

## The Hazing

By Minako Tomoka

### An Original Character Short Story

It had been a couple weeks since Momiji Kurumi was hired as a new actress at the Rose Theatre. It was a unique theatre, as it made use of both human and giant actors and actresses. Momiji had been studying theatre for years and just recently graduated, but her audition was so impressive that the Rose Theatre quickly hired her. She was small and dainty, with a pale complexion and a delicate face. Her eyes were a bright blue, while locks of wavy black hair flowed over her shoulders like winding rivers of spilled ink. Part of her success was her willingness to work with her giant colleagues as well as the humans. Most were frightened or intimidated by them, but Momiji wasn't afraid of them- at least if she was, she never let it show.

She'd grown up out in the country, where some of her neighbors were giants. Her parents always taught her to not be scared of them, but to respect them and treat them like ordinary people, because that was what they would want. They wouldn't want to be treated like monsters, unable to talk to a smaller person without them fleeing in terror. Up until college, she had been homeschooled, so she wasn't fed all of the gruesome old tales of giants gobbling up humans hundreds of years ago. She had heard a few, but they hadn't quite taken root in her mind like most people.

That was then, and this was now. Giants didn't lay siege to villages and devour humans whole anymore, and it hadn't happened for ages, so why should she need to be afraid? To Momiji, they were people, just bigger. She never thought that one of them would snatch her up and eat her whole, it didn't cross her mind. In fact, she had become quite friendly with one of them- Suguru Konomi, one of the giant actors that made up the Rose Theatre's current roster.

He was stunningly beautiful and insanely popular, as any play with him in it sold out within the first few days. He was adored by women large and small alike, and it just went to show that even a giant could be idolized by humans. Momiji was enjoying her time at the theatre, as demanding and stressful as it could be at times. Despite her talent, her isolation meant that her social skills weren't quite the best, and so she could be rather shy around strangers and had a hard time saying no to people. She was obedient and did what she was told. Unfortunately, there are some people in life that should always be told no.

Chihaya Kotori and Tenshi Shiranui led Momiji along while she carried a large chocolate cake on a sealed plastic dish. "Umm...what is this for?" Momiji asked, her voice small and meek. "You told me to buy this...but why?"

"You'll see," Chihaya sneered. "We've got a little challenge for you, Momiji. You see, you've already been here for two weeks, and here at the Rose Theatre, that's kind of a problem."

"W-why...?" Momiji stammered. "Did I do something wrong? I know I'm still new, but I'm trying my hardest..."

"That's the problem, right there," Tenshi growled. "You're trying too hard. Simply put, it's making us look bad. We can't get shown up by some hillbilly chick who showed up a couple weeks ago while we've been working our asses off here for five years."

Momiji chose not to rebut her nasty comment and tried her best to remain polite. "Even still, I don't see what this has to do with anything...if you're that worried about it, I could just not work as hard..."

"We wanna see what you're made of," Chihaya smirked. "You get along so well with Suguru, it's getting to be an issue. We get all these dumbass fangirls coming to us, asking to see you, so they can figure out why you're so friendly with him. Do you have feelings for him or something? He's a giant, you know he'll gobble you up like a gumdrop if you get too close."

Momiji blushed hot red. "I-it's not like that at all, you've got it wrong! I don't have feelings for Suguru, he's just my colleague, so I want to get along with him...I want to get along with everyone. Besides, giants don't eat humans anymore. He doesn't want to be treated like that, he just wants to be treated like a normal person...I know I wouldn't like it if everyone was afraid of me."

Tenshi grinned. "Wow, what an airhead. Let's put that to the test then, huh? If you're not afraid, you should be able to do it easily, right?"

The three young women approached the enormous chair that Suguru Konomi was currently passed out in. Since it had been just after rehearsals, he was still dressed in his costume. It had a Victorian air to it, mostly purple with silver trim, and he wore a wide-brimmed hat with a fluffy feather sticking out of it. He had beautiful, soft brown hair that was so long that he could sit on it, and hairdressers often got lost in it. One part of his appeal to so many was that he was very gentle and spoke softly. He had been taught to be incredibly delicate around humans because they could be injured easily, and after an experience as a boy when he accidentally hurt a human child while playing with them, he'd sworn to be very careful around humans at all times. It made him approachable, and didn't make people think that those who spoke to him would be eaten by him. Even while sleeping, he was quiet, a gentle giant.

