

**DURARARA!!X13**  
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成田良悟

Ryohgo Narita

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志願!!

 電撃文庫



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成田良悟

Ryohgo Narita

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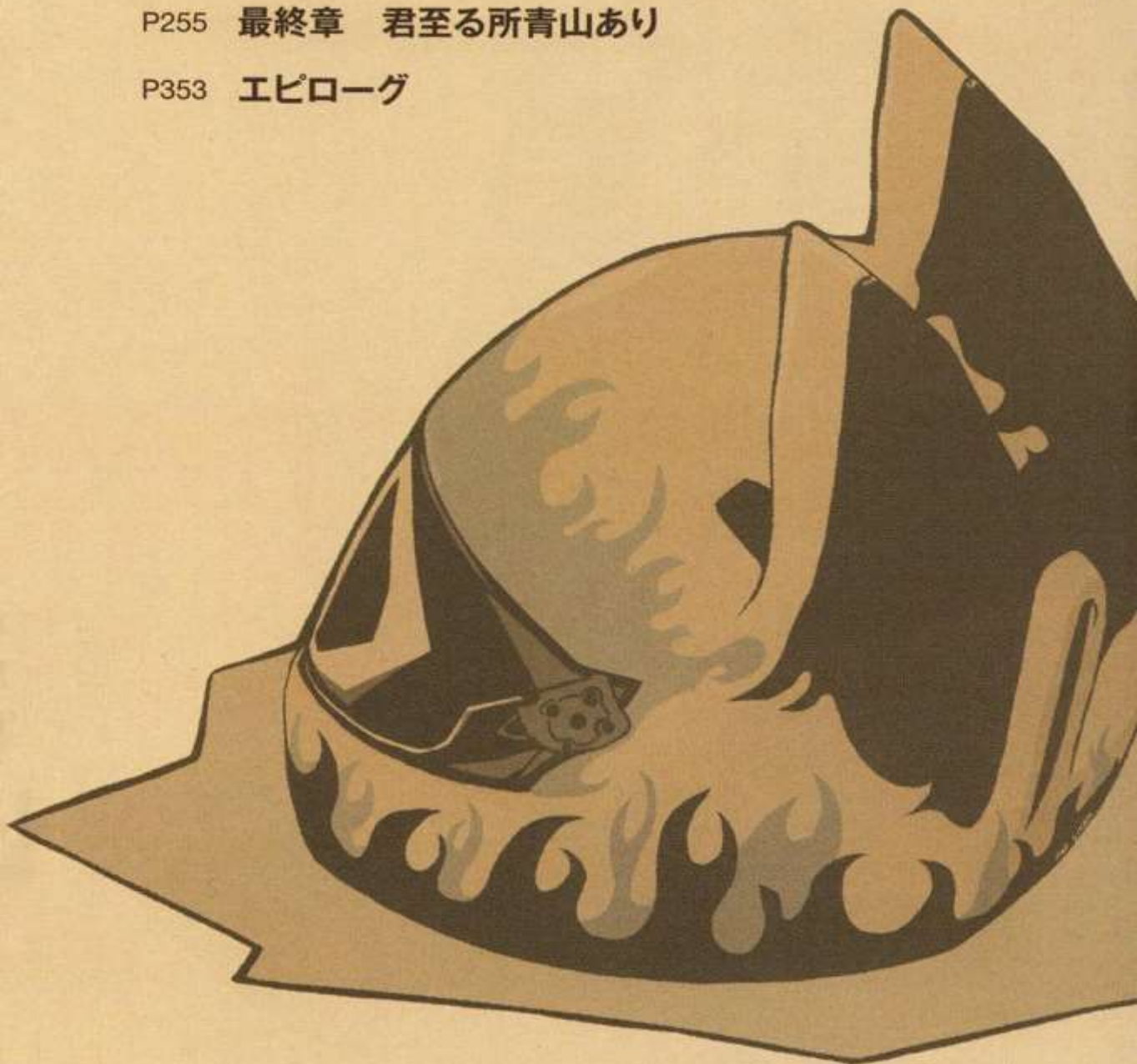
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(T/N: \*If there's a will, there's a way.)

(T/N: \*\*Do not hesitate to leave your home and explore the world.)

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**COLOUR PAGES**



Tsukumoya Shinichi's closed blog.

You want to hear about the end of the Dollars?  
 All I can do is reminiscence, you know.  
 Ryugamine Mikado, Sonohara Anri, Kida Masaomi.  
 These three, magnificently,  
 without being noticed by any of the others - made their way through Ikebukuro.  
 Which is to say they did their fair share of ridiculous things, in just the year and a half since they entered Raira Academy.  
 It was probably not because they were at a growing age, but all three of them changed significantly.  
 For good or bad, the city changes people.  
 New environments, new meetings, new lives.  
 As they were at the mercy of these things, and as they themselves, occasionally, put others at their mercy,  
 they became a wind that blew through the streets.  
 Perhaps it was not just a pretty sight to see.  
 As they changed, as they grew,  
 and sometimes, as they sunk, linked to one another without realising,  
 they returned to the same place, in the end.  
 What the three of them, reunited after going through these changes,  
 see in one another - only they themselves can know.  
 Even if we feel concern for them, all we can do is believe.  
 That from back when they started running, all three of them have had a certain unchanging 'something' within themselves.

Ikebukuro is the same.  
 People, buildings, trends; all of these change quickly in the city.  
 But isn't it all right to have one thing that never changes?  
 ...or rather - it is precisely due to the presence of such a thing that the city remains itself, I think.

Well then, I think it's about time to say goodbye.  
 It would be nice if, the next time we meet, something between us will have remained unchanged.  
 At the very least, that is what I pray for.



Daiou TV Production, 'Walk Team Through That City'.

Excerpt from record tape, A Walk through Ikebukuro with Hajima Yuuhei

"...walking through the streets of Ikebukuro, I get the feeling I've come home."

"Because I lived here throughout my childhood, and I still live here now..."

Though phrasing it as coming home might be a little strange."

"Even on the same road, at the same intersection, when you walk you remember different things every time."

"...Vending machines flying sky-high, street signs ripped from the ground,  
delinquents being thrown to the rooftops of buildings..."

"...I might not be able to say those were good memories, but they feel nostalgic."

"Because if you keep living in the same district, the memories accumulate in the streets..."

"Maybe when you walk, it's in these memories that you feel like you've come home."

"Because even talking like this makes new memories  
that will build up, just like this."

"No matter how much the streets change, no matter how much the people change, the memories will stay just  
as they were in the past."

"A salaryman or a student walking on the street,  
housewives or children, or people in colour gangs, or..."

Even the Headless Rider;

I think all of them must have various memories they must return to, on these streets."

(All of the above was cut from the actual broadcast.)

"I love this city.

"So I'd like everyone to come to love it too..."

I want to people to make memories that make them grow to want to come home.

"The streets of Ikebukuro will always be waiting for everyone to come home, surely."

The twisted love story closes its curtains.

The unnatural being simply looked down, quietly, on the city.  
Spinning a path of shadow, on the back of a horse equally unnatural that ran through the sky.  
Looking down from the darkness, despite the lateness of night, the city was, still, studded with countless lights.  
It was as if the starry sky and the earth had switched places; as it gazed at this scenery, the being said nothing.  
The pitch-black armour of a knight.  
Separated from its neck, its head, held under the arm of the armour, had its eyes clearly open.  
But its mouth did not speak.

The being could be thus labelled for, literally, it took on an unnatural form.  
No human could live with their head separate from their torso.  
By that definition, she was, indeed, unnatural.  
But as for the inside of her heart, it was unknown -  
If it was human - or unnatural.  
For the heart has never taken a form.

**CHAPTER TEN | A TIGER DIES TO LEAVE ITS SKIN**

Past. Raijin High School.

"Well, Orihara-kun. That was a terrific fight you had yesterday."

Leaning against the wall at the landing of a staircase leading to the roof was Orihara Izaya, reading a magazine; coming up next to him was his friend from middle school, Kishitani Shinra, speaking up cheerfully as he did so.

In response Izaya, smiling slightly, narrowed his eyes, and replied somewhat irritably.

"A fight? I don't know what you're saying. That protozoan monster only nearly killed me."

The fight Shinra spoke of was when Heiwajima Shizuo and Orihara Izaya had attempted to kill one another after they had been introduced, almost like a bad joke.

"What is he, really? With some persuasion I set up an accident, but I didn't imagine he would be perfectly fine after getting hit by a truck."

"Isn't it interesting? You said you liked humans, Orihara-kun, so I thought you might be interested."

"That's no human. Maybe a wild beast, or a monster."

"I wonder. But if possible, I hope you two learn to get along."

Shinra shrugged as he said this, and Izaya creased his brow irritably.

"Why?"

And Shinra replied frank as ever:

"Because when it comes to chemistry, you and Shizuo are about as incompatible as it gets, aren't you? From the extent of what happened yesterday, someone will die, sooner or later. At least, one of you might."

"That's an exaggeration."

"Well, I wouldn't know about if you or Shizuo toned down your personalities."

"In the first place it was you who introduced us, Shinra."

Izaya said this wearily, and Shinra replied,

"Whatever you say we're all in the same high school. I thought it'd be easier for both of you to get along with me in between. Well, it didn't go well, so that can't be helped. If you fight to the death I'll lose one or two of my friends at most."

It sounded like a joke, but Izaya knew.

What Shinra said, with that troubled smile, was most likely truthful.

"That's very frank."

"If either of you... or if both of you died, I think I'd be lonely, but I wouldn't really mind."

"A useless friend, you are."

"I can't help that. For me, even if all the humans in the world were to die, so long as the woman I love alone survives, it's all right."

Shinra looked into the distance, and he grinned widely, as if he had visualised something.

"You're disgusting. I pity the woman you love."

He had a vague idea of Shinra's beloved, but he did not voice it.

Izaya had given up and gone back to his magazine, when Shinra suddenly mentioned a proverb.

"Ah, yes - 'a tiger dies and leaves its skin; a man dies and leaves his name'... Have you heard of it?"

"?"

"Shizuo-kun is exactly like the tiger. If he dies, the hide on his body... That superhuman strength will be revered as a legend that once lived; it'll be exaggerated in rumours, and most likely it'll become an urban legend."

Shinra was as excited as an elementary schooler who had found an exotic bug, and in the same way, as if his elementary school friend was that exotic insect, he continued.

"Yes; not just rumours, but an urban legend that once lived! The human Heiwajima Shizuo might even, after death, be complete as an existence surpassing humanity."

Shinra nodded cheerfully as he spoke, and Izaya felt himself annoyed by those words.

--That man, living on as an urban legend?

--An existence surpassing humanity?

--Ridiculous. That thing's no more than a monster.

Setting aside the extraordinary fight yesterday, he felt an irrational anger towards the human Heiwajima Shizuo; as he noticed this in himself, Izaya asked a question.

"So, you'll leave a name behind dissecting that monster or something, huh."

"I do have some scientific interest in dissecting him, but... It's not like I have any interest in dissecting men, and I don't have any plans to leave a reputation behind. Of course, I'm not interested in dissecting girls either. Though it's true that my love for 'her' might have started off from a dissection."

"...?"

Izaya felt puzzled at Shinra's disturbing words, but thought it not unusual, and he asked again,

"So, if the tiger leaves its skin, as a human, what name do you mean to leave? I'd be thrilled if you left your name on history as some psycho killer."

"As a human, huh..."

After some thought, Shinra's smile vanished from his face, and he looked up at the light streaming in from the roof as he spoke.

"I - "



Present time. Ikebukuro. Uppermost part of a building mid-construction.

Which of them made the first move?

There was no witness to that moment.

It was possible they themselves did not register it.

Not Shizuo, who had transformed on a systemic level to destroy the man before his eyes at once -

And not Izaya, who had kept his rationality as a human.

It was before dawn, on the roof of a building mid-construction.

Without even a clear beginning, the fight to the death began.

On some level, to the two of them, with their years-long grudge, this death match was a clear marker of the end. Under that context, it could be said this start was somewhat anticlimactic.

But keeping in mind that the reason for their mutual hate in the first place was simply that they could not stand one another, perhaps that was only a natural turn of events.

A grand fight to the death, discrediting the repeated claims, from their schooling years, that fighting would improve their relationship.

It was a fight in a spirit far less pure than those of duelists, without the slightest respect for their respective opponents.

And now as well, in this fight to the death that began before sunrise -

Still the two of them held no respect or the like towards one another; there was no friendly acknowledgment of the other as a worthy opponent.

Which was why, now they met again, on the top floor of this unfinished building, no conversation whatsoever occurred between the two.

The call made by Izaya as Heiwajima Shizuo ascended the building.  
That was the only verbal exchange that occurred before they tried to kill one another.

A little more than ten seconds ago.

As Shizuo slowly opened the door to the construction site on the top floor -

The scent of gasoline vapour reached his nose.

And next he noticed it was wafting from the liquid flowing at his feet.

But Shizuo did not show any particular anxiety.

Even in the next moment, as flames consumed his surroundings, Shizuo's expression did not change in the slightest.

It was not that he had foreseen this; neither had he devised a plan of escape on the spot.

The rage repressed in his body had numbed his common sense as a person.

“...”

Wordlessly, he **tore** the door he had just opened **off its hinges**, and stamped down on it with his full strength.

That was all he did.

But this action, done with his extraordinary strength, smothered the flames that were spreading at his feet, and the resulting air pressure pushed back the air that was feeding in from the surroundings.

The fire, riding on the whirling air, seemed to dance.

With the door he had just kicked down as a lever, he leapt, breaking the swirl of flames by pure force.

Part of his clothes had caught fire, but he was able to leap out of the fire's range before it could spread.

And then, before the damage from heat and oxygen deprivation could even take its toll on Shizuo's body -

Metal beams, hooked on a crane, rushed toward Shizuo like a pendulum.

In the face of the incoming metal beams that could easily crush a car - Shizuo's expression remained unchanged.

From when he had deflected a forklift truck earlier, Shizuo's right arm hung limply.

But anger numbed the pain, and even common sense.

Shizuo swung his remaining arm from below, and met the metal beams with what was, essentially, an uppercut.

On the moment of impact, the metal was crushed, and the floor of the construction site around Shizuo's feet gave off a twisted sound.

The metal beams, deflected, slipped from their cables, and fell into an area in the construction site.

Shizuo's eyes turned to where they fell, and there they rested on the figure of one man.

Completely still, even as the metal beams fell right next to him, was Izaya.

He was similarly undisturbed by the changes in the situation, but unlike Shizuo was, firstly, the cruel smile fixed on his face; and the fact that he had just enough rationality to kill a person calculatedly.

Though from Izaya's point of view, he had no intention at all to kill a 'person'.

And the curtains rose on Izaya's monster extermination.

It was not that the monster was bad, or Izaya righteous.

To begin with, this fight to the death held no meaning by the standards of good and evil.

For the two of them were, in their own ways, distanced from the concepts of good and evil.

Their internal, subconscious restraints broken, they merely faced one another.

They had not even tried to kill one another up till now. That had only been something like a greeting.

Facing off, glaring at one another -

Murderous intent collected between the two, and erupted all at once.

Who made the first move?

The moment none could answer afterwards arrived.

Without a clear trigger, the fight to the death began.  
As the air that had simmered - came to a boil.



Ikebukuro. Russia Sushi.

In the midst of Shizuo and Izaya's fight to the death - events were developing at another location. It was a few hours before sunrise, a time at which the city itself was still asleep. Aside from twenty-four hour karaoke places, or bars and pubs that operated till dawn, or cabaret clubs, it was a time where one would expect the number of pedestrians to have dwindled, but -

"It's hopeless."

Tom, who had built a barricade over the windows with tables and other furniture, peeped through the cracks to the outside.

Visible was a group of people with red, bloodshot eyes, gathering before the store.

They were neither rioters, nor zombies hungering for brains or human flesh.

They were simply smiling, silently, towards the store.

It was inevitable that this was, conversely, eerier.

"Is this a nightmare or something?"

Next to Tom, who was frowning as he sighed, a bald-headed man, peeking outside through a similar crack, spoke.

"They're... possessed by Saika, aren't they."

"Eh? That bro over there... You know anything?"

"It's Kine."

"...ah, I'm Tanaka. So, do you happen to know anything, Kine-san?"

--Kine?

--Kine as in... The one who was from the Awakusu-kai?

Perhaps having detected the bald man was yakuza, Tom spoke more politely as he asked his question again, and the man, calm despite his furrowed brows, murmured.

"...Well, it'd be impossible to have you believe it, so I'll put it simply: it's something like hypnosis, such that they follow someone's instructions."

"...hypnosis?"

Tom frowned disbelievingly, but looking at the situation outside, he concluded it was a more plausible explanation than zombies.

"Well, anyway, if it's hypnosis, it means someone's behind it, right?"

"You catch on fast."

"If I couldn't stomach about this much, I wouldn't be able to handle my current job... So, what could this hypnotist be planning...?"

"I have a few culprits in mind, but none with a reason to besiege this store."

Heaving a small sigh at Kine's answer, Tom spoke to the employees of Russia Sushi behind him.

"Oi, how about you guys? The shop's gonna get into some serious trouble, isn't it?"

Denis stared at Tom as he replied.

"Who knows. How about you?"

"I don't seem to remember giving any hypnotists a reason to hate me... Ah, speaking of which, I wonder who the guy we saw outside earlier was..."

"Even if they don't hate you directly, it could be someone you're linked to, couldn't it."

Hearing Denis' words, Tom first thought of the president of his company - and subsequently the faces of his subordinates Shizuo and Vorona.

"...Ahh---, well, it could be, but, say, does that mean it's me they're after?"

"It probably means you're more popular than you think."

The store's manager tidied up the interior as he spoke, his face calm, and Tom shrugged.

"That's an exaggeration."

Then Simon, who had gone to the back of the store, returned, and said, smiling:

"Hey, we'll be on the night shift today. We have lots of fireworks prepared, you know?"

His hands gripped a bag dusted with soil.

It appeared he had somehow managed to dig it out from beneath the floorboards.

"Oi, don't bring dirty things into the store."

Denis frowned disapprovingly, but Simon smiled, as he took something out from the bag.

At the sight of what he had brought out, Tom pinched his cheek, while Kine frowned slightly.

They had realised that the object - one that resembled a black hair mousse can, equipped with a crooked handle and pin - was clearly not something that ought to exist in Japan, much less a sushi restaurant.

Holding the black, cylindrical object - a military flash grenade - Simon spoke, with his usual tone.

"Fires and fights are Edo purple. But fighting is bad. Your face will turn purple. Set fireworks instead of fire; Tamaya and Kagiya are all friendly."

*(T/N: Tamaya, Kagiya - historical rival firework-makers.)*



Somewhere in Ikebukuro.

"Sonohara-san, you okay?"

"...yes, sorry."

"You shouldn't force yourself, you know? Do you want to rest somewhere?"

Seeing that Anri was looking unwell, Mikajima Saki, walking beside her, had spoken up.

"I'm all right..."

Anri's voice was clearly shaken, but perhaps having concluded she would not get an answer, Saki did not pursue the matter.

The girls were currently making their way somewhere on foot.

They had considered hailing a taxi, but as the place was nearby, the two of them had opted to walk the streets - but from when they entered the vicinity of Ikebukuro station, Anri's heart was consumed by a strong sense of uneasiness.

The noise of the Saika that slept within her, more reliable than any premonition or instinctive gut feeling, was growing louder.

--What... is this...

Even during the Ripper Night incidents half a year ago, when Saika had proliferated in large numbers by Niekawa Haruna's hand, she had never felt such a disturbance.

At the time she had not yet faced Saika head-on, but even taking that into consideration, Anri clearly felt an abnormal trembling from Saika, that her body was host to.

It was as if Saika was resonating with its fellows.

The feeling was similar to being in an enormous bell, and having its peals from the outside resound through her body.

The mental resonance shook Anri's heart violently, and she was assaulted by a slight dizziness.

But it would not do to stop here.

Because, as a result of her conversation with Saki, Anri had resolved to actively involve herself in the trouble brewing in Ikebukuro right now.

Ryugamine Mikado, Kida Masaomi.

Orihara Izaya had hinted that a disaster, senselessly large in scale, was closing in on both of them.

As a person the man was completely untrustworthy, but she sensed that the allusion to the disaster, alone, was reliable.

That was a mutual opinion between Anri and Saki.

--It can't be that... The disturbance in Saika's related to Mikado-kun as well, can it...

If Mikado and Masaomi were to be swallowed as a part of Saika, by the hand of someone not herself...

As Anri imagined this, a shudder ran down her spine.

Fortunately, her premonition fell off the mark.

If only for the fact that this disaster was unlinked to Saika -

But the fact that both Mikado and Masaomi were at the centre of it did not change.



Late at night. Abandoned factory.

