

Woman admits killing, dismembering husband

By JUN HONGO

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A 33-year-old woman pleaded guilty Thursday to killing and dismembering her husband last December but claimed the act was triggered by vicious and persistent domestic violence during their three-year marriage.

Kaori Mihashi, who was arrested in January for killing her husband, Yusuke, and dumping his body parts around Tokyo, owned up to the charges during her first trial session at the Tokyo District Court. Asked by a judge if she objected to any of the charges, she replied, "No."

But her attorneys disclosed in their opening statement that Mihashi had endured constant physical abuse from her husband, including a beating in June 2005 that left her with a broken nose, damaged facial tissue and a bruised face.

They argued that Mihashi was suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder at the time of the killing and should therefore not be held liable.

Mihashi appeared in court in a light blue sweater and white pants. She wept incessantly during the session, holding a small hand towel to her face.

The butchery came to light when severed human body parts were found in Shinjuku and Shibuya Wards last December. The grisly nature of the crime caught the media's attention, and the arrest of Mihashi, a wealthy housewife, set off a tabloid frenzy.

The victim was an employee of a securities company affiliated with the Morgan Stanley group and the couple lived in an upscale 11-story condominium complex in Shibuya Ward.

They wed in March 2003, but according to prosecutors the marriage started falling apart in a matter of months. The two were both having affairs, they said.

The prosecutors argued in their opening statement that Mihashi recorded a conversation between her husband and his lover, and demanded he discuss divorce with her on Dec. 11, 2006. But after being ignored, she fatally clubbed him in the head with a wine bottle at around 6 a.m. the next morning.

She laid his bloody corpse on a pile of gardening soil prior to dismembering it with a saw.

Mihashi used taxis and trains to get rid of the pieces in separate areas, then filed a missing person report with the Yoyogi Police Station on Dec. 15. The torso was found a day later inside a plastic bag on a street in Shinjuku Ward, and on Dec. 28, the lower half of the body was found in the garden of a vacant house in Shibuya.

Mihashi renovated the condominium following the killing in an attempt to expunge signs of the bloodshed, the prosecutors argued.

Suspicious arose when a security camera at the condo captured the husband returning home early Dec. 12, despite Mihashi telling police that he hadn't returned home since Dec. 11. She was arrested Jan. 10.

Based on her testimony, the husband's decomposed head was found in a 35-cm deep hole at a park in Machida, Tokyo.

Unable to proceed with divorce talks the way she had hoped, Mihashi "decided to kill the victim in a fit of anger," the prosecutors said in a statement. Attempts to conceal the slaying indicate she was mentally fit at the time, they added.

But Mihashi's lawyers countered that she had not only been assaulted constantly, but he had taken away her cash card and threatened to kill her.

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