

# FROG EATS TOKYO

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A TALE OF UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTERS

RESA RATIONAL





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## I. THE ARRIVAL

Haruki Tanaka first noticed the frog on a Tuesday morning, which was already unusual because Tuesdays were not days for noticing things. Tuesdays were for commuting, for spreadsheets, for the precise calibration of coffee strength that would carry him through meetings about meetings. The frog sat in the middle of Shibuya Crossing, occupying the space where the Hachiko statue had stood for ninety years, and it was the size of a small apartment building.

At first, people thought it was art. Tokyo had been conditioned to accept the absurd as installation. The frog squatted on its haunches, mottled green-gray skin glistening with what looked like dew but might have been city rain, its eyes—each one the diameter of a car tire—fixed on something in the middle distance that no human could see. Tourists took selfies. Commuters rerouted around it with the efficiency of water finding new channels. By noon, the city had adapted, because Tokyo always adapted.

Haruki worked on the forty-seventh floor of a building that overlooked the crossing. From his desk, the frog was a

strange tumor on the city's familiar body, a growth that shouldn't be there but somehow was. His colleague Yuki insisted it was a publicity stunt for a new anime. Their manager, Kobayashi-san, sent an email reminding everyone to focus on quarterly projections and not on "amphibious distractions."

But the frog was not a distraction. It was a phenomenon.

By evening, scientists had arrived. Biologists who specialized in herpetology stood next to physicists who specialized in impossible things. The frog's skin was analyzed and found to contain compounds that didn't exist in any known database. Its eyes tracked nothing and everything. When they tried to move it with cranes, the cables snapped as if they'd touched something that existed in a different relationship with physics. The frog simply *was*, and it would not be moved.

That night, it began to rain. The frog seemed to swell with the moisture, its throat pulsing in a rhythm that matched the city's heartbeat—the 60-hertz hum of electricity, the syncopated traffic lights, the breathing of ten million people. Haruki lay awake in his one-room apartment in Nakano and felt the vibration through his thin walls. It was a sound like a subway train heard from deep underground, a subsonic thrum that rearranged the atoms of his sleeplessness.

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## II. THE FIRST BITE

The frog began eating Tokyo on Wednesday.

It started with the Hachiko statue, or rather, the space where the statue had been. The bronze dog was simply gone, and the frog's throat bulged with the effort of swallowing something that was more than bronze—something that was memory, meeting place, the accumulated weight of a million rendezvous. When it opened its mouth again, the air tasted different. It tasted like absence.

Then it ate the Shibuya 109 building. Not the physical structure—that would come later—but the concept of it. Teenage girls arriving for their morning shopping found themselves standing in front of an empty lot where their favorite store should be, but they could still *feel* it. They could describe the layout perfectly, the smell of perfume and ambition, the exact location of the shop where they'd bought their first grown-up dress. But the building was gone from sight, from photographs, from memory's external anchors. It existed only in their minds now, and even there, it was fading.

The frog's method was surgical. It consumed the *idea* of

places first, the narrative tissue that held them in the city's consciousness. Then it ate the physical structures, but by then, few remembered what had been there. It was a mercy, of sorts. You cannot miss what you cannot name.

Haruki's company sent everyone home early. The subways were crowded with people who kept checking their phones, as if the digital record could anchor them to a reality that was becoming increasingly liquid. But the photos were disappearing too—images of Shibuya Crossing now showed only the frog, squatting in sterile isolation, the surrounding buildings erased like errors in a sketch.

Yuki invited Haruki for drinks. They went to a small izakaya in Golden Gai, where the narrow alleys still felt human-scaled and safe. "It's eating the future," Yuki said, her third sake cup trembling slightly in her fingers. "My sister works in urban planning. All their projections for 2030, for the Olympics, for everything—they're just blank pages now. The frog is eating tomorrow."

"That's ridiculous," Haruki said, but he thought of his own calendar, how the days beyond Sunday seemed fuzzy, how he couldn't quite picture what his meetings next week were about. "It's just... I don't know. A natural phenomenon. Like a typhoon."

"Typhoons don't eat your memories," Yuki said. "Typhoons don't make you forget what you're supposed to be doing with your life."