"So, Ryugamine Mikado's number, which, would, it, be..."

Late at night, on the grounds of an abandoned factory, resonated a jarringly carefree voice.

"There, found it! Wow, it really does look scary in black and white. Ryugamine Mikado."

Rokujo Chikage tinkered with the mobile phone, his voice relaxed, and the phone's owner Kida Masaomi sighed as he replied.

"Like I said, he's not the kind of guy to just pick a call from a stranger's number. And he's a timid guy, too..."

It was unclear if he had heard or not; Chikage looked at the screen of Masaomi's handphone as he entered Mikado's number into his own smartphone.

"That would be the Ryugamine Mikado of before, right?"

"..."

"If he's broken to such an extent, he'll take the call. Believe in me."

Smiling confidently, Chikage dialled the number, but -

Even after a few seconds, the call showed no sign of connecting.

"..."

"..."

"Let's pretend that conversation just now never happened."

"...yeah, got it."

The atmosphere between them had turned awkward, but Chikage, as if nothing had happened, asked Masaomi,

"So, does that guy go on any social media? Like Moxi or Twitia. He seems the kind of guy to at least check something out before ignoring it."

"You really don't give up..."

Masaomi snarked back, forgetting the proper respect he should give Chikage who was his senior, but he sighed again and thought.

“Somewhere he’d most likely get to see... If it were a message board linked to the Dollars...”

“It wouldn’t be too great if it went too public, either.”

“Mm... Social media... Even if he had an account, it isn’t linked with mine, so... Ah!”

As though he had thought of something, Masaomi took his phone back from Chikage, and connected to the internet anxiously.

“He might still be checking that chat site everyday...”

And ten seconds later.

At the sight of the chat displayed on the screen of his phone, Masaomi went into shock.



Tanaka Taro [I don’t understand what you’re saying. Who is Kujiragi. What is she up to]

Yagiri Namie [You’re the one up to something, aren’t you. What are you planning]

Yagiri Namie [Why do you not look around you]

Yagiri Namie [I only want to end this situation. Cooperate]

Yagiri Namie [You don’t know anything, but you’re linked to all that’s going on]

Yagiri Namie [Be aware of yourself. You are the key]



“What’s going on here?”

Masaomi had his brows creased, and Chikage, peering at the screen from behind him, spoke.

“Oh---, what a bad state. What’s with this chatroom?”

“No, it’s not always...”

The woman calling herself Yagiri Namie was talking over Tanaka Taro - Ryugamine Mikado - with overwhelming forcefulness.

Of course, it all occurred on the chat on the screen, but the forceful nature of the posts, which were still continuing, could not be described as anything but ‘talking over’.

“By Yagiri... Could she be related to Seiji?”

As he recalled the face of an acquaintance formerly of the same school, Masaomi, in spite of his confusion, went on to read what had led to the current predicament in the chatroom.

And, shortly after he started reading, he stiffened again.

It was not only Mikado.

The name of yet another person familiar to Masaomi had made its appearance.



Yagiri Namie [And your girlfriend Sonohara Anri]  
Yagiri Namie [You should know she's a monster]  
Yagiri Namie [You should have seen her wielding a Japanese sword once]  
Yagiri Namie [Should I tell you what she did during the Slasher incidents]

♂♀

The abandoned factory.

“...”

In the stead of Masaomi, who was frozen in place, unable to scroll up the screen, Chikage spoke.

“Ohh, Anri-chan, huh. She did have a Japanese sword the other day.”

“No... Wait a minute, it's too much too fast, my brain can't follow...”

“Oh? You looked like you knew a lot about your friends, but you know surprisingly little, huh?”

Chikage nodded contentedly, like it was none of his business, but then he grabbed the phone and, checking the web address, entered the address into his own smartphone.

And then, with a glint in his eyes like that of a mischievous child, Chikage began to type, deftly, into the input space on the chatroom.

♂♀

Somewhere in the city. An abandoned building.

“Mikado-san! Mikado-san!”

Despite the fact that it was coming to be late at night, Ryugamine Mikado did not appear to be sleeping at all. In his ears rang the voice of Kuronuma Aoba, the very culprit that had **dragged him down** into this situation. Mikado placed the object in his hands into a box, and looked towards Aoba, who had, shortly after, climbed up the stairs.

“Is something wrong?”

Mikado asked this in a normal tone of voice, and Aoba, mobile phone in hand, said:

“Um, earlier there was a strange person being disruptive in the chatroom, wasn't there.”

“Ah, it's all right now. Tomorrow I'll ask the administrator Kanra-san to delete all of it.”

“No, it's not about the person who was making trouble... I was curious, so I went to take a look at the chatroom, but...”

Aoba showed Mikado the screen of his phone, and brought up a name.

“Another strange person turned up afterwards, saying things about Kida-senpai...”

“...”

As he creased his brow slightly, Mikado opened his laptop wordlessly, and accessed the wireless data link

terminal before proceeding to the chatroom.  
And there, waiting for Mikado, was a one-sided message.



Chatroom.

Rocchi--san has entered the chatroom.

Rocchi~ [Sorry for barging in~]

Rocchi~ [Ehh~, I wonder if all the members can see this post]

Rocchi~ [Wow, chatrooms are so nostalgic. Everyone's on social media now, aren't they?]

Yagiri Namie [Who are you]

Yagiri Namie [Outsiders should stay out]

Rocchi~ [That name's a woman's, right? It's a cute name]

Rocchi~ [I'd like to meet you in real life to chat someday, so, sorry, let me interrupt here a bit~ Really sorry]

Rocchi~ [Cause you can't call me an outsider exactly]

Rocchi~ [Ryugamine Mikado-kun, was it]

Rocchi~ [You received a call just now, right?]

Rocchi~ [You shouldn't pretend you're out]

Rocchi~ [You can't take a call from a stranger, is that it? If that's the case, we know each other now]

Rocchi~ [Well, though we did meet once before]

Rocchi~ [But more importantly, you should take the call]

Rocchi~ [If you see this, redial the number that called you about five minutes before this post]

Rocchi~ [If you don't, I don't know what might happen to Kida Masaomi-kun~ Really]

Rocchi~ [You wouldn't want your friend to be hurt even worse, right?]

Yagiri Namie [Shut up, that's not important]

Yagiri Namie [Do it later]

Yagiri Namie [Ryugamine Mikado, do your duty first]

Rocchi~ [*Onee-san*, is Seiji-kun all right?]

Yagiri Namie [What are you ]

Rocchi~ [See, it wouldn't do if Seiji-kun saw you wrecking this chatroom, would it]

Yagiri Namie [Don't mess withrnanfadadedgijafujbkm]

Kyo [Well, well. Things have turned strange]

San [Exciting]



The abandoned factory.

“Oi, there's got to be a limit to how much you can post as you please. And really, what's going on in this chatroom...”

Masaomi had only known of this chatroom for about half a year, but even so, it was a place important to him. Masaomi was assaulted by violent uneasiness at how it was breaking down now.

As he creased his brow and made as to start saying more, the ringtone of a mobile phone echoed through the abandoned factory.

Chikage checked that the number displayed was the same as the one he had dialled earlier, and grinned.

“Hey, it’s from your friend.”

“...!”

Hiding his surprise at how well it had worked, Masaomi reached for the phone without thinking, but -

“Andandand wait, wait, it won’t mean a thing if I’m not the one picking up.”

“But I should be the one talking...”

“If he knows you’re fine he’ll hang up, won’t he? I’ll do it.”

As he pressed the button to receive the call, Chikage glanced at Masaomi, and added,

“Ah - ... I’ll say it first. **Sorry.**”

“?”

Masaomi frowned questioningly. Chikage put the phone to his own ear.

“Yo.”

‘...are you “Rocchi~”-san?’

“I guess. I’m glad we got to meet so quickly. Well, though we did meet once before.”

‘...’

“Do you remember my voice?”

Chikage spoke this in a light tone, and from the other side of the receiver a voice replied, flatly:

‘You’re... Rokujo Chikage-san, aren’t you.’

“Oh, well done. A round of applause. Ahh~, sorry for back then. I couldn’t believe you were the boss of the Dollars, you know.”

‘...’

Heedless of Mikado going silent on the other side of the call, Chikage continued the conversation.

“I’ll say it straight. Your friends... People from the Dollars are picking fights with us again. I’m here for compensation.”

At that story Masaomi opened his mouth to speak - but Chikage stopped him with a hand.

Most likely he had a plan of his own.

Masaomi decided to stay quiet and listen on, and closed his mouth.

But then Chikage curled the fingers of the hand he had used to stop Masaomi into a loose fist, and bumped it forcefully against Masaomi’s cast.

“...?! Uguhgh?! Ah... Guah...!”

The pain erupting in Masaomi’s bones rippled through his entire body, and he cried out unthinkingly.

Chikage turned the phone in Masaomi’s direction, before he drawled, lowly, into the receiver.

“You heard it. If we don’t meet face to face, your friend’s gonna go to a very far place.”

A few minutes later -

Having hung up on the call, Chikage smiled as he pat Masaomi’s head.

“Good; anyway, now we’ve decided where to go. We’ll be handing you, the hostage, over to them in the city.

To think our neutral ground would be a place like that, huh.”

“...when exactly did I become a hostage? And damn, that really hurt!”

Chikage shrugged as he replied to Masaomi’s protests.

“Well~, that’s why I apologised properly before I did it, right?”

“You could have done it without doing that...”

“Screaming isn’t something you can fake on the spot, you know?”

Chikage hummed as he said this, and Masaomi shook his head and sighed.

“Ahh, anything goes at this point. So, where are you passing me to Mikado?”

"Oh, it's a place even I know. I remember it quite well."

Swinging his arms as though warming up, Chikage continued, obliviously:

"It's a place with a girls' school nearby."



The abandoned building.

"You can't be planning to go on your own, right?"

Aoba spoke to Mikado, who was in his own thoughts, expressionless, after hanging up.

"Eh? No... And he didn't indicate how many people to bring, either."

"Rokujo - he's the one we provoked at the start. Even if you don't go, Mikado-senpai, we'll bring Kida-senpai back."

Aoba spoke lightly; Mikado thought for a moment, and said:

"Speaking of which, where do you guys stand with Kida-kun?"

"Where... He's senpai's friend, right?"

"To you guys, as the leader of the Yellow Scarves, he was your enemy, right?"

"My brother aside, we never fought directly."

Shrugging, Aoba told Mikado:

"Honestly, we don't particularly love or hate Kida-senpai, so if you ask us to help him we'll do as you say, Mikado-senpai."

"I see; that's great. But Masaomi might not think very well of you guys. Kida-kun might look like he's always joking, but he's always been a straightforward person."

"..."

Mid-conversation, Aoba noticed a change in Mikado.

--It's worrying how he switches between 'Masaomi' and 'Kida-kun'...

It might not have been anything significant, but it seemed important.

It was possible Mikado did not know, himself.

Of what kind of relationship connected him with the individual Kida Masaomi - or with any of his acquaintances, such as Sonohara Anri - or even how he wanted their future to be.

Aoba made such theories as he looked at Mikado, and was silent for a while.

And, from a position Mikado could not see, the corners of his lips twisted deeply.

--Mikado-senpai's - terrifically interesting, after all.

Aoba looked at the back of the broken boy before him, and cleared his smile quietly as he asked:

"By the way, why did you choose that place?"

The location of the deal Mikado had spoken of over the phone was a place Aoba was familiar with as well.

Although it was night time, it was a place with a little too many witnesses.

"..."

It was a natural question; Mikado went silent again for a while.

He stiffened for a moment as though a computer that had received data exceeding its capacity; and then he spoke, as if for himself to hear as well:

"It's... an important place."

"An important place?"

"You should know too, I think... It was where it started, for me and the Dollars."

He spoke the word 'Dollars' with nostalgia, and smiled boyishly as he continued.

"But, you know, Sonohara-san and Kida-kun, neither of them were there."

Mikado's words were no longer directed at Aoba. It seemed that perhaps he was briefly considering the reason he chose that location as an afterthought.

That was what Aoba felt.

But it was certainly a place special to Ryugamine Mikado.

The place was the start of the Mikado of now; where the ordinary and extraordinary had switched places completely.

'The intersection before Tokyu Hands.'

It was the mouth of the main road in front of Sunshine, and also the end point.

Mikado had, naturally, appointed that location.

It was probably inevitable, at least to Mikado.

As the founder of the Dollars, and as a mere member -

To receive Kida Masaomi, who was not there, on that day, in that place.

If it was possible, he hoped that Anri would be there as well.

That was what he thought, but it was no more than his own selfishness, and so Mikado repressed his own yearning.

Because he understood.

That afterwards what would probably take place there would be bloody.

Even as he realised that the secret Anri held reeked more heavily of blood than any mere fight amongst youths, Mikado refused to involve Anri.

Perhaps that was all left of the boy that resembled naivete.



Ikebukuro. A certain apartment bar.

"..."

Somewhere else, a person of an occupation far-stretched from naivete saw the same screen as Mikado, and their expression stiffened.

"What's going on, here?"

It was the executive of the Awakusu-kai, Akabayashi.

Having grown concerned over the strange ache of the old wound at his right eye, he had come to a hideaway bar, refurbished from an apartment, to continue his personal collecting of information.

What caught Akabayashi's eye was neither a message board of the Dollars nor a report from the Jyan Jyaka Jyan, which ran errands for him - it was a chatroom gathering the denizens of Ikebukuro, that the girl he looked after had introduced to him.

Because it was a chatroom where underground information would strangely surface from time to time, and also, as a guardian, to ensure the girl he viewed as a niece was doing well, Akabayashi made sure to check the chatroom daily.

The chatroom had now run into a strange situation.

“Is something wrong, Akabayashi-san?”

The expression he wore was probably a rare one. The aged bar owner spoke up to Akabayashi.

“No, it’s trouble at work.”

“I see.”

The bar owner asked no further.

Whether or not he knew of Akabayashi’s occupation, he had probably deduced it would be better not to ask.

But Akabayashi chuckled as he continued lightly.

“Well - how to put this? - it feels like I’ve been hit from an unexpected direction.”

As he said this, he looked towards the screen of his smartphone once more.

Up till that point he had been able to keep his calm at what appeared to be trouble surrounding the Dollars; but what stirred Akabayashi was the exposure of the name of the girl who had invited him to this chatroom.



Yagiri Namie [Where is that headless monster]

Yagiri Namie [And your girlfriend Sonohara Anri]

Yagiri Namie [You should know she's a monster]

Yagiri Namie [You should have seen her wielding a Japanese sword once]

Yagiri Namie [Should I tell you what she did during the Slasher incidents]



Ordinarily, one would have seen it as simply a lunatic yelling irrational things.

But Akabayashi understood.

He was able to understand.

That what the woman Namie had proclaimed had a definite link to Anri.

*‘A monster.’*

*‘Japanese sword.’*

*‘The Slasher incidents.’*

The old wound on his right eye throbbed.

From the wound, a burning pain assaulted his brain - it was as if his false eye itself was scorching.

But Akabayashi merely removed his shades and pressed lightly on his right eye, and smiled somewhat lonely.

--Calm down.

--You can’t be acting like a teenager.

And then he looked back on the past.

On his memories of his hot, painful first love as a man, that had come too late.

The woman who had seemed utterly inhuman, the one who had pierced his right eye and his heart.

Hosting a mysterious blade within her body, and with her eyes shining red, the Slasher.

Even now, Akabayashi could clearly recall the woman he first loved.

That woman, a blade herself, had supposedly died by a stab wound to the abdomen.

But Akabayashi knew.

He had not seen it firsthand, but he believed.

That she - Sonohara Sayaka - had beheaded her own husband, and pierced her own stomach.

But where had the sword she hosted gone?

It was said that the weapon was not found on the scene. It was why, despite the wound proving she could only have slit her own stomach, suicide had been ruled out.

Had the police's autopsy uncovered anything abnormal?

Even if it had, being abnormal, it might not have been publicised, but -

Could the sword still live on after Sonohara Sayaka's death, passed down to someone else?

In that case, the most probable candidate would be Sonohara Anri.

Akabayashi had considered it many times up till now, but each time he had laughed it off as his own unfounded, meaningless imaginings.

However, by just those few lines in the chatroom, his proof came.

The sword that had stabbed his eye had been inherited by Sonohara Sayaka's daughter, Sonohara Anri.

The right half of his face burned.

Overcome by how his theory was true, for a moment, it felt as if his blood, that had cooled up till then, was boiling.

But the excitement stopped there.

Akabayashi forced down the pain in his right eye with all he had, and suppressed his emotions into the memories of the past.

--Calm down, damn it.

--Anri-chan received a memento from her mother.

--That's all there is to it, isn't it?

If it had been his past hot-blooded self, perhaps he would have left the store immediately.

Thinking a part of the woman he loved lived on in her daughter.

But Akabayashi's heart was not so immature as to feel any twisted attachment towards Anri, who was young enough to be his own daughter.

--The one I loved was a pretty woman... Sonohara Sayaka.

--Not that noisy sword.

As he remembered the dark Words of Love that had flowed into him the instant his right eye had been cut, Akabayashi gulped down the last of his sake, and spoke to the bar owner.

"Hey, boss."

"Yes?"

The bar owner turned towards him, and Akabayashi smiled as he asked:

"Say I loved a woman, but she rejected me and married someone else."

"All right."

"Their daughter was dragged into something quite troublesome, and she's in danger. If I wanted to save her, would you think it was some lingering attachment?"

"..."

After some thought, the bar owner returned the glass he had been polishing to the shelf, and replied, evenly. "Whether or not you still feel anything towards her mother, you aren't someone who would sit back if the child of any acquaintance was in danger, are you? Akabayashi-san."

"You think too highly of me. Ah, bill please."

Akabayashi smiled and rose from his seat, taking out his wallet.

It was not something he had had to ask the bar owner.

It was no more than an excuse he used to take the first step.

But Akabayashi thanked him from the bottom of his heart, as he strode out of the store slowly.

**To poke his nose into the current events**, in his own way, as an 'adult' from the underside of society.



Along Kawagoe Highway.

"...It's this apartment."

"Is there really someone so reliable?"

As she heard Anri speak, Saki asked this not in doubt, but to confirm.

"Yes, it's a very reliable... person."

Anri tilted her head as she said 'person', and then looked up at the apartment.

It was a place she had visited countless times.

Ryugamine Mikado and Sonohara Anri. The mutual acquaintance, as as the benefactor, of them both - Celty Sturluson.

She could not imagine the trouble revolving around Mikado and Masaomi was of a scale she could stop by herself. And in the first place, she did not know even where they were at the moment.

It would not do to involve anyone else, but she wished to have someone she could discuss it with.

At this, the first thought had been Celty.

Even so, it was already late at night.

Two girls going outdoors at this time was itself not anything socially acceptable, but Anri had no worry over getting attacked by any ruffians or delinquents.

Because she hid in her body a 'weapon' that no superficial violence could counter.

But Anri and Saki aside, there was still Celty's convenience to be considered.

She had thought it would be inappropriate to intrude without notice, and so on the way here she had tried to call many times - but Celty, who would usually pick up calls immediately even at night, made no reply this time around.

"Maybe she's asleep already, after all."

"Maybe... Ah."

At that point Anri thought of something, and began to use her phone.

"She might be in the chatroom."

"Chatroom?"

"Yes... There's a chatroom I go to often; we talk more over there than through texts."

"I see. Then I'll try to contact Masaomi. He didn't pick up yesterday, but since it's a new day today he might pick up."

As she said so, Saki began to open her bag to take out her phone.

Perhaps Masaomi had cut contact to ensure she would not be dragged in.

This was what Anri thought, but as it was not entirely impossible for him to pick up, she made no move to stop Saki, and looked instead toward her own phone.

"Eh..."

And then her face hardened.

"What's wrong?"

Even to an onlooker, it could most likely be seen that something abnormal had occurred.

With her thumb still stopped above the keypad of her phone, Saki questioned Anri.

"How..."

A woman claiming to be Yagiri Namie had exposed the names of both Mikado and herself, stirring a

commotion.

Unable to comprehend immediately what had happened, Anri was momentarily dazed.

And then Saki, looking towards the screen from the side, tilted her head curiously.

“Huh? The chatroom you’re looking at, Sonohara-san... Is it the one Kanra-san manages?”

“Eh?”

Anri blurted, surprised at Saki mentioning the administrator’s name.

“Do you know this chatroom, Mikajima-san?!”

“Yeah. The one called Saki is me. By the way, Bakyura is Masaomi, you know?”

“...”

Faced with the truth so abruptly, Anri stiffened.

But Saki, without any ill intention, continued to say things that brought forth further chaos in Anri.

“Kanra-san’s Izaya-san... Did you know when you joined?”

“... ..? ...?! ...eh?”

Anri gaped, unable to understand what had been said.

