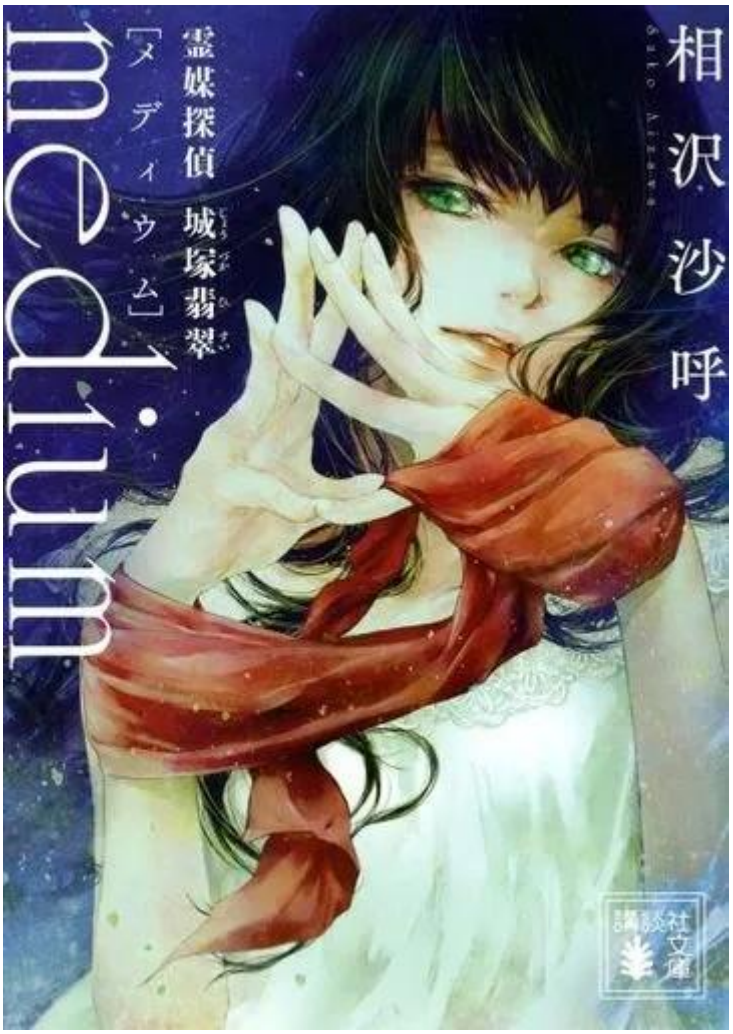


Made by:Abby

First Meeting with Kuramochi Yuika:

Initially, Hisui deceived Yuika and Kougetsu by predicting Yuika's career using psychic powers, but in reality, it was just a trick. She put on an act, created an air of mystery, and then made a prediction about Yuika's profession.

Hisui's reasoning:

Hisui noticed that Yuika had a clear, well-enunciated voice that was rare among young women when she used the intercom. She observed Yuika's sitting posture, noting that her demeanor was proper and well-mannered.

Her skillful makeup indicated that she was conscious of how others perceived her. Hisui concluded that Yuika had accumulated considerable social experience working in companies or organizations.

→ Possible professions: model, actress, TV broadcaster, flight attendant, receptionist at a high-end shopping center or mall, bank employee, etc.

Observing Yuika’s way of walking → Ruled out the possibility of her being an actress or model. Ruled out the possibility of being a TV broadcaster because no information about her could be found online.

Hisui’s entire apartment building had been renovated with recording devices installed in places such as the lobby, elevators, and the path leading to her apartment.

When Yuika rang the intercom, the novelist exclaimed, "Truly a pro, aren’t you?" Hisui wondered what exactly he was complimenting. Was he complimenting her acting skills? Since she performed well → Ruled out the possibility of her being an actress, so the compliment was not about acting.

Her voice was not distinctive enough for voice acting → Could work in a call center, but such a job wouldn’t require standing in front of many people, nor would it necessitate makeup or such proper sitting posture → Ruled this out.
→ It was highly likely that Yuika was a receptionist who had received formal training at a company or similar establishment, or a bank employee. However, Yuika’s visit took place on a weekday, making it unlikely that she worked at a bank.
→ Hisui ruled out bank employee, actress, TV broadcaster, and model to determine Yuika’s current profession with the highest accuracy: a receptionist at a shopping center or mall.

This was how Hisui deceived Yuika during their first meeting, making her believe that Hisui was a genuine psychic. In case the prediction was wrong, Hisui had a backup option: a tour bus guide. Hisui mentioned that she usually guessed correctly and had been performing this trick for a long time.

Hisui deduced that Kougetsu was a writer through the recording devices, during the moment Yuika said, "Anyway, you're a mystery novelist..."

The psychic trick Hisui performed on Yuika was a psychological illusion. This is a very common trick.
"It's a psychological hallucination phenomenon generated by the words spoken by the audience themselves," Hisui explained.

This is a tactile hallucination phenomenon. Hisui had Yuika close her eyes and hold her hands facing upward. She moved her hand toward Yuika without touching her, circling around where Yuika was seated. Yuika felt as though someone was touching her, but in reality, no one did.

In my opinion, having Yuika close her eyes was meant to neutralize certain senses, allowing her to focus on hearing and touch. Hisui walking around likely created an air of mystery, and her moving her hand close to Yuika without touching may have caused disturbances in the air around Yuika.

