

Character Profile: “Takane Amaya”

by K9Lupus

Takane Amaya was the kind of girl who could melt ice off a glacier with her warm, radiant smile. You first got pulled in by the chocolate pools of her deep brown eyes framed by curated locks of short, dark hair. Her rich, vibrant splendor contrasted against the pale glow of her fair skin which always managed to catch the sunlight at the perfect angle. It was as if she were a plant absentmindedly leaning towards a private audience with the full face of the sun. Her short stature was an asset; the consideration of its limitations rarely crossing her mind in day to day affairs. In Takane's eyes, the package of her beauty was compacted without a single wasted breath. She held so much potential to enjoy a well-lived life.

And all of it managed to come crashing down around her the day she first encountered the Entity.

Takane enjoyed many of the fineries afforded to a well-to-do, young, Japanese woman. Afternoons were filled shopping busy malls with friends, trying new foods and subsequently researching diets fueled by guilt only to ultimately slide back to her weakness for taiyaki stands and mounds of stuffed manju, the bite-sized portions of the latter forming a particularly dangerous, delicious horde. Anything to get a distraction from turning on the news and seeing new updates on the most recent attacks was welcomed.

Her home town of Shibuya had fallen victim to a series of recent attacks by enormous, monstrous beasts known as the Kaiju. Their catastrophic destruction across multiple regions of Japan had wreathed victimized cities in blankets of anxiety and terror. Even as tensions continued to broaden, solutions to the growing issue remained thin. Everyone expected to be next to hear the wailed warble of the evacuation alarms. However, even in these challenging times, Takane had trouble deciding whether racing away from the looming shadow of a Kaiju was any worse than dealing with coming back home.

The fantasy of maintaining a regular life would vanish the moment she walked in the door. A reasonable person would believe having your father as a general in the army and a mother as a lead researcher whose entire division had been converted to study the Kaiju threat would offer some semblance of safety and rationale. But Takane's father was not a reasonable man.

Her father's prominent position of authority came with an immutable desire for control, a desire which had now seeped into Takane's home amplified by the rapidly spreading chaos created by the Kaiju threat. While he never dared lay a hand on his daughter, the slightest transgressions or misgivings were punished with his booming voice that stung just as fiercely. Only Takane's mother managed to wall back the tirades of her father, but only until the next interrupting phone call demanding answers for yet further loss of life and billions in damages.

So it came to be that Takane found herself more often with her friends than her family, and on one such outing while venturing to the sparsely populated outskirts of town their group stumbled across the aftermath of a recent Kaiju conflict. The land had been dramatically altered: sweeps of trees crushed into splinters, boulders flung across hillsides like marbles, and long gouges of furrowed earth raked

into bloodless scars. No police vehicles or aircraft disrupted the otherwise eerie quiet of the space. To stumble across unreported evidence of kaiju activity was a rare social media goldmine, and emboldened by the possibility of claiming info even her father was not privy too filled Takane with grand delight.

She spotted the entrance to a strange, makeshift cave peppered with claw marks across its rocky facade similar to the ones strewn about the rest of the forest. Never one to turn tail from a possible adventure, and not yet willing to return home for the day, Takane boldly stepped first into the cave followed by the reluctant echoes of her friends' footsteps.

Deeper they all descended into the dank and mysterious realm with only the light of their phones to guide their way through the narrow passages. Even Takane joined in the collective gasp when they finally illuminated a small piece of the partially decomposed remains of the Kaiju which appeared to have managed to crawl itself deep into the mountainside to evade pursuit of its attacker. While the rest of the group was transfixed on what they had discovered, Takane instead cast her glance towards a pale, purple glow faintly illuminated through a shallow crevice nearby.

She slunk away from the rest of the group and forced her body through the small opening, prepared to surprise them all with even more interesting news. Emerging on the other side, she barely managed to stifle the outcry laced in her throat from coming face to face with the sunken, hollow husk of the deceased Kaiju. The body before her was immobile, and indeed lifeless, which made the faint glowing wisps emanating from its body all the more haunting.

Takane reached out and laid a hand across the thick hide of pulled, scaly skin if for nothing more than to say she had direct contact with one of these grand beasts of destruction and lived to tell the tale. Unnervingly, the body radiated with a surprising warmth amid the otherwise cool temperature of the cave. Takane reasoned that the decomposition process was well at work her as she had seen in mulch heaps of her mother's garden. A rumbling trickle of warmth concentrated through the tips of her fingers and caused her to pull her hand away as if it had been scorched on a heated stove. The heap of the Kaiju biomass grew colorless and dormant thereafter, its final task completed.

Takane, with a new and unfamiliar pang of worry in her chest, decided that no other should know of this eldritch resting place. She withdrew from the narrow passage and reassured her friends that the whole affair had been nothing more than coming to a dead-end and encountering a few unsuspecting spiders. When the group finally emerged back out of the cave system, they found that the area was now littered with military personnel coming to investigate the site. Takane observed that they belonged to her father's division, and the group narrowly escapes with a grand tale for years to come.