She was utterly unable to handle the onslaught of information, and moreover, the stir of Saika, that had been reverberating in her heart since before, only grew louder.

Anri, struck by giddiness, swayed on her feet, but -

A nostalgic voice rang out towards her.

“Anri-chan...?”

It was a voice she had only last heard a few days ago, but to Anri right now it was a truly nostalgic voice. The voice of the girl who had always helped her, when she had been bullied by her classmates in middle school.

The friend that had accepted the frame, and herself within it.

To Sonohara Anri, who called herself a parasite, this was the dazzling host **she had once clung to**.

Thinking it a hallucination, Anri looked up, and there was the familiar face.

“Harima... -san...?”

It was a person she could never have met at this time in this place, normally.

Anri mumbled her name unconsciously, and Harima Mika ran up to her.

“What’s wrong?! At this kind of time...”

At Mika’s exclamation, Anri hesitated, as she replied:

“I had something I wanted to discuss with Celty-san... You too, Harima-san, why...?”

She was aware that Harima Mika came to this apartment at times to teach how to cook traditional pickled sandfish and other dishes. From the hotpot they had had together Anri knew she was acquainted to Celty and Shinra as well, but running into her at this time of night was not normal.

“Ah - ... A lot of things happened. No, they’re still happening, I mean...”

“?”

Just as Anri tilted her head at Mika’s mumbling, several figures neared them from behind Mika.

“Oh? Isn’t that Anri-chan?”

“...oh, it’s Sonohara *no jou-chan*...”

“Don’t push yourself, Kadota!”

It was the usual van gang, but Karisawa was absent.

Anri felt uneasy at this, but more worrying was how pale Kadota was, and how he appeared to struggle with even walking.

Visible behind him was Yagiri Seiji, leaning on another woman’s shoulders.

Seiji was wobbly as well, but unlike Kadota, he was not pale.

“...Oh, Sonohara-san. What happ... ened...”

“Seiji! The sedative hasn’t worn off yet, don’t push yourself! Leave that demon sword’s host be!”

“Demon sword...? *Nee-san*, what...”

--Eh?

The current conversation threw Anri off further.

And as if a final blow, Kadota, pale, said firmly to Anri, whose face had frozen:

“You should stay away from the city for a while.”

“Eh?”

“You were attacked by a slasher before, right? That guy with the red eyes...”

“...!”

A chill ran through Anri.

It was not due to Saika's disturbance, but a fear she herself felt.

Was it Niekawa Haruna, or Kujiragi Kasane, or the third party Kujiragi had said was buying Saika?

Anri did not know their identity, but convinced that a slasher, possessed by Saika, had once again showed up on the streets of Ikebukuro, she clenched her shaking hands.

And then Kadota, to her, spoke words of despair:

“Red-eyed folks like him have turned up... The number of them looks like trouble.”



Ikebukuro. Downtown.

“...What is this?”

Karisawa Erika gripped her phone, as she hid in the darkness of the streets.

She peeked her head out from a narrow alley between buildings, to look at the main street outside.

Before her eyes was a crowd.

It was less populous than in the day, but for late at night it was an excessive number.

She remembered this scene.

From the first meeting of the Dollars, one and a half years ago.

But the people on the streets gave off an atmosphere completely different from the one at the meeting of the Dollars.

All of them stood around aimlessly, as if robots awaiting an instruction.

And most unusual of all was that -

All of their eyes were dyed in red.

Karisawa recalled the same thing as Kadota.

The slashing incidents half a year ago.

The slasher Togusa had hit with his van back then had given off this exact same air.

As tens of people were cut in the Ripper Night Incident a few days later, they had by no means thought it was the end of it, but this scene was beyond any expectations they could have had.

“If I were lost in the 2D world I'd rather go for a disaster film or a sports manga---”

As she complained in her own way, Karisawa considered the situation.

When the occasional normal person came close to the red-eyed group, they would, like zombies, begin to claw at them with their nails.

Most would feel the pain, and turn to say something - but in the end after a few seconds their eyes would turn bloodshot as well, and they would join the group.

Karisawa had been observing the situation from a distance, but as several from the red-eyed crowd had

noticed her and come closer, she had run away to hide, leading up to the current situation.

While she was peeking at the situation from the shadows, Yumasaki had called her numerous times, but to avoid garnering the attentions of the whole group if she were to converse, she was rejecting the calls.

“Well, a ringtone’s instant death, too~”

She murmured this calmly, but in reality she was almost completely trapped.

She had received a message on her phone saying, ‘Kadota-san’s fine. He says to come to the underground doctor’s place, or hide in your own house.’

For now she was relieved that Kadota was unharmed; was it possible to escape this street unharmed after all?

Focusing on her surroundings, she replied, continuing to peer through the gaps in the group: ‘I’m in a pinch. If anything happens, I’ll give my harddisk and doujinshi to you, Yumacchi.’

--They’re just clawing with their nails, but...

--If I got scratched, maybe I’d become a slasher too.

Anri came to Karisawa’s mind.

As she recalled the form of the girl, brandishing a Japanese sword, her eyes not the abnormal bloodshot eyes of this group, but truly shining red, she was convinced there was a link.

Perhaps the fact that Anri had once been targeted by the slasher was related as well.

But Karisawa felt no hatred or suspicion towards Anri, and merely smiled, troubledly.

--Rather than these zombies, I’d have liked to be slashed by Anri-chan’s sword, and wield a sword too---

--Mm---, as I thought, a big scythe would do better than a Japanese sword. Like a grim reaper.

Perhaps she felt no immediate danger, or perhaps it was to cover up her own unease; she merely continued with her own unique thoughts.



“What...?”

Some distance from the area Karisawa was in, a boy, seeing this group, took out his phone.

He was a member of the Blue Square, and on Aoba’s instruction had come to take a look at the place to be used for the exchange, but -

“Oi, Aoba, is there a festival or something today?”

‘What’s wrong?’

“It’s the middle of the night, but there are lots of people gathering.”

‘People from Toramaru?’

At Aoba’s words, the boy looked at the crowd once more.

But he saw no one that could be a *bosozoku* member; only normal people such as salarymen and young people on the way home from drinking sessions.

“No, they’re normal folk. Salarymen and OLs... There are kids in uniform here and there, too.”

‘At this time? Just keeping looking for now.’

“Got it. I’ll call if I find anything.”

The boy hung up then, and moved closer to 60 Storey Street.

And then he noticed.

The closer he went in that direction, the denser the crowd became.

--What?

Between the junction beside Tokyu Hands and the bowling alley.

Just outside a sushi restaurant run by Russians was a gathering of people.

Guessing that there was a siege going on, the boy moved closer -  
In the moment he passed a pedestrian, he felt a pain in the back of his hand.

“Tch...”

When he looked at his hand, there was a small wound. It seemed to be by the man he had just passed.  
The boy turned, while he hesitated on whether to say something.  
And then he noticed the wound was hurting.

He stopped in his tracks, and examined the cut.

...  
It was merely an abrasion.

...you

The bleeding had already stopped.

I love you you

But the pain had not stopped, and was, furthermore, increasing.

I love you I love you I love you I love you you and Nasujima-sensei I will love

And then the boy noticed.

I love you I love you I love you your flesh your hair your soul your blood your voice your memories  
your future everything

That the pain was not pain, but a voice echoing in his body I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you  
I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you you you you you you  
you love love love love love love love love love love love love love love love love love love love  
love.....-----

“...ah, Aoba?”

His eyes glazed with red, abnormally bloodshot, the boy made a call.

‘How was it?’

“Ah, it looks like some idol had a surprise concert, so there’re still some excited people left over. It’s actually  
good camouflage, whatever we do.”

‘I see; tell Mikado-senpai as well.’

The boy, ensuring he had hung up, looked towards the man before him.

“Well done; you act well, don’t you?”

“Yes... Thank you very much, **Mother.**”

After addressing a man as his mother, the boy staggered away, and mixed into the crowd.

And the man that saw him off - Nasujima Takashi - chuckled, as he spoke to the pair beside him.

“This is interesting. Looks like Ryugamine Mikado-kun’s coming over by himself. And the leader of Saitama’s  
*bosozoku*, with Kida Masaomi on the side.”

“Yes, Mother.”

“R, Ryugamine Mikado?”

The girl - Niekawa Haruna - replied, eyes glazed; and the boy - Shijima - creased his brow disbelievingly.

Without addressing his doubts, Nasujima Takashi, having received interesting information from the boy before,  
smiled cheerily.

--‘Tell me everything useful you know.’

When he had given this instruction to the ones under his control, the boy from before had produced various  
pieces of information.

The founder of the Dollars, Ryugamine Mikado, had caught Nasujima’s eye as well. He had been considering  
between putting him under Saika’s control tonight, or having Shijima threaten him into cooperation, but to have  
the other party approach him instead was a happy miscalculation.

Moreover, there was a strange twist of fate.

“Kida Masaomi... To think I’d hear his name here.”

When he had still been a teacher, Kida Masaomi had witnessed his sexual harassment of Sonohara Anri, and threatened him with proof.

He felt no inclination to say anything about this as a teacher, but his anger at being derided by a boy younger than him remained.

“Interesting; maybe I’ll have him dance naked or something. I wonder what face he’ll make if I put a video up on the net and release him?”

Nasujima smiled briefly at this vulgar thought, and then turned his gaze towards Russia Sushi.

He was planning to control Heiwajima Shizuo’s superior, who was inside; but he had chosen to refrain from making a scene for now.

Nasujima had beforehand had the Saika-possessed standing before Russia Sushi bring the mobile jamming devices that were popular recently. Furthermore, it was a modified substitute stronger than the one on the market, such that if his group were to move several metres closer, they themselves would lose the function of their mobile phones.

The telephone line to the store had already been cut, and they had found no wires for broadband or cable television connections.

Having created a situation where no contact with the outside could be made, Nasujima held a massive advantage over the space that was Russia Sushi.

But he was not completely carefree.

He continued to hold high caution towards the being known as Heiwajima Shizuo.

He had the traumatising experience of being beaten up before in the past, but it appeared the Saika itself gave special consideration to the human Heiwajima Shizuo.

Nasujima was calling a certain number, but there was no reply.

“Tch... That damned informant; useless when you need him.”

Ignoring the fact that Nasujima had once escaped with money from his office, Nasujima clicked his tongue.

And next, he made a call to the other party in this business of betrayal - Yodogiri Jinnai’s secretary.

Her information network was reliable so far as Nasujima knew. Most likely she would have some hold of Heiwajima Shizuo’s movement.

That was what he thought, but still, she did not pick the call.

“Shit, they’re all useless.”

Nasujima failed to even consider the ridiculousness of him calling in the middle of the night.

Of course, he did not know.

That Orihara Izaya, as well as the secretary of Yodogiri Jinnai - Kujiragi Kasane - were in the same building.

And that the one at the heart of the matter, Heiwajima Shizuo, was in that building as well.



A building mid-construction. Lower parts.

In the lower parts of the building on which Shizuo and Izaya's deathmatch was unfolding.

Although the building was in construction, the foundations of the lower portion had already been completed, with even the interior furnishing done.

Even so, this floor, with only its corridors lit by fluorescent lights, could be described as dreary, and had no big difference from the rest of the building.

In the middle of this, three young women faced off.

But the atmosphere between them was neither grand nor excited, and each of their bodies sustained an equal amount of injury.

"Haha - not bad, both of you."

Saying this cheerfully, despite the wounds on her cheeks and arms, was a woman with the air of a martial artist: Sharaku Mikage.

"Honestly, I underestimated you. Sorry."

The ones she said this to - Vorona and Kujiragi Kasane - gave each of their replies expressionlessly.

"Under normal conditions viscera would fly, but presently I reject doing battle with you."

"I feel similarly. I have no reason to fight you."

It was not a three-way fight; rather, the situation was that Mikage was obstructing Vorona and Kujiragi, who were attempting to go up the building.

Even so, Vorona and Kujiragi did not have so close a relationship that they could cooperate effectively.

If it were Slon instead of Kujiragi, Vorona's fighting ability could be amplified by up to three or four times, but she had only just found out that Kujiragi could fight.

All she knew was that Kujiragi was not weak, but rather, possessed a superhuman strength.

Mikage as well seemed to have felt this through their exchange of blows, and she smiled innocently at Kujiragi.

"Really, it's true you can't judge people by their appearances. I didn't think someone looking as intelligent as you could be so strong."

"You think too highly of me. If I were intelligent I would not be here in the first place, and if I were strong my life would be on a different path right now."

"How strong you are as a person - I don't really care about troublesome things like that."

And then Mikage looked towards Vorona as she continued.

"Vorona, was it. I'd have liked to fight you when you weren't injured. Though well, if you were in top shape you'd probably use guns."

Vorona, hearing this, narrowed her eyes and kept her silence,.

It was true that she had sustained injuries over her whole body from the steel scaffolds that had been dropped from the building. Furthermore, the gun she had been wielding had been buried under the steel.

But Vorona understood.

That even had she been in top form, the woman before her could not be looked down on.

Even with some cheap weaponry, there was a full chance she would be beaten at her own game.

Right now, although they were not fighting in sync, the two of them could not break the 'wall' that she was.

Between the continuous assaults from Vorona, an expert in martial arts, single blows would be delivered with Kujiragi's superhuman speed.

It was a combination that would have meant instant defeat for a beginner at martial arts, even one with the body of a well-built man.

But Mikage met the flurry of Vorona's attacks with her palms, and dodged the blows from Kujiragi by a hair's breadth.

Moreover, in the instant both of them switched, she returned various attacks of her own, going so far as to land kicks on them.

The process of this attack and defence did not leave Mikage unhurt, but neither party could produce a winning move, and so things had come to a draw.

If Shizuo was a fiend that had surpassed humanity, this woman was an amalgamation of special techniques.

In a normal situation, perhaps Vorona would have rejoiced.

Over the possibility that if she could destroy this woman who had, as a human, pursued and attained such a standard of 'strength', and have every inch of her own skin destroyed as well, she could measure the strength of humankind.

But although an opponent that could satisfy her years-long wish stood before her eyes, Vorona was in no mood to rejoice.

At Vorona's glare, Mikage, who had positioned herself in front of the stairway, smiled as she spoke.

“But let me say this. Whether or not you go won’t change a thing, you know?”

As if she felt it was a pity she could not see it herself, she smiled bitterly, as she continued.

“It probably isn’t a fight of that level.”

As though the whole building was agreeing with her words, a metallic sound echoed from the upper parts of the building.

“Because the ones going at it up there are a guy whose body’s no longer human, and a guy whose brain’s no longer human.”

Vorona replied, resolutely, to what Mikage said:

“There is zero necessity to establish victory. The probability of winning against Shizuo-senpai is nil. The act of stopping his pulse is mine to commit.”

“You use some weird Japanese, don’t you...”

Stunned, Mikage flexed her arms, and smiled guilelessly.

“Now, what should we do? Frankly, I don’t think there’s any factor that could let Izaya win against that monster, but... It’s not like I’ve actually seen his true strength.”

“?”

“He’s a guy to smile as he ruins people, but he doesn’t use violence to destroy them directly. Because of what he says about loving humans and such.”

Mikage, as though sincerely regretting that she could not witness the scene herself, turned her eyes to the ceiling for an instant, as she said:

“So it’s probably the first time he’s giving his all to kill someone.”



A building mid-construction. Upper parts.

“Ah... It’s a good view.”

Izaya slowly lowered his gaze from the starless sky, murmuring to himself.

“The view of the night, stretching on under a starless sky, is the best, I think. It’s the culmination of human creation.”

What he said was, in the end, only to himself, and it disappeared into the darkness of the night.

For Orihara Izaya made no conversation with **the man kneeling amidst the construction site**.

With a dark expression, on his knees, was Heiwajima Shizuo.

A scene normally impossible was occurring.

Izaya, completely unharmed, sat on the metal frame on the construction site, looking down on Shizuo, who bore countless injuries over his body.

They were from the wire, nails, and other objects in traps Izaya had set.

It was a setup that would have easily killed a normal person, but it no more than grazed Shizuo.

Surely there was no reason a being such as Heiwajima Shizuo would kneel - but in reality, right now, his knees were on the floor.

“...”

Shizuo said nothing, and with a dark expression, he glared at Izaya, who was diagonally upwards.

Shizuo had no intention to speak, but in the first place, he was in a state where even breathing was impossible.

It was not pain nor blood loss that robbed this fiendishly hardy body of its freedom.

The first that had assaulted him were dizziness and drowsiness.

It had clearly not been a situation where one would feel drowsy, but by the time he noticed the surge of this abnormality, it was too late.

The muscles in his body lost their strength, and he lost his ability to even stand.

Oxygen deprivation.

He had simply fallen into a state often referred to as 'hypoxia'.

It was not an enclosed area, only a space where parts of the half-complete metal frames had been coated in clear plastic and the like; the occurrence of this strange phenomenon could only be a trap set by Izaya.

The fire, the sudden assault by the crane, and the other traps - all of these were merely arranged to distract from this.

The fire-extinguishing system installed in the building. Adjustment of the pipes from the carbon dioxide tanks - meant for extinguishing purposes - had led to the construction site rapidly filling with the gas.

Predicting the direction and strength of the wind, and leading Shizuo into the region oxygen would be at its lowest density, would have been impossible without Izaya's calculations.

Even as he was filled with a murderous intent greater than ever before - or perhaps, exactly because he bore a true desire to kill - Izaya's focus might well have reached its peak.

It was unclear how much gas had been released exactly; but regardless of the fact that they were in an open area, the oxygen density in the space where Shizuo had stood had dropped to dangerous levels.

Shizuo had breathed in that air unknowingly, and had the freedom of his body's movement snatched from him. If the concentration of oxygen were further lowered, it was possible he would lose consciousness there and then.

If it were an enclosed area indoors instead, perhaps Shizuo would have met his demise by anoxia.

But having gauged it would be nigh impossible to create an enclosed space in the face of a raging Shizuo, Izaya had produced this plan of battle.

How would one kill a fiend blades and guns could not touch?

Amongst the answers Izaya had reached was 'asphyxiation'.

And as a result - a monster that had survived being hit by a truck perfectly fine - now fell, powerlessly, to his knees.

But Izaya had not the luxury to show joy.

'Heiwajima Shizuo was still alive.'

This fact could only mean a threat to his life right before him.

It was possible to imagine a situation without any wind at all, not even the wind usually created between high-rise buildings, but being so effective as to steal Shizuo's freedom of movement in an open area could only be seen as great fortune in itself.

How many minutes, how many seconds, would it be till he recovered from the hypoxia?

Common sense was inapplicable here, and so Izaya did not smile freely.

Normally Izaya would have smiled guilelessly and escaped, but he showed no smile now due to the immense hatred he felt towards the human before him -

And because, most likely, he understood instinctively.

That one wrong move could lead to his instant death.

--I don't really care if I die.

--But if it comes to that, I cannot let this monster live.

--In a world I don't exist, a monster like this, living amongst humans...

--A monster with the mask of a human, quashing people with his strength...

--Love, hope, malice, strategy, knowledge, technique, experience...

--All humanity has accumulated - he destroys completely.

“...yeah.”

The words slipped from his mouth without thought.

Brimming with dark emotions, his eyes narrowed, he spoke; but whether or not it was to himself - no one knew. Even the speaker, Izaya, himself.

“I have to kill him after all, logic or no.”

Izaya erased all emotion from his face, and as he stood on a metal frame, he retrieved something.

It was the same old matchbox, printed with a store's name.

He struck a match - one he once used in his home to set fire to chess pieces - and let the spark of fire fall.

The fire-suppressant gas, released to remove oxygen, was dispersed by the wind, and in that space -

Another gas saturated the air around Shizuo.

It was the flammable gas that had been circulating, when he had first stepped onto the roof.

As he glared at the falling match, Shizuo detected the scent of the gas surrounding him.

But it was unknown if he had the rationality to calmly assess the situation.

The only thing certain was that he had yet to recover from the damage wrought from the hypoxia, and was in no condition to move his legs.

His upper half had regained its function, but he could not stand, much less jump away, or create a wind like before when he had kicked down on the door.

There was no way he could fly off into the sky, either; the gas clogged his surroundings, and he was utterly trapped.

And then the match's fire arrived at the altitude of the gas -

The starless night sky was lit by a brilliant red light.



Somewhere in Ikebukuro.

Being that it was late at night, the number of people who witnessed the red dyeing that portion of the sky was very limited.

Although limited, the population was large in the first place, and so the witnesses numbered in the hundreds - But strangely, the light quickly vanished into the darkness.

From afar it would appear that a glowing roof had darkened once more after half a minute or so.

But the masses witness to this did not feel anything off.

It was only the blinking of an aircraft warning light.

Only a few realised what had happened.

The two at the base of the unfinished building, looking upwards directly: Kishitani Shingen and Igor.