"Suguru didn't eat anything after rehearsals, so he must be starving," Chihaya said. "You're going to feed him. Just climb up there and give him that cake, toss it in his mouth. Don't worry, he won't choke or anything. Giants are used to swallowing their food whole, so it'll be fine."

"But...he's sleeping," Momiji protested. "I don't want to wake him up, shouldn't we wait until he's awake so he can eat?"

"That wouldn't be a challenge, now would it?" Tenshi grumbled. "This isn't about him, it's about you. If you think you've got what it takes to work here, and you're not afraid of Suguru, then get your ass up there and feed him that cake. He's such a heavy sleeper, he probably won't even feel us. Sleeping giants are notoriously hard to awaken, you know."

Momiji didn't know what to do. She knew that if she refused, Chihaya and Tenshi would continue pulling pranks on her and making her life hell. If all she needed to do was give cake to Suguru...then it wouldn't be that bad, right? It had to be some kind of hazing, just to test her. Clearly the girls were jealous of her, she understood that much. But even if they were mean, they wouldn't do anything to hurt her, would they? Either way, she decided she had no choice.

The three girls started to climb Suguru, slowly but surely making their way up the length of his enormous body. They walked across his stomach, which was soft and squishy, making it hard for them to keep their balance. Momiji took careful steps and tried her hardest to not fall over. That was made even more difficult by the challenge of trying to hold onto the chocolate cake. She felt low vibrations beneath her feet as she walked.

"Can you feel his belly rumbling?" Chihaya teased. "He must be really hungry..."

Momiji didn't like the sound of that. When the three climbed their way up his chest, they could feel his thumping heartbeat, the sound of a heart ten times bigger than their own hard at work. It made Momiji slightly nervous...she had never been this close to a giant before. Especially a male, with how beautiful he was...she struggled to keep herself together.

After a long and arduous journey, the girls finally made their way up to Suguru's face. His mouth was wide open, and he was gently snoring. Momiji felt a stinging pang of fear in her heart, being up so close to his mouth. "Well, what are you waiting for?" Tenshi asked. "Get to work and give him the cake. Make sure you get inside enough so it slides down his throat without any trouble."

"I-I have to go...inside his mouth?" Momiji asked, her voice cracking.

"Not all the way," Chihaya corrected. "Just enough, maybe about halfway. You can feed him the cake, then hurry up and get back out before he swallows. No big deal, right?"

Momiji gulped. "I...I guess not." She slowly crept forward, pushing past Suguru's squishy lower lip and pulling herself up by gripping his front teeth. She tried to not put too much pressure on them, as the giant's teeth were sharp and pointy, and they could easily cut her if she wasn't careful. She removed the plastic lid from the cake dish and tossed it aside. Gradually, she made her way within Suguru's gaping maw. Momiji didn't let it show, but she was more terrified now than she had ever been in her life. She gazed into the dark abyss, feeling the heat of his breath and the light mist of saliva spray. All she wanted was to toss the cake down his throat and be done with it, but she had to do this right, or else the other girls would accuse her of not doing it the way they wanted her to, and perhaps make her do something even worse as punishment.

"See how sharp his teeth are?" Tenshi taunted. "Giants are carnivores, you know. They're designed to eat meat...and what sweeter meat is there than a cute girl like you?"

"Stop it!" Momiji barked. "I'm trying to focus!" Her arms rattled, growing tired from holding the cake dish for so long. With her hands full, she had to use her lower half to keep her balance on Suguru's slimy tongue. The area around her trembled as Suguru stirred, slightly shifting on the chair and making everything shake. Momiji squealed and gripped one of his canines to keep from falling. He yawned, drawing in air and creating a strong gust that threatened to suck Momiji into his gullet.

"Oooh look, you can see his belly from here!" Chihaya teased.

"I-I'm scared!" Momiji gasped. "Please, I don't want to do this!" She reached out, ready to dump in the cake and run out, until...she felt a hard push on her lower back. A pair of hands slammed against her, hitting her by surprise and making her lose her balance. The cake fell, and she fell with it. She couldn't stop herself or attempt to grab onto anything, all she could do was roll around helplessly as she battled the slippery surface, sliding right into Suguru's throat. She screamed, flailing and panicking in utter terror. She couldn't believe it. She was going to be swallowed whole...and Suguru didn't even realize it. Well, at least at first.

Back outside, the sudden movements in Suguru's mouth jolted him awake, sending Chihaya and Tenshi crashing into his lap. He didn't know what had fallen into his mouth, but it was now stuck in his throat. His reflexes overtook him...and he swallowed. A large gulp was all it took to send his squirmy snack sliding down to his stomach. Quickly gathering the situation, he glared down at Chihaya and Tenshi. "What did you two do?" he growled. "What did I swallow just now?"

