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opening extract from

Takeshita Demons

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TAKESHITA DEMONS

Cristy Burne

CHAPTER NINE - Extract

“You in?” Cait hissed from outside the window.

“Yep, coast is clear.” I looked around, rubbing my hands together to get the blood back into them. A few seconds later, Cait tumbled in through the window. “Anything out there?” I asked.

“Nope, no one followed us.” Cait stood up and dusted the snow from her jacket. “Let’s get moving though.” She slid the window back and clicked the lock. “Even if her head does fly back early, it won’t be getting in through this window.”

I grinned. We were actually doing it. We were hunting the nukekubi.

“Where to?” Cait whispered.

“Our classroom?” I wasn’t sure, but it was the place we’d last seen her, and as good a place as any to start looking.

Cait nodded, and together we headed across the empty classroom to the hallway door. I could hear my heart beating so loudly I was sure Cait could hear it too. I peered around the door, searching the darkness for what lay beyond.

Nothing moved. The whole corridor was silent, empty.

“Come on,” I whispered.

We snuck out, scurrying with shoes squeaking to our classroom. It was freezing in the corridor and our breath made little clouds as we moved. I half expected them to turn to ice and fall cracking to the floor as we walked. We went straight to our classroom without stopping, just like when the corridors were full of kids and teachers and schoolbags. Except now the whole place was empty, as silent and frozen as the moon.

The doorknob of our classroom door was frosted with tiny ice crystals. Cait turned it slowly, with such care that it didn't even squeak. She edged the door open, peeking one eye around to see inside the room.

I waited in the freezing corridor while Cait checked the room. After what seemed like forever, Cait swung the door completely open.

"I don't think she's here," she said, puffing a cloud of white with her breath.

We tiptoed into our classroom. It was like a graveyard – rows of empty desks, some with lonely pencils or forgotten books left on top, like sad offerings at a shrine. Mr Lloyd's desk was just like all the others: empty of life. And there was no sign of the nukekubi.

"Where would she be?" Cait asked, shivering.

I was shivering too. My frozen fingers were aching, and the cold seemed to be spreading. What were we doing here? Maybe I had imagined the red markings on Mrs Okuda's neck. Or maybe they were just mosquito bites, or a tattoo. She might be just an ordinary person who happened to like unusual bright red neck tattoos. I opened my mouth to ask Cait what she thought, but no sound came out. Instead, an awful wailing echoed from the corridor.

Cait jumped to attention, like she'd been shot in some scene from an old Western movie, then we both ran for the door, peering outside. I felt sick. This was it. There had to be something out there. The nukekubi was hunting.