After reading carefully, I personally think this was a short-term plan to build trust with the two characters. The first step was predicting Yuika’s profession, and the second was Hisui’s psychological trick of "touching the soul.”

The Case of the Weeping Woman:

Victim: Kuramochi Yuika
Cause of Death: Struck a vulnerable spot on her head against the edge of a table.
Perpetrator: Mai
How the Incident Occurred: On the day of the incident, Mai visited Yuika. A conflict arose between them, and Mai pushed Yuika, causing her to hit a vital spot on the table's edge, leading to her death. In a state of panic, Mai staged the scene by opening the window in the room and taking Yuika's money and cards to make it appear as a burglary.

Reasoning Process Eliminating the Possibility of a Thief as the Culprit:
Hisui herself stated that she deduced it from the "iced coffee."

Initially, since no coffee was found in the victim's stomach, the police assumed it was leftover coffee from the previous night. This was simply because they thought the culprit was a thief; if that were the case, Yuika would have encountered the intruder immediately upon coming home, leaving no time to brew iced coffee.
→ The truth is, the absence of coffee in her stomach only indicates that she did not drink the coffee, not that she did not brew that cup of coffee shortly before being killed. What proves she brewed coffee is the water droplet on the floor. This was a trace left by melted ice.

Why could it be assumed that this was a mark left by melted ice? Hisui knew that Yuika brewed coffee using a small paper filter meaning she used a method of instantaneous cooling. With this method, coffee is dripped as usual, but a large amount of ice is placed in the receiving vessel to immediately cool each drop. Afterward, the coffee collected in the vessel is poured into a cup, more ice is added, and it is ready. The coffee cup at the scene was found broken.
→ Therefore, it can be hypothesized that the cup contained ice, and when it fell, the ice scattered outward.
That night until morning, the weather was very cool.
→ Large ice cubes would not melt and evaporate quickly, so it was entirely possible for them to leave a water droplet on the floor.
Continuing with that assumption, the presence of the droplet from melted ice proves the following:
1. Yuika brewed the coffee during the period after she returned home and before her death—it was not leftover coffee from the previous day.
2. Another possibility is that she had brewed the coffee earlier and was just adding ice to the cup to drink it, but Japanese-style iced coffee emphasizes freshness.
3. Yuika herself had mentioned that coffee loses its flavor if left to sit.
4. Yuika did not own a suitable storage container.
→ Therefore, having pre-brewed coffee was illogical for Yuika, both psychologically and physically.

Another scenario: for example, Yuika returned home, and a thief broke in to attack her while she was brewing coffee.
→ Hisui considered this also unreasonable, because it would be impossible to brew coffee in a dark room (the opportunity for the thief to strike), and no thief would rob a room with the lights on.

Another scenario: if the thief had broken in before Yuika arrived home, hidden somewhere, and waited for the right moment to act, what then?
→ Hisui thought this was also absurd, because Yuika would not be so carefree as to not notice the window was open while brewing coffee.

Conclusion: Yuika brewed the coffee before her death. Therefore, the possibility that the culprit was a thief is eliminated.

Reasoning process leading to Mai as the culprit:
"The suspects include not only friends but also colleagues, and that stalker Nishimura as well…" — Eliminator.
Having eliminated the possibility of a thief, we are left with the aforementioned suspects. Let us proceed to eliminate cases such as a colleague or a stalker.

Since the possibility of the culprit entering through the window has already been ruled out, it can be inferred that the culprit either entered through the front door together with the victim, or that Yuika invited the culprit into her home.

Recalling Yuika's remark that whenever she brews coffee, she always makes too much and doesn't drink it all → Yuika brewed coffee for two people.

Looking at the victim's attire at the time of death: she hadn't had time to remove her makeup, had only taken off her coat, and hadn't changed her clothes → Yuika had just returned home
→ She was tired, so she wouldn't have bothered to brew just one cup of coffee.

Iced coffee contains more caffeine than usual, and it was almost bedtime. Moreover, Yuika was sensitive to caffeine.
→ Why would she go to the trouble of brewing coffee for herself, especially since she had work the next day?
→ However, Yuika did brew it, meaning she had no intention of sleeping and planned to stay up late.

If she were drinking alone, as mentioned above, she would not finish it. If she didn't finish it, there would certainly be leftover coffee in the brewing vessel. Yet at the scene, the coffee receiver was left out (something she would normally put away if there were leftovers) and was empty.
→ She brewed the coffee, divided it into portions—enough for herself—and the rest was given to the culprit to drink.

Conclusion: She had coffee together with someone.

Regarding the photos Hisui had asked Yuika to take of her apartment, Hisui noticed that one of the photos showed a four-person dining table. Two outer chairs were empty, while the two chairs against the wall were piled with belongings. That was why Yuika had been hesitant because she hadn't tidied up. This condition remained until the discovery of the body. Thus, up until just before she was killed, she could have cleaned up, which effectively invalidates the false scene the culprit tried to create.

Suppose:
If Yuika had coffee with the culprit, then she must have had some kind of relationship with them. Would she have let someone like a stalker, a colleague, or a superior into her home, especially in the evening?
If she did let them in, would she bother to brew a cup of coffee for a stalker, and even drink with them? It seems absurd, but if we assume it actually happened, let us proceed to the next inference.
→ Someone, whether familiar or not, came to drink coffee with her.

