

## [Transcript] Sword and Scale Nightmares / Women's Rights

In December of 2019, Japanese immigrant Ri Hachianagi was just trying to make her way in the world.

Since moving to the US in the 90s, she had landed a career as a college professor at a prestigious university.

She even had a few friends, but she wanted more out of life.

She created a name for herself working on behalf of women's rights and made herself known in the art world.

Ri never could have imagined that a single interaction with another woman would change her life forever.

Welcome to Sword and Scale Nightmares, true crime for bedtime, where nightmare begins now.

Ri Hachianagi was a young girl born in Sapporo, Japan.

She came over to the United States as a high school exchange student and settled in Kansas, which is not exactly the most beautiful first impression of the United States.

Growing up, Ri struggled to communicate with everyone around her.

English didn't come naturally to her, and initially she bottled up her frustrations.

Soon though, she found an alternative way to express her emotions, through art.

Ri began learning papermaking, a skill that would stick with her and evolve throughout her later career.

Ri eventually went on to get her Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California and landed a teaching job at the Alfred University in New York.

This was not her final career stop though.

In 2004, Ri got a job at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts.

This was a big deal for Ri, someone who was deeply invested in women's rights.

Mount Holyoke is a prominent private women's liberal arts college.

It's one of seven sister schools in the United States that were historically all women's schools.

A career at this institution was a dream come true to her.

Everything was starting to come together.

She had her dream career, and by this point her artwork was even being exhibited internationally.

So she begins this job at Mount Holyoke as a professor of art, specializing in installation, performance, and papermaking.

She's doing all these cool things, like this research project where she collects and documents stories from ancient Japanese papermakers before the knowledge dies.

And Ri's students also seem to love her.

One of them writes, she is by far the best professor I have ever had at MHC.

She is so helpful, and so lovely, and just great.

Another says, Ri is such an insightful and inspiring professor.

She's honest and gives very constructive criticism, if you are willing to accept it.

At one point Ri is even featured in a promotional video for the college, explaining how to create paper in the traditional Japanese style.

Her voice is serene and calm as she gently hangs newly crafted paper up to dry.

So she spends another 15 years at Mt. Holyoke developing close relationships with her coworkers and really making a home for herself there.

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On December 23, 2019, Ri's boyfriend tells her that he's leaving the western Massachusetts area to visit out of state family for the holidays.

Why Ri doesn't go with him is a mystery, but something about this trip makes her feel uneasy. Like their relationship is about to end, and he wouldn't be coming back to Massachusetts. So Ri is kind of freaking out.

She drives to her boyfriend's workplace, a martial arts studio, and sits in the parking lot crying.

She needs a friend to talk to, but the timing isn't great.

Everyone would be spending time with their own families leading up to Christmas Eve, but in Ri's mind this is an emotional emergency.

So she racks her brain for her closest friends and coworkers and ends up driving to her friend, Lorette Savoy's house.

The two work together at the college and Ri figures in this kind of circumstance, Lorette would definitely make a little time for her.

So she heads over to Lorette's house, she parks her car, steps up to the door, and knocks. There is no answer, so she tries the handle and it opens.

She goes inside.

On the floor, she sees her friend Lorette, bloodied and nearly unconscious.

She's clearly been attacked.

Ri runs over to Lorette, kneels down beside her and tries to get answers about who did this to her.

Ri holds her friend as she calls 911 and explains what she's just discovered.

Ri is like covered in blood at this point and tells police that it doesn't seem like Lorette knows who did this to her.

Lorette in her half-consciousness tells police that she remembers being attacked but didn't see who the person was and can't even give them a vague description, like height, race, or even gender.

They swiftly cart Lorette off to the hospital and take Ri in for questioning.

Medical staff examine Lorette and see that her wounds are substantial.

She's got multiple broken bones in the eye and nose area and numerous lacerations and puncture wounds on her head and face.

By this point, both of her eyes are dark purple and nearly swollen shut.

If Ri had gotten there even a few minutes later, Lorette may not have survived.

Police arrived at the hospital a couple of hours later and entered the triage room where Lorette was being treated, wearing a neck brace and in pretty bad shape.

She was ready to tell police what she remembered.

Suddenly, she seemed to recall exactly who had done this to her.

On December 23, 2019, College Arts Professor Ri Hachianagi discovered her friend Lorette Savoy, a fellow professor, on the floor of Lorette's home after an attack.

Recalled 911 and held her friend as they waited for paramedics to arrive.

