

Gropers home in on guys

By MARK SCHREIBER

Dacapo (Aug. 16)

The Tokyo-bound commuter train was jam-packed. Suddenly, the bespectacled 21-year-old male university student -- let's call him Shigeru -- felt the back of a



hand subtly fondling his loins. When he shifted his position, the hand made an unmistakable thrust toward his private parts.

Turning to confront his predator, Shigeru saw a fortyish man in a business suit.

"I'm a *guy*, dammit!" Shigeru exclaims to him from between clenched teeth.

The above incident took place aboard the Saikyo Line -- the rail link between Saitama and Tokyo that boasts Japan's highest number of *chikan* (groping) incidents. These have almost always involved men molesting women, but Shigeru found himself the target of an amorous individual of the same gender.

"At first I thought maybe he was reaching for a girl and touched me by mistake," Shigeru tells Dacapo. "But when I saw that sordid leer on his face, I realized he was after me. I thought about shouting to attract attention, but couldn't bring myself to do it."

Women, evidently, are not the only victims of train gropers. While males constitute only a small minority of victims -- 20 cases out of a total of 1,897 incidents reported to the Tokyo Metropolitan Police in 2005 -- the number may be larger.

"Male victims run the gamut of boys in their late teens wearing school uniforms to university students and salaryman types," Sachiko Saeki, a crime prevention counselor, tells Dacapo. "They tend to be of a similar type: what some might describe as 'cute,' well groomed, with handsome features as well as being slender -- what we call *bishonen* (a term the Kenkyusha dictionary renders as

'an Adonis')." "

"But in other cases, the victims weren't delicate types, but muscular hunks."

Incidents of *chijo*, women who molest men, are rare, but not entirely unknown. Take the terrifying train encounter experienced by a 28-year-old engineer named Kazuki.

His story is related by the aforementioned Ms. Saeki, who had counseled the shell-shocked young man. His predator appeared to be a career-type woman in her 30s who pursued him on the notorious Saikyo Line on three successive days.

"Would you *please* stop doing that?" Kazuki entreated her in a hushed plea. But after disembarking at his station and heading toward home, he heard the clicking of high-heeled shoes, and sure enough, the woman was just behind him. When he halted, she bumped into him and then began pulling him toward a vacant lot overgrown with weeds, all the while tugging at the zipper on his trousers.

Kazuki dashed off as fast as his legs could carry him.

"Amazingly, Kazuki's friend, Satoshi, was stalked by the same woman," says Ms. Saeki. "She dragged him into a vacant lot and forced him to go all the way, in spite of himself."

"Afterward, Satoshi fell into a deep funk," Saeki adds. "He broke off his marriage engagement and became completely estranged from women."

While the notion of being stalked by an excited nympho may, for some men, seem like a dream come true, there's little to safeguard the innocent. Might "Men only" cars on trains during the peak rush hours afford protection? Such a move, Dacapo concludes, would just make them more vulnerable to male predators. Is there no escape, then, for these vulnerable young Adonises?

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