So where did they drink? Standing up?
Basic hospitality when offering a guest a drink is to sit in chairs. Usually, one would go to the table, place the cups down, and sit.
So which chairs would they choose?

In the room, the two most suitable places were the four-person dining table and the sofa with the low round table in front of it.

Scenario 1: The four-person table. As mentioned earlier, the two inner chairs were stacked with belongings, so they would have to sit in the two outer chairs, next to each other. But were they close enough to sit side by side? With a superior, or even a stalker?

Hisui used herself as an example for Yuika's situation. She would have had the other person sit in an empty chair and cleared the belongings from the chair opposite. Then she would sit there. But that did not happen. As stated, when the body was discovered, the items on the inner chairs were still there—meaning she had not tidied up to sit there.

Scenario 2: The sofa. That spot had two small, narrow seats. The bodies of the two people would still be pressed close together, as in Scenario 1.
→ In both cases, any arrangement would bring them into close physical proximity, meaning the culprit was very close to the victim—someone Yuika allowed into her personal space to the point where their bodies could touch.
→ So does that mean it was her lover? That would be completely wrong, as she had feelings for the "novelist," which was evident from her demeanor and expressions during the previous visit to Hisui's apartment.

(The previous visit, one can watch the film to quickly understand.)
→ It could not be any other man.
Hisui had also considered the possibility that the novelist and the victim were a couple, but after seeing the novelist's stunned reaction upon seeing the body, Hisui immediately ruled that out.
→ Hisui was able to narrow down the possible range of the culprit: a woman, someone very close to the victim.

Hypothesis that a conflict occurred between the culprit and the victim:
Since the victim and culprit had held a sleepover party together, they would not have sat at the dining table facing the wall. So they must have sat on the sofa with the low round table in front. Under that table was a rug. The coffee cup had been placed on that table. The table was low, and the rug underneath was soft. If a conflict broke out and the cup was knocked over, how could it have shattered? Yet at the scene, there was a broken cup. Why?

Explanation for the broken cup:
If one of them had thrown the cup during an argument, the ice and coffee would have scattered over a wider area. However, the cup broke near the four-person table. If it had fallen from that table, breaking would be expected. That means someone dropped it from somewhere nearby.
Nearby was where Yuika's body was found meaning the culprit tried to cover something up by smashing the cup.
Thus, the culprit used the broken glass from the cup to conceal smaller glass shards. Hisui supported this reasoning with a quote from a book by Chesterton.
→ In short, the culprit had dropped something made of glass and wanted to hide it.

But why not simply pick it up instead of hiding it among the shards of the cup?
Because the culprit could not do so. From this, Hisui deduced that it was highly likely the culprit had poor eyesight, making it difficult to pick up all the pieces. Moreover, there would have been very small fragments that could not be retrieved. Worried, the culprit smashed the cup to conceal those unrecoverable pieces. Those fragments would then be mistaken as part of the broken cup.

The culprit, after wiping her fingerprints from her cup (the other cup found at the scene), placed it in the sink and opened the window using rubber gloves to avoid leaving fingerprints. This was part of staging the scene to make it look like a burglary, as mentioned earlier.
As for the water droplet, the culprit, with her poor eyesight, accidentally kicked it, causing the ice cube to slide to a spot under the table.
→ The culprit had a very close relationship with Yuika, was a woman, and wore glasses.
From the schedule notebook, Hisui deduced that Mai was the culprit the one who had called Yuika that evening.

How did Hisui later lead and deceive the "novelist" into believing in her psychic abilities?

First, let's return to the time before Yuika's body was discovered. From the very beginning, when Hisui first met the "novelist," she sensed something strange about him. She tested whether he was hiding a significant secret.

Initially, Hisui had been harassed by a group of men during the meeting with the novelist, and she wanted to create a mask. At first, the novelist thought Hisui was mysterious, but in reality, he came to see her as clumsy, foolish, and bewildered by her own powers. The information Hisui fluently recited about the crimes of those thugs was also staged to make the novelist believe he had uncovered all her secrets that her mysterious aura from before had merely been an act. Yet he did not realize that her foolish appearance was also an act.

Next, after the discovery of the body, Hisui gave the first clue: the culprit was a woman. Then, she performed a séance act to give the novelist the second hint—the glass shards mixed in with the broken cup.

THE GLASS VILLA MURDER CASE

Background: The incident occurred when Hisui and Kogetsu attended a party hosted by Kurogoshi, a mystery novelist. The victim was Kurogoshi. The estimated time of death was between midnight and 2:00 AM.

Kurogoshi's body was found in the room he typically used as his study at the Glass Villa. The room contained no furniture other than a small bookshelf, a large L-shaped desk, and a wastebasket. On the L-shaped desk, besides a laptop computer, there was a box of tissues placed at the corner. The laptop was connected to the power supply via a charging cable. The desk was very simple in design, lacking even drawers. The trophy usually displayed on the desk was identified as the murder weapon.

At the scene, the trophy was lying on the floor, covered in blood. The laptop screen was not closed but had gone dark. On one edge of the desk, there were blood spatters, and in the middle of them was a strange symbol drawn in blood. Was this a mark left by the killer, or a clue left by the victim before death? It was highly likely to be a trace left by the killer. If it were a clue left by the victim, it would surely have been written on the floor.