Once at the hospital, police entered Lorette's room to get a statement.

Her eyes widened and she manages to utter out the words, I know who did this to me.

So Lorette tells them that earlier in the day, Ri showed up at her house to give her a poinsettia plant.

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This was odd because despite their long work relationship, Ri had never been to her house before and to her knowledge, Ri didn't even know where Lorette lived.

She tells them she cautiously accepted the plant and closed the door.

A little later in that day, Lorette says she saw Ri again on the college campus where they both work.

They had a short conversation and agreed they'd catch up with each other in the new year.

Later that night at around 8pm, Lorette says she had just arrived back home and saw what she thought was someone's shadow on her porch.

She remembers calling out who's there and says she saw Ri emerging from the darkness, telling her that she really missed her and wanted to talk to her about feelings.

Lorette nervously recalls that she invited Ri inside her home.

As soon as she shut the door, just a foot from the doorway with her back turned to Ri,

Lorette was hit on the head with something hard.

She wasn't sure what it could have been.

She says she was totally stunned by the first blow, confused as to why this was happening to her.

She landed on the floor and put her hands up to block Ri's next attacks and asked her why she was doing this.

Ri told Lorette that she had loved her for many years and Lorette should have known.

The cops are stunned at this point, wide-eyed as Lorette continues her story.

So her friend Ri totally blindsides her, hits her on the head with something, and now she's on the floor.

Ri has the higher ground, Lorette has lost her glasses and can't see so well anymore, and she's unarmed.

At this point, she's resolved to just stay calm and let this play out.

Despite her poor vision, Lorette sees Ri pick up multiple weapons and use them against her.

Things like rocks, garden clippers, and a fire poker.

It figures this is the day she's going to die.

Lorette is desperately trying to appeal to some crumb of humanity in Ri and basically says, hey, I've lost a lot of blood and I'm not going to live much longer unless you get me some help.

Even that doesn't work, and Ri continues hitting her with the fire poker, dancing and laughing as she taunts Lorette about how she would be blind and her face disfigured before Ri finally ends her life.

In the heat of this scuffle, Lorette being slammed over and over with these implements, the sharp corners slashing into her face and body, she has an epiphany.

The only way out of this is to convince Ri that she is in love with her.

She thinks, if I don't at least try this, I'm going to die here.

So she tells Ri between the blows that she loved her back, and Ri seems to calm down for a few seconds.

Then Ri suddenly jumps on top of Lorette, straddling her, punching her in the face and hitting her again with the fire poker.

Ri starts letting out exclamations about how she couldn't let her go now.

Lorette would just go and tell someone, and then she would go to jail and she was scared

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to end up behind bars.

She tells Lorette that if she goes to jail, she'll kill herself.

So obviously, Ri doesn't care whether Lorette dies.

It seems at this point, that was her goal from the very beginning.

This torture session has been going on for nearly four hours by now, and Lorette's thinking, I don't know if I'm going to survive another minute.

I need to figure something out, some way to save my own life.

So Lorette reaches deep within her soul to pull some lines that would convince Ri that Lorette really did love her, even though the two had never had more than a platonic work relationship with her whole career.

The emotion in Lorette's pleas must have been believable, because it works.

Ri is convinced that Lorette is being sincere, and so Lorette basically says to Ri, hey, if you don't call 911, I'm going to die here.

So if you could just do that quickly, that'd be great.

Lorette agrees that once first responders got there, they would stay quiet about what really happened, and would go along with the story Ri came up with.

After the four hours of brutal torture she endured, Lorette savoy at stab wounds all over her face and body, and bones in her face were also fractured.

It was almost as if disfigurement was one of Ri's primary goals during the attack.

So Lorette sat in her hospital bed as she told the police the story, and by the end of it she appeared frantic as she remembered Ri still had her keys, cell phone, and glasses.

And Lorette was afraid Ri might return to the hospital to finish killing her, under the guise of returning those items.

This woman, someone Lorette thought was her friend, had already betrayed her trust, invaded her home, and tried to kill her one time.

There was no reason to believe she wouldn't try again.

On December 23, 2019, Ri Hachianagi, an art professor at Mount Hoyo College, called 911 to report finding her friend Lorette Savoy a fellow professor, bloody and injured, on the floor of her house.

After discovering that Lorette had not been attacked by a stranger, but by her very own friend Ri, police made a beeline back to Lorette's residence, where Ri Hachianagi was still hanging out.

