

APENDIX I

SUMMARY OF *THE DARK MAIDENS*

The Dark Maidens is a young adult novel written by Akiyoshi Rikako in 2013. The story follows the academic life of Itsumi and her close friend Sayuri. Itsumi, known as the perfect girl who serves as a role model for other students, hides a hidden nature. She sees herself as the protagonist who needs a supporting cast to stand out, concealing her taboo relationship with her secret lover, Mr. Hojo, a student-teacher affair kept between her and Sayuri. However, Itsumi is merely wearing a facade or mask to conceal it all.

Throughout the book, Itsumi does not anticipate that other members of her club will betray her by secretly informing Itsumi's father, thus ruining the secret life she had planned. Her resentment leads her, with Sayuri's help, to plan her fake suicide, intending to make the other members blame each other, unintentionally adding poison to the chaos. Itsumi is happy to finally live a quiet life with Mr. Hojo once they decide to marry. Her happiness overshadows what Sayuri had planned.

Sayuri, a longtime friend of Itsumi, always follows Itsumi's lead, even when it is vile. She views herself as an assistant who watches from the backstage and enjoys events. Therefore, when Itsumi's life ends happily, Sayuri is not pleased with the outcome; she finds Itsumi's ending boring. Consequently, Sayuri secretly decides to eliminate Itsumi and usurp her position by replacing Itsumi as the main character.

In conclusion, this story explores two characters who expose what lies behind their persona masks, their chaotic journey of self-discovery, and their non-positive outcome. Through Itsumi and Sayuri's experiences, the novel delves into learning how to resist, accept, and embrace the sides buried in the human subconscious.

APENDIX II

BIOGRAPHY OF AKIYOSHI RIKAKO

Akiyoshi Rikako or Rikako Akiyoshi is a teen novelist known for one of her works *The Dark Maidens*. Rikako graduated from Waseda University, Faculty of Literature, and she also received a master's degree in television and screenwriting from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Her short story *Yuki no Hana* received the third Yahoo! JAPAN Literature Award in 2008 and chose to debut this short story in 2009. Akiyoshi Rikako is best known for her teen novel genre. Besides *The Dark Maidens*, Rikako's other novels include *The Dead Returns*, *Silence*, *Holy Mother*, and *Absolute Justice*.



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