The Disappearance of the Tenth Book:

When the party ended, as everyone was conversing in the living room, the housekeeper Morihata poked her head in. Morihata, who had just finished taking out the trash from Kurogoshi's study, said, "I secretly read the author's new story!" Upon hearing this, Kurogoshi seemed to remember something and brought a package he had received from a

delivery service into the living room. He explained that the sample copies of The Blackwater Mansion Murder Case had arrived. He then distributed the books to everyone.

The package had been delivered during the party.

When he handed out the books, there were ten people in total, and the number of books distributed was exactly enough for everyone present. Naturally, this did not include the person distributing them, meaning he handed out nine books. But was that the actual number of books in the parcel?

Typically, paperback books are sent in quantities of ten. The number may vary depending on the publisher or other factors, but it would not be an odd number like nine, seven, or eleven, as such numbers make packaging inconvenient.

Assuming ten books had been delivered to Kurogoshi's home, where was the tenth book?

Morihata, who had cleaned Kurogoshi's room, said she had secretly read his new story referring to The Blackwater Mansion Murder Case. She could not have arbitrarily opened the package on his desk and taken out a copy to read.

The most plausible scenario was this: During the party, the delivery company arrived with the package, and Kurogoshi received it. He took the package to his study and opened it to take out one copy. Since this was his literary creation, he was willing to interrupt the party to hold and examine it immediately. He then placed the book on his desk and returned to the party. When he returned, Morihata went into his room to clean and saw the new book on the desk. Out of curiosity, she secretly read it, which is why she confessed to having sneaked a look at the author's new work.

However, that tenth book was not in the room when the murder occurred. Where did it go?

At the time of the murder, the room had not changed much, aside from the addition of a body, blood, and the murder weapon, everything else remained the same. On the desk were a laptop and a tissue box.

Regarding the small bookshelf:
The bookshelf was already full, and no more books could be inserted. This was based on Kurogoshi's own statement. There were no bloodstains on it, nor any signs of someone deliberately inserting a book. Kurogoshi had also mentioned that he did not place his own works on that bookshelf. If he had wanted to put his own work there, he would have had to swap it with another book on the shelf. This would result in one book being left over. However, no such leftover book was found at the scene.

Morihata confirmed that the sample copy was in the study, and until Kurogoshi went to retrieve it, no one had visited the west wing. Therefore, no one had taken the book away, nor was there any reason to do so.

In summary, there was an inconsistency in this case namely, the existence of the tenth book. The tenth book was confirmed to exist but had disappeared. If it had been swapped with another book on the shelf, where did the leftover book go?
Hisui took eight seconds to deduce this.
→ The culprit had taken that book. But why? For what reason?

Here is the translation of the passage into English, keeping the original meaning intact:

The Swastika Symbol:

Initially, this mark was thought to be a trace left by the killer to conceal some incriminating detail, and it was considered meaningless. That was correct, but what exactly did it signify?
This detail was used to conceal the mark left by a book on the desk.
When the killer struck and killed the victim, blood splattered onto the book.

For some reason, the killer took the book away. However, since the book had blood on it, simply taking it away would have left an unnaturally interrupted bloodstain pattern, leading others to realize that something had been placed on the desk.
→ Therefore, the killer drew the swastika symbol to conceal that interruption in the bloodstain pattern.

The Reason the Killer Took the Book:

Hisui deduced that the killer had read the book and flipped through many pages. What did this leave behind? Fingerprints.

Hisui knew that fingerprints easily remain on paper. Moreover, the killer had flipped through it many times. The cover naturally had prints, but what about the pages? How many pages were affected? Which pages had prints that needed to be erased? Would the killer meticulously wipe each page?
→ Why go through all that trouble when simply taking the book away was a much better option?

Similar to Kogetsu, Hisui also deduced and narrowed down the list of suspects to three people. Returning to the time at the Glass Villa, when Hisui and Kogetsu were in the living room waiting for the appearance of a ghost. To briefly summarize the plot: Kurogoshi had asked Kogetsu and Hisui (still playing the role of a medium) to perform an exorcism. While waiting in the study, Hisui pretended to be asleep and was thus aware that three people had passed through the living room to go to the bathroom. The path to the bathroom was the same as the path to Kurogoshi's study. First was Arimoto, then after some time, Bessho, and immediately after he returned, it was Shintani's turn.

→ These three were considered suspects, and one of them was the culprit. Kurogoshi's estimated time of death also fell between Arimoto's first trip to the bathroom and Shintani's final trip.

Arimoto:
Hisui deduced that Arimoto had no reason to take the book.

When everyone was conversing in the living room, Arimoto and Kurogoshi had gone to the study to discuss work. Even if fingerprints were left on the book, Arimoto could explain that they got there during their time together in the study.

He had gone to the bathroom multiple times while others were talking in the living room, and they could testify that he had opportunities to enter the study. Deliberately hiding a bloodstained book and then passing by Kogetsu and Hisui was unnecessary. In fact, doing so risked getting blood on his clothes, which could become incriminating evidence. Moreover, at that time, Arimoto had been together with Kurogoshi.

VIn summary, this reasoning explains that if Arimoto were the culprit, he would have no reason to take the book. If his fingerprints were on the book, he could explain that they were left during his work session with Kurogoshi. Many people had seen him go to the bathroom, giving him opportunities to access the study. And in fact, he had been with the victim. He was not foolish enough to take a bloodstained book.
Shintani:
A male could hide a small paperback book in the waistband or back pocket of pants. He could even pretend to have a stomachache, making the book less noticeable. However, Shintani was wearing a one-piece dress, so she could not do this.