When police arrested Ri, she did have Lorette's keys, cell phone, and glasses in her possession, perhaps on her way out to return them at the hospital.

The questioned about her involvement, Ri admitted her love for Lorette, but denied any memory of attacking her, telling police that she has a history of head injuries that have affected her memory.

For Lorette, who remembered everything, this experience would be something that would take a long time to recover from, emotionally, physically, and even financially.

She had been working at Mount Hoyo since 1990, and was a professor of environmental studies and geology.

Aside from that role, she was also publishing pieces of writing, doing photography, and was even a licensed pilot.

I'm sure she wondered how many, if any, of these things she would ever be able to do

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again after this brutal attack.

She was already at her sixties, nearing retirement age.

The time it took for her to physically and emotionally recover took a big toll on her finances.

She obviously had to take time off of work and was forced to turn down numerous other career opportunities in the meantime.

And for what?

Why would someone she thought was her friend ever do something like this?

In February of 2020, Ri Hachianagi pleaded not guilty to the nine charges against her.

The charges included three counts of armed assault to murder a person aged sixty or older, and single counts of mayhem, home invasion, and entering a dwelling at night for a felony.

There are also armed assault and battery charges related to each separate weapon reused against Lorette.

Massachusetts apparently has some very strange but specific laws on the books.

Her lawyer tried to argue that Lorette's statements to police were inconsistent, though we all know why that was the case.

He also argued that she should be eligible for bail, because she owned a house and had no criminal record, and no history of violent behavior.

The judge was concerned that though Ri had no history of violence, she had still attacked someone, and that person was once a friend to her.

That must say something about the kind of person she is, right?

On October of 2021, after being held in county jail without bail from the time of her arrest, Ri Hachianagi changed her plea to guilty.

Her attorney argued that Ri had been a model prisoner, a leader even.

He explained that she had been struggling with feelings of anger for some time, and had been raised to believe that feeling anger is shameful.

He said, quote, my client had an anger that she was not familiar with.

She was distraught, to say the least.

The judge ultimately sentenced her to 10 to 12 years in state prison.

The judge said to the courtroom, Professor Savoy is certainly the victim of a horrific crime, but that's not what I'm going to remember.

I'm going to remember that she had the presence of mind and the courage to convince her attacker not to kill her.

As her body was failing her, she used her mind to save herself.

And that's remarkable.

At the end of all of this, Lorette Savoy ended up with nerve damage to her face, and two of her fingers don't work anymore because of Ri's brutal and senseless attack on her.

Lorette also has trouble sleeping, suffers from nightmares and daily headaches.

The definition of torture is this, severe or excruciating pain or suffering of body or mind, anguish, agony, torment, the infliction of such.

Lorette says this is the best set of descriptors she can find to explain what she went through.

She says for hours I experienced literal torture of body and mind, not knowing if I would survive the next minute, yet needing to find some way to save my life.

The emotional, physical, financial and professional impacts of this crime have been huge, and

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they continue.

Now the defendant's violation of me is becoming part of a public persona that I did not choose. She has invaded my privacy, my career, my life.

Lorette hasn't covered all of her expenses and she hasn't returned to the income streams she once had.

At one point Buzzfeed even listed Lorette as one of eleven women whose writing has changed the way the world sees itself.

Though she may never find herself back in an auditorium giving collegiate lectures, Lorette's writing continues to speak for itself.

Her book, Trace, Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape has won numerous awards throughout the years.

She wrote it before the attack she suffered.

And though Ri Hachianagi may have permanently destroyed Lorette's sense of safety, no one can ever take away from us the legacy we leave behind on this earth, even after we're gone.

Both Lorette and Ri have been outspoken about women's rights and the rights of minority groups.

But all the good that Ri did is overshadowed by her brutal attack on another woman.

A woman in a minority group, just like her.

If she really wanted to make a difference, she should have just, you know, not attacked her friend.

Now Ri has created a victim, someone who will be part of a statistic he was fighting so hard against, and that will be her legacy.

That's how people will remember Ri Hachianagi.

Since the attack, Lorette has invested in a beefy home security system to protect herself, not only from other potential intruders, but specifically from Ri Hachianagi.

Because she will be out of prison, likely before the year 2031.

If you enjoyed the show, please consider joining plus at [swordandscale.com slash plus](http://swordandscale.com/plus).

But if you can't, consider leaving us a positive review on your preferred listening platform.

Sweet dreams, and good night.