**A Temple at Night**

by Emi Tsuruta

Hi again. It's sooooo hot out these days in Oceanview. I hope you are enjoying the summer.

I still haven't told you about all the stuff I did when I was back in Japan. I kept a diary while I was there, so I'd be able to tell you about it when I got back.

Before I left, I was planning on slowing down, trying to decide how I felt about the stuff my boyfriend Ryosuke and I were getting into, I mean, fooling around outdoors or whatever. Still, even on the flight over, I was already missing Ryosuke. I'd gotten so used to having him around. A couple of times on the street, I'd see someone who looked like him, but then realized it wasn't him.

This spring had been kind of exciting. It was crazy too, but it was like I would wake up every morning, and I wouldn't know what was going to happen that day. My life in Japan hadn't really been like that. It was more normal if you know what I mean. I'm not saying it was boring or anything, but it was just that during these two years in the States, I think I've changed a bit. Maybe I'm more grown up, more confident or whatever, but especially this last trip home, I felt like I could do things that I'd never done before. I'll tell you about it, and you'll see what I mean.

When I finally got home to our house in Kamakura, my mom was all excited to see me. I was tired from the long flight. I talked with her a little bit, and then had a shower, and went to bed.

The next morning, I woke up at something like 3 a.m. I tried to go back to sleep, but I couldn't because of the time difference. I wasn't sleepy. The house was so quiet. My mom and dad were asleep. I didn't know what else to do, so I went downstairs, and made myself some breakfast. There was nothing on TV, so I started looking through my old stuff. I dug out some old clothes and books and stuff from when I used to live here.

Around 4:30 or so the sun came up, so I had a shower, and pulled on a jersey and jeans. My mom and dad were still asleep, so I went out for a walk looking around my old neighborhood.

My house is on a hill. I noticed that they've built a whole bunch of houses on the hill across from where I live. It used to be all trees. I walked down into the valley where the main road is. There didn't seem to be much traffic. I guess it doesn't really get busy till summer starts. There's a beach not too far from my house, and some temples and a big Buddha, so there are usually a lot of tourists in the summer. Still, it's a small town by Japanese standards and pretty quiet most of the year.

I walked along the main road a little ways, and a few cars went by. I decided to go to this temple that I used to go to on New Year's Eve when I was younger. It's not too far from my house and just a little ways off the main road. The entrance is surrounded by trees, and you have to walk up a whole bunch of stone steps to get to the temple. I think there are a hundred and eight steps all together. When my grandmother was in the hospital, I once ran up and down these stairs in my bare feet over and over again to pray for her to get better. You're not supposed to let anyone see you, so I did it at night. It ended up raining, and I got soaked, but it must have worked because she got better pretty soon after that.

I climbed up to the top, and walked around the temple grounds a bit. The temple building was all locked up, but there is a very large courtyard, a rock garden and an observation deck where you can look out over the bay. I sat down on one of the picnic benches on the observation deck. I could see the whole town spread out in front of me, and beyond that, the beach and the bay. I couldn't really see any movement. Most people were probably still asleep.

I fished out the locket Ryosuke gave me from inside the collar of my jersey. I wondered what Ryosuke was doing thousands of miles away. The temple reminded me a bit of the Japanese garden where Ryosuke and I used to go on my university campus back in California. I suddenly remembered the last time we had been there, the feel of his warm lips kissing me, his arms hugging my waist. I felt a vague pang of regret at having come to Japan without him. I wished he were here sitting in the temple with me.

I walked over to the fountain. I dipped my hands in, and then splashed some water on my face. That's supposed to bring you good luck. I realized that my whole body was hot, but I wasn't sure why.

I walked over to the top of the stairs, and took off my shoes and socks. The large stone step was cold on my feet, but it was a good cold. It would help me calm down. I left my shoes there, and ran down to the bottom of the steps. I glanced down the laneway back towards the main road, but it was so quiet. I walked in the shade of the trees out to the main road, stepping on a few pebbles on the way, but there were no cars at all. I hadn't brought a watch, but it had to be around five a.m. Was my neighborhood always this quiet in the morning? I sat down by the roadside to wait for cars, but none came. All I could hear was the rustling of the leaves and the cry of seagulls in the distance.

I was beginning to get this strange feeling inside. It's hard to describe it. Sort of like butterflies in my stomach or jittery nerves. I could feel the soft fabric of my jersey brushing against my breasts, my jeans tugging at my hips. The cool air felt so nice on my bare skin. An image crept into my mind of me taking off my clothes. I shook my head to clear it. What on earth am I thinking? I began walking back up the stairs, but the feeling wouldn't go away.