Outside, the frog's throat pulsed, and another building vanished from the skyline. They felt it more than saw it—a shift in the city's gravity, a sudden lightness, as if Tokyo had exhaled something it had been holding for centuries.

### III. THE BUREAUCRACY OF CONSUMPTION

**B**y Thursday, the government had responded with the only tool it truly trusted: paperwork.

The Ministry of Impossible Events was created by lunchtime, staffed with the most adaptable civil servants from other departments. They created forms for citizens to report missing buildings, missing memories, missing futures. They established protocols for evacuation that didn't require knowing what you were evacuating from. They held press conferences where they apologized for the inconvenience while behind them, visible through the windows, the frog methodically consumed the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building, its throat working like a bellows, its expression unchanged.

Haruki found himself assigned to the Frog Impact Assessment Team, because someone had noticed he was good at spreadsheets and the city needed to catalog what it was losing. He sat in a conference room with twenty other people, all of them trying to create a database of absence. They worked with outdated maps, with tourist brochures

from 2019, with children's drawings of skylines that no longer existed.

Kobayashi-san had been replaced by a woman named Tanaka-san who had the same surname as Haruki but no relation. She wore the same suits, had the same haircut, gave the same speeches about quarterly projections. Haruki wasn't sure if Kobayashi-san had ever existed, or if the frog had eaten him too, or if this was simply how bureaucracy worked—you replaced one functionary with another, and the machine continued.

"We need to quantify the loss," Tanaka-san said, pointing at a whiteboard that showed a diagram of the frog's digestive system, inferred from drone footage. "What is the economic impact of a consumed memory? How do we insure against the loss of a future that hasn't happened yet?"

Haruki raised his hand. "Shouldn't we be trying to stop it?"



Twenty faces turned to look at him with the expression of people who had already considered and discarded the impossible. “Stop it how?” Tanaka-san asked. “It’s not breaking any laws. It’s not hostile. It’s simply... eating.”

“But it’s eating our city.”

“Cities are temporary,” Tanaka-san said, and Haruki realized she was quoting something, perhaps a memo that had been passed down from some higher authority. “Tokyo has been burned down, bombed flat, rebuilt, reimagined. This is just another transformation. We adapt, we document, we continue.”

That evening, Haruki walked home through neighborhoods that were becoming sketches of themselves. The frog had eaten the concept of his local konbini, and though the physical building remained, he couldn’t remember why he would go there. The lights were on, the doors were open, but the purpose had been digested, leaving only an empty husk that would soon follow into the frog’s endless gullet.

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## IV. THE MEMORY EATERS

**O**n Friday, a cult formed.

They called themselves the Memory Eaters, though they didn't eat memories so much as try to preserve them through sheer force of will. They gathered in parks and plazas, chanting the names of buildings that no longer existed, describing street corners that had vanished, trying to hold the city's narrative together with the gravity of collective remembrance.

Haruki's neighbor, an old woman who had lived in their building for fifty years, joined them. She knocked on his door at dawn, her eyes bright with a fanatic's certainty. "You must come," she said. "We are remembering the Shibuya of 1972. The frog hasn't eaten that year yet. If enough of us remember it, perhaps we can save it."

He went with her, more out of loneliness than belief. They gathered in Yoyogi Park, hundreds of elderly Tokyoites sitting in a circle, their eyes closed, their voices rising and falling in a rhythm that matched the frog's pulsing throat. They described a city that existed only in their minds now —wooden houses, the smell of tatami, the sound of street-

cars. They were trying to create a counter-gravity, a black hole of memory that could hold back the frog's consumption.

But the frog was older than their memories. As they chanted, Haruki realized that the creature squatting in Shibuya Crossing had the patience of something ancient, something that had eaten cities before. Perhaps it had eaten Atlantis, or Angkor, or the cities that existed before history had names for them. It was not just eating Tokyo; it was teaching the city how to be eaten.

Yuki found him in the park. She looked different—her hair was shorter, her clothes more practical. “I’m leaving,” she said. “There’s a boat in Yokohama. Some people are trying to get out while they still remember what ‘out’ means.”

“You can’t outrun it,” Haruki said. “It’s eating the future. Where would you go?”

