

SEX PESTS AND RAPISTS CARDINAL SINS 1

SIN 原罪 1：性・掠食者

With over 200 bestselling novels to her name, Taiwan's "Queen of Horror Fiction" now invests her authorial talents in a new series of works centered on the seven deadly sins. Her first, on lust, plumbs the depths of sexual predation, victimized high school girls, internet celebrity, media reporting, and more.

Wu Ju-Yin's dramatic suicide in front of her parents is made all the more baffling by the note she leaves behind: "I won't go back to hell." The tragedy is headline news. However, while most reporters chalk it up to a revenge suicide, Ju-Yin's consistently good grades and seemingly doting parents just don't add up.

In the days that follow, Ju-Yin's classmate Hung-Chia is confronted by Ju-Yin's ghost, who asks, "Why do you still say nothing?" Although Hung-Chia remembers seeing Ju-Yin in the back seat of a well-known cram school teacher's car as it turned into a motel, that was before the two had even met and, after all, there was no evidence to prove what she'd seen. The mangled spirit continues badgering her and torturing her dreams. What does Hung-Chia have to do for Ju-Yin to finally let her be?

Around the same time, reports of missing and victimized female students begin cropping up in the same school district. Surprisingly, the brutalized bodies of the purported predators are found at several of the crime scenes while, at another, a cryptic "crop circle"-like pattern is found. Expert pundits weigh in, calling it a daemon's circle... But what, if anything, do demons and evil spirits have to do with these cases?

Author Linea weaves demonic elements and a familiar bloodstained landscape into this visceral work of horror fantasy on sexual predation. This story also shines a harsh light on crime reporting in



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the media and blind spots in traditional family and educational systems, and asks how society may better prevent crime and support its victims. While all books in this series share similar characters, each is its own standalone story.

Linea 苓菁

Known as “The Queen of Supernatural” in Taiwan, Linea is famous for her portrayal of the darker side of human psychology and her unflinching examination of society. A bestselling author and blogger, her works include the *Urban Legends*, *Bad Fairytale*, and *Dark Dark Sounds*.

SEX PESTS AND RAPISTS

By Linea

Translated by Alex Woodend

Prologue

The clean, tidy room was mildly fragrant. Completed homework was stacked neatly on the desk, and the schoolbag hanging next to it was already packed with textbooks and materials for the next day. Hanging on the hook behind the door was a meticulously ironed uniform, its black skirt as dark as her life.

She sprayed perfume into the air. She'd always liked the scent, though it was a bit strong. The idea that it could cover up all the disgusting smells of her body was comforting.

She sat on the edge of the bed, staring blankly at the uniform hanging on the door. Her tilted head made her tears puddle before sliding down her right cheek. She didn't wipe them away, but let out a sniff and a chuckle instead.

Fine, it's like this then.

She slowly raised her head and stood up, not forgetting to smooth out the wrinkled bedsheets, then bent down and pulled a storage container packed with out-of-season clothes from under the bed. Reaching deep inside, she found a coil of rope and took it out.

"Turns out I needed you after all..." She examined it, noticing it still bore the marks she had made with a permanent marker, and gave it a loving caress.

From the window beside the bed came the light of a street lamp. She stared at it and sighed. That suffocating light was not what she wanted. She wanted a brilliant, blinding light...the kind of light she never seemed to find in this lifetime.

After carefully straightening the clothes in the container and sliding it back under the bed, the girl changed into her precious high school uniform, tightly grasped the rope, and quietly opened her bedroom door.

The staircase to the second floor was to her right. Ahead to the left was a bedroom door with light shining through the gap at the floor. She glanced at it briefly, then tiptoed to the stairs with steps so soft her parents didn't hear a thing.

"You don't think she has a boyfriend, do you?" Her father suddenly put his phone down.

The woman doing her beauty routine at the dressing table paused, then turned toward her husband lounging on the bed. "No way, right?"

"Why else would she be so against being tutored? She's never been so disobedient before! Especially because it's Mr. Chiang. He's the reason she tested into the district's top high school!" Mr. Wu scrambled to his feet. "Mr. Chiang tutors high school students too, and she actually said she *wouldn't* go! Does she think she became a gifted student by herself?"

“Don’t get so excited, I’ll have a proper talk with her!” Mrs. Wu turned to the mirror and continued her routine. “Think about it. It makes sense. After all the effort it took to finally get into high school, being asked to immediately start tutoring again must feel overwhelming!”