She did not wear a belt, so she could not tuck the book into her waist or side as one might when wearing pants.

She could have done so if she were wearing tights, but she was bare-legged.

If she had tucked it into her underwear, when she bent down to pour tea or sat down to talk, the outline of the book would have shown through her thin dress. However, there was nothing unusual about her dress.

→ There was no possible way for her to conceal the book.

Bessho:

Only Bessho remained the one who should have been the least likely to need to take the book, because:
Hisui observed that he had been by her side from the time the package arrived until the end of the party, and even returned to his own room without having gone to the bathroom.

If he tried to explain that he had sneaked into Kurogoshi's study and left fingerprints on the book, it would not be convincing, because the only opportunity he would have had was during a trip to the bathroom and that one occasion was on the very night of the murder. That would have been the only time he could have left fingerprints.

The Mirror in the Bathroom: How Did Hisui Know There Were Fingerprints on It?

This was a clue that helped Kogetsu solve the case.

While Kogetsu was speaking with the detective, Hisui noticed that the mirror had been wiped, yet fingerprints remained in the area that had been wiped.

It is still a bit confusing, so let me now explain how Hisui and Kogetsu solved it.

From the angle of the blow, it could be inferred that the killer was right-handed. However, this was useless since all three suspects were right-handed.

On the mirror above the sink, there were details indicating the killer had tried to hide something.

Hisui gave Kogetsu a hint by saying she had three dreams. She told Kogetsu about a series of three strange dreams she had experienced. The common element in all three dreams was her state of immobility: she could not move, could not speak, and was not even sure she existed in the dream.

1. First Dream (Arimoto):
   Arimoto appeared and reached his hand toward her face.
   Just as his hand was about to touch her, she felt dizzy and suddenly lost her vision. The dream ended.
2. Second Dream (Bessho):
   Bessho suddenly appeared right in front of her, staring intently, his face so close that their noses nearly touched.
   He touched her cheek, but she felt nothing. Then, he left, and the dream ended.
3. Third Dream (Shintani):
   Shintani approached and reached her hand toward Hisui’s face. Again, Hisui felt dizzy and lost her vision.
   Immediately after, she could see Shintani again. Shintani was touching her cheek but quickly withdrew her hand and left. The dream ended.

What did this mean?

Kogetsu deduced the truth from Hisui’s three dreams by assuming that what she saw in the dreams were actually reflections from the perspective of a mirror in the Glass Villa.

Because Hisui could not move or change her perspective, she was like a fixed camera. Kogetsu suddenly thought of the antique mirrors placed throughout the villa, particularly the mirror attached to the cabinet above the sink.

From there, he deciphered each dream:

· Arimoto reached his hand toward Hisui, and she lost her vision. That was when he opened the cabinet, causing the mirror to turn away.
· Bessho appeared, touched her cheek, that was when he closed the cabinet, turning the mirror back and looking into it.
· Shintani reached out, Hisui lost her vision, then saw Shintani touching her cheek ,that was when she opened the cabinet (losing the reflection) and then closed it (seeing the reflection again).

The reason for these actions lay in each person's psychology: Arimoto and Shintani were afraid of ghosts, so they opened the cabinet to avoid seeing their own reflection in the mirror while washing their hands. Bessho, however, was the true culprit; he needed to check his face and clothes for any blood from the victim, Kurogoshi, so he had to close the cabinet. This difference in behavior allowed Kogetsu to identify Bessho as the murderer.

The reason Shintani had initially been suspected was that her fingerprints were found on Kurogoshi's laptop after the murder. At the time, seeing the laptop open, she had taken the opportunity to delete some data that could have been disadvantageous to her.

Arimoto was ruled out because if he were the culprit, Shintani would not have been able to delete data from the laptop. The latest time Arimoto could have committed the murder, if he were the culprit, was 12:10 AM. The screen lock time was one hour later. Shintani went to the bathroom at 1:45 AM, so this scenario was impossible.
From these clues, Hisui provided the writer with the hints needed to solve the case.

THE SERIES OF STRANGULATION MURDERS OF FEMALE STUDENTS

I WILL SUMMARIZE THE CASES THAT HAVE OCCURRED AS FOLLOWS
CASE 1:

Victim: Takenaka Haruka, 16 years old, 10th grade student.
Location: When the victim did not return home after school, her parents filed a report with the police. The victim was found in a park by someone walking their dog.
Time of Death: Between 4:00 PM and 6:30 PM, she was killed while on her way to a cram school.
Cause of Death: Strangled to death with a soft cloth or woolen scarf.
Crime Scene: The victim's clothing showed no damage or signs of sexual assault. She was wearing a sailor-style school uniform with an outer coat, in a neat posture, lying on her back on a park bench.
Other Details:

· Scratch marks on the victim's neck from trying to remove the strangulation weapon.
· Her fingernails were carefully trimmed, making it impossible to collect any evidence from them.
· There were many scuff marks from shoes, possibly made while the victim was struggling.

