

Tokyo Ghost Story - Rewrite

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - EVENING

KAORI, a 5-year old girl in a kindergarten uniform, quietly sobs in the middle of a busy station platform. People hurry about on all sides, ignoring her. She is motionless except for the slight heaving motion of her sobbing.

A BUSINESSMAN (30's) on the other side of the tracks stands against a pole, talking on his cell phone. He notices the girl. The two of them are like stones in parallel rivers of people.

Trains arrive and leave, and the 2 are not part of the regular rhythm of the rush-hour crowds.

The businessman stares at the girl as he talks on the phone to his MISTRESS.

BUSINESSMAN

...but you know it's not that simple...

He is jostled periodically by people coming and going in all directions on the busy platform.

BUSINESSMAN (CONT)

...of course I don't care about her. You know that...

BEAT

No. That's not a good idea. I told you I'd talk to her myself when the time is right.

BEAT

...but my daughter. I don't want to lose my daughter.

As he mentions his daughter he catches a momentary glimpse of Kaori, who is wide-eyed and staring straight at him through the people and trains passing between them.

This shakes him from his phone conversation, and he fights through the crowds to try and see the little girl. But when he sees her again, she is quietly sobbing as before.

MISTRESS (VOICE FROM THE CELL PHONE)

Hello?! Are you there?!

Confused, the businessman puts the phone back to his ear and resumes his conversation. He is jostled even more frequently now as he tries to regain his composure and his position by the pole.

BUSINESSMAN

S-sorry. There was....I just got
bumped in the crowd.

Reaching the pole, his face and body language become more controlled and determined. The people rushing around the platform no longer bump him.

BUSINESSMAN (CONT)

Look, it's better not to talk about
this right now. I'm going to leave
her, but I need to keep my
relationship with my daughter.

He nods and sighs.

BUSINESSMAN (CONT)

...Yes, I told her I'd be in Osaka
until tomorrow, so we've got all
night...Me too...I'll be there in
about 15 minutes.

He finishes his call and boards the next train.

INT. TRAIN - EVENING

The businessman can see Kaori through the window as he gets on the train. She is still sobbing, but she is staring back at him again.

They make eye contact, which freezes him for a moment, and then he quickly tries to get off the train. But the doors close on him and it pulls away from the station.

He tries to keep looking at the girl as the train picks up speed. Through the heads and walls and another incoming train, the girl's eyes have not shifted---she is still fixed on him.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - EVENING

The businessman gets off at the next station, rushes up the stairs and over to the next platform to catch the return train. He barely makes it before the doors close.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - EVENING

The businessman gets off the train back at the girl's station and pushes through the crowd to reach her. He crouches down to her eye level.

BUSINESSMAN
(gently)
Hello.

The girl just looks at him, sobbing.

BUSINESSMAN
What's wrong? Are you lost? Where's
your mother?

The girl does not answer. The businessman reaches out to her kindergarten nametag.

BUSINESSMAN
Kaori-chan, huh. What's wrong,
Kaori-chan?

The girl's sobbing slowly eases and finally stops.

KAORI
(abruptly, and in a cold,
mature voice)
Go home.

The businessman is visibly shaken. Kaori resumes her sobbing.

BUSINESSMAN
Ah...sorry? You...you want to go
home then?

Kaori does not respond. She just continues sobbing.

BUSINESSMAN (CONT)
Well...where do you live? Let's
find your parents, shall we?

KAORI
(touching his left wrist)
You killed her.

The businessman stumbles backward as the statement shocks him out of his crouching position.

He gets tangled up in passers-by, bumps into someone, apologizes, and then can't find Kaori through all the rushing people.

He searches through the crowd as it dissipates, but sees no sign of the girl.

He tugs at a thin, embroidered friendship bracelet on his left wrist as he approaches a STATION ATTENDANT.

BUSINESSMAN

(quickly and semi-coherently)
There was a little girl...Where did she...? Did you see her? I was talking to her and then I lost her and...