Days pass and Takane now finds her experience with the biomass has affected her sleep. Dreams are vivid recollections of scenes she does not recognize, and her body is far more powerful and grand than she ever could have dared envision. She becomes distracted easily with a sickened feeling carried in her chest. One night, following a particularly aggravated dealing with her father, she retreats to the sanctum of her room where her body goes to release a mucous-like substance that drapes around her to form a fleshy cocoon.

During Takane's subsequent metamorphosis, she comes to experience a feeling kin to achieving nirvana: a true peace where her bodily limits have dissolved away, leaving only raw, unvarnished

potential. She at first is terrified, believing that she is dying and this process is one of passage to the afterlife, but soon comes to the realization that a new, assured strength courses within her which will allow her to overcome any obstacle which would dare stand in her way. Time becomes a distorted, fractured remnant of its former self allowing Takane to travel down the roads of her memories and regrets, carving a new sense of self in the process, until she comes to today and the uncertain future ahead of herself.

When Takane emerges from the shell, it is now night. She finds herself with more matured features, appearing physically older even though her mind feels the same. Takane's beauty is even more striking now; her dark, cropped, hair cut into a bob now hangs long and flowing as a natural accent to the otherwise ineffable beauty of her curvaceous body. She was a walking testament of fierce grandeur; her petite size eroded away to be replaced by a tall, commanding presence. Thoroughly enamored by the strange transformation that has taken place, she observes a dwelling wildness swimming in her eyes much like looking into the obscuring ferns leading deeper into a jungle and for a moment fears what lay further within if she dare look too long.

Takane spends the rest of the night sleepless and holed up in her room wondering if these strange effects will eventually wear off, and finally comes to the conclusion by mid-afternoon of the next day of a necessary confession to her parents. Her mother's reaction is of deep concern spawned from an inherent understanding of how little she actually knows about her daughter's condition and where it could possibly lead. Her mother urges Takane to submit herself to rigorous testing. Takane refuses, citing ownership of her body. In a strange reversal, Takane's father appears to be less concerned about the dramatic sweep of changes which have befallen his daughter, expressing a begrudged acceptance that her new form makes her more capable in the world. Few will turn away from her as she is now, and with that captive attention, it would be up to her what she makes of it.

For a time, Takane enjoys her burgeoning growth and beauty. However, she soon finds that while her physical form has grown beyond her wildest expectations, her emotional stability has been vastly compromised. Takane snaps at the slightest inconvenience or misdirection, and it's soon after she comes to know that her metamorphosis out of the cocoon was only the beginning of what was in store for her.

With time Takane becomes aware that the deep-seated wildness is manifesting into strange and animalistic-like abilities and impulses. Her night vision is greatly enhanced along with a bolstered sense of smell allowing her to trace sources of magnetism, radioactivity, and even emotional states in others. Her abilities still unfocused, she walks through a park only to find herself overwhelmed by the cacophony of a million separate lifeforms all struggling to survive, drawing her into a saddened rage that bubbles over into an even more aggressive and dominant personality.

Her monstrous form continued to evolve and assert itself further, her body vastly growing and filling with the immense strength she had possessed in the strange visions of her dreams and her time in the cocoon. Takane's once trim and flowing locks extended into a rough, unruly mane cascaded down the length of her muscled neck and back. Deep purple scales quickly grew to replace patches of shed skin, glowing in rounded phosphorescent patches as she had seen in the depths of the caves when she first encountered the Entity. Mighty claws and fangs erupted from the humble beginnings of her human nails and teeth paired with the sprouting of a broad, powerful snout tipping her face. The formation of a sinuous, thick tail erupting from Takane's bottom solidified her inhuman appearance for the rest of her

days.

With her disfigured body, Takane withdrew from virtually all remnants of her old life, and with that increased isolation grew a profound need to act with the coursing energy flowing within her. To her great dismay, she discovered the true source of her father's understanding demeanor one day after smashing his briefcase across the hastily built shelter to house her sizable girth in a fit of rage at her confinement. A pile of documents spilled forth, all detailing updates on the plan to utilize her as a weapon in the nation's battles against the Kaiju threat. With her trust betrayed, she confronted her father only to be greeted with his thumbs hooked in his pockets and a label of a “disappointing calculation” cast in her direction. Takane resolved to leave her old life behind forever then, vowing to use her newfound abilities to change the world for the better by her standards alone.

Takane's friends eventually discover her hiding location, but are greeted to the thundering growls and rumbles that they now traverse the lair of Amaya, the Queen. When they assert their presence for support, they are waved off as Takane explains that this way was best. There would be no more hurt, no more false trust again. She would be the arbiter of her own fate. By being the strongest and conferring that message to all who would hear her she would create her own peace in the chaos she now was incarnate of. Amaya then rises from the shadows to reveal herself completely as her attuned ears and nose detect a challenger nearby who rallies a cry for dominance over her land.

She leaves her makeshift den clutching to the scattered remnants of her discarded humanity jostled within her colossal body. Now, only the quiet that follows the wake of absolute destruction would satisfy her, and even then, as she increasingly feared, only for a little while until she craved even more.