CASE 2:

Victim: Kitano Yuri, 16 years old, 11th grade student.
Location: Similar to the first case, when her daughter went missing, the parents reported it to the police. The body was found at a construction site near the high school.
Time of Discovery: Midnight, June 17.
Cause of Death: Same as the first case.
Crime Scene: The body was lying on its back on the ground. It was raining, and the victim's clothing was disheveled.
Other Details:

· The fingernails had also been trimmed, with no skin fragments underneath.
· No DNA (saliva, bodily fluids) was found.
· Although the clothing was disheveled, there were no signs of sexual assault → For what purpose did the culprit remove the victim's clothing?

CASE 3:

Victim: Fujima Natsuki (16 years old), the person who requested Kogetsu to solve this case.
Time: Between approximately 5:00 PM and 8:00 PM, discovered in the evening.
Location: A secluded corner of a deserted park, a few kilometers from the scene of the first case.
Crime Scene: The victim was wearing a sailor-style school uniform. Her clothing was disheveled, half-removed, with her underwear pulled down over both legs (unlike the previous case where it was only over one leg). A green scarf was lying beside her.
Cause of Death: Strangulation from the front; it is possible the culprit sat on top of the victim.
Other Details:

· Scratches on the neck from fingernails during resistance.
· Fingernails were cleanly trimmed, and no DNA or bodily fluids were found.
· No abrasions on the skin, no signs of sexual assault.
· The victim's face was contorted, eyes wide open in terror, mouth agape.

Hisui's reasoning:

First, we can see that Yuri’s footprints were stamped on that very scarf. The police’s initial reasoning was that the scarf fell while she was trying to escape and resist the culprit from taking off her clothes, and she accidentally stepped on it. There is something unusual here.

The fact that her loafer shoe print is on the fallen scarf means that the scarf fell while she was still alive, or before she was strangled, because if she were already dead, who could have stepped on the scarf? The culprit grabbed her tightly, not letting her escape, and deliberately yanked it off during the struggle. Another scenario is that he yanked it off while undressing her. However, there is something strange here. Normally, if a scarf is yanked off, it should have fallen farther away, so how could she have stepped on that scarf? In the case where she tried to run away, and the culprit chased after her and only grabbed the scarf, then the scarf would still have fallen some distance away from her feet because she was running; she wouldn't have stopped to look at the scarf. According to this scenario, the culprit exerted a lot of energy during the struggle but only ended up with the scarf. How could he have had enough strength to catch Yuri? Even if he caught her, what was the point of yanking off the scarf?

So, what if during the struggle and resistance, the scarf fell at her feet and she stepped on it. Is that still plausible?

That is still valid, because the above reasoning is only a hypothesis; it is still possible that such a scenario occurred.

Characteristics of the scarf:

Hisui used a magic trick to produce a scarf similar to the high school uniform scarf. It is called a triangular tie, with a base length of 140 cm. After putting it on, Hisui pointed out two ways of wearing it: the type with a scarf ring and the type without. The scarf ring on the sailor uniform is made of fabric attached to the edge of the collar. If the uniform has a scarf ring, students thread both ends of the tie through it; however, not all uniforms have one. If there is no scarf ring, the students have to tie it themselves, and at that high school, the uniform does not have a scarf ring, so they tie the triangular tie in a necktie style. If the uniform had a scarf ring, the culprit could easily remove it during the struggle.

Hisui tied her scarf in a necktie style. With this style, pulling one end does not undo it, similar to that high school's tie. She then tried pulling it forcefully, and indeed, it did not come off.

→ The culprit would not have been able to pull it off, because the tie does not come off even when pulled hard. Furthermore, during a struggle, why would anyone bother untying someone else's tie or undressing them? If the culprit wanted to undress the victim, why would they need to remove the tie? It is merely decorative. Moreover, removing the tie is not easy; could the culprit have held on and undone the tie while the victim was resisting? If they did remove it, then why was it folded in half and placed beside the body? The tie would have to be folded into a strip. It is strange that it was left unfurled, and why would the killer even do that? If they actually did that, it would not match the scene. The question now is: why was that scarf there, and why did it fall?

From the above reasoning, we can eliminate the possibility that the culprit was the one who removed the tie. Therefore, the only remaining possibility is that the victim herself took it off. But why?

First, the murder weapon was made of cloth, but its exact nature has not yet been determined.

Second, the perpetrator tried to destroy evidence by cutting the victim's fingernails.

Third, in the first murder, the victim was said to have been sitting on a bench and showed no signs of resistance. In an experiment conducted by Hisui and Kogetsu, they ruled out the possibility that the culprit wrapped the weapon from behind the victim.

→ Human psychology naturally feels unease and discomfort, and people quickly try to escape such a situation. Subconsciously, a person would definitely understand that such an action is strangulation and would try to defend themselves, possibly by immediately running away. But as stated above, the victim showed no signs of resistance. Therefore, the only remaining possibility is that it was done face-to-face.

Initially, the police believed the murder weapon was a woolen scarf. However, even if the weapon was the same, the timing did not fit. The second murder occurred in early summer, making this possibility unlikely (who would wear or carry a woolen scarf in summer?). Therefore, a weapon was needed that could be wrapped around the victim's neck without raising suspicion. From this, it can be deduced that the weapon was the triangular tie, the very tie found near Yuri's body. From this, we can understand how the culprit wrapped the tie around the victim's neck without them suspecting anything. It would be done in the manner of adjusting the tie for them → then the victim would take it off themselves → the culprit would offer to tie it for them and use that very tie to wrap around their neck.