STATION ATTENDANT

Your daughter is missing?

BUSINESSMAN

No, no, she's not my daughter. She was just crying and I wanted to help and...I...I don't know what happened to her.

STATION ATTENDANT

I see. There's nothing I can do, really, but you can report this at the police box just outside the station.

The businessman rushes out of the station to the police box.

INT. POLICE BOX - EVENING

The businessman interrupts a middle-aged POLICE OFFICER, who is chatting and laughing with a civilian. He still subconsciously tugs at his friendship bracelet.

The civilian bows and leaves as the businessman starts speaking. The officer is annoyed by the interruption.

BUSINESSMAN

(excitedly)
I need to report a missing child. Kaori. She was crying on the platform and now she's gone. She just...

POLICE OFFICER

(interrupting the man and pulling out a note pad)
Just a minute, please. Slow down and have a seat. Your daughter is missing?

BUSINESSMAN

No, she's not my daughter. She was just standing there, crying, and I tried to help her.

POLICE OFFICER

Where were her parents? Maybe she went with them.

BUSINESSMAN

(impatiently)

No, I didn't see any parents. She was alone and she was crying...but then she said...she just...she just vanished.

POLICE OFFICER

Vanished, huh? When did you first see this girl?

BUSINESSMAN

I was waiting for my train and she was just standing there, crying. Nobody was helping her, so I went to see what was wrong.

POLICE OFFICER

And you said her name is Kaori. How do you know that?

BUSINESSMAN

Well, she wouldn't answer me--I asked her what was wrong--and I looked at her name tag.

POLICE OFFICER

(writing)

Name...tag...good. Family name?

BUSINESSMAN

(thinking)

No...but her school's name was Akamon. Akamon Kindergarten. She must be about 5 years old, like my own daughter.

The police officer stops writing. He looks at the businessman suspiciously.

POLICE OFFICER

Akamon? Are you sure?

BUSINESSMAN

Yes...I think so...Yes, I'm sure. I remember clearly...the letters.

The police officer puts down his pen, leans forward in his chair, and looks sternly at the businessman.

POLICE OFFICER

That school closed down more than 10 years ago. Is this some kind of prank?

BUSINESSMAN

What? No. That...that can't be right. I thought...But her name is definitely Kaori. I'm sure of it.

POLICE OFFICER

Really? Well Kaori is a pretty common name, so there's not much we can do.

The police officer looks at the businessman for a few seconds, shaking his head slightly.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT.)

You look tired, sir. Work's been pretty stressful, huh? Why don't you go home and relax.

BUSINESSMAN

But that little girl...

POLICE OFFICER

(in the same cold voice that Kaori used)

Go home.

The businessman bolts up from his seat and starts backing out the door. The police officer looks at him like he's insane.

The businessman turns and disappears into the rush-hour crowd.

The police officer starts to get up to follow him, but changes his mind. He scratches his head, crumples up the interview paper, and shoots it into a garbage pail.

INT. BARROOM - EVENING

The businessman arrives at a small, quiet bar a little while later, noticeably disturbed.

His MISTRESS, an attractive woman in her late 20's, is there waiting for him, with an almost-empty drink.

MISTRESS
(playfully)
I was getting worried. It's not
nice to keep a lady waiting.

She quickly notices that the businessman is bothered by something. She gets concerned and helps him settle into his seat.

MISTRESS (CONT)
What's wrong?

BUSINESSMAN
I don't know. Something strange
happened. I don't know...

He takes a photograph out of his wallet and looks at it. He is in the photo with an attractive woman and a little girl. He looks at and touches the friendship bracelet.

BUSINESSMAN (CONT)
Yu-chan...

MISTRESS
Is everything OK? Is she OK?

BUSINESSMAN
(looking up from the photo)
The strangest thing happened. I saw
a little girl crying at the
station, and I tried to ask her
what was wrong. That's why I was
late. I wanted to help her.

He looks up at his mistress with pleading eyes.

BUSINESSMAN (CONT)
And she said, "You killed her."