“Somewhere without frogs,” she said, but her smile was weak, uncertain. “Somewhere small. Maybe the frog only eats big cities. Maybe it only eats places that have forgotten how to be small.”

She kissed him on the cheek, a gesture that felt final, like closing a book. He watched her walk away through the park, and he tried to remember what they had been to each other. Colleagues? Friends? Something that might have become more, in a different timeline, in a version of Tokyo that wasn’t being digested? The memory was slippery, and he held onto it with the same desperation as the cultists held onto their phantom city.

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## V. THE DIGESTION OF SELF

**O**n Saturday, the frog began eating people. Not physically. It didn't pluck them from the streets with its long, sticky tongue. Instead, it ate their connection to the city, their sense of belonging to this specific place at this specific time. People woke up and found they could no longer remember why they lived in Tokyo. They packed bags, closed apartments, walked toward the city limits with the dazed expressions of sleepwalkers.

Haruki felt it happening to him. He stood in his apartment, looking at his few possessions—the single futon, the coffee maker, the shelf of books he couldn't remember buying—and felt the city's hold on him loosening. Why had he come here? Why had he stayed? The reasons were being digested, broken down into their component parts and absorbed into the frog's vast, ancient belly.

He tried to fight it by walking. He walked from Nakano to Shinjuku, from Shinjuku to Shibuya, following the path of the Yamanote Line even after the train itself had been eaten. He walked through neighborhoods that were becoming conceptual art, places that existed as questions

rather than statements. The frog squatted at the center of it all, its throat working, its eyes seeing everything and nothing.

In Shibuya, where the crossing had once been the busiest intersection in the world, he found only the frog and a handful of people like himself—those who were resisting digestion through sheer stubbornness. They stood at the edges of the empty plaza, watching the creature that had become the city's new center of gravity.

"It's beautiful," said a woman next to him. She was young, maybe twenty, with dyed blonde hair and tired eyes. "In its own way. It's like... it's not destroying Tokyo. It's collecting it. Preserving it. All the memories, all the dreams, all the futures that would never happen anyway. It's giving them a home."

"It's eating our home," Haruki said, but even as he said it, he felt the truth of her words. The frog wasn't malicious. It was simply doing what it had been designed to do, by evolution or by something older than evolution. It was archiving the city, storing it in a belly that was bigger on the inside than the outside.



"Maybe home isn't a place," the woman said. "Maybe it's just the stories we tell about places. And the frog is giving us a new story."

She walked toward the creature, and Haruki wanted to call out, to warn her, but what could he say? The frog had already eaten the concept of warning, the idea that some things should be feared. The woman placed her hand on the frog's skin, and for a moment, Haruki saw her dissolve—not into nothing, but into information, into pure memory, into the story of herself. Then she was gone, absorbed, and the frog's throat pulsed with the satisfaction of a complete meal.

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## VI. THE LAST CENSUS

**O**n Sunday, Haruki went to work for the last time. The Ministry of Impossible Events had been reduced to a single room in a building that existed only because the people inside it refused to forget that it should exist. Tanaka-san sat at a desk that was itself a memory of a desk, typing on a computer that displayed only blank screens.

“We’re conducting the final census,” she said when Haruki arrived. “We need to know who’s left. Who still remembers what Tokyo was supposed to be.”

The list was short. Forty-seven names. Yuki’s was gone—Haruki checked three times, but she had either left the city or been eaten by the frog, and the distinction was becoming academic. Kobayashi-san’s name was there, but when Haruki tried to remember his face, he saw only Tanaka-san. The old woman from his building was there, and the woman from the park who had touched the frog, though she was marked with an asterisk: *absorbed but not forgotten*.

“What happens now?” Haruki asked.

Tanaka-san looked at him with eyes that had seen too

much of the impossible. “Now we wait for the frog to finish its meal. Then we see what’s left. Maybe we’ll be the foundation of something new. Or maybe we’ll just be the appendix to a story that was always going to end this way.”