“You think she can just take a break? I hear a lot of students were tutored over summer break. She’s smarter than the rest, but only by a little. Does that give her an excuse to be lazy?” Mr. Wu was at a loss. “It’s her attitude that upsets me most! Why’s she being hysterical? It’s not like we’re not asking her to kill someone or rob a bank. How can she say she’d rather die than continue going to after-school classes? Is she trying to threaten us?”

The woman sighed and looked at her husband pacing by the window. She knew how much it upset him. Their daughter had always been so well-behaved, never questioning their decisions or talking back. When it came to tutoring, however, she had made her position clear. That she had refused so fiercely today, to the point of yelling at them, had shocked her husband and her both.

There wasn’t much chance she had a boyfriend. Her attitude could be the result of having new classmates or being in a new environment. High school had only been in session for one month, after all. *Maybe some of her new friends were the kind who...* That concerned her the most. Even at the district’s top high school, there was no guarantee there wouldn’t be children of poor character who nevertheless managed to make good grades. You are who you associate with, and she didn’t want her daughter to be corrupted.

“Don’t talk to Ju-yin yet. Your attitude will only make things worse now,” Mrs. Wu advised. “Let me talk to her.”

The man by the window was so angry that his chest heaved visibly. He looked at her and said, “I’ll make this very clear now. She has to go to tutoring no matter what!”

“I know, I know!” Mrs. Wu stood, hoping to calm him down more when a black shadow appeared outside the window – *whoosh, bang*.

“Ahh!” the couple shouted at the same time. The wife couldn’t tell what it was...just a black shadow rushing toward them. The husband was so startled by the sudden noise that he clutched his ears and dropped to the floor.

Thud...Thunk, thunk – more knocking on the glass. The man crawled to his wife, trembling, then faced the window again.

It was cracked in a radial pattern. Because the glass was thick, it hadn’t completely shattered, but the crimson bloom spreading across it horrified him.

Thunk, thunk... Someone outside was swaying and knocking against the cracked window.

“Ahh! What is that?” The wife held her head and stumbled backward.

The husband tried to steady her. The crimson bloom that blocked their view of whatever was on the other side streamed downward, pushed by gravity. They heard neighbors opening their windows and a chorus of screams.

“Someone hung themselves!”

“What?! Someone jumped off the building!”

Wait – hung or jumped? The man looked at the black shadow swinging outside their window in terror. *Was that a person? They lived on the twenty-sixth floor, and the building had twenty-eight, so...someone had tied a rope on the top floor and jumped to their death?*

Who would go through so much trouble? Wouldn't it be simpler to just jump straight down? Why end the fall outside of their window?.... The man frowned, suddenly sensing the figure hanging outside looked familiar....

A gust of wind swept past the building, causing the hanging figure to slam against their window again.

This time it was face-first.

Although her neck was broken, and her face was pierced by fragments of glass and covered in blood, there was no mistaking her. It was his daughter.

“Nooooo, Ju-yin!”

Chapter One: The Suicidal Classmate

Dozens of bicycles moved in an orderly fashion down a street shaded by verdant ginkgo trees, pedaled by students – some alert, some sleepy – steadily making their way toward school.

But the entrance was unusually crowded today.

“Why so many reporters?”

The students were taken aback by the news vans clustered around the entrance. Several reporters hovered around, finding little corners to report from.

Nieh Hung-chia jumped off her bike, taking in the spectacle with a confused look. *Had something happened at their school?* She had scrolled through several social media apps before leaving home and hadn't seen anything of note.

School rules prohibited riding bikes on campus, so the students all walked them in. It was difficult to know, however, which route would best skirt the crowd of reporters.

“Could you all please move to the side? The school day's starting, and you're blocking our way in!”

“When will they give us access?”

“Could the head of student affairs come out for comment?”

“What about the Class 6 homeroom teacher, Mrs. Chang?”

Huh? Hung-chia quickly rolled her bike onto campus. *Class 6 homeroom teacher Mrs. Chang? What a coincidence.* She was in Class 6, and her homeroom teacher was Mrs. Chang. Had something happened to one of her classmates?

She hurried to the bike shed, parked her bike, and grabbed her bag. Walking to her homeroom, she saw clusters of fellow students, faces pale with shock, staring at their phones.

The mix of guilt and excitement in their eyes left no doubt that something had happened.

“Did you hear? It's Wu Ju-yin!” one said to another as they walked up the stairs.