By the time I reached the top of the stairs, I was breathing heavily. I sat down next to my shoes, and tried to clear my head. This is crazy, I thought. I can't strip naked in the middle of a temple even if there is no one around. With a strong effort of will, I put my shoes back on, and walked home. Maybe it was just the lack of sleep getting to me.

My parents still weren't up when I got back, but I must have woken them because I began to hear noises coming from their room. I sat in the dining room, drinking juice till my mom came down. After I saw her, I began to calm down a little. I wonder what came over me earlier.

After my dad went out, I tried his computer, but my mom kept coming into the room, so I couldn't write an email to Ryosuke. I hadn't told my parents about him yet.

My dad's computer is so slow; I couldn't even get connected to the internet. I decided to get my old cellphone working again, so I could use the email on that. We called the phone company, and asked them to start it up again. We also called my sister Norika to say hi, but I couldn't very well tell her about what happened in the temple with my mom listening.

Late afternoon, all of a sudden, I got so sleepy I couldn't keep my eyes open. I had another shower, and went to bed even though it was still light out. Tomorrow, I'll try to stay up later, I told myself.

That night I dreamed about Ryosuke. He had come to Japan, and we were visiting that temple together. It must have been New Year's or something because the temple was crowded with people. He leaned over to me, and whispered,

"Take off your kimono."

I was shocked.

"What? Take it off, here?" I asked. We were right in the middle of the crowd with everyone standing around waiting for their turn to ring the temple bell. I looked at them nervously, but for some reason, I started to do as he asked. I undid the belts, and took the kimono off, layer by layer, handing each one to him as I did. Soon, I was standing there completely naked in the middle of this crowded temple surrounded by my friends and neighbors. All I had on were these little white tabi socks and ornate slippers. I was holding an arrow in my hand, which we had bought from the temple for good luck. In the dream, I felt so ashamed I wanted to hide, but when I woke up, my heart was pounding. It took me a long time to calm down.

I looked at the clock. It was still only 3:30 in the morning. I tried to go back to sleep, but I couldn't stop thinking about the dream. I went downstairs to get a drink of water. I was too awake to sleep. I had some breakfast and a shower, and got dressed.

In my dresser, I found this colorful sundress I used to wear in the summers sometimes. The pattern is indigo with yellow and green water lilies and light blue bamboo. It reminds me of when we used to live in Hawaii.

I pulled on my bra and panties, and then slipped the dress on over my head. I also picked out this white terrycloth hoodie Ryosuke bought for me a while back. It's nice and soft, and reminds me of him. I tried my cellphone, but it still didn't work. I guess it takes a few days. I put it in my backpack along with my umbrella, and went back downstairs.

It was still dark out, but I decided I didn't want to wait. I felt like visiting the temple again. Of course I knew the dream couldn't come true - Ryosuke was still in the U.S. for one thing - but even so, I wanted to go, and check.

I put my running shoes on my bare feet, and tied them up tight. I went out, carefully shut the door, and locked it trying to make sure mom and dad didn't hear me. My keys kind of jangled in the pocket of my dress, so I took them out, and put them in my backpack. I shivered a bit from the cold. Maybe I should have worn my tracksuit instead.

It took my eyes a while to get used to the darkness. There aren't many streetlights where I live, and it was pretty cloudy out. As I walked down the hill toward the main road, it started to get kind of misty. I haven't really been out that much this late at night. Maybe it's always like that.

I saw lights coming down the road, and then a car went by, but then it was quiet again. I crossed the road, and walked till I came to the laneway where the temple was. It was kind of dark under the trees. I found the stairway though. I could hear something that sounded like a frog croaking, but otherwise, it was pretty quiet. I always thought of my neighborhood as a big town, but maybe it is the countryside, like some people say.

I walked up the stairs peering into the trees on either side. It's kind of scary at night, because you can't see anything, but then again if there is anyone there, they probably can't see me either. My neighborhood is pretty safe though. Kids play out on the street till late at night. I've never heard of anything happening to anyone.

Once I got up to the courtyard, I felt better. There were a few breaks in the clouds where I could see the stars. I walked over to the observation deck again. The town looked so quiet. Everyone must be asleep except for me. I sat down, and took out my cellphone again. I wish I could call Ryosuke, or at least send him an email. I wonder what he would say if I told him about the dream.

I looked around at the temple grounds. It didn't really look like the dream. The lookout was the same, but in the dream, everything looked so well kept. Maybe it was just the lighting, but now the temple looked kind of rough, like no one had been here for a while.

I put the cellphone in my pocket, and walked to the railing. I could hear the leaves rustling in the breeze, and then I realized it was starting to rain. The phone felt heavy in my pocket. Then the wind started to blow my hair in my face, and I could feel little drops of rain on my hands. I scrambled under the eaves of the temple as it started to rain. I squatted down, took my umbrella out of my backpack, and opened it up.