The two girls trembled in his shadow, unsure of how to respond. "It uh...it was cake, that's all!" Tenshi replied.

Suguru narrowed his eyebrows. He felt something...moving in his stomach. Something squirming, kicking, and crying for help. His entire body tensed up. "Last I checked, cake doesn't struggle and cry when it's eaten." While he usually spoke very softly, his voice was bleeding with predatory anger. The girls shivered and clung to each other, knowing they were both in dire trouble.

Meanwhile, Momiji was writhing in the darkness of Suguru's belly, fighting against the rippling, fleshy walls. She screamed as she slid deeper down, becoming lathered in a coat of thick, sticky fluids that smelled sour like vinegar. Her skin started to tingle. She noticed the cake just a little ways below her...and she shuddered as it began to melt, becoming nothing but a slurry of chocolate mush. Momiji knew she was soon to follow the same fate if she didn't find a way out. She thrashed about, desperately clawing and beating at the stomach walls. "Let me out of here! Suguru, please! I'm going to be digested, you have to get me out right now!"

The long-haired giant quickly deduced the situation. As furious as he was at Tenshi and Chihaya, he had to focus on making sure Momiji wasn't digested into slush. He focused his energy on his middle, deeply inhaling to suck in his stomach. He gently pressed on it, feeling Momiji squirming within. His voice returned to its normal softness. "Shhh, don't struggle. It's okay, I've got you. You're going to be fine, I promise."

At last, he felt a powerful suction that pulled Momiji deeper down, out of his stomach and into a fleshy pouch just below. It was the deepest point of his body, and as frightening as the ordeal was for Momiji, she wouldn't be touched by his digestive juices now. All she could do was whimper and wince as Suguru pushed upon her, making his insides contract. The feeling was intense...it was as though his entire body was shifting around her, squeezing her into a new place.

With a wet plop, she landed in a slightly cramped, yet hollow organ that sealed shut around her like a satchel with its drawstrings pulled. Momiji was trapped deep inside, forced to curl up into a ball. The giant's echoing voice comforted her. "It's alright, you're safe now. You won't be digested in there. It's a protective organ meant to contain prey and keep them from escaping, saved as emergency stores for when I need to...use them."

Momiji whimpered, crunching up even tighter. "Suguru, please...don't leave me in here. It's so dark, I don't want to be trapped in this place forever..."

"Don't worry, I'm not going to leave you there," Suguru reassured her, stroking at his lower belly. "I'm sorry, but I'll have to keep you there for a while until my digestion settles down. It seems like it already went to work on that cake...it's not safe for me to try to let you out now."

Momiji allowed her body to loosen, trying to let herself relax. The rumbling and sloshing from outside the pouch could be heard, and it was unsettling. She would have been in there if Suguru hadn't known what to do, melted away into nothingness. "Thank you..."

"There's no need to thank me," Suguru said. "It's probably not very pleasant for you in there. I've never eaten a human before until now, actually. I thought that sweet taste might have been the cake, but maybe it was you...I'm sorry, I said something really weird. You're not food, you're my friend. I promise, I'll let you go as soon as it's safe to."

Even though he was comforting Momiji and trying to keep her calm, he wasn't about to let the other girls go without punishment. "What do you two think you're doing?" he hissed. "Just what was it that you did to Momiji to get her swallowed?"

Chihaya forced out a breathy explanation. "T-that damn girl...she was making us look bad! We've worked so hard at this theatre for years, and she comes in here and ends up being everyone's favorite in a couple weeks! It's not fair, and it's not right! She gets along so well with you too...we couldn't stand it, so we wanted to do something about it! We wanted to scare her

straight and make her learn her place, so we made up a challenge to feed you cake while you were sleeping, and we pushed her in!"

Suguru was horrified. His expression burned with boiling anger. "Do you have any idea how dangerous what you just did was? Or...was that your intention all along? Did you intend to get rid of Momiji by feeding her to me, thinking I'd digest her in my sleep and no one would ever know what happened to her?"

The girls were speechless. He could read them like an open book. Vengeful humans were easy for him to spot. The giant reached down and gripped them both in one hand. "You have no answer, do you? So I'm right. Humans are so petty and jealous. Tell me, how would you feel if I swallowed you like I did Momiji? Would you like to find out? My stomach is still rumbling quite loudly..."