However, Yuri's tie was not the murder weapon because she herself had stepped on it. The police also proved this. From this, we can see a contradiction: Yuri took off her tie, but it was not the weapon? Another important detail can explain this: the color of the tie.

The color of the tie changes depending on the year of enrollment. Before going to the high school to investigate the case, Hisui had researched this school. Kotone's tie was red, while Natsuki's and Yuri's were green. From this, we can deduce how the culprit lured the victim:

The culprit would say that their tie would suit the victim, suggesting, "Would you like to trade?" Then, they would offer to take a photo.

Based on the lens cap marks, the slide, the container stairs, and the fact that the victim was a member of the photography club, it is highly likely that what the culprit called a "trophy" after each murder was a photograph, meaning the killer photographed the victim's body.

The ties of 12th-grade female students were vermilion red. The possibility of two people exchanging ties is plausible, as girls often enjoy such games.

Returning to the first murder, here is how it likely occurred. The culprit proposed exchanging scarves, and Takenaka agreed, removing her own tie. Then, the culprit would tie the scarf for Takenaka and wrap it around her neck. However, there is something odd,the technique of tying from the front, but the culprit would find a way to cover it up. Takenaka might have been slightly puzzled but would have simply thought the culprit was skilled with their hands. The victim would not have suspected being strangled, let alone thought to escape. Strangling from behind would be easier, but strangling from the front allowed the culprit to see the victim's face. From this, it is not impossible that the culprit wanted to see the victim's face as they were being strangled. After killing the first victim, they laid her on the bench and retied her tie to conceal the murder weapon.

Next, in the second murder, the culprit used a similar method, proposing an exchange of ties and strangling the victim with their own tie. But this time, the exchange happened while standing. Thus, we can explain how this murder occurred:

The culprit suggested exchanging ties. The victim then held her own tie in her hand, folding it in half, while the culprit put their own tie on the victim. This was done while standing. After wrapping it around the victim's neck, the culprit strangled her. When being strangled, the victim struggled to escape, naturally dropping the tie she was holding to focus on loosening the one around her neck. In doing so, she accidentally stepped on it.

In the first case, the victim probably placed her tie on her lap or on the bench, but in the second case, the victim was holding her tie and only let go when strangled.

After the murder, the culprit noticed that the victim's tie had been stepped on. Therefore, putting it back around the victim's neck would look unnatural—meaning they could not replicate the first case. The murder weapon could be exposed. To disguise this and mislead the police, the culprit undressed the victim because if only the tie had fallen off, it would have seemed strange; by making the clothes disheveled, the police would think the culprit was trying to remove them.

As for why the culprit cut the victim's fingernails, this also explains that. The culprit wanted to hide traces of the scarf's fibers.

→ The murder weapon would be easily exposed, and the police would narrow down their search, endangering the culprit.

Because they had a close relationship with the victims, the culprit was someone from the school (naturally, only then could they approach the victims; they would need to be close enough to play the tie-exchange game). However, Hisui did not immediately rule out an outsider. But she did eliminate that possibility because Takenaka could have been killed by someone outside, specifically from her cram school, since she studied there and likely knew many people. But what about the other two victims? They did not attend that cram school, so

how could an outsider know, be familiar with, and be close to them? The possibility of a male student was also ruled out because their uniform had a stand-up collar (in the writer's opinion, a male student could not have played the tie-exchange game).

Why was the culprit a 12th-grade female student and not an 11th or 10th grader? As mentioned earlier, the culprit played the tie-exchange game to strangle the victim:

· 10th grade: Blue
· 11th grade: green
· 12th grade: red

Chronologically, the first murder occurred, then the second four months later. The third murder happened within the story itself. A fourth was about to occur if Hisui and Kogetsu had not arrived in time to stop the culprit. The colors must have been different to propose an exchange, right? Through all the elimination processes, only the 12th-grade female student remained as the culprit.

From this point, we can now understand the culprit's method and concealment tactics. Next comes the search for the culprit

Next, how was Hisui able to identify Kotone as the culprit? How did she know exactly where Kotone would commit the final murder?

Earlier, Hisui had suspected Ayako, but the detail about the lens cap made her think the culprit might be someone else, though she lacked decisive evidence. She made the mistake of trusting the police's ability to catch the culprit, which led to the third murder. She used this failure as a stepping stone for her next plan to catch the culprit together with Kogetsu.

At this point, all police suspicions pointed to Kotone, but they needed fingerprints to confirm a match. Hisui (who was now acting to deceive Kogetsu) collaborated with the police on a small plan to obtain the fingerprints. When they arrived at the culprit's house, they saw her wearing her school uniform (it was immediately obvious she was the culprit) to conceal the murder weapon.

→ Hisui deduced that Kotone was about to go out to kill again. Why else would she be wearing her uniform at home? Therefore, Hisui needed to find a way to prevent the imminent murder.

In the fingerprint-collection plan, when the police handed Kotone a business card and she touched it, Hisui stood up to go to the bathroom and deliberately bumped the table, spilling tea. While Kotone was distracted, the police swapped the business cards. But Hisui had another purpose: while Kotone was distracted, Hisui stole her phone, and while in the bathroom, she installed tracking software on it.

The password was simple, just her birthdate, as people tend to set easy-to-remember passwords. Hisui used the license plate number, which belonged to the family car, and that number was derived from Kotone's birthday.