I crouched there, pulled my long hair back, and looked out at the storm. You could kind of see the wind making little waves with the droplets of rain as it came down. I could no longer hear the cars or the frog over the sound of the wind and rain. No one would come here, not this early, in this weather. I was sure I was alone.

I began to get that feeling again - like I wanted to take my clothes off. I could feel the butterflies flitting around in my stomach. I stood up, and tried to think of something else. I walked out to the top of the steps, and once more remembered the time I had climbed the steps over and over for my grandmother. It had rained that day too, but the rain hadn't bothered me.

I sat down on the step, set down my umbrella, and took off my shoes. Maybe I could pray for Ryosuke to come here to Japan to see me. No, no, that would never happen. Maybe I'll just pray that he finds a good summer job. I picked up the umbrella again, and ran down the steps leaving my shoes there. The steps were pretty slippery and harder on my feet than the morning before. Still I made it down to the bottom, and then all the way up again with no problem. I just sort of stared at my shoes for a while. I wonder why you're supposed to take off your shoes anyway.

I ran my fingers along my bottom, feeling for the hem of my panties through the material of my dress. Should I take them off too? No, that would be too crazy. I remembered the time at my aunt's house when I got caught wearing just a t-shirt. At least this dress is longer than that t-shirt was.

I moved back from the steps, and stood in the shade of the trees. I set the umbrella down again, and huddled up close next to the tree. I reached up inside my skirt, fiddling to find the waistband of my panties. I began to feel really guilty for even thinking of such a thing, but I finally got a hold of the waistband, and started to pull it down over the curve of my behind. As my panties slipped away from my skin, I felt a rush as the air made contact with my most sensitive place. The breeze tickled as I pulled my panties down and off. I crouched down, and put them away in my backpack, but my heart started to race as I spread my legs apart. I kind of wanted to touch myself, but held back.

Half in a haze now, I pulled my backpack on, picked up my umbrella, and stood up. I couldn't feel the rain anymore, only the soft caress of the breeze tickling me between my legs. I stepped over towards the stairs, peering anxiously into the darkness to see if there was anyone below. I slowly walked down the first few steps, pulling down on my dress, which all of a sudden seemed so very short. Step by step, I drew closer to the bottom, back into the mist. The rain had cleared the air a bit, but I still couldn't see very far.

I jumped as I heard the screech of car tires. As soon as I reached the bottom, I ran back up, and got my shoes. As I squatted down to put them on, I spread my legs, and let my skirt ride up till I could see my pussy glistening in the dim light. Maybe I'd better put my panties back on. This is crazy. I stood up letting the skirt fall back down.

I peered down the stairs into the mist, but there was still no sign of anyone. I walked down cautiously sweeping my eyes back and forth through the trees looking for a sign of that car. I wonder if they saw me. I kept thinking I should go back, and put my panties on, but instead I just kept on walking.

I got to the bottom, and walked out the lane to the main road. A car drove up, almost blinding me with its headlights. It went straight on by. I quickly pulled my dress down as far as it would go. I walked along the main road, and a few more cars went by. My heart was pounding like crazy, as the cool night air licked at my privates. Despite myself, I was getting more and more excited.

I started climbing the hill that led back to my house. The sky grew lighter as the sun started to rise. I ran the last few blocks, and hurried inside, terrified that someone would see me. When I got in the door, I felt relieved, but then realized that my parents might be up by now, so I quickly got my panties out of my backpack, and pulled them on. Only gradually did my heart slow back down to normal.

Let me tell you, it felt really strange when my parents came down. Inside, I felt happy, almost exhilarated that I had gotten away with this bit of sauciness, but I didn't want them to figure out. I got ready, and went out again.

I decided to go see my friend Michiyo (the one who went to the fireworks with me). Japanese university wasn't out yet, but I knew her cellphone number, so I gave her a call, and met her in Tokyo. She looked happy to see me. She hadn't changed that much, still the same innocent face, twin ponytails, long bangs and long skirts.

Michiyo gave me a grand tour of her campus. I sat in with her for one of her classes. She sits right up at the front, and takes very careful notes, but didn't really talk with any of her classmates. In high school, both of us were shy, but maybe I've changed.

I was burning to tell Michiyo about my exploits that morning, but I realized that I'd probably have to tell her all about Ryosuke too. I don't think she's seeing anyone, and I didn't want to make her feel bad. Instead, I invited her to go out shopping. We went to Shibuya, an area geared to college co-eds like us.

When we got there, it had changed a bit. They've rebuilt the whole station, and right by the main intersection, now there's this seven-storey video rental store with a Starbucks on the second floor. Everyone was dressed in the latest fashions - baby doll style tops, Goth Lolita, ganguro (tanned and tea colored hair). I wanted to buy some clothes to take back with me to the States, something sexy for my dates with Ryosuke.