And - a man with bloodshot eyes, looking towards the building from a window far away.

Having **forcibly** escaped from his restraints, there was torn skin all over the man's body, and parts of his flesh were scraped.

The bare minimum had been done to curb the bleeding, but the blood that stained his clothing was painful to see.

With red eyes, he gazed at the scene, as if he had seen a beloved person.

And at the same time, he understood what had occurred.

On the roof of an unfinished building, a kilometre away.

**A Shadow had descended from the sky, and, scooping the flame as it was about to spread into the surroundings, abolished it to the darkness.**

On first sight it could only be assumed that the light had suddenly gone out.

But the man, having observed the Shadow, woven from supernaturality, for longer than anyone else, having been linked to it for longer than anyone else, was able to comprehend the extinguishment instantly.

It was an unusual situation; where it could only seem that the night sky had, of its own conscious will, extinguished the fire.

The man not only comprehended it; moreover, he rejoiced.

Precisely due to his comprehension, he rejoiced; more, more than anyone else.

curses

Saika's Words of Love, surging within his body.

The command of Kujiragi, who had transformed him to one of the Saika-possessed: 'Please stay quiet.'

As he forced both down with his own 'love' -

He spoke the name of the one to whom he held this overwhelming love.

As if crying, as if singing, words of love wrenched from his throat.

"Cel... ty..."

He no more than murmured her name, but for the man, it was certainly a word of love.

He had not driven out the Curse of Saika the way Akabayashi had in the past, by gouging out the wounded area.

Like how Niekawa Haruna had done, within himself the man had sung, madly, of his own love, and controlled Saika.

That he had overcome Saika with a speed incomparable to Haruna's was, perhaps because - as opposed to Saika's love for humans, he loved an unhuman being.

Did he understand what had occurred in his own body?

The man cut by Saika - Kishitani Shinra.

As he gazed at the dark sky with his red eyes, he smiled, quietly.

As if the darkness of the night covering the city was, itself, the object of his love.



"So, if the tiger leaves its skin, as a human, what name do you mean to leave? I'm thrilled at the thought you might leave your name behind as some psycho killer."

"As a human, huh..."

Shinra's smile vanished, and he looked up at the light shining in from the roof -

He imagined a shadow behind that light, sucking in everything; and replied.

"I don't have to leave anything behind."

"A man dies and leaves his name', wasn't it. If you're neither a man nor a tiger, what do you plan to be?"

"That's true. If neither a man nor a tiger, maybe I'll become some lesser-known demon."

Still Shinra's tone could only be heard as joking as he spoke; and he smiled troubledly.

"But if I could stay by her side... I wouldn't mind if I turned into something inhuman."

Chatroom.

Kyo [Well, well, well. Namie onee-sama was wrecking havoc up till Tanaka Taro-san left, but she's suddenly stopped posting]

San [Strange]

San [Maybe she got hungry]

Kyo [If only it were for such fortunate reasons]

Kyo [In any case, who might Rocchi~-san be? This message board can only be accessed by invitation, so most likely he is acquainted with someone. Or alternatively, this Kida Masaomi-san could actually be a member here, who divulged the address under Rocchi~-san's threat... Would that not be a possibility also? Ah, who exactly is this Kida Masaomi-san...?]

San [What blatant lying]

San [Ouch]

San [I got pinched]

Kyo [But at any rate, by the fact that neither Rocchi~-san nor Namie-san left the chatroom, could it be they're still keeping an eye on the chat?]

San [My heart thumps]

Rocchi~ [Oh, thank you]

San [You're welcome]

Kyo [Oh my, it seems you were still here. To stay silent and spy on the conversation while pretending to be absent; what a schemer]

Yagiri Namie-san has left the chatroom.

Kyo [My, Namie onee-sama. Have you given up already? Or did something urgent crop up?]

San [She's retreated]

Rocchi~ [I'm sorry. I have to meet my friends for a party]

Rocchi~ [By the way, are both of you girls?]

Rocchi~ [If you are, I still have some time to the party, so]

Rocchi~ [Until then is it okay to have fun talking here?]

Rocchi~ [Is it okay?]

Kyo [My, my; does one address a lady so easily on the internet? For all you know, we could be faking our gender]

San [Gender unspecified]

San [It's a mystery!]

Rocchi~ [Well---, I understand. You're not faking. Both of you are girls]

Kyo [An interesting deduction, but where is the evidence? Rather than playing make-believe as a detective, I would recommend you be a romcom novelist instead. In the shining darkness of modern society, where one's face remains unseen across the internet, on what basis do you claim so boldly that I am, indeed, a female?]

Rocchi~ [Gut feeling]

Rocchi~ [I can tell you're cute girls from the way you write]

San [Scary]

San [What a flirt]

Rocchi~ [I can't deny that---]

Kyo [What a strange gentleman. Ah, I apologise. I failed to consider the possibility you might be female]

Rocchi~ [Now, what is it? Am I cool for turning my back on the shining darkness of modern society?]

Kyo [That anonymity was ended by the disturbance just now. Due to Namie onee-sama heedlessly exposing the real-life identity of a member. This chatroom is, in actual fact, composed upon the strange balance of

acquaintances unaware of one another's identity. That balance has collapsed, reset; No Side, No Game, No Future]

(T/N: 'No side': rugby reference.)

San [It's lonely]

Rocchi~ [The way you say that, it looks like you know the members' identities]

Kyo [Yes; we were, here, deriving a sense of superiority by being observers with full knowledge of everything; and we have now lost a precious playground. It is a pity, but if one thinks of it as fate, perhaps this cannot be helped]

San [It's sad]

Rocchi~ [It isn't, is it?]

Rocchi~ [There are many things we can say because we can't see one another's faces, but by knowing one another, aren't there plenty of things we can talk about as well?]

Kyo [Oh? What might such a thing be, for example?]

Rocchi~ [A confession of love, perhaps]

San [Amazing]

Rocchi~ [Well, there were times things didn't turn out well for me confessing to someone less familiar]

Rocchi~ [But well, I wouldn't know about this chatroom]

Rocchi~ [After I see this to the end myself, I want to know both of you better]

Kyo [You really are going off on your own tangent. Who are you exactly?]

San [Who are you]

Rocchi~ [Just a passing villain]

Rocchi~ [And from now on, there'll be a bad party in Ikebukuro]

Rocchi~ [You shouldn't go out till sunrise]

Kyo [Why, that's similar to what someone somewhere said. And we were just planning to go out in the city to shake off our loneliness and despair, too]

San [It's synchronisation]

Rocchi~ [Sorry for that]

Rocchi~ [But this place isn't anything special]

Rocchi~ [It's the same on the outside as it is in this chatroom]

Rocchi~ [Because the people you pass by in the streets might as well be anonymous]

Rocchi~ [You won't know where the people you know are hiding, either]

Rocchi~ [And because, just like this chatroom, it could suddenly crumble]

Rocchi~ [Well, later then]

Rocchi--san has left the chatroom.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN | LIKE A DRAGON GIVEN WINGS**

The past. Raijin High School. A corridor.

“So, can you walk all right already... Asking that would be stupid, huh.”

“...oh, Shinra. Tell me where that cockroach is. I'll beat him up till he volunteers to transfer.”

Replied Shizuo, sour-faced, as he greet Shinra lightly, along the corridor.

Shinra shrugged, and asked jokingly after Shizuo's health:

“You were hit by a truck, and you're more concerned over beating someone up than your own health? Though well, maybe not destroying the school compound till Izaya appeared is a sign you've mellowed as a person.”

Sighing, Shinra continued, looking at Shizuo's hair.

“Honestly, I was surprised you'd dyed your hair when we met again. I was wondering if you'd finally gone off the right path.”

“...shut up. I didn't dye it because I wanted to.”

“Then why? Not dyeing it because you wanted to; that doesn't sound like how you wilfully barge your way through everything with your strength.”

“My senpai from middle school said... Ah, whatever. It doesn't matter. Tell me what class that scrawny guy's in.”

His temple twitching, Shizuo expressed his enmity against the man he had only just met the day before.

“Do you plan on dropping out? Control yourself at school, at least.”

Shinra laughed as he spoke, and Shizuo, clicking his tongue, grudgingly accepted this.

However, he turned his anger on Shinra next, as he asked:

“So why the hell did you introduce an insect like that to me...?”

“Come on; all I did was introduce my only friend through middle school to you, my only friend through elementary school.”

“Advice. Think before you choose your friends.”

“Er, are you the one saying that, Shizuo-kun?”

Shinra smiled, and advised his old friend in turn.

“In any case, you should stay quiet while we're in school. It'd trouble your family as well if you were to drop out right after entering the school, right?”

“...”

Bringing up Shizuo's family only served to make his face sourer as he hummed, and reluctantly accepted what Shinra had said.

“Got it. I'll wait till after class to kill him.”

“Why don't you cancel the option of killing him first? What's got you so riled up?”

“...I hate the kind that convince people with all their talk, and then pretend they've done nothing.”

“Ah, I see.”

Despite the fact that Shizuo was making conclusions regarding the personality of a person he had only just met, Shinra did not refute what he said.

Because he understood Izaya was just as Shizuo had said.

But instead of refuting, Shinra laughed and said:

“But if you put it that way, I'm all talk and no action, too.”

“It's true you're always pissing me off.”

As Shizuo glared, Shinra backed away instinctively.

“Wait, don't make such a scary face. Whoa whoa, keep it cool...”

Shizuo, brows furrowed, continued to his old friend:

“But though you make some real shitty jokes sometimes, when it comes down to it you're not a guy to lie. In that sense you're better than that louse.”

“You're exaggerating; I'm not such a pure person, and I'll lie when I need to.”

“...you're the stupid bastard that told me straight up to let you dissect me; when would you need to lie?”

Shizuo continued in the spirit of casual conversation, and Shinra thought, for a moment.

“Mm. ...yeah. I have - this woman I love.”

“Huh?”

“See, if it was for the sake of my love for her, I’d tell countless lies; even become a villain.”

“Ah, so it’s like that... Well, if you’re becoming the bad guy for the woman you’re after, go ahead.”

Shizuo thought Shinra was just being lovesick, and replied boredly, but -

Shinra waved a hand as he denied it, face serious.

“No, it’s a little wrong to say it’d be for her. It’d be for myself.”

“Huh?”

“If I were to lie, maliciously, it would be to her, I think.”

“What’s with that?”

Shizuo wrinkled his brow deeply.

The surrounding students, fearful of him, were staying away from the corridor altogether.

“Yeah. I really do love her. Honestly, rather than love it’s more a desire to monopolise her, I think. That’s why, if she were about to leave me... I think I’d be fine with being any kind of villain to make her stay. I might even kill.”

As could be expected, Shizuo went silent, and he replied after some thought:

“...but that wouldn’t work. If you killed someone she’d just hate you more.”

“Yeah, that’s why - I’d most likely hide it from her always. ...no, I might even lie that she was the one to push me to murder, and make her feel guilty. She might stay with me forever, if I did that.”

“You’re a worse person than I thought.”

Sighing deeply, Shizuo gazed, pityingly, at Shinra.

“It’s because you say things like these so damned honestly that you have so few friends, I think.”

“I didn’t think it’d be you to say that, Shizuo-kun, but I won’t deny it.”

“What’s love if you hurt the other person? Even for love, that’s fairly twisted.”

“Of course, there hasn’t been anything requiring that situation to happen, you know? For me, if I could be in a relationship, live a life where I could say, ‘I don’t need anything; I’m happy just doing my best for her’... that would be the best, I think.”

Shinra nodded as he said this, unshyly.

At what his old friend said, Shizuo answered, blandly:

“Ah, I pity the woman you’re after, really. Be prepared to at least get stabbed when you’re exposed.”

“Yeah... But that woman’s amazingly kind, so she might somehow forgive me.”

“Your brains’ve turned to fields of flowers...”

As if he had grown tired of speaking, Shizuo shook his head slightly.

“Well, whatever. When the time comes, I’ll send you flying to the edge of the sky for her, so don’t worry.”

Shizuo spoke rather coldly; Shinra smiled, and continued, the seriousness of his words indistinguishable.

“That’d be a great help. It’d be even better if you held back enough so I don’t die.”

“‘cause I’m nowhere near as tough as you.”



Present time. An unfinished building.

Triggered by the fire of the match, the flammable gas went ablaze, letting off heat and light, as well as the

sound of slow destruction.

Izaya stood atop a metal frame, but in order not to be overcome by the wave of heat from below, as he dropped the match, he had retreated to a safe zone.

Even so, the explosion from the gas catching fire was enormous, and a hot, lashing wind passed Izaya. Such that the wind would not move him and cause him to fall, Izaya pressed onto the rods of the metal frame and stood his ground.

As such, he could not see directly what had become of Shizuo.

As it was Shizuo, there was the threat that, even while being roasted alive, he could recover from the hypoxia and attack.

At the very least by estimate he would not be able to escape, his legs being paralysed -

Then, Izaya felt an uneasiness.

At the fact that the darkness of the surroundings had thickened visibly.

“...?”

It was not the usual darkness of the night.

The light from the flames had been sucked away directly by the darkness. The darkness was so unnatural even such a description would be fitting.

It was often said stars could not be seen from the city due to the light pollution, but the current situation was as if the sky had robbed all light from the ground.

It was not only light. The hot wind from the flames - no - even the flames themselves had disappeared into the darkness.

A shadow had extended from the sky, caught the flame, and devoured it.

And then Izaya recalled where he had seen that Shadow before.

“...”

Izaya, realising what the Shadow truly was, narrowed his eyes and murmured.

“It looked like she lost her memory... What’s that monster trying to do?”

For just an instant, he looked up at the night sky.

Not even stars were there; there was only the expanse of abnormal darkness.

But he could not afford to focus his attentions there.

Because he was in the middle of a deathmatch right now.

Having concluded this, Izaya, suspecting the shadow might interfere with the fight, began to search for the form of Heiwajima Shizuo with the bare minimum of alertness.

Perhaps by the power of the shadow, the fire did not spread, and was concentrated on one spot.

But no human figure could be seen in those flames.

--Where is he?

Straining his eyes, Izaya attempted to find the figure of a man that should have been turned to ashes -

But then he felt a slow wobbling from under his feet, and grabbed the metal frame instinctively.

--An earthquake?

It was slow, but forceful, as if the earth itself was shaking.

A normal person would have deduced it was an earthquake.

But he knew.

Rather than a coincidental earthquake at a time like this, there was a possibility far more likely.

As Izaya gripped a rod on the metal frame, he glared towards the centre of where the flames were concentrated.

And then he realised.

At the heart of the flames.

Near where Shizuo had been kneeling before was a large shadow.

But it was not a charred human body -

It was an enormous hole in the floor, spiderweb cracks extending from it.

A chill ran down Izaya’s spine.

--That damned monster.

--Did he destroy the floor with the strength of his upper body alone?

There was no question that Shizuo had fallen to his knees from the hypoxia earlier.

It had appeared that his upper body was still functional, but one could not imagine he could have recovered so much so as to stand.

With pure muscle strength, without the use of his legs, he had delivered a blow so strong it broke the floor.

It was unclear if he had used his fists or elbows, or even his head.

What was certain was that the sound of destruction that had accompanied the heat and light had not been from the explosion, but from the collapsing of the floor under that one blow.

--He fell through the hole and escaped?!

--No, or...

There were two possibilities.

The first possibility was that he had hit the floor and escaped the flames by falling through the resulting hole.

The other was that, in the same way a grasshopper kicked off the ground to jump high, by the recoil of the blow to the floor, he had thrown himself away from the centre of the flames.

In either case, there was only one answer.

Izaya tilted his body forward from the top of the metal frame, and looked towards the base of the rod he gripped.

And there -

“ ... ”

Was Heiwajima Shizuo - with parts of his clothes, as well as his hair and skin, singed, gripping the base of the metal frame angrily.

--Shit!

Izaya made as to leap away, but his pace was broken by a violent shake of the metal frame.

The surrounding metal scaffolds were crushed, and the foundations of the building itself began to fall apart.

By force Shizuo tore the metal frame he held away from the skeleton of the building, and lifted it in much the same way he usually did telephone poles and the like.

Losing his footing, Izaya fell; and what met his eyes was the scene of the metal frame rushing towards him in full swing.

“Shi...”

It was unclear if it was instinct or a calculated move: Izaya twisted his body instantly, and made as to receive the impact of the metal frame with the bottom of his feet -

In the next moment, his soles connected with the metal frame -

Izaya's body was flung out, into a night sky with no pitcher or fielder.



Somewhere in Ikebukuro.

“...It’s kind of weird, isn’t it?”

On the way to the venue of the exchange, Chikage said this.

In reply, Masaomi, who walked beside him, agreed.

“It’s true there are more people than usual, somehow.”

“Ah... It doesn’t feel like it’s almost dawn.”

They were going to hide themselves at the venue before the time appointed for the exchange, to see how many people Mikado brought.

They were considering checking out the situation from a restaurant in a nearby building, or maybe from the emergency staircase of a late-night store.

But on the way to the location the two of them sensed a strange atmosphere.

It was not only Masaomi, who was familiar with Ikebukuro; even Chikage, who was based primarily in Saitama, sensed something wrong.

“I have some kind of a bad feeling... This shiver down my spine - it’s just like when the yakuza contacted my gang.”

“Don’t say such scary things...”

Even with his face tense, Masaomi continued to walk unafraid.

But there was one thing that bothered him greatly.

“It would be great if that bastard Izumi Ran didn’t interfere, but...”

He had taken a vicious blow from Chikage back at the car park, but he even so, it was difficult to think that alone could make him back down.

“In the first place, to get even someone like that involved...”

“The Dollars have everything, don’t they? I heard even elementary schoolers are members.”

“But still...”

Recalling the breakdown when Izumi’s group had infiltrated the Yellow Scarves, Masaomi gritted his teeth.

“Well, you should keep an eye out for that bastard sunglasses. He’s the type to calmly throw a molotov even in the middle of the city, if he sees you as an enemy.”

Chikage said such an outrageous statement lightly, and looked over the streets once more.

They were only watching the downtown area from a distance, keeping their distance from the crowd.

If it were daytime they would have considered mixing into the crowd, but they were not so unvigilant that they would choose to go closer to such an abnormal situation.

“So, do you happen to know anything about this? I would believe it if it were the trial for the World Cup today or something.”

“No, but... Aren’t they all weird? It’s like they keep going back and forth around the same places...”

Masaomi felt a disgust exceeding mere repulsion at the situation on the street, and sweat soaked through his back.

--It can’t be that even this is related to the Dollars, can it.

--There’s also the possibility... that all of the people over there are members of the Dollars...

--No, but...

Masaomi himself had heard myths of the Dollars’ first meeting, but even for something like that things seemed strange.

“It can’t be helped; just in case, we should get into a building around here.”

And then Chikage began to move to enter a nearby building.

“It’d be good if we could go all the way to the roof.”

“You’re way too unplanned.”

Masaomi sighed, stunned, and turned his gaze to another nearby building.

“Make it that one. The view from the roof there should be good, and it’s easy to go up.”

“You’ve gone up to the roof before?”

“A few times, back when we were fighting the Blue Square in the past. The Orihara I mentioned before was the worst advisor, but he’s scarily knowledgeable about rooftops and the like.”

Remembering the past clash, Masaomi said this sourly.  
And then Chikage laughed, and patted Masaomi's shoulder.  
"Not bad, juvenile delinquent. Let's turn a blind eye to your past crimes for now."  
"...You're going to be trespassing yourself right now, aren't you?"



Inside the van.

Togusa's van, with the anime print by Yumasaki on its side.  
A space that normally housed four people comfortably in the front and back seats was now occupied by a population more than twice that number.  
Togusa was in the driver's seat, and Kadota, injured, was in the passenger seat.  
In the middle seats were Namie and Mika, sandwiching Seiji; and in the back seat was Yumasaki, Anri, and Saki, sitting side by side.  
If one were to add Karisawa, a regular passenger, they would be exceeding the passenger limit.  
But she was not here at present.  
In the middle of her search for Kadota in the city, contact had been cut off.  
And in order to find her, Kadota and his group had decided to head towards Sunshine, the downtown area -  
"As I thought, we should leave the girls behind."  
Ignoring his own wounded state, Kadota said this to the two girls sitting furthest back.  
"Why don't I ask Shinra's mother to shelter you for the time being?"  
But, uncharacteristically, Anri shook her head, her eyes firm.  
"No... I will go too. I must go."  
Through the rearview mirror, Kadota saw Anri's gaze from the back seat, and sighed resignedly.  
At first Anri was confused as she was unable to follow what was happening, but the instant she had heard Karisawa was in danger, she had actively volunteered to go as well.  
"Did something happen with you and Karisawa?"  
"Karisawa-san... helped me at a difficult point."  
Anri bowed her head, and remembered her conversation with Karisawa a few days before.  
If not for Karisawa, her heart would most likely have been broken by Orihara Izaya's words alone.  
As she recalled this, Anri once more renewed her sense of gratitude towards Karisawa.  
And so she was prepared.  
To face all of the **ache** connected to herself.