She handed him a form, the last form, the ultimate piece of bureaucracy. It was a single question: **What do you remember?**

Haruki filled it out with everything he could hold onto. The smell of ramen on a cold night. The sound of cicadas in summer. The feeling of being twenty-two and believing the city would never end, that it would always be there, growing and changing but never disappearing. He wrote about Yuki’s smile, about Kobayashi-san’s lectures, about the old woman’s fanaticism. He wrote until his hand cramped, until the memories flowed like water, until he was empty.

When he finished, Tanaka-san took the form and fed it into a shredder that had no power source but worked anyway. The paper strips dissolved into light, into information, into the story of a city that was now entirely internal.

“Thank you for your service,” she said, and then she too was gone, her desk fading like an image on old film, her chair becoming a question mark in an empty room.

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## VII. THE BELLY OF THE CITY

Haruki walked to Shibuya for the last time.

The frog had grown, or perhaps the city had shrunk. It filled the horizon now, its skin mapped with the streets it had eaten, its eyes reflecting neighborhoods that existed only in its belly. Tokyo was inside it now, all of it—the skyscrapers, the alleys, the love hotels and temples, the salarymen and hostesses, the dreams of Olympic glory and the memories of wartime fire-bombing. It had eaten the city's past, present, and future, and now it was digesting, turning all that complexity into something simpler, something essential.

Haruki stood before it and felt the pull. It wasn't hunger, not anymore. It was gravity. The frog had become the city's black hole, its archive, its afterlife. To be eaten was not to die but to be stored, to become part of the story that the frog was collecting.

He thought about running. He thought about Yuki's boat, about small towns without frogs, about a life that was simple and linear and didn't end in being digested by an impossible creature. But the frog had eaten the concept of

escape, had shown him that there was no outside, not really. The city was the world, and the frog was the city now.

So he walked forward. He placed his hand on the frog's skin, which was cool and alive and covered with a slime that was not slime but pure information, pure memory. He felt the city rush through his fingers, ten million lives, ten million stories, all flowing into him and through him and out of him, into the frog's vast belly.

The last thing he remembered was the taste of it. Not the taste of being eaten, but the taste of the city itself—soy sauce and cherry blossoms, concrete and train exhaust, the metallic tang of bullet trains and the sweet rot of summer garbage. It was the taste of home, of belonging, of being part of something so big you could never understand it, only live inside it.

Then he was inside too, dissolved but not destroyed, stored but not forgotten. He was in the belly of the city, which was the belly of the frog, which was somehow bigger than both. He could feel Yuki there, and Tanaka-san, and the old woman, and the woman from the park. They were all there, all the millions, their memories and dreams and futures layered like strata in an archaeological site.

The frog, having finished its meal, blinked its massive eyes. The city around it was gone, replaced by forest and hills, by the Tokyo that had existed before Tokyo, by the landscape that would exist after. It was a place of green silence, of water and stone, of ancient rhythms that predated steel and glass.

And in its belly, the city lived on. Not as buildings, not as streets, but as pure story, as the narrative of what it meant to be Tokyo, to be human, to build something so big and so complex that it could only be preserved by being eaten, by

being transformed into memory so dense it had weight, so real it had to be stored in something bigger than reality.

The frog blinked again, its ancient eyes seeing forward and backward in time. It had eaten Tokio, and in doing so, it had saved it. The city would exist forever now, perfect and complete, frozen in the amber of the frog's belly, while outside, the world continued, clean and green and unburdened by the weight of all those stories.

In the belly, Haruki opened his eyes. He stood on a street corner that was all street corners, in a Tokyo that was all Tokyos—the one that had been, the one that might have been, the one that existed only in dreams. Yuki stood next to him, and she was all Yukis, all possibilities. They held hands and walked forward into the city that the frog had saved, the city that would never end because it had already ended, the city that existed forever in the moment of being eaten.

The frog, full and content, closed its eyes. In the green darkness behind its lids, ten million stories unfolded, ten million lives lived out their infinite variations, ten million dreams dreamed themselves into being. It had eaten Tokio, and Tokio was eternal.

Outside, the sun set on an empty landscape. Inside, the city lights came on, bright and endless, a constellation of human endeavor preserved in the belly of the beast that had loved it enough to consume it whole.

The frog slept, and in its sleep, it dreamed of Tokyo. Which meant, of course, that Tokyo dreamed of itself, forever.