He pressed them up against his gut, forcing them to squirm in his grip and listen to the growls deep within. "You know, you've got me hungry now after dumping that cake and that poor girl down my throat...maybe you two could help me out with that. I don't think I can fit three people in my belly pouch though...oh well, you ladies wouldn't mind taking a warm bath in my stomach juices, now would you?"

"N-no, please don't!" Chihaya squealed. "I'm sorry, I promise I won't bother Momiji again!"

Suguru craned his head down and opened his mouth, lolling his tongue over the two girls. He licked at them, drenching them in sticky saliva. "Mmm...you taste so sweet and tender...I'm tempted to sink my teeth into you both..."

By this point, the girls were thrashing about and screaming, begging for mercy. He drooled and slobbered on them a little longer, before dropping their soaked bodies in his lap and allowing them to take off running like scared little mice. Suguru gave his belly a gentle pat. "Don't worry, Momiji. I'm certain they won't be bothering you anymore."

"I...I'm sorry," Momiji mumbled. "I dumped a whole cake into your stomach, and I ended up stuck here too..."

"You don't have to apologize for anything," Suguru said. "It's not your fault. I've known Tenshi Shiranui and Chihaya Kotori for a long time...this isn't the first time they've caused trouble. They tend to be quite full of themselves, and they get jealous easily because they're so used to getting all the attention. I didn't think they'd go that far and do something like this, though. Also, you don't need to apologize for the cake either. I don't mind the snack, I was quite hungry. It wasn't much of a meal, but I feel strangely full thanks to your presence. I suppose our instincts are something we can never truly abandon, no matter how hard we try. I'm so sorry for frightening you, Momiji. It must be scary for you in there, being treated like food."

"N-no, it's okay," Momiji quickly answered. She nuzzled against the side of his protective belly pouch, hoping he could feel the cuddling movements. "I was afraid at first because I was scared of being digested, but now that I'm safe...I think I'm alright. Even though I was scared, you must have been afraid too, having me helplessly squirming inside your body like that. You're so warm...I can even hear your heartbeat from in here. It's kind of soothing, actually..."

She fell silent, taking in the sounds of the giant's body hard at work keeping him alive. His beating heart was steady and a bit loud to her, but the constant sound helped put her at ease. His breathing was slow and calm. She could tell he was trying to keep himself relaxed, to not move around and frighten her too much. Deep down below, she could hear the low rumbles of his intestines working on the digested remains of the cake to convert it into nutrients. She tried not to think about it too much, instead being grateful that she hadn't ended up there along with it.

"I think I should be able to let you out in about an hour or so," Suguru said. "Are you feeling okay in there?"

"I'm just fine," Momiji confirmed. "I can wait as long as it takes...it's not so bad in here. I feel...very safe when I'm with you like this."

Suguru chuckled. "You are a strange girl, aren't you? Humans say the oddest things sometimes. I certainly didn't expect you to be so relaxed. Most people would be terrified being stuck in a giant's gut like that. I know you get along well with me and the other giants. You don't show fear around us at all...I hope you aren't traumatized now."

"I promise I'm alright," Momiji assured him. "Even if I had a scary experience, it doesn't change anything. The other girls see you like some kind of feral animal...but I know you don't want to be treated like a monster, you just want people to treat you like a regular person, right? At least, that's what I would want..."

Suguru leaned back, gently petting at his midriff. A slight bulge could be seen pressing out against his purple coat. If anyone noticed it, it could easily be explained away as a little extra belly fat or a very filling meal...which technically to him, Momiji was. "Well, I'm glad you feel that way," he said. "It is nice to have at least one human who understands." He slowly sat up. "I need to get moving...will you be okay? I promise I'll be gentle, I'll try not to jostle you around too much."

Momiji nodded, not seeming to notice that he wouldn't see it. "I understand. I'll be quiet, and I won't move." She let her body go limp as Suguru stood up and started to walk, gradually adjusting to the swaying motions of his belly. It wasn't very intense though...if anything, it was rather calming, like being rocked in a cradle. A wet, slimy cradle, at that. She couldn't explain why she felt this way, when most would be scared to death. But she trusted Suguru, perhaps that was enough. She could hear him going about his business, talking to the other cast members and theatre workers.

It was about time for everyone to go home for the day...Momiji didn't ask, but she assumed that Suguru would be taking her home with him. Not that she minded, she had grown quite comfortable inside his belly. If she could remain in his stomach pouch for extended periods of time to be 'saved for later,' as one might put it, perhaps she could spend the night...

The End...

November 15th, 2020.