When Anri looked up again, Kadota frowned slightly.  
"? Something wrong, Kadota...?"  
Togusa had taken out his car keys, ready to set off, but following Kadota he looked at Anri through the mirror, and he let out a sound involuntarily.  
"O, oi, *Jou-chan*, what's wrong with your eyes?"  
At Togusa's words, all of the others turned toward Anri in unison.  
And there lay one clear anomaly.  
The eyes of Sonohara Anri shone red.

The red light, through the lenses of her glasses, tremored in the van as if fireballs. Kadota and Yumasaki had seen Anri fighting at the park before, her eyes shining red. But back then, in the end, they had not questioned Anri extensively about it, and had had no intention to initiate any questions in future, but -

In the midst of that red light, Anri directed a strong gaze at all of them, and told them, clearly: "I believe the slashers in the city are linked to myself."

And after steadying her breathing, storing away her usual timid voice into the back of her throat, she said, with conviction: "That is why... I must go."



A certain commercial building. Rooftop.

On the roof of a building with numerous restaurants.

Chikage and Masaomi surveyed the streets from the partially cleared-out roof, and once more affirmed the situation in the city.

Despite the lateness of night, it was abnormally crowded.

Furthermore, the chosen area they would be heading for - in other words, the area before the Tokyu Hands building - was crowded with people. But it was not the area most densely packed; rather it seemed that the centre of the crowd was the street from the corner before it leading to the bowling alley.

"The buildings are blocking the view from here... Did something happen around Russia Sushi?"

"Hey---, the way those guys are moving's kind of weird, isn't it. It's robotic, maybe, or looping... like the characters in the background of a game, isn't it?"

Chikage said this carefreely, but in contrast, Masaomi was agitated by the abnormal scene.

"Shit... What's going on..."

"Hey, those people, are their eyes red?"

"Eh?"

"Though I can't see very well from here... And, the expressway's in the way, so it's hard to see the end of the road from here."

A flyover, part of the Metropolitan Expressway, came between their position and the ground, such that it was difficult to see the area where 60 Storey Street and Otowa Street intersected.

"If we were about as high up as the Amlux or Sunshine building, we'd be able to see..."

Masaomi looked sideways towards the Amlux building directly across from the Hands building, the two sandwiching the highway.

But aside from the fact that it would be nigh on impossible to sneak all the way up to the rooftop of the Amlux building, and even if the observation deck at Sunshine operated 24 hours, it would most likely take quite some time to get there and back.

"Well, it's probably good to have some view of Sunshine as well."

And then Chikage, who had continued to observe the city, noticed one unusual thing.

Around the area in front of the Hands building, a group visibly unlike normal civilians had appeared.

All of them wore blue knit caps or balaclavas, and formed a single concentrated point amidst the night crowd.

At the sight of the small group dyed in blue and its cohesion, Masaomi gripped the railing tightly.

“They’re here... It’s the Blue Square.”



In front of Russia Sushi.

“The guests are here?”

A van had stopped in front of Tokyu Hands, and youths wearing strange shark balaclavas appeared; seeing this, Nasujima snickered.

“Don’t touch them yet. Control the Saika crowd, won’t you? I’ll instruct as to the timing. It’d be troublesome if there was an opening and the people from the sushi place escaped.”

“...Yes, Mother.”

As he stroked the blank-eyed face of Haruna, Nasujima grinned.

“Ryugamine Mikado, huh... Just his name was eye-catching enough, so I’ve forgotten his face already.”

Nasujima had tried to remember his past student, but he had not been from the class Nasujima had been in charge of, and was a boy, so Nasujima had completely forgotten his face.

“Well; to think an unspecial guy like that would be the boss of the Dollars. What’s happening to young people these days?”

As he sniggered, he looked around at Haruna, who was blank-eyed, and Shijima, whose eyes were fearful, as he continued.

“Uneducated, don’t you think?”

At the sarcasm of the former teacher, neither Shijima nor Haruna replied.



Mixed-used building. Rooftop.

“So, which is Ryugamine Mikado? I can remember a woman’s face with just a look, but...”

At Chikage’s words, Masaomi focused on a spot in the city.

“Shit... The ones about Mikado’s size are all wearing balaclavas, I can’t tell who’s who...”

They were looking from a distance, but Mikado’s honest face was likely to stand out amongst those of the Blue Squares. It was nighttime, but with Masaomi’s good eyesight this distance would be enough for him to make out Mikado’s face, if barely.

“I see; so they’re going to deal a surprise attack, and avoid getting their leader targeted, huh. That, or it could be that he’s still in the van... And hell, the highway’s blocking so I can’t see the van.”

“They use cars very often, so I don’t think they’ll come on foot or on bicycles.”

"It's hopeless, I still can't see. Damn the highway... And the taxes are high, damnit."

Chikage mentioned something completely irrelevant, and Masaomi brought up another concern.

"Speaking of which, before we came up here... I saw the main road under the highway; somehow it feels like there's less traffic than usual."

Even so, looking down from this roof it could not be seen; all that was visible was a throng of cars moving thoughtlessly across the flyover.

"Too many people and too few cars? Things are getting stranger."

"There's something wrong with Ikebukuro today, after all..."

"Anyway, it doesn't look like the crowd moving strangely are interacting with the blue guys."

Chikage sighed lightly, and turned his back to Masaomi abruptly.

"Well, it's about time; I'll be going. You wait here."

"O, oi, what're you gonna do without me there?"

"You're like the trump card, the main actor. If he's not there, I'll get them to tell me where he is, and I'll call."

With visual information obstructed by the highway, even their opponents' exact number was an unknown.

And even so Chikage spoke with a tone that suggested he had not considered even briefly that he could lose; as Masaomi saw Chikage's back, he blurted unthinkingly:

"Rokujo-san - "

"Yeah?"

"...um, thank you so much."

"Leave your thanks for later. If this were a movie or something, saying this now would mean I'll be dying later, wouldn't it?"

Chikage smiled bitterly as he waved a hand, and started down the stairs.

"Not to mention, I don't know if it'll turn out to be worth thanking me for."

"Eh?"

Masaomi frowned, and Chikage shrugged as he replied:

"'cause if I get too caught up, I might beat up even your friend."



Residential street.

Mamiya Manami was an avenger.

It could be said that she was living solely to despise Orihara Izaya.

She was meant to have died by a suicide oath; the only driving force she had to continue living now was her hatred towards Izaya, who had degraded her determination and despair.

In that sense, it could also be said that Izaya was keeping her alive.

Manami was aware of this herself, but she had no particular thoughts on the matter.

If she could see Izaya's face as he died in despair, her life would be complete.

It was this belief that enabled her to commit a crime.

Throwing a live head out in front of Ikebukuro station, in broad daylight.

Exposing the existence of Cely Sturluson's head to the world, and thereby seizing one of Izaya's advantages.

She had not considered so far as to how exactly Izaya would suffer as a result.

She had done it because she had thought he would hate it; that was all.

And now as well, for similar reasons, she was acting without thought to the consequences.

"...next would be here."

She muttered to herself, voice cold, as she looked up to a small building on a residential street.

Yodogiri Jinnai.

A broker rival to Orihara Izaya.

Information logged in a computer in Izaya's office at one of his safehouses.

Not only that; she had stolen all of the information in Izaya's personal computer, and copied it to the USB drive in her pocket.

In order to pass the data to Izaya's enemy Yodogiri, she was seeking out his hideouts one by one.

But after ten of them still she had encountered no building with any sign of people.

She had broken into some of them, to no avail.

She was aware of the danger of her actions, but she felt she would not mind much if Yodogiri found and killed her.

He was an enemy of a level Izaya had to guard against.

It would be fortuitous if she could pass all of Izaya's data to such a character.

It would be pity not to see Izaya suffering in the flesh, but if she were killed here and now it would only mean her driving force had only lasted her so long.

As she justified her actions with this twisted logic, she made to break into this building in the same way, but -

She stopped in her tracks by the back door.

The lights were visibly on on the other side of the frozen glass.

"..."

On alert, as she peeked to see the situation -

There was the sound of a key turning from the inside, and from the opened door a young man appeared.

He wore pajamas stained liberally with red, and one leg dragged along what appeared like a cast.

There was no way this could be normal; he emitted the air of a victim in a murder case, or, conversely, an assailant after a bloodbath.

Furthermore, behind his glasses, his eyes were unnaturally bloodshot..

"...Possessed by Saika."

As she murmured this under her breath, Manami felt no fear.

If he was possessed by Saika, he could be under Niekawa Haruna.

Perhaps Izaya had read her moves, and had him come to Yodogiri's hideout beforehand.

Those were her thoughts, but she quickly realised this might not be the case.

Because the man's face was familiar.

She had seen it in a photograph when she was investigating everything of Izaya for her revenge.

--This is... The underground doctor...

--Shinra, yes, Kishitani Shinra.

She remembered that much as Izaya had countless pawns, the only human he could call a friend was this underground doctor.

Why was this man here?

"...ah, evening. Don't be shocked. I'm not anyone suspicious."

The man smiled as he limped along on one leg.

Probably instead of a crutch, he gripped a mop he must have gotten hands on in the building.

"Kishitani... Shinra-san."

"Oh, why do you know my name?"

Still red-eyed, Shinra cocked his head.

As expected - he was not subordinate to Niekawa.

And Manami began to contemplate other matters.

--A friend of Orihara Izaya.

--Would it hurt that man if his friend were to die?

As she turned her attentions to the ice pick hidden at her breast, Manami went through these dangerous thoughts.

On the other hand, although Shinra's eyes indicated possession by Saika, he waved towards Manami like a normal human being.

"Could it be I've examined you before? If that's the case I have a request."

Shinra came closer as he said this; Manami hesitated as to whether she should draw her ice pick, and with her hand still extended towards it she asked him:

"Hey, Kishitani-san, do you know someone called Orihara Izaya?"

"Hm? He happens to be a friend, why?"

"I don't know much about friendship, but... What did you think when he was stabbed recently?"

Not asking about the man in the bloodstained nightclothes would make her rather odd from any bystander's perspective - but Shinra thought on her question seriously, and replied as he recalled.

"Eh... I might have thought that he probably deserved it."

"..."

"And when the call came I just said, 'Oh, I see,' and hung up, too. Was that bad of me?"

"No. It was all his own fault, so I think that's a natural reaction."

Manami sighed deeply, and her hand left the ice pick at her bosom.

What Shinra said was unquestionably the truth, but as his words deviated from the conventional image of friendship, she thought killing him would be meaningless.

Perhaps Izaya was a man to laugh and watch as his friend died before him.

That was probably exactly why she held such hatred towards him.

Then she said, calmly, a single sentence.

"Uh, your wounds, are they all right?"

"Ah, yeah. Thank you. It hurts a lot, but I'm fine."

Unwitting of the fact that the girl before him was the very one responsible for exposing Celty's head to the world, Shinra replied apologetically.

"Um, it's not very becoming of me to say this, but... Can I borrow your phone?"

"...yes?"

"There's a place I need to go, but I don't have my phone... I need to call a taxi company, and my foster mother, and my father... No, not my father."

Mumbling while his eyes were dyed through with red made for an uncanny scene, but after some thought, Manami lent Shinra her shoulder for support.

"Ah, no, it's fine; I can walk on my own."

"It must hurt."

"A girl shouldn't lend a shoulder to some stranger at this time of night."

To the strange concern of the red-eyed man, Manami replied, expressionlessly:

"No, it's all right. In exchange, there's something I'd like to ask."

"?"

"About Orihara Izaya."

Manami requested, her voice mechanically even and without much inflection:

"Please tell me what you know, of what that man truly hates."

"Why?"

"I want to make him suffer as much as I can, and kill him."

Her words concealed nothing, and as Shinra heard them he smiled slightly while dragging his leg forward.

"Say, is that feeling of the same nature as, maybe, envy? It's love; love."

"No."

Manami neither smiled nor showed any anger, and denied it coolly.

"What he... hates, huh... Ah ow ow ow."

As Shinra walked, he groaned occasionally, as if his joints were aching.

However he was smiling slightly, and with his red eyes he resembled a strange pierrot.

Shinra, having decided to hail a taxi by the main road for now, headed in that direction, and meanwhile recalled the past as he made an answer to the girl's question.

"Yeah... Generally speaking, Izaya does not despair over humanity. Which is why, when it comes to human relationships, or showing the ugly parts of humanity, or betrayal, or death, he doesn't feel any hatred."

"..."

"But I don't feel it's because Izaya has a strong heart. It's the opposite, in fact."

"?"

Manami creased her brow.

In the meantime Shinra was leaning on her shoulder, and as they walked slowly down the nighttime street he continued.

"He might seem cold-blooded, but he's more human and his heart more brittle than anyone else. So much so that if it was filled with human love or betrayal, it'd break easily. Which is why, I think, he chose from the start to avoid it all, to love humanity. You understand? Not to accept, not to face it. To avoid it."

"Avoid...?"

"Yes. It's something like how a windssock\* flies. On first sight mouth wide open, like he's smiling and accepting everything, with a huge capacity... But in reality it's a cylinder with no bottom. That's why any amount can go through the mouth. And he can love anything."

Shinra's smile never changed, as he told Manami what he thought of his friend's character.

"Ah, sorry. Not his true nature; what he hates, was it."

Then Shinra closed his eyes for a moment and sighed lightly, as he said:

"What he hates, would probably be... to feel real pain, or heat, or suffering, I think."

(T/N: \*Koinobori.)



Ikebukuro. In a certain office.

"Kahah..."

With a cough, Izaya's breathing restarted.

The air he expelled was spattered with blood.

When he attempted to grasp the situation with his rationality, a fierce pain assaulted him.

"...!"

For a moment, he forgot even who he was, or why he was here.

The inability to differentiate the intense pain from heat cast an illusion that his whole body was on fire.

The pain running through his entire body did not even allow for him to lose consciousness.

--I'm - still alive.

Izaya was not one to promote the idea of mind over matter.

But he would not deny it either.

With all of his strength, he pushed the pain back desperately and forced his mind to think.

--What happened?

--I fell... from the metal frame...

It was an impact so great even a memory from only ten seconds ago had blurred.

He thought back, hard, as if recalling a memory from ten years ago; and somehow, arrived at an answer.

--Right, he - hit me.

--That monster - used that metal frame on me, like a bat with a baseball.

"...beast."

He spoke this angrily.

Had his opponent been human, Izaya would have praised their fighting ability, even if the wounds they had dealt him were fatal.

But Izaya did not recognise Heiwajima Shizuo as human.

He could only feel the nagging pain, as if it were eating through his body.

It appeared somehow that he was in a building.

He had some impression that after being hit, a shock had gone through his back; and there had been the sound of glass breaking.

"..."

As he looked around, lying face-up on the ground, he saw a number of work desks.

It seemed to be the interior of some office.

--I was lucky.

It seemed that after being hit by Shizuo, he had broken a glass window and landed in the next building.

The window might have served as a cushion, for despite the splinters and shards that had pierced his clothing, miraculously, his arteries remained unsevered.

Blood flowed from the shallow cuts all over his body; and Izaya turned his eyes to the broken window.

The situation outside was unclear.

But he could say one thing with certainty.

--He'll come to finish me off.

The truth, equivalent to a death sentence, shook Izaya's heart.

--In other words - it's not over yet.

The very instant after he thought that -

The sound of glass breaking came from above.

There was only one thing imaginable.

Heiwajima Shizuo had most likely leapt across to this building.

He could kick even a truck aside; with that leg strength, it was presumable that crossing the width of a narrow road would be easy.

Few with the same leg power would attempt something like this over a gap between such tall buildings, where falling would mean going down head first.

--If only he'd fallen.

That was what Izaya thought for a moment, but as he remembered how the forklift, despite falling from that same height, had been sent flying, he corrected himself.

--...No, he probably wouldn't die even if he fell.

--And what's my plan, looking forward to death like this?

--It'd be meaningless if I don't exterminate that monster.

After grinding his teeth for some time over these thoughts, Izaya cracked a smile.

"That's right."

He clenched his fists tightly, ensuring his nerves were still connected.

And, enduring the pain through his whole body, he slowly stood.

"I came to exterminate a monster."

What brought back his strength was perhaps sheer will; the power of his love towards humanity.

However, of the humans he loved, no one face appeared in his mind.

Not the parents that had raised him.

Not the sisters who idolised him.

Not the face of the woman with the brother complex, who he had employed as his secretary.

Not the face of his eccentric friend, the first to have seen through him to his true nature.

Not the faces of those he had ruined, filled with despair.

Not the faces of the gullible ones he had helped, now and then, on one whim or another.

Not the faces of the youths who were, at this moment, on the boundary between destruction and their everyday lives.

No one person appeared in his mind.

And even so, he continued loving humanity.

The image of humanity he held onto was empty, but in spite of this, Orihara Izaya stood.

“Not to run.”

When Heiwajima Shizuo reached the bottom of the stairs, the door of the office was left open.

“...”

He had no words.

‘Where are you, fleaaa!’ would be what he would have shouted in a scene such as this, under normal circumstances; but the present situation was clearly not the norm.

He had bottled even his yelling into himself, converting it to energy to annihilate the man Orihara Izaya.

He slowly walked to the centre of the office, and noticed that the floor near the middle had been stained with blood.

Putting aside the fact that his anger and hatred were directed at Izaya alone, the reason behind his transformation into a mindlessly raging beast was, perhaps, the accumulation of the days he had come to wish for.

Having carelessly leapt too far, Shizuo had broken the windows on the floor above and thus entered the building, but he had not destroyed the floor to go down.

The lights were out, so it was difficult to imagine anyone would have been there to be needlessly involved.

Even so, to Shizuo, filled with anger, his instincts made a warning.

It was due to his countless fights with Izaya that he knew.

So long as he did not see Izaya dying by his hand before him, Izaya would not be dead.

If Izaya was buried in debris, he could not rest till he saw a body.

A situation where the corpse could disappear would be an opportunity to Izaya.

Shizuo did not understand it on an intellectual level, but having fought for so many years, essentially attempting to kill one another, the understanding came naturally.

It would be meaningless if Izaya was not killed in a way that could be witnessed firsthand.

Even if he were encased in concrete and sunk to the bottom of the sea, so long as he was alive at the point he disappeared beneath the surface, there would be no peace of mind.

Even if he truly died, the uneasiness alone would persist on the streets of the city.

Even if a body were to truly be found under the debris, people would wonder:

--Had that corpse really been Orihara Izaya's?

And in that way, the uneasiness would have lived on in those who had known Orihara Izaya.

Heiwajima Shizuo was here to prevent that.

To confirm with his own eyes when Orihara Izaya was wiped off the earth.

It was unclear how much rationality Shizuo still possessed, but if he were his usual self, he would most likely say the following.

That he was here not completely due to how Izaya had made him suffer.

That it was entirely his own selfishness.

However, it was also true that had Izaya's malice been directed at only himself, this situation would not have come to be.

Izaya's malice had involved the ones around him - with his cherished friend Vorona first and foremost, to

Awakusu Akane and Shinra, to Celty, Tom, and beyond; it was this situation that had pushed Shizuo to this. On some level, it was ironic.

If it had been Shizuo from before his fight with Saika, before his perception of his own power had changed, If it had been Shizuo before his meeting with Awakusu Akane, whereupon he had gained awareness on how he could use his power to protect,

If it had been Shizuo when he had been consumed by his own violence, and thus distanced himself from his surroundings,

Perhaps he would not have been standing here.

Or perhaps, even if he stood here, he would have been yelling as he gave chase, as always.

But it was not so.

It was because Heiwajima Shizuo had accepted people and forged bonds with them - that he had grown angry when they had gotten hurt, suppressed his anger within himself to this extent, and erupted in this manner.

Even if it could only result in a tragedy, he could not stop.

In a way, bonds to others had become the single greatest weakness of the demon Heiwajima Shizuo.

And -

Now, Shizuo was plunged into the most undesirable of situations.

He could not see Orihara Izaya.

With a bloodstain as the only remnant, Izaya had vanished from the office.

It was possible he intended a surprise attack.

After scanning his surroundings, Shizuo began to lift the work desks with one hand each.

But it did not appear Izaya was hiding beneath any of them.

He should not have had the time to set a trap like the one before, with the fire and gas.

“...”

Shizuo left the office, and looked around at the surroundings.

Other than the green panel indicating the emergency exit, there was one other source of light.

It was the display for the lift.

As he moved closer, wordlessly, Shizuo confirmed that the light was moving.

It showed that the lift was steadily travelling downwards from this floor.