We crossed the intersection, and entered along Center Street. Some tanned surf-boys were checking us out. Michiyo seemed nervous, but I felt chuffed that I could get a reaction. I took off my pullover to give them to let them see my bare shoulders and back, which my sundress didn't cover. Two guys came over, but Michiyo grabbed my arm, and pulled me away to one of the department stores.

This particular store is so expensive there was almost no one in there. I didn't plan to buy anything here, but Michiyo wanted to look around. We each picked out some pants, and took them to the change rooms.

When I got into the change room, I pulled on the first pair of slacks, but my dress was in the way, so I took it off. The slacks fit all right, but they were made of this funny material like velvet.

"Michiyo, how are yours?"

"Oh, I don't know. They're a bit tight."

"Here let me see." On top, all I had on was my frilly white bra, so I picked up my pullover. I thought of pulling it on, but instead just held it against my bra with one arm. I pulled back the curtain, and stepped out into the hall, trying to get Michiyo to show me. Michiyo was looking down at her own pants, but when she realized I was topless, she gasped.

"What are you doing?"

Her over-reaction made me worry, but I didn't think I was doing anything wrong. We were still in the fitting room area.

"They look fine to me," I said ignoring her question. "Turn around."

She did. I could see what she was complaining about. Her pants hugged her cute little rear quite snugly indeed. I don't know if she does any sports, but she has quite a compact body, the way guys like I guess.

"C'mon. Let's try another store." I went back to my booth, and changed back into my dress.

I took her to a small shop that I'd read about. On the rack, the clothes look normal enough, but when you try them on, they have some sexy twist. For example, some of the jeans have tears in the seat of them, or zipper up in the back. A lot of them seemed to be low rise - you know, the kind you can't pull up all the way, so people can see your hip bones. We each picked out a few pairs to try on.

I went into a booth, pulled my dress off, and tried on the first pair. The waist was so low that you could see my underwear, so I took them off again pulling my underwear with them. For no reason, I took off my bra as well, stripping naked.

I could hear the other customers talking just on the other side of the curtain. It felt weird to be naked so close to the street. Wouldn't they be surprised if I walked out like this? I stood there fantasizing for a while, and then finally remembered the jeans. I slipped them on. Without undies, I could feel the seam brushing up between my legs tickling my most sensitive place. It was driving me to distraction.

There was no mirror in the booth, so I pulled my hoodie on, and went back out into the shop. I found the mirror, and pulled up the hem of my hoodie to get a better look at the jeans. They were so low at the front. You could almost see where my bush starts.

I soon realized there was a guy in the shop, checking me out. He was holding a couple of shopping bags from women's shops. He must be waiting for his girlfriend. He reminded me a bit of Ryosuke, especially the way he was trying to make out that he hadn't been staring at my ass.

I actually didn't mind so much. If he wants to look, be my guest. I lifted up the hem even more showing him my flat tummy. Not quite on purpose, I reached up my top, and brushed my fingers against one breast. OK. I guess I can admit I was getting excited, teasing this guy. Michiyo came out, so I covered my tummy.

I think Michiyo didn't like how low her pants hung, so she'd pulled them way up. I don't think I've ever seen her dress sexy like this. The skin of her hips was so white. She still had her underwear on, but she'd pushed it down trying to hide it below the jeans.

"You can buy special low rise underwear too," I told her. She was blushing a deep red, and tilting her head down to hide her eyes. "Other than that, you look great."

The guy behind us was checking us both out now, comparing Michiyo's taut little rear to my own. He kept coming back to me though, his eyes almost sparkling. I turned to examine myself in the mirror, and sure enough, at the back, you could see the crack of my behind and large swaths of my butt cheeks. No wonder he's getting so excited! I wasn't so sure I wanted to go around flashing my bottom at everyone, but this guy for one seemed to love the way I looked. His girlfriend must be around here somewhere, but the way he was eyeing me up and down, I swear I thought he was going to ask me out. He definitely wanted to do something with me, if you know what I mean.

I let him get his jollies for a while, but Michiyo grew tired of being stared at. She disappeared off back to her booth.

"I'm going to buy a pair," I told her through the curtain. "You?"

She didn't seem quite as keen, but to humor me, she said she'd buy hers too. I suggested that we wear them home, but she wasn't willing to go that far. I didn't have a real top to wear, anyway. I gave the guy one last look, and then went into the booth, and changed into my dress. The guy was still gawking when we came out, but eventually, his girlfriend reappeared, and he had to give up on Michiyo and me. We went for a tea, and then headed home.

I still haven't told you half the stuff I wanted to, but I'll stop here for now. I'll write again soon.