“Huh? I heard a senior didn't make it home yesterday.... Is she missing?”

"No, I mean she..." The voice became quieter, but Hung-chia saw the student draw a finger across their neck.

"Really? How is that possible?"

Wu Ju-yin was, in fact, her classmate, and she wasn't just well-known in their class; she was a gifted student whose fame had spread as soon as she enrolled. She entered as the number one student, ahead of even Hung-chia in District S, where they both lived.

"School just started, and her grades are so good. What could get to her so much?"

"I don't know. She's always quiet. I didn't notice anything off."

Hung-chia slowed down and followed her classmates into their homeroom. Sure enough, it was in chaos. Everyone was discussing the shocking news about their star student. She walked calmly to the very back row, sat in the last seat, and quietly took her phone out of her bag to check. The news was everywhere now:

Gifted Student from District S Jumps to Her Death at Midnight

Just One Month into School, Gifted Student Jumps from Home to Her Death

Midnight Horror: Local High School Student Commits Suicide by Hanging!

Hmm. Hung-chia scrolled. Was it hanging or jumping? Why the contradiction in reporting?

She got a Line message from the boy she'd lived next door to her whole life: "It's your classmate!"

"Yeah, was just reading the news. Some say hanging, some say jumping. It's confusing."

"Not confusing. Both are true."

"Both? Jumping and hanging are two very different ways of killing yourself!" Hung-chia frowned as she waited impatiently for the next message. But the bell rang first. The whole class sighed, stood reluctantly, and walked to the front desk to put their phones in the "hibernation box."

Once all phones were secure, the class monitor placed the box securely under the podium. The students continued to discuss the shocking case. Hung-chia gazed at the empty seat near the podium. There were books and supplies still in its drawer, but their owner would never be seen again.

Even though the bell had rung some time ago, their homeroom teacher was still nowhere to be seen. She was probably delayed by the incident. The class monitor had to step in to maintain order and prevent the noise from their class spilling over into the others.

But once the chatter had quieted down, the sound of sobbing became clear.

The girl whose desk was to the left of Ju-yin's as well as the one who sat diagonally in front of Hung-chia were crying uncontrollably, their heads pressed down on their desks. Hung-chia didn't know much about the personal dynamics of their class, but she guessed they were close to Ju-yin.

"Kai-ting!" Several teary-eyed girls rushed to comfort the girl, who also had excellent grades, with the desk next to Ju-yin's.

"Yesterday...yesterday she was fine. We even had plans to meet up on this weekend..." Kai-ting said, sobbing. "There's no way she committed suicide, it's impossi—bwahh..."

She broke into tears before finishing the sentence, giving the others a lump of emotion in their throats.

Hung-chia frowned. She didn't appreciate the sad, suffocating atmosphere. But their classmate had died, and so it was normal they felt this way.... It was just that she wasn't used to it.

"Chieh-hsin..." The girl who sat diagonally in front of her, now crying so hard that her whole body shook, was also being comforted.

The sadness infected the entire class, and many began weeping quietly. Hung-chia could only take a deep breath and look out the window to her left. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. Such nice weather!

She knew no one would come over to talk over things with her. She was the class loner...not because she'd been bullied or harassed. She had just made herself as quiet and invisible as possible. She hadn't connected deeply with anyone or joined any of the cliques. Her one reason for being here was to study...to get an education. She really didn't care about anything else.

The sound of footsteps in the hallway came at last, and Hung-chia saw the weary figure of their homeroom teacher walk past the window.

Mrs. Chang walked to the podium, eyes and nose red from crying. She forced herself to meet the gazes of the similarly affected students. She began to speak several times but had to stop, her fingers gripping a textbook so tightly they had turned white.

"As you all probably know, Wu Ju-yin...left us forever yesterday." Mrs. Chang struggled to contain her grief, each word choked with emotion. "I know it's sudden, even I can't believe it yet, but..."

"She wouldn't kill herself! That's not who she was!" Kai-ting wailed. "She told me all the things she wanted to do in the future. How could someone with so many dreams possibly commit suicide!"

Mrs. Chang, a tear sliding down her cheek, looked at Chou Kai-ting and could no longer speak. Turning away from the class, she covered her mouth and stared at the blackboard, but her trembling shoulders made it clear how upset she was.

After the deeply sorrowful mood of the morning independent study period, the classroom devolved into a tourist trap for students from other classes. Some, eager to engage in gossip, asked if anyone knew why Ju-yin had killed herself.