Of course, there was a possibility that the movement of the lift was a distraction, and Izaya was still on this floor.

But in that case, it would only be another round of escaping.

Despite having said to himself that he would not run, bafflingly enough, Izaya had disappeared from the building.

Shizuo had not heard what Izaya had murmured then, but he had gathered that Izaya was honestly intending to kill him.

He did not know what Izaya was planning, and so Shizuo, in a state where he could not think himself, moved, slowly, back into the office.

And he stuck his face out of the broken window.

It was possible that Izaya would push him from behind; or, if Izaya had gone to the floor above while he had been distracted by the lift, he could be hung by the neck with a rope or the like.

But Izaya understood that such things would not work.

Which was why, now - **Shizuo spotted him.**

The movement of the lift had been no distraction; he had purely used it to leave the building.

As he saw the shadowy figure, clad in the usual black and running down the dark road, Shizuo's expression did not shift in the slightest.

And as if it were a perfectly natural course of action, he planted his foot on the frame of the window -  
And, as though he were merely walking down stairs, he stepped out onto the air.



Back road.

“Oh my, isn’t that you, Orihara-kun? Why such a hurry?”

“...”

As Izaya exited the building, Shingen, in his gas mask, asked this, but Izaya merely glanced at him, and ran off without a word.

“Fuumu... What’s going on, Igor-kun? I realise I put up with being ignored by younger people more than I thought.”

“It can’t be that you haven’t ever been ignored before?”

“I wonder why you speak as if it’s natural for me to be ignored? He’s one of the few close friends my son has, you know - I’m not sure how true that is, apparently he’s also the one who stabbed my son once and got the police involved?! He should show more respect...”

Disregarding Shingen’s nonsensical rambling, Igor was looking up.

“...Hey! Even you ignore me, Igor-kun?! Even ignoring that you’re younger than me, it’d be troublesome if you forgot I’ve paid to hire you! Despite my magnanimity as a person, to make an employee a friend, to the extent I could stick a photo of me flirting with my new wife in your New Year’s card... Uooooh?!”

Halfway through his sentence Igor grabbed him by the scruff of his neck.

In a fluid movement, he knocked Shingen against the wall lightly, and Shingen yelled.

“Goh?! What are you doing! Jealous over my new wife?!”

“Sorry, but...”

Just as Igor was about to reply to Shingen’s protests -

A person landed where Shingen was standing only seconds before.

“...?!”

“It was a dangerous spot, so...”

Shingen was shocked; and the man who had alighted on the ground before him wordlessly identified the running shadow that was Izaya.

“...”

And in the next moment, his expression unchanging, he sped off.

After watching him leave, Igor shrugged, and mumbled.

“...it’s like the Terminator.”

“Mm. By the way, this is awkward, but should I be thanking you?”

“It doesn’t matter. Your wife is beautiful, so I do feel jealous.”

Igor smiled carefreely as he said this, but abruptly he turned his eyes towards the dazed, middle-aged man sunk on the ground at the end of the road.

“What should we do with him?”

“Mm?”

Having been prompted, Shingen turned to look; there was Yagiri Seitaro, mumbling to himself.

“It’s gone... My... head... the dullahan... My... head.... head...”

Moving closer to his old friend, who had gone into a catatonic state, Shingen waved a hand at him. However there was no response, and so Shingen sighed, through his gas mask.

“So this is the consequence, of having your heart stolen by a being separate from reality. Pitiful.”

“It sounds like you’re saying this is your son’s future.”

Shingen shook his head slightly at Igor’s sarcasm.

“No, in Shinra’s case - he isn’t broken to such an extent. ‘Adversity is the trial of love,’ he’d say, and he would probably go blind to his surroundings and initiate his own actions.”

“That’s a bad end in its own way. ...What are you doing?”

As he was listening to Igor talk, Shingen had taken a magic marker out from his bosom.

“Mm, to think a pen would be in my pocket just like that. I thought I should do some doodling before Seitaro goes back to his senses. ...mm, in this era it would be unoriginal to write ‘meat’ on his forehead. Do you have any avant garde ideas, Igor-ku...”

Shingen turned as he asked this, and stopped as he saw Igor’s face.

“Oh?”

A deeply interested sound escaped him.

The face of Igor that met his eyes held an expression no different from the usual.

But something was clearly abnormal about him.

His sclera were bloodshot and red, and he was gazing towards somewhere in the distance.

As he saw this obviously uncanny scene, Shingen spoke, evenly.

“So you were cut by Saika somewhere or another, after all. But the control doesn’t seem to be enforced very strictly. Which means it’s Sonohara-kun, huh.”

After accepting this on his own, Shingen asked Igor another question.

“So, is something happening around Saika?”

“I’ve been concerned about this for a while... Another Mother’s been exerting stronger control over their Children and Grandchildren, strangely.”

As he heard this, Shingen nodded a few times, and then shook his head helplessly.

“...mm. Really, it can’t get any more complicated than this...”



In the van.

“This is... um, Saika.”

Having finished the main explanations, Anri, as if to give proof, let the tip of a Japanese sword peep out from the palm of her hand.

“Oh---, amazing. How does it work?”

Saki looked at said hand with deep interest from the seat beside, while Togusa, catching sight of the blade from the rearview mirror, gaped as he said, disbelievingly:

“Fuu---n, it’s so weird...”

Seiji was uninterested from the start, and Namie in her own fashion said, “You don’t have to mind it, Seiji,” as she drew fingers through his hair.

Yumasaki, the one who had produced the most dramatic reaction in the van, looked at the blade slipping out from her hand, and quivered for a moment -

“Ohh... Ohhhhhhh...”

He moaned strangely, and, grabbing Anri’s hand, he gazed at the blade seriously, and began to cry.

“Uh, um...?”

Anri hesitated; Yumasaki yelled fervently.

“The promised day has come! I always knew my chance for supernatural power would come! And, and! Can I wield Saika as well?! If so, for the day enemies will surely come, I’ll enter an Iai Dojo from today without question!”

Anri replied, anxiously, to Yumasaki’s enthusiasm:

“Um, er... Firstly, if you wielded the sword, you would inherit the curse of Saika’s love for humanity.”

And there Yumasaki stopped still.

“Human as in, three-dimensional?”

“Three-dimensional?”

Anri was confused, but Kadota came to the rescue just in time.

“...he means if it’s only real, living people, and not manga characters or things like that.”

“Um... Saika isn’t... interested in manga or novels, I think, but...”

The following moment, Yumasaki, dejected, let go of Anri’s hand.

“I see... Then Strategy Demon Sword can be scrapped.”

“Eh?”

She wondered if he was serious about wielding Saika, and, unable to follow his train of thought, was thrown into confusion.

Yumasaki said to her, then, apologetically:

“If I could be the bridge to 2D characters I would go all the way, but I don’t have so much time to matchmaking 3D love.”

From the driver’s seat, Togusa said to Yumasaki, disbelievingly:

“...then wouldn’t it be all right if you used that demon sword’s power to make a nice girl your girlfriend?”

“Eh? What’s all right with having a 3D girlfriend?”

“I think it’s amazing how clear-cut your requirements are...”

Togusa said this with half exasperation and half admiration.

“Ahhh, put that aside! I’ve witnessed a demon sword, a ticket to the 2D world; I need to share my joy with Karisawa-san! Let’s not waste a minute in saving her! What are you doing, Togusa-san! Hurry hurry up up run run run!”

Togusa shouted at Yumasaki, who was pounding at the windows:

“Shut up! Keep your fingerprints off the windows! I’m in a hurry too! I can’t do anything about the red lights!”

As such an exchange went on between the front and back seats, Kadota turned to Anri and asked:

“I want to confirm this... If Karisawa gets captured by this Saika, could you do anything about it, Sonohara *no jou-chan*?”

“...yes. Whether it’s Karisawa-san or the Mother of the people in the city possessed by Saika... If we found the root person and overwrote the curse with my Saika, and then released them, they would probably return to normal.”

“I see... If it really happens, we’ll be counting on you. Sorry.”

“No way... It was me who involved everyone, after all.”

“Oi, you didn’t do anything, did you, *Jou-chan*? We don’t know who’s behind it, but it’s definitely not anything you have to worry about.”

“But...”

Anri hung her head a little sadly, as she spoke.

“If we can’t find Saika’s Mother, I’ll have to hurt Karisawa-san...”

Anri looked to the blade extended from her palm sadly; Kadota asked:

“...would that cut really have to threaten her life?”

“N, no, just on the finger would be fine, I think.”

“Then it’s no problem. Karisawa isn’t someone who would get angry at just that.”

Kadota smiled lightly, and continued to cheer Anri up.

“I say it’s fine. I’ll take the responsibility.”

Feeling the warm kindness in his words, Anri looked at Kadota through the mirror, as she spoke.

“...Um...”

“Mm?”

“T, thank you.”

“I should be the one thanking you.”

Kadota smiled as he spoke, and as she heard him, Anri naturally thought of Karisawa’s face.

She felt the same kindness as when Karisawa had said, ‘I alone will forgive you, Anri-chan.’

Kadota and Karisawa were always together, so perhaps they had influenced one another.

--But I...

--I was always with Ryugamine-kun and Kida-kun, but I couldn’t do anything...

--And I didn’t try to change, either...

Which was why she had to take action now.

Because she had had this conviction, she had made everything clear to those in this van -

But the reactions of those surrounding her were far from what she had feared.

She had imagined that had they all known her secret, they would treat her like a monster, suspect she was the Slasher, or, in the worst case, regard her as if it were the witch trials in the middle ages.

However, the response was unexpectedly normal, and Anri could not hide her confusion.

“Um... Aren’t you afraid of me?”

Without thinking, she blurted this.

And Yumasaki tilted his head as if he could not understand what she was saying, while Namie snorted.

“Even if I had a reason to hate you, I wouldn’t have any to be afraid of someone your caliber, would I?”

“*Nee-san*, there wouldn’t be a reason to hate her either.”

“Ah... I, I’m sorry, Seiji! I didn’t mean what I just said!”

At Seiji’s reproach, Namie quickly amended her words.

Following that, Saki smiled, as she said:

“Surprised, yes, but not afraid, I think...”

Saki said this very casually, to which Anri replied, unthinkingly.

“But I’m... not human...”

Kadota interrupted there.

“Hey, *Jou-chan*.”

“Y, yes?”

“Would you be able to say that in front of Celty?”

“...!”

To what Kadota said, in full seriousness, Anri could not reply.

“Compared to you, *Jou-chan*, she’s way further from human, but none of us hate her.”

At that point, Namie started, discontentedly:

“Well, I - “

“*Nee-san*, read the atmosphere.”

“...A, all right, Seiji. Your sister’s a woman who can read the atmosphere; don’t worry.”

With that conversation killed off, Kadota continued to Anri.

“Putting aside when we first met her, we aren’t afraid of her now - and it’s because we know her. We know what she’s been up to till now, what makes her happy, what makes her sad. Well, not as well as Shinra, though.”

“...”

“People fear because they can’t see what’s on the inside of a person. Even for a human bomb like Heiwajima Shizuo, someone who knows exactly what sets him off could get along with him without being afraid.”

Using Shizuo as an example, Kadota moved the conversation back to Anri.

“We can accept you because we know what kind of a person you are, Sonohara *no jou-chan*.”

“Ah...”

“Whether it’s sincere or just a front, it’s a result of what you’ve accumulated with people, you know? Have more confidence.”

Kadota’s words, spoken casually, entered Anri’s heart.

And next, Mika, who had been silent up till now, turned back from the front seat, and bowed her head towards Anri.

“Anri-chan... I’m sorry!”

“Huh? Huh? H, Harima-san?”

“I knew it already, actually. That you hosted that sword...”

“?!”

Anri’s mind went blank at the sudden confession.

“The details are lengthy so I can’t explain, but... In a nutshell, I chose Seiji over you, Anri-chan... I knew you were bothered by it, but I only ever faced towards Seiji...!”

At what she said, which bore no explanation, the inside of the van was consumed in shock.

Namie and Seiji, who knew about Mika, made no attempt to follow up.

Rather, Namie took the opportunity to deride Mika.

“Seiji, a woman who neglects her friends like this is trash. Also, it’s low to confess at this kind of timing where she can only be forgiven. You should leave her as soon as possible.”

“What about you, *Nee-san*?”

“It’s all right since I have no friends!”

“You’re very straightforward, *Nee-san*.”

As she listened to such a conversation, Anri found herself accepting this easily instead of being shocked.

Anri’s impression of Mika, as a person, was that there was nothing impossible for her.

Aside from her stalkerish tendencies, to Anri she was, essentially, the epitome of a perfect human.

That was why Anri did not feel extremely uncomfortable that she knew of even Saika.

And Anri was not very surprised at the fact that she had known and done nothing.

She had chosen Yagiri Seiji over Sonohara Anri.

Those were words she had most likely meant.

Anri knew.

That Mika placed Seiji before even her own life.

Which was why, to Anri, it was not a matter of forgiving her.

But one thing bothered her.

She looked at Mika’s face, eyes flashing red, and asked, timidly:

“Um... Harima-san, are you... afraid of me?”

Mika smiled, and declared in reply.

“Hey, Anri-chan.”

“Yes.”

“If you’re asking something like this after that, I’ll get angry, you know?”

And those words were enough for Anri.

This strong-willed girl had helped her when she was bullied.

This girl, who she had thought had left her after Seiji, was even now, certainly, here for her.

The world in the frame deep in Anri’s heart shook violently.

Perhaps the frame itself had broadened.

“Thank you... Thank you so much...!”

As she expressed her gratitude, tears trickled from her eyes that shone red.

“Hey, don’t cry. Save your tears of joy for Mikado-kun and Kida-kun!”

Speaking kindly, Mika joked:

“If other drivers look in here it’ll just look like Togusa-san and his friends kidnapped girls into the van, won’t it?”

“Stop referring to me instead of Kadota at times like this, would you...”

Those in the van laughed helplessly at Mika and Togusa’s conversation.

As Anri laughed, she made a conviction, quietly.

That she would definitely bring Ryugamine Mikado and Kida Masaomi into the bonds she had just made.

Perhaps the result would not be what the two boys wished for.

Perhaps it was no more than her own conceited selfishness.

Even so, she would persist in this selfishness.

As Anri faced herself deep in her heart, she slid the blade of Saika back into her palm.

And in that moment, Anri felt as if she heard Saika’s voice.

-- 【Do you plan to abandon me?】

-- 【No matter how hard you struggle, you can’t run from me, you know.】

-- 【Loving humans is my purpose; don’t forget that, yes?】

words of love

At those repeating words, mixed into the Curses, Anri smiled and nodded, not minding if she had heard wrong.

--It’d be nice if we could love people together someday.

--You and me both, someday... To love people in the true sense of the word.

For just an instant the Curses stopped, before Saika’s voice resonated again.

-- 【I said already. Humans belong to me.】

It sounded irritated, but there was no strong objection.

As always, Saika’s Curses continued to echo in her heart.

Saika’s words.

In the end, Anri did not know if they were a hallucination of her own, or the true voice of Saika’s personality.

But there was one strange thing: compared to before her confession to the people in this van, Anri felt the distance between herself and Saika had shrunk.

words of love

It could be construed that Saika was happy that, without using the power of the curse, the number of those who accepted the existence of a demon sword had increased -

But in the end, it was unclear if this was merely Anri’s imagination.

At the sound of a clap, Anri’s mind returned to the van.

Yumasaki had clapped his hands together, and doing a jig with just the upper half of his body, he told Anri:

“Anyway, with this, you’re officially a member of the Guild too, Anri-chan!”

“...guild?”

“The adventurer’s guild. The group Kishitani-sensei made, to solve the current problem!”

“All right...”

Anri had never encountered the word ‘guild’, but as she agreed with the need to solve the problem, she stayed quiet and let it be for now.

“But well, the key figure, our founder Kishitani-sensei, was kidnapped by a mysterious *megane onee-san* with wires from her hands. Aah, that wire was impressive, wasn’t it?”

“Eh?”

As she heard what Yumasaki said, Anri thought of a woman.

“Um... Do you mean - Kujiragi-san?”

In that moment, the people in the van stirred, and turned their focus to Anri once more.

“You know Kujiragi Kasane?”

Namie asked this in shock, and Anri replied, obediently:

“Yeah, she gave me her business card. Though it only has her number...”

“Her card?!”

In the midst of the unrest around her, she recalled further, and continued sheepishly.

“Ah... I’m sorry, but I put the card in my bag, so... It should be at home.”

They did not know yet if they would be calling Kujiragi, but in this situation it was important information.

“So, should we go get it?”

“No, get Karisawa first. It won’t be too late to go afterwards.”

Hearing the conversation between Togusa and Kadota, Anri remembered one more thing.

“Ah, Karisawa-san has it too!”

“Huh? Has what?”

“Kujiragi-san was thinking of joining the cosplay group, so **she gave her name card to Karisawa-san too.**”

Kadota creased his brow in astonishment; and unlike before, instead of Anri, now the rest of those in the van were confused.

“Cosplay... group?”



“...”

Late at night, in the downtown that had been plunged into chaos, Karisawa walked, slowly, her eyes flashing red.

But she had not been cut by Saika.

She was masquerading as a child of Saika, and boldly making her way through the city.

About ten minutes ago, as Karisawa was about to be discovered, she made a gamble.

There were make-up and props in the bag she always carried, for cosplay purposes.

Taking out the red colour contacts, she had attempted to fit them over her eyes.

Of course, they did not cover her sclera completely, and if one looked closely the difference was obvious.

But Karisawa narrowed her eyes such that her sclera could not be seen, and continued to walk.

And the other red-eyed people, for all they looked at her face occasionally, continued passing her as if nothing had happened.

It was clear that Karisawa had been fortunate.

The Children and Grandchildren of Saika were able to detect the presence of other Saikas not their parent.

But on the other hand, it was difficult for them to identify a normal human mixed into a crowd of Saika.

The Parent of Saika - in other words, the true host - would be able to distinguish subtle differences - but for the Grandchildren, who had been ordered by Nasujima and Haruna to cut all who entered this area, the main difference between the Saika-possessed and normal humans was the colour of their eyes.

And, although Karisawa was unaware, the fact that the Blue Square was attracting their attention was a factor of her luck.

She was planning to go to Otowa Street - beneath the Shuto Expressway - for now, but as she started making her way towards Sunshine -

--Oh? There’re lots of people gathering in front of Russia Sushi, for some reason.

--Are Simon and the Manager all right?

With these worries, Karisawa began to move across the road.

But she stopped as she saw a familiar face.

It was Sonohara Anri's friend, who she had met at the hospital's canteen in the afternoon.

She was crouched low on the road before Russia Sushi, and she looked different from the other red-eyed people.

--I wonder what happened.

--Could she be conscious?

It was impossible to tell at this distance, and Karisawa moved closer, going slowly so she would not be exposed.

Karisawa moved closer with such good-natured thoughts in mind, and noticed a man beside Haruna, talking agitatedly.

Further on was a red-eyed youth who appeared terrified of his surroundings, standing straight as a rod; compared to the rest of the area, the three of them were notably special.

--?

--What's going on...

Karisawa moved closer from the men's blind spot.

About half of the surrounding crowd was focused on Russia Sushi, and the other half, for some reason, on the area before the Tokyu Hands building; it seemed there would be no need to worry that her face would be stared at.

With her eyes still narrowed, Karisawa came close enough that she could hear the man's voice.

And so she was able to recognise a familiar name he mentioned.

"Now, the blue ones have come... Shijima-kun, which is Ryugamine Mikado?"

In reply to Nasujima, Shijima looked through a pair of binoculars, as he said:

"The ones about Ryugamine Mikado's build are all wearing balaclavas... He could be hiding in the van, too; how about having the Blue Square lookout we just took control of try asking?"

"That's a last resort. It'd be suspicious if he just asked for the location. If he hasn't arrived on this street yet he might be able to escape."

After voicing a prudent opinion, Nasujima continued, brutally.

"Well, if we take over even the Dollars, we'll have more than enough firepower. Then all that's left would be to have the people from the Dollars look for Yodogiri Jinnai. And the secretary Kujiragi Kasane, too."

"The secretary too?"

"Yeah... That woman was the one who first had Saika possess me. She's probably the right-hand of that old man Yodogiri."

"Speaking of which... It was that secretary woman who first told me to investigate the Dollars."

As he said this, Shijima felt once more depressed by how complicated his position was.

At first he had infiltrated the Dollars under Yodogiri's orders - but Nasujima here had proposed he betrayed Yodogiri.

Yodogiri's instruction had been to infiltrate the Dollars, and make contact with the Headless Rider; Nasujima had added an order on top of that.

Hijack the Dollars.

Now he knew that was Nasujima's objective, he recognised once more that he was in deep trouble.

There was the possibility he could escape the clutches of Izaya and Yodogiri.