MISTRESS
Oh my God!

BUSINESSMAN
I mean, what a thing to say.

MISTRESS
But she didn't say who, did she?

BUSINESSMAN
Well, not in words.

MISTRESS
So it was just a weird little girl
saying weird little girl things.
Yu-chan's fine.

BUSINESSMAN
But what if she's not?

The mistress wants to ask the obvious question, but
hesitates before doing so.

MISTRESS
Did...did you call home?

BUSINESSMAN
I was going to...but I didn't know
what to say. I mean, she's probably
OK, right?

They sit there for some time. The mood is somber.

The mistress tries to console him by lightly touching his
arm. The businessman just sits, looking at the photograph.

Finally, the mistress softly speaks.

MISTRESS
You should go home.

BUSINESSMAN
But I told her I'd be in Osaka
until tomorrow.

MISTRESS
Tell her there was a change of
plans. Something came up.

The businessman doesn't move.

MISTRESS (CONT)
(in the same cold voice that
Kaori used)
Go home.

The businessman reacts with a start, and he looks at his
mistress with wide eyes. She is confused by his sudden
change, unaware of what caused it.

He slowly backs away from her, picking up his jacket and bag and bumping into things as he leaves.

She looks bewildered and helplessly reaches toward him as he exits the bar, wordlessly.

INT. TRAIN - EVENING

The businessman is on the train, standing near the doors and holding his cell phone.

He periodically does double-take looks out the window, as he thinks he sees Kaori on every platform.

He calls repeatedly on the cell phone, always hearing the same WOMAN'S VOICE message.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(cheerfully)

I am not able to take your call
right now. But please leave a
message and...

After a few calls, he leaves a message. Other passengers on the crowded train look at him disapprovingly.

BUSINESSMAN

(falsely cheerful)

Hi! It's me. I came back already.
Yeah, Osaka was...we had a change
in plans, so I came home. Yeah,
so...I'll see you soon. Call me
when you get this message.

He tries a few more times, but hangs up as soon as the voice message begins. He gets frustrated.

Finally he leaves a curt message.

BUSINESSMAN (CONT)

Just call me, OK....I don't know
why you're not calling me back.

He stares back aggressively at one of the disapproving passengers.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - EVENING

The businessman runs home through the streets, arriving to darkness. The driveway is empty.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

BUSINESSMAN

I'm home!

Inside the house, he calls out and looks around, but nobody is there.

The rice cooker signals that it is ready, and there is food on the counter, half-prepared.

The home phone rings. As the businessman goes to pick it up, he sees an envelope on the floor. It is open and the corner of a photograph sticks out.

He picks up the phone, then bends to pick up the envelope. He listens to the SERIOUS VOICE on the line.

SERIOUS VOICE

Yes, hello, are you the husband of
Mrs. Yukiko Okada?

He pulls the photograph out of the envelope and looks at the picture of him and his mistress holding hands on a beach.

BUSINESSMAN

Yes, I am. What happened?

SERIOUS VOICE

I'm afraid there has been an
accident...

INT. HOSPITAL - EVENING

The businessman runs into the hospital and barges through people to the receptionist.

He then sprints through the hospital and into a room. He rushes to his wife's bed, looking from the NURSE to his wife and then back to the nurse.

His wife is unconscious and hooked up to machines and monitors.

BUSINESSMAN

What happened? Is she OK?

NURSE

She was in a car accident. She's
lucky to be alive.

BUSINESSMAN

(looking around and starting
to tear up)

And my daughter?

The nurse looks at him sadly. The businessman breaks down.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

Months later, the businessman gets on a train at the same
station.

Looking out the window at the same spot where he talked to
Kaori, he sees a woman crouching down and talking to an
empty space. He sees her mime looking at a nametag.

The woman stumbles backward as if in surprise, apologizes to
the person she bumps into, and then starts peering
frantically through the crowd as if searching for someone.

The blank-faced businessman rubs his left wrist as his train
pulls out of the station.

FADE OUT.