When Hisui discovered that Kotone had been in contact with Sakura, she knew Sakura would be the fourth victim. By then, the police had already identified Kotone as the culprit and were pursuing her, but Hisui acted to be sure. Since the Japanese police were incompetent and lost track of her, Hisui had to use the GPS to locate her.

Hisui had an accomplice named Makoto. She had appeared from the very beginning of the story but had no significant role in the first two cases, so I did not mention her earlier. Only in this case did she play an active part. Her role was to gather information. At the location where the fourth murder was about to take place, Makoto was the woman who stalled Kotone, preventing her from attacking Sakura (of course, Makoto knew the location because the GPS from Kotone's phone was also transmitted to Makoto's device, so she disguised herself to tail the culprit). Makoto reported to Hisui via a wireless earpiece hidden beneath Hisui's black hair.

Finally, to catch the culprit, Hisui performed a séance act to point out Kotone's location so that Kogetsu could go there.

Some questions:

Why didn't the police collect fingerprints for testing from the beginning?
A:Fingerprints were only found in the third case, the most recent one.

What about the trace evidence from the first case, and why was it used to eliminate Ayako?
A:That trace was from when the culprit dropped the lens cap from the slide onto the sand while photographing the corpse. Ayako's camera was attached to a strap, so it could not have fallen. The camera was already attached with the strap before the first case occurred.

THE SERIES OF WOMEN'S BODY DUMPING MURDERS

The culprit in this case was Kogetsu, who had accompanied Hisui in solving the previous three cases.

His motive was rather twisted. When he was young, his older sister was stabbed by a robber, and when the robber pulled the knife out, it caused her death. However, he could not accept this, so he began abducting beautiful young women to experiment on whether being stabbed and having the knife pulled out was painful and fatal. He could not believe that he had killed his sister.

He changed his name, became a mystery novelist, and later joined the police investigations into his own murders. This allowed him to stay informed about the police's progress and find ways to counter it. He killed his victims and dumped their bodies in different locations, erasing all evidence, making it nearly impossible for the police to solve the case.

From their first meeting, as a psychic, Hisui felt something was off about Kogetsu. She decided to observe him and staged an elaborate act to make him believe in her powers—if she was wrong, so be it.

The first suspicion came from the case of the weeping woman. When she saw the victim's body, Hisui observed Kogetsu's facial expression and saw shock, admiration, and indignation rather than grief for a close friend. It was as if someone had stolen his prey. And indeed, he had once intended to make Yuika his target, but due to the complexity of his social relationship with her, he abandoned the idea.

The second suspicion also arose from the same case. When Kogetsu had his DNA sampled, during the series of women's body-dumping murders that occurred after this incident, the culprit became even more meticulous in how he handled the bodies. Previously, the culprit wrapped the bodies in vinyl sheets before disposing of them, but starting from the sixth case, there was a change. He began using shower hoses and bleach to wash them clean. The culprit was already cautious, so why become even more so? From this, Hisui deduced that he was afraid of his DNA being discovered. Since Kogetsu had also had his DNA taken in the Yuika case, her suspicions grew. Hisui understood that the culprit was inherently cautious, and no one knew what the police might actually do with the DNA sample. It was this excessive caution that made Hisui suspect him.

At the Glass Villa, Kogetsu sketched out a misleading profile of the culprit and even defended him, making remarks that seemed to deny any deviant desires on his part. This further deepened Hisui's suspicions. However, lacking concrete evidence, she set a trap to catch him.

This trap involved Hisui walking into the tiger's den herself. First, she recognized that she closely resembled Kogetsu's target profile. He had not killed her because of their connection; he was uncertain whether he should. Throughout their time solving cases together, she had made him believe she possessed psychic powers. She used a simple suggestion technique to provoke his instincts. Hisui predicted that one day she would be killed. This planted the idea in his mind: "If she has a premonition like that, then one day I will kill her." If he turned out not to be the culprit, Hisui would fabricate some excuse to back out.

Next, through the way Kogetsu told the story of his sister's death, his expression showed he was not lying. From this, Hisui deduced his motive for killing:

His sister had been stabbed to death by a robber. The victims were all around the same age as the novelist's sister → The novelist was seeking the image of his sister in his victims → The cause of death had to be the same.

The victims died from blood loss caused by stab wounds where the knife was then pulled out. → His sister must have suffered a similar fate.

From this, Hisui was able to reconstruct the scene of his sister's murder as follows:

When he was young, Kogetsu witnessed his sister being stabbed by a robber. In his panic, he pulled the knife out. This caused his sister to bleed to death. He believed that from the moment she was stabbed, she had no chance of survival, and the only thing he could do was pull the knife out to see if it would stop her pain. From then on, he killed other young women to test whether his action was right or wrong.

Hisui concluded that he was a man obsessed with death, repeating this meaningless experiment over and over. He could not accept that his own action was wrong. She deemed him mentally ill, twisted, and consumed by an obsession with his sister, abducting young women to experiment on and satisfy his deviant urges.

Somehow, Hisui managed to escape from the chair where she had been tied up. She also conveniently stole his watch and phone while simultaneously calling Kaneda (the police officer all along). She swapped them with a GPS device, allowing the police to track his location and arrest him.

In the end, the case concluded when he fell into the trap and confessed everything on his own.