He had accepted Nasujima's proposal with that in mind, but now he regretted.

It was too late to think he could escape, and so Shijima settled for pretending he was having a nightmare.

As he searched for as many companions as he could.

"So, what do we do with Yodogiri and Kujiragi?"

"If we use our numbers we can probably handle anything they pull. It's just that it'd be difficult to take control of

Yodogiri or Kujiragi with Saika. We'll bury them somewhere."

Bury.

Nasujima said something equivalent to murder so frankly; and a shiver ran down Shijima's spine.

Having operated an organisation dealing narcotics himself, he should have been used to such savagery.

But Shijima felt terror towards this man, who had the power to occupy a downtown area in the city with pawns akin to zombies, ordering murder so crudely.

Whether or not he had noticed Shijima's fear, Nasujima chuckled and continued.

"Well, I might have some fun with that Kujiragi woman before burying her."

Karisawa heard those despicable words from behind, and as she felt hatred towards this man before her, a strong, ominous feeling rose in her.

Ryugamine Mikado; Kujiragi Kasane.

Both were attention-catching names, impossible to mistake.

--Mikarun and Kujiragi-san; why?

The situation was unclear, but it was certain they were being targeted by this man.

If this man was the leader of the red-eyed crowd around them, save for an army or Heiwajima Shizuo, anyone targeted would stand no chance.

Karisawa gulped, and, with her eyes still narrow, began to back away slowly.

As she did so, she met eyes with Niekawa Haruna, who happened to have turned in her direction.

Her eyes were red as well, similar to the crowd around them.

--Oh dear---. Infected by the Slasher, huh...

--It can't be helped; I'll come with Dotachin and the rest to save you later, so wait for me.

As Karisawa thought this, Niekawa began to stare at her intensely.

--H, huh? This is bad. I've been noticed?

Karisawa averted her eyes hurriedly, and Haruna's mouth moved -

Before she could say anything, a mobile ringtone rang out in their surroundings.

"What?"

The man and the youth beside Haruna both turned towards the sound.

But it was not from Karisawa.

The source of the sound was the mobile in Haruna's hand.

"What's this? It's rare for you to get a call. You haven't even told your own father your number..."

The man stared at the mobile disbelievingly, and said, "Lend it."

"...yes, Mother."

Despite the strangeness of this exchange, Karisawa faked a natural gait and retreated.

In order to inform Kujiragi and Mikado of the imminent danger as soon as she could.

And she did not know.

That the call Niekawa Haruna had received - was from a girl she knew well.

"What's going on? Why do you have her contact in your phone?"

Sonohara Anri.

Nasujima widened his eyes as he saw the name of the student he had once made advances on on the screen of the mobile.

But a vulgar expression quickly returned to his face, and he clicked his tongue as he muttered.

"Well, whatever. I just thought of something interesting."

In the van.

“Looks like it’s not picking up...”

Anri’s lonely voice echoed in the van.

Anri had called Haruna, with whom she had just exchanged numbers with, in hopes that she would know something, but for a time there was only the sound of the call connecting.

“Well, it’s nighttime, and close to dawn, too. Most people wouldn’t take the call.”

“Though if she were behind it, she wouldn’t pick up even if she were awake, I think.”

After some thought, Anri replied to Mika and Saki.

“But when we met yesterday, she didn’t look like she would do something like this all of a sudden...”

Just as they reached that point in the conversation, the dial tone cut, and the sound of wind came through the receiver.

“Hello! Is that you, Niekawa-san! Um, sorry for calling so late at night...”

Anri thought the call had gone through, and spoke hurriedly.

But the voice that replied was not what she had expected.

‘Long time no see, Sonohara.’

“...Eh?”

Anri froze at the sound of a man’s voice.

‘You’re a bad girl, staying up so late. Misbehaving? I’m disappointed.’

The slimy voice came across the phone, but it felt as if it was from right beside her.

Anri had not heard the voice for half a year, but she remembered it well.

“N... Nasujima... -sensei?”

Hearing that name, Mika and Seiji looked up.

It was the name of a teacher from Raira Academy, who, after being admitted to the hospital in February due to severe injuries, had disappeared.

Why was it that when Anri had called Niekawa Haruna, this man had picked up?

Even Mika, who knew somewhat of the situation, was shocked; she stared disbelievingly at Anri’s phone.

“N, Nasujima-sensei, why...”

‘It doesn’t matter, does it. Ah, I’m glad to hear your voice after so long, Sonohara.’

On Ripper Night, Nasujima had seen her holding a Japanese sword, and screamed and fled.

That was her last memory of having seen him.

But the voice that came across the speaker now was as if he controlled Anri.

‘I want to see you. Won’t you come over now? I’ll give you lots of advice, you know?’

“Um! What happened to Niekawa-san?!”

‘Ah, Niekawa-kun’s sitting beside me. Going all ‘*Kaa-san, Kaa-san,*’ how cute.’

“...!”

At what he said, Anri understood to some extent.

It was not clear how, but it seemed Nasujima was now host to Saika.

She did not know if it was the real thing he had, or if he was the Child of someone else.

The only thing she knew was that he had cut Haruna, and was manipulating her.

“Right now... Where are you?”

‘Don’t be so anxious. You know Tokyu Hands? In front of Sunshine. I’ll be hanging around there till morning, so come by if you have the time. I’ll call you out if I see you.’

“Is Haruna-san safe?”

Anri’s voice was urgent; Nasujima replied, astonished:

'Oi, worrying about her like that - when did you two make up? You were pointing blades at each other over me.'

"Please answer!"

'Relax, I haven't touched her yet. Though after tonight's party I'll be giving her a special lesson.'

"Release Haruna-san right now... or else..."

As she gripped the phone, she forced the blade to remain in her body instead of rushing out as it threatened to even now.

This was not the manner someone under another person's Control spoke.

Somehow, like Haruna had in the past, Nasujima had overcome Saika's control.

Anri, having gathered that Haruna was in danger, desperately sought their location.

Just half a day ago Haruna had both announced she would kill Anri and later proposed they become friends, but Anri felt a strange sense of identification with her.

She did not know if it was because they were both hosts to Saika, or due to their similar age, that she identified with Haruna.

Unlike the people on this van, she could be called an enemy -

But even so, Anri was greatly shocked at the fact that she had fallen under Nasujima's control.

But the shock did not end there.

After enjoying Anri's panic for a while, Nasujima laughed slimily, and continued to speak.

'Two more of your friends are coming to the party, you know.'

"Eh..."

'Ryugamine Mikado, and Kida Masaomi. You were close, weren't you?'

"-----"

Anri's heart froze over, and she dropped the phone unthinkingly.

She could not immediately understand what he had said.

But as if to make her despair, Nasujima continued.

'You can tell the police if you want, you know? I'll just play dumb, and **Ryugamine and your friends will testify in my interest.**'

"Wait, what, what have you done to both of them...!"

'Nothing yet, yeah? I've only invited them to the party.'

He laughed crudely, and hung up.



"Now then, Shijima-kun, observe them for a while. Well, though I did instruct through Saika, too."

"Observe?"

Nasujima replied, cheerfully, to Shijima's surprise:

"By Sonohara's personality, I think she'll panic and call Ryugamine."

"If the real guy's in that crowd of balaclavas in front of Hands, the one whose phone rings will be Ryugamine."



In the van.

After ending the call, Anri told Kadota and the rest of everything that had been said.

“Are you serious... Why are Ryugamine and Kida’s names showing up here?”

Kadota, his brows furrowed, answered Togusa:

“I don’t know. But Ikebukuro’s definitely been in trouble recently. It wouldn’t be strange for anything to happen.”

“There’s Karisawa-san’s issue, too... Let’s hurry to Hands! And what’s with all the red lights?!”

The distance between Shinra’s apartment and Otowa Street was not long.

Even during a rush hour, it would have been strange not to have reached by now.

But the van was not even halfway to its destination.

“No, it’s not just red lights. It’s an all-out jam. Shit, what could be going on at this kind of time?”

Togusa switched on the radio to listen to news on the traffic jam.

The late-night five-minute news happened to be on.

‘...multiple traffic incidents have occurred around the Ikebukuro area; various places have been jammed...’

“Accidents?”

‘...also, there have been many sightings of groups engaging in reckless behaviour; the link to the incidents...’

As if in time with the radio report, multiple sounds of exhaust closed in from behind the van.

A few seconds later, a noise, composed of exhaust and music horns, came closer, and a number of extravagant motorcycles passed them.

“A meeting now? And damn it, making so much noise at this hour. It’s illegal.”

Even as Togusa mumbled, a new group of motorcycles passed them.

With a break of a few seconds, a few more, and then more than ten came; at intervals, a large number of motorcycles went towards Ikebukuro.

“The retirement meeting of some group? There’s a lot of them.”

“They aren’t with the red-eyed folks, are they?”

Uncaring of Anri, Namie voiced this bluntly.

But Anri shook her head quietly.

“I didn’t sense any trail of Saika from the people just now... I don’t think they are.”

“Shit... Nothing’s linking up...”

Togusa was angry that the van was not making progress as expected.

He had thought it would be faster to run, but he had not voiced it.

If he were to say that, it was possible that Kadota might really get off to run.

Kadota appeared strong, but he was in no state to run right now.

Togusa had given up stopping him from going to save Karisawa, but letting him push it further was not an option for Togusa.

At both the lack of progress of the van and the groups of motorcycles heading towards Ikebukuro, Anri, uneasy, took out her phone.

“I’ll... try to call Ryugamine-kun and Kida-kun.”

And beside her, Saki, as if to comfort her, smiled and spoke.

“I’ll call Masaomi; it’ll be all right.”

“Ah... Sorry, thank you so much!”

Anri, nodding quickly, called up Mikado’s number, and pressed the button to dial.

But neither of the calls got through, and an unpleasant atmosphere came upon the van. As Anri prayed that they were merely asleep at home, she set her heart on one thing. If both of them were to, by the hand of Nasujima Takashi, be possessed by Saika - Then she would herself cut Nasujima Takashi.

Quietly, Anri sharpened her heart - against the irony of having to point the blade of Saika, that aimed to love humans, at one she had claimed to hate in the past. So that she would hold no hesitation to slash a man who would have otherwise never even been worth Saika's cut.



Meanwhile. 60 Storey Street. Before the Hands building.

"Now... What's going on, I wonder."

Chikage, having descended the building, walked towards the pedestrian crossing, looking to the opposite end of the road as he did so.

It was a place where normally numerous taxis would be parked, but today there was not even one - but Chikage, unfamiliar with Ikebukuro, was not particularly bothered by this.

Instead, the many vehicles stopped at the opening of 60 Storey Street caught his eye.

In the area whose view had been blocked by the expressway before, an unexpectedly large number of vehicles were parked. There was the likelihood that some normal cars were in the mix, but by the youths standing around with blue knit caps and balaclavas, it was unmistakable that all of the vehicles belonged to the Blue Square.

"Oh--- my, for a gang founded by middle schoolers, they ride better cars than Toramaru, huh?"

He had heard that there were many members in their twenties as well; Chikage, thrilled, continued to wait for the green light.

--Not bad.

--Full of fighting spirit, even in the city.

-- Just, well...

While he was looking forward to the possibility of an interesting fight with the Blue Squares, Chikage was still disconcerted by the loitering civilians.

--You'd think they would be more panicky with guys from colour gangs there.

--They're really just loitering on the streets.

As he saw the aimlessly walking group, Chikage had an inexplicable sense of danger -

--Well, I did say to leave things to me.

Seeing that the light had turned green, he smiled and stepped out onto the pedestrian crossing.

"Yo."

After crossing the road, he landed his hand on the shoulder of a nearby boy wearing a blue knit cap.

"Ah? Who are you?"

The boy frowned, and Chikage spoke:

"A friend of the Saitama folk who had their bikes burnt by you guys... Is that clear enough?"

At those words the boy's face paled instantly - and turned his eyes to the area behind Chikage.

"...? Oh, you're alone?"

"I've lots of girlfriends, you know? You look as single as a monk; are you enjoying your youth properly?"

The boy that he mocked smiled as sweat rolled down his cheek, and said:

"Being single isn't all that bad either, you know?"

The next moment, a duo that had crept up behind Chikage swung wooden bats, one after another, at his head.

Thumps rang out, and one of the two bats snapped.

"Ha! You can go to your grave by yourself too! Old man!"

The boys laughed.

In the next moment, the man that was their enemy collapsed to the ground.

That scene was as they had expected, but -

"...hey, it's weird after all, isn't it?"

Chikage, his head bleeding, smiled as he said this.

"?!"

Shuddering, they took a step back from Chikage.

To them, Chikage jerked his chin towards the 'civilians' walking on 60 Storey Street.

"It's also weird that you'd hit someone's head with a bat in front of those people, but... Even with that, no one's looking this way, or making a report... That's strange, isn't it? It's not just on the level of what they say about people lacking compassion in the city. There aren't even any onlookers taking photos with their phones."

"..."

Most likely they only noticed it when he voiced it.

The boys exchanged glances.

Chikage, still smiling, took a step towards them -

"Well, that aside."

"?"

"It hurt, bastards!"

He hit the boy wielding the unbroken bat with a powerful hook.

"Gahyaaa?!"

Letting out a bewildered cry, the boy's body spun half a round.

He was of about the same build as Chikage, but even so, there was a devastating difference in their power.

At that signal, some youths in blue a little further away, who had not noticed Chikage before that, immediately understood the situation.

Moreover, more youths came out of the vans parked on the road, and even grown adults were coming down - but still, the civilians merely looked in their direction periodically as they wandered about.

--It's disgusting, really.

Even as Chikage felt a chill at the crowd of uncanny civilians, he cracked his neck, and switched his focus to the young men rushing towards him.

--Well whatever. Let's think about that after we send them all flying.

"And--- anyway, don't you guys care about what happens to Kida Masaomi?!"

As he yelled that, Chikage countered a boy attacking himself with a punch.

But a nearby boy in a balaclava replied to him:

"Yes; **it doesn't matter what happens** to Kida-senpai."

"Huh?"

With a twisted smile, removing his balaclava, Kuronuma Aoba smiled cruelly as he declared.

"Because we know everything already."



A few minutes before. Roof of the mixed-use building.

“Damn it, it really is hard to see anything from here...”

As instructed by Chikage, Masaomi was staying on the roof to watch the situation.

From his pocket, the sound of his ringtone rang out loudly.

“Owahh?!”

Being in hiding, he panicked for a moment, before he realised there was no way it could be heard from ground level, and took out his phone, relieved.

But at the same time - he felt a strange uneasiness.

He sensed faintly that other than his own ringtone, another sound was coming from behind him.

“...”

His whole body drenched in cold sweat, Masaomi slowly turned around.

Slowly, very slowly.

He did not know why he felt this premonition.

He felt as if he had to turn.

He felt as if he had lost something important.

In that mere one, and then two seconds, every possibility there was shook Masaomi’s heart.

There was even the sense that when he turned, there would be a monster of the unknown, ready to twist off his head.

But despite this, he was unable to stop his body that had already begun to move, and in the end he turned fully.

In the end, what was there was, naturally enough, not a monster, and Masaomi’s uneasiness was no more than an irrational fear.

But Masaomi could not relax.

There was no mistake that a phone not his own was ringing -

And at the same time he understood the reason for the explosive surge of unease.

He had heard that ringtone before.

“...”

In the beginning, he had sensed no one beyond himself on the roof.

But in a spot amidst the darkness, in the shadow of the external unit for the air conditioning, he could see a small light shining.

“...Who’s - there?”

Masaomi’s ringtone continued to play.

The display showed the name ‘Mikajima Saki’, but he had not the leisure to confirm that.

Conversely the small light - a being gazing at their own phone - spoke of the contact displayed.

“It’s from Sonohara-san.”

It was a familiar voice.

The person gazing at their phone seemed to be in no mood to pick up.

“It’s almost dawn; I wonder what could’ve happened.”

It was not a voice he had wanted to hear so suddenly.

Masaomi had come here to hear this voice, but this was an unexpected attack.

As if, while going up the stairs to a bungee jump, he had lost his footing and fallen: this was the emotion that assaulted Masaomi.

The boy stood, smiling.

Appearing on his childlike face, a smile somewhat troubled.

It was an expression completely undifferent from his usual, the exact same as the one in Masaomi's memory.

"Hey, Masaomi."

"Mikado...?"

"Somehow, it feels like it's been a really long time."

With Mikado before his eyes, wearing the same smile as always, for a moment Masaomi could not speak.

The sound of their ringtones mixed slightly to form a twisted sound, that continued to echo across the dark rooftop.

A sky without a single star.

All that gazed down on them was the shadow writhing in the sky.

Quietly, secretly.

As though swallowing everything.

Chatroom.

Kyo [At last, it's the end of this place, as well]

San [It's lonely]

Kyo [Well, perhaps these are the torrents of time. Even had the current events not come to pass, perhaps it would have been the fate of the chatroom itself to disappear anyway. Besides, as with Mix E and Twitia, Bodybook and FINE, the communication tools of the internet evolve by the day, and most likely people would have migrated from this chatroom to new places]

San [Maybe]

Kyo [However, the world changes with the times. Perhaps one day there will come a time this chatroom is needed once more; although I know not whether this will come in three days or three years, or when we reminiscence on the brink of death. It would be good if this system could remain on the server till then]

San [It'll be fine~]

Kyo [It will not. Even if it did, it is likely our hearts can never return to how they were before]

Kyo [And saying any more here would affect what happens from now on. Before we add any excess to the end, let us leave this to you]

San [Showoff]

San [Ow]

San [I got pinched]

Kyo [All the very best, everyone]

Kyo [Despite ending it off this way, it has certainly not been unpleasant. In fact, conversely, for having been delivered such an interesting show, we express our gratitude. We wanted to speak more with Gaki-san or Saki-san, and so look forward to the next chance to do so]

Kyo [Because the advantage of the internet is how we can choose any of countless paths towards the same connection]

Kyo [And so, we wish a good end to all]

San [Bye-bye]

San [It was fun]

Kyo-san has left the chatroom.

San-san has left the chatroom.

There is no one in the chatroom.

There is no one in the chatroom.

There is no one in the chatroom.

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. .  
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**CHAPTER 12 | IF YOU ACT WITH CONVICTION EVEN GODS WILL CLEAR FROM  
YOUR PATH**

A few months ago. Shinra's apartment.

"By the way, Celty, have those three made up?"

'Made up? Who?'

As Celty watched a comedy on the television, Shinra had brought up a certain topic to chat.

"Remember, the Raira Academy kids?"

'Ah, Mikado and his friends?'

"I only know Anri-chan and Mikado-kun, but I was wondering if there were any developments afterward."

'Who knows... What's left is theirs to handle. It's probably not something we can interfere in.'

Reading the words displayed on the PDA, Shinra shrugged as he continued.

"That's also true, I guess."

'It's rare for you to be interested in other people.'

"When I hear about those children from you, Celty, somehow I think of my own high school days."

Celty, stunned at Shinra's reminiscing, typed:

'Stop it; they're nowhere as perverted as you.'

"You're very frank, calling me a pervert. But it's not a matter of personality. It's the relationships, maybe. Well;

Anri-chan's a girl, so her position might be like yours, Celty - and Orihara-kun and Shizuo-kun would be Mikado-kun and, uh, yeah, Masaomi-kun, was it? That kid."

As Shinra began drawing a comparison, Celty asked him a basic question.

'And you?'

"The one Anri hosts - Saika, maybe."

'Don't cast so ridiculously.'

Ignoring Celty's retort, Shinra cheerfully began to compare his own high school group and Mikado's current one.

"Our relationships are opposite of those between Mikado and his friends, I think."

'Opposite?'

"Yeah; Mikado and his friends - they hide their secrets from one another, and go lengths to avoid showing them. I think maybe by succeeding, they want to grow closer than anyone else."

'Well, that's possible.'

Celty went along, nodding with only her shoulders, while Shinra continued.

"Likewise, Orihara-kun and Shizuo-kun hid no secrets from one another. No - Orihara-kun did hide many things, but he never concealed what kind of a person he was. As a result their relationship's opposite to the one between Mikado-kun and Masaomi-kun. And you were opposite of Anri; back then you were exclusively an onlooker."

'Well... Frankly, back then I didn't want to get involved with humans in the first place.'

"That's all right. But yeah, though it was fun, when I think we could've had a future where we were closer, the four of us including you, Celty - honestly, I want Mikado-kun and his friends to try their best."

'Are you envious?'

Celty asked teasingly, and Shinra shook his head promptly.

"No, not at all. See, I'm living happily with you, Celty. I can't think of any life worth more envy than that."

'...Don't say such embarrassing things with a straight face.'

Shinra, faced flatly with being thrown cold water on, continued his loving words by himself.

"Oh yeah - as for me, you could say I'm the completely opposite of Saika."