Hung-chia took the opportunity to take a long walk and buy a drink. She had to escape that depressing atmosphere. Even though she and Ju-yin were in the same science lab group, they hadn't been close at all. They were only a month into the school year and had exchanged only a few words, nothing more.

It is a shame she had passed away...but acting sad wouldn't be honest.

Hung-chia started heading back to class but stopped when she heard something strange:

"She was really, really smart, and I'm honored to have been in the same class as her. Every day, Ju-yin was kind and full of energy. Though she was a great student, she never acted superior. Whenever we had a question about something we didn't understand, she always helped answer it."

Hung-chia followed the sound of the voice to a quiet corner where a classmate was livestreaming. It was the fast-growing influencer Loli Lepei.

“Really! I’m not lying. I’m really in the same class as Wu Ju-yin! During self-study just now, our homeroom teacher cried so hard she nearly collapsed. No one can believe it’s real!”

The rising star of their class, in fact of their entire school was a stunningly beautiful girl, whose given name is Yang Chih-pei. She had been an influencer since before school started and recently signed a contract with an entertainment agency. People said she had even filmed a web series over the summer. Beautiful, nice figure, good grades...she had been getting a lot of attention lately.

Hung-chia watched in disbelief as Chih-pei dabbed her tears away for the camera. *Hello? Diving into an issue like this for attention isn’t exactly appropriate is it? No one knew why Ju-yin had committed suicide and reporters can’t even get in, but you’re here livestreaming?*

Hung-chia, realizing Chih-pei hadn’t yet noticed her, looked down and stomped twice on a broken branch to catch her attention.

Chih-pei flinched, and Hung-chia stepped back to avoid being seen.

“Class is about to start...have to get back. I’ll be on again at noon if I can!” Chih-pei teased, pouting her lips and waving.

After ending the livestream, she turned to look for whoever had made the sound, but saw nothing. Hung-chia was already on her way back to class. Only an idiot would wait there to be caught, and she had no intention of getting into it with Chih-pei.

“You’re talking to someone one day, and they’re just gone the next...” Lou Cheng-ying, the girl who sat directly in front of Hung-chia said softly, leaning against the wall.

Hung-chia, about to sit, stopped and looked around in surprise. There was no one else nearby, since their two desks were next to the windows at the back of the classroom. “Are you talking to me?”

Cheng-ying turned and looked at her intently. “Yeah! Don’t you feel that?”

“Uh...guess that’s life.” Hung-chia didn’t know why she had randomly started talking to her.

“Don’t you think it strange she would commit suicide?” Cheng-ying turned toward her a few more degrees, which made Hung-chia, now seated, a little nervous.

“I don’t want to consider the reasons. It’s not our business, and she’s already gone anyway. Why gossip?...”

“It’s not gossip; it’s finding the truth.” Cheng-ying gazed at Hung-chia with shiny puppy eyes. “None of us think Ju-yin was capable of taking her life that easily. Something *must* have happened!”

Take a deep breath, Hung-chia told herself. They were all classmates who would be together for the next three years. If she just stayed calm, she could speak correctly.

“That...could be, but there’s no point in speculating. No matter how much we speculate, the police will be the ones who eventually find an answer” Hung-chia said coolly as her eyes flicked onto the beautiful girl coming in.

Chih-pei really *was* stunning, and her features aligned almost perfectly with the current ideal of beauty. She was tall and slender with fair skin, thick eyebrows, and large eyes. Her cute appearance was what had gotten her started as an influencer in elementary school. Over the years, she had transformed into a beautiful girl with hundreds of thousands of followers.

She was so active online that she could open a livestream most any time she wanted. She even livestreamed her first day of high school. When the homeroom teacher told her to stop, because she wasn't allowed to film her classmates without their permission, she pouted and asked the class, "Who doesn't want to be on camera?"

The phrasing seemed intended to make them uncomfortable, like emotional manipulation.

No one reacted to Chih-pei's performative question until Hung-chia quietly raised her hand. She didn't want to be on camera at all because of her social anxiety.

Then, Ju-yin raised her hand too, pointing out that Chih-pei shouldn't be livestreaming in class regardless. She could do it in other parts of the school, Ju-yin added helpfully, but all class members had the right to privacy. Her arguments were compelling, and the homeroom teacher followed up with additional points that made Chih-pei reluctantly give in.

Hung-chia had thought the incident had taught her the importance of respect, but apparently it had not...