'Why?'

"If Saika is a girl in love with the whole of humanity, I am a young man longing, continually, after a single person amongst nonhuman beings... you, Celty."

After hearing what he had said to the end, Celty's chest heaved as if she were sighing, and she typed:

'You just wanted to say that in the end, didn't you.'

"Yeah, I just wanted to say that."

As Shinra nodded, shadows extended from Celty's body.

The shadow took on the shape of a cocoon, trapping Shinra's body in darkness.

'Don't say so embarrassing things all the time.'

As Celty typed the words into her PDA, she realised Shinra would be unable to see it at the moment.

And then she realised the cocoon was silent.

--?

--Strange. He isn't as noisy as usual.

As if addressing Celty's doubts, Shinra's voice came from within the cocoon.

"Recently I find dark places calming."

'...'

"These shadows are a part of you after all, I think. A colour that sucks away all light, one only you possess, Celty. At least, as far as I know."

She felt Shinra smiling inside the cocoon.

And Shinra, smiling, continued.

"Since childhood I've never been afraid of the dark; maybe that's because I'd previously sensed your presence, Celty. That's why, even now, blind in the darkness, I can say this."

"Celty, you're beautiful."

(~~~~!)

Celty's limbs and shadows quivered, and as the cocoon unfurled the shadow bound Shinra's arms and legs.

'Don't say such embarrassing things!'

As she covered up her own embarrassment, she rolled Shinra into the corridor, and turned back to the comedy on the television.

A scene unfolding in an insignificant everyday life, in Shinra's apartment.

But the accumulation of that insignificant ordinariness was what built the person Kishitani Shinra.

This blissful everyday life - had certainly birthed something in Shinra.

Not even Celty knew what this was -

And Shinra alone held this close to his heart.

Even as he was laughed at, or feared as eccentric.



Present time. Kawagoe Highway. Before Shinra's apartment.

"Ah, the sky is beautiful."

A man in a white coat looked up at the unnaturally dark sky from in front of his apartment, and murmured.

"My favourite colour."

Kishitani Shinra.

He had returned.

He had gone home to his apartment at a timing just missing Kadota's group. Though his stepmother had tried to stop him, he talked his way out glibly and reappeared at the entrance to his apartment mere minutes later. He was no longer garbed in pajamas, but his usual white coat.

Wrapped in bandages, and his mop replaced by an aluminium crutch.

"Oh? Looking good."

"Oh, you're still here?"

Mamiya Manami, who Shinra had just met, spoke to him, and Shinra tilted his head incredulously.

"I thought I should ask more about Izaya."

"You're passionate."

Shinra smiled as he supported himself with the crutch, and began to hobble.

His movements were exactly those of a normal wounded person.

But the fact that his eyes were dyed red had not changed.

"What... are you exactly?"

"I'm just a doctor."

"I've seen many people cut by Niekawa-san whose eyes turned red, but you're the first to act normally, Kishitani-san."

Having witnessed Saika's possession herself, she asked a unique question, and Shinra replied, after some thought.

"Ah---... Yeah; I must be in the same position as that Niekawa-san. Caught under something like hypnosis, breaking out from it by force, using it myself as well... Something like that."

"Somehow you sound better."

"I had a painkiller injection."

He said this, but from the perspective of Manami, a layman to medicine, Shinra was clearly pale. To the extent that it would be unstrange for him to be unconscious in a hospital bed.

At the thought of hospital beds, Manami remembered her failure to stab Izaya when he was hospitalised, and, clicking her tongue internally, she asked to divert the topic:

"Where are you going, pushing yourself like that?"

"I wonder; where would be good?"

"What?"

Shinra said, to Manami, who was frowning.

"Celty Sturluson."

"Eh?"

"It's the name of the one I love. I'm going where she is to meet her, but I'm wondering how to meet."

Shinra looked up at the sky as he said this, and Manami spoke.

"Is that the name of the Headless Rider?"

"She's a dullahan. I don't completely know what happened, but... She might have gotten her head back."

"..."

Manami, the one who had exposed the head, averted her conflicted eyes as she spoke.

"Then won't she have gone back to her hometown? Izaya told all of us. He said the Headless Rider's memories of her hometown, her duty, everything's with her head."

"If that were the case, I would be preparing to go to Ireland right now."

Shinra gazed raptly up at the sky as he limped forward, and his face softened as he continued.

"Celty's still in this city. I know."

"How?"

"The sky is... Celty's colour."

"Eh?"

Manami looked up at the sky at his words.

There was nothing.

No starlight,

no moon,

not even the faintly lit hue of the night specific to the city, from the atmosphere reflecting the light from the ground.

Having grown used to that sight, she was disconcerted by the unusual darkness of the sky.

Shinra looked up at this sky, and spoke, his eyes like those of a boy speaking of his dreams.

“Celty’s somewhere under this sky; there’s no reason for me to shut myself at home.”

“...”

“It doesn’t matter if Celty doesn’t come home. I’ll go to her.”

Shinra said something that could easily have him misconstrued as a stalker, as his eyes, red and clear, flashed.

Manami looked towards him, her gaze tinged with envy.

“...I’m a little envious.”

“?”

“I don’t have such a definite dream. I only want to make Orihara Izaya suffer.”

Manami showed hesitation for the first time, and unexpectedly, Shinra said:

“Really? I think it’s a good dream, though.”

“Eh?”

“Of all the dreams you could’ve chosen, to make Izaya suffer’s an ambitious one. It’s pretty definite. Having him concede defeat might be even harder than joining the Diet, you know?”

It was impossible to know how serious the man in the white coat was as he commented this. Manami frowned.

“Wouldn’t normal people try to stop me at this juncture?”

“You wanted the normal answer? In any case, whatever humankind does to Izaya, he has it coming. Well, Celty would probably say, ‘Becoming a murderer for a guy like that isn’t worth it; I’ll only let you kill him halfway,’ I think?”

Shinra wove the words of his beloved even in his reply to a question posed by an outsider; and then, gazing up at the starless sky, like a pure child, he spoke.

“My dream is simple. I want to keep loving the person I love, always. I want to be with her always. That’s it.

Wanting the one I love to be happy is a precious dream as well, but in the end that comes second.”

“...sounds like something a stalker or abuser would say.”

“I guess. But however you see it I’d be the victim of the domestic violence, huh?”

Remembering even the past beatings lovingly, Shinra’s face softened.

“But what I’ll be doing from now on might be worse than just punching or kicking someone. And even so, I think it’s something I must do. If I don’t, everything I’ve said to Celty up till now will become a lie.”

He made a lonely face, but eventually Shinra smiled as he looked up at the sky again.

“Even if Celty, with her memories back, kills me.”



Inside an unfinished building.

Kujiragi, observing Vorona and Sharaku Mikage glaring at one another from a step back, felt a strange stir in her chest.

It was not from her own emotions.

She sensed it through the Saika under her control.

But as she was not wielding directly, she did not know what the feeling was exactly.

“...”

In any case, the woman before her eyes, clad in *dougi*, would make for a troublesome opponent unarmed. She had considered if she ought to go back to retrieve Saika, which she had used to restrain Celty Sturluson, but if she were to leave Verona alone here, the possibility of defeat within that window was high.

And just as she began the train of thought as to whether she should request that Verona retreat with her, a minute vibration came from her suit pocket.

Kujiragi noticed that the pattern of the vibration was that of her handphone's alert for an incoming call, and taking out her phone, she looked at the screen expressionlessly.

Seeing that the contact displayed was 'Karisawa (Cosplay-san ♥)', Kujiragi tilted her head.

When they had exchanged numbers, Karisawa had not seemed to be so odd a person she would call in the middle of the night; but having said that, Kujiragi could not imagine any urgent reason for which she would be called.

"Is it all right if you don't pick up? I can wait, you know?"

Mikage, standing halfway up the stairs to block them, smiled coolly.

Kujiragi made no reply, and put the phone to her ear.

"Hello, Kujiragi speaking."

'Ah, Kujiragi-san?! Thank goodness... You're all right!'

"?"

What did she mean by 'You're all right'?

As further doubt came forth in Kujiragi's mind, the voice on the other side of the call came through the phone.

'Kujiragi-san! Somehow I escaped, but you mustn't come to the area around Ikebukuro station right now! If you can, run away to Saitama or Chiba!'

"...I am a little unsure - run away from what?"

'Slashers... Um, tens, no, hundreds of red-eyed people! A man who looked like the leader mentioned your name, Kujiragi-san, he said he would bury you or attack you or something!'

“...”

Kujiragi maintained her calm, but still, she creased her brow.

--People possessed by Saika - after me?

Was it Niekawa Haruna or Sonohara Anri?

But it made no sense that the leader would be a 'man'.

"...Did that man have any special features?"

'Um... His hairstyle was like a host's, and, he was talking to the long-haired girl you and Sonohara-san were with in the hospital canteen, and she was saying weird things like, 'Yes, Mother,' to the host-guy, and...'

“...”

--Nasujima Takashi.

Amongst the Saika-possessed, he was the most likely candidate, from the information.

Initially she had taken him under her control in order to keep Niekawa Haruna, who was under Orihara Izaya, in check; and perhaps, hopefully, to bring her in as a comrade.

But now that the system of 'Yodogiri Jinnai' had been broken down by Izaya's hand, there was no longer any particular need to focus on Niekawa Haruna, and she had essentially left it be.

--I thought I had him do miscellaneous errands because it would be troublesome if he were to act unsuitably...

--He overcame the curse of Saika?

To break the curse of Saika, to turn the tables and become the one in control, one required the mental strength to surpass the curses that spread from the wound.

--I didn't expect Nasujima to have the will for that...

Kujiragi, who felt only contempt for Nasujima's strong 'self-love', could not immediately accept that he had overtaken the power of Saika.

But the fact that Niekawa Haruna was calling Nasujima 'Mother' at the very least meant that Haruna's curse had been 'Overwritten' by the Saika Nasujima had.

Even without that, the fact that there was a Saika-possessed crowd in downtown Ikebukuro was concerning. If he merely intended to build a kingdom with Saika she would not mind leaving him be, but from what Karisawa had said it appeared he had declared he would attack her.

"...Thank you for your concern. You have my gratitude. Please escape quickly as well, Karisawa-san."

'Yeah, there aren't any red-eyed people around me any longer, I think so it should be fine... Take care also, Kujiragi-san. I'll do whatever I can to help, so contact me right away if anything happens!'

"...Your worry leaves me much obliged."

After ending the call, having had a nemesis show up on an unexpected front, Kujiragi brooded over her next actions.

Should she break through here and stay in this building regardless, in order to confirm the end of her current enemy Orihara Izaya; or should she leave the confrontation here for later, and prioritise the elimination of the trouble surrounding Saika?

But just a few seconds into her thoughts, a signpost showed itself in a manner she had not imagined.

"Oh my, what are you doing here?"

"?" "?" "!"

The three women turned towards the voice, and there stood a strange character with a gas mask.

"Oh, you're the one who talks to *Aniki* on business sometimes, aren't you."

"Ohh, you're Eijiro-kun... No - Kishitani Shingen Mark III's little sister, aren't you?"

"Mark III...?"

A question mark rose in Mikage's mind, and Shingen continued by himself, heedlessly.

"The intellectual first! The skillful second! The walking figure - the Chinese peony when he stands, the *moutan* when he sits - Mark III! But on closer appearance, he's normal... That's the kind of guy he is! But well, opposite of a grown man - what a grand scene we have here. Three women gathering ought to be noisy, but from the atmosphere it seems you've turned to fists before speaking?"

*(T/N: Shingen makes several puns here.)*

"If you don't say why you're here my foot will reach your chin before my fists."

"If you're kicking me I would prefer you go for my rear... That aside, I had business with Kujiragi-kun, but thank you for saving me the trouble of climbing all the way up."

Shingen said this completely unaware of the situation, but Kujiragi showed no distaste, and asked:

"What business might that be?"

"Ah - the wire you used to restrain Cely-kun turned back to a Japanese sword and fell; it's on the ground now, so I was wondering if you would mind giving it to me."

"If you paid the appropriate sum I would hand it over."

"If you pretend you didn't see me stealing something I happened to find, I'll let you off for breaching the Firearm and Sword Possession laws. Oh, and I'll even overlook that time you set that strange stalker on Shinra and had him severely injured."

Shingen easily abandoned his revenge for his son, and Kujiragi replied:

"Although it was the proposal of Yodogiri Jinnai, it is true that I, having allowed that, am at fault as well. However, I cannot hand Saika over at the moment."

"Well, why don't we go out to talk? It's about time for you guys to come down as well, isn't it?"

At Shingen's strange words, the three women exchanged glances.

"Your thought process is indeterminable. I wish for a meeting with Shizuo-senpai. There is no reason to descend the building so close to my goal."

Vorona spoke, representing the doubts of the trio, and Shingen, tilting his head in a feigned manner, bit down

his laughter behind the gas mask as he replied.

“Well... Haven’t Shizuo-kun and Izaya-kun run off of this street already?”

In that moment, a breeze passed between the three of them.

“...”

“...”

“...Huh?”

Mikage, who had taken up post in the middle of the stairs, folded her arms and, skillfully, tilted just her head.

Sweat ran down her cheek. Shaking his head exaggeratedly, Shingen replied:

“Was my Japanese too hard to understand? Shizuo, Izaya, gone, already. Returned, to the city. Humans, scary. Shingen, doesn’t lie.”

“I’ll kick your ass, you know?”

Mikage’s temple twitched; Shingen waved his arms and stepped back.

“Well well, hold it. I’ll apologise for messing around, but they’ve really left already.”

A deep sigh escaped the vent of the gas mask, and Shingen said, as if it were only to be expected:

“In the first place, were you thinking a serious fight between those two could be contained in just one building?”



In the city.

One could only say that the vending machine was unlucky.

It had simply happened to exist on a street Izaya passed through, and Shizuo had thrown it as was routine.

In the streets, in the nighttime, the vending machine hit the road with an impressive crash.

Izaya dodged it by a hair's width, but perhaps due to his previous wounds, his movements were not as sharp as always.

In a normal situation, it would have been unsurprising for him to lose Shizuo completely.

Although he was evading the fences and telephone poles with moves that were distinctly from parkour, it was not with his usual speed.

Shizuo was close to succeeding in his pursuit, and parts of the streets were destroyed where he had had openings to attack.

It seemed as though the damage would be on the scale of a natural disaster if this were to continue, but even now the police had not showed up.

But it was certainly for no negligence on their part -

All of the active police officers in Ikebukuro - were already **away on other cases**.



Otowa street. Roof of the mixed-use building.

“Mikado... It’s really you, Mikado...?”

Rather than gladness at their reunion, the emotion predominant in Masaomi’s voice was confusion as he failed to digest the situation.

Mikado smiled, awkwardly, at Masaomi, who was in a shocked daze.

“Is that a question?”

And then, as though having thought of something, he continued.

“If you were me, this is where you’d say, ‘So, who might I be?’, Kida-kun.”

At what he said, Masaomi suddenly remembered, and said:

“Multiple choice. ...One - Ryugamine Mikado. Two - Ryugamine Mikado. Three - Ryugamine Mikado... Like that?”

Remembering the day Mikado had come to Ikebukuro, Masaomi involuntarily let out a bitter smile.

“Back then you ignored the joke I put so much effort in, didn’t you.”

“Masaomi, I don’t think it was funny at all even now, you know?”

“√3 points, huh?”

Slowly, the bitter smile on Masaomi’s face turned to a normal smile, and his eyes began to fill with tears.

“Oi... Mikado, you’re really Mikado...”

“If I’m not me right now, who could I be exactly?”

“I mean... I can’t believe it. I couldn’t have known you were just behind me, could I...!”

Masaomi, having eventually registered the situation, felt rising joy at their reunion, as he shook his head.

“Ah... I see, did Rokujo *no danna* speak to you already?!”

In other words, that would mean the location he had instructed Mikado to receive the hostage was, in fact, where they were right now. That was what Masaomi inferred -

But Mikado’s following words disproved those pleasant thoughts.

“Rokujo-san should be fighting Aoba-kun and his friends over in front of Tokyu Hands, I think.”

“...Mikado?”

“They brought bats just in case, but he isn’t someone easily beaten, is he.”

Mikado spoke such dangerous words even with his normal smile, and Masaomi, in the midst of his joy, felt a flash of uneasiness.

“Oi... What are you saying...”

And then Masaomi remembered.

Back to the time the boy before him had set fire to the man who had assaulted Anri.

At the time Mikado, just after burning a person like that, had smiled.

And, with the same expression as back then, Mikado spoke.

“Rokujo-san isn’t the type to hold a hostage. So he might be pretending to be the bad guy to let Masaomi and I meet, was what I thought.”

“...”

“With the information network of the Dollars we found you and Rokujo-san quickly. I had Aoba-kun’s friends tail you. And the ones we sent to the Hands building said it didn’t look like Toramaru was waiting to ambush us, so.”

“Haha... The Dollars are really amazing, huh. It’s the middle of the night, you know?”

“It just means there are plenty of members still loitering the streets at night.”

With Mikado saying such things, Masaomi remained unable to take even a step towards him.

If it were as always, at this point he might have perhaps been rejoicing at his reunion with his friend, and running up to him.

Perhaps he would have been acting as it was in movies about youth, beating up Mikado with all of his strength, asking to be hit in return.

Perhaps he would have simply, simply pat Mikado's shoulders, happy at his being safe.

But Masaomi could not move.

His experience as the leader of the Yellow Scarves.

Masaomi, with his experience - his instinct wavered against running towards Mikado.

The one standing before his eyes was, unmistakably, Ryugamine Mikado.

But despite that, Masaomi sensed something completely different from the Mikado he knew, and his joy was slowly overcome by doubt.

--No, this is wrong.

--If I run away now, it'll be just the same as before, won't it.

Masaomi halted his steps, and decided, in his heart, that he would not run.

"If you knew, then you wouldn't even need to turn up as you agreed to, would you?"

Masaomi asked this, shrugging, as he decided to continue the conversation for now.

But Mikado shook his head slightly.

"I thought it would be just right."

"?"

"There was something I wanted to show you, Kida-kun."

"Wanted to show me...?"

It was worrying how Mikado alternated between 'Masaomi' and 'Kida-kun' as he addressed him, but Masaomi was more concerned over what he had said.

"You see, Masaomi, you didn't see the first gathering of the Dollars directly, right?"

"...Yeah. Though I heard rumours. Come to think of it, going all, 'Did you hear, Mikado,' and telling you all excitedly about it, I must've been such a clown."

Masaomi said this self-deprecatingly, and Mikado said:

"Yeah... Sorry, Kida-kun."

"?"

"I think it's a little late to say this, but I'm the founder of the Dollars, so far as it goes."

"Oi, that really is late."

It was something he had long known, but even so, hearing the truth from Mikado it firsthand weighed down his heart.

"Actually, I promised to talk about it only when Sonohara-san was here, too, but..."

"Then why don't you call Anri too? You just got a call from her, didn't you?"

As he said this, Masaomi looked at the screen of his own phone.

It had already stopped ringing, but displayed on the screen was 'Missed Call: Mikajima Saki'.

--Saki?

At the exact same time Anri had called Mikado, Saki had called himself.

As Masaomi questioned the meaning behind this, Mikado spoke.

"Though I wanted to call Sonohara-san to show both of you what I'm about to now... I thought it would be dangerous after all."

"Oi, what are you planning to show? If it's porn I'd gladly see it."

Masaomi shrugged, and Mikado continued:

"The gathering of the Dollars."

Before Tokyu Hands.

“Hey, free to talk?”

Chikage turned to Aoba, whose face was dyed with blood from his head.

“You look like the leader of these guys.”

At Chikage’s feet were about five of the Blue Squares he had sent flying.

“Don’t you think something’s off with the people watching us?”

“...”

Aoba replied with silence.

When he arrived before the Hands building, he himself had understood.

That something was strange about the pedestrians.

Despite his teammate’s report of excitement over an idol’s surprise performance, there was nothing of the sort.

Having said that, they had ignored it as it was none of their business, but -

Regardless of the fact that it was getting to be a large-scale fight here, the crowd had made no noise nor any attempt to escape, and were not even taking videos with their phones; this was, indeed, uncanny.

In all truth, the crowd that seemed only to observe worried him, but the discomfort Aoba felt from this was overshadowed in the face of Rokujo’s abnormal strength.

“Oi, Aoba, what should we do? This guy’s real bad.”

Aoba replied, evenly, to his blue-capped friend.

“...Call Yoshikiri from the van. And beat Houjou awake.”

And then, Chikage said, his voice lonely:

“Oi, are you ignoring my question here?”

“I’m sorry. You’re too strong, so we don’t have the time for that.”

“I’m already going easy, you know? In case I kill Ryugamine Mikado by accident.”

It could not be distinguished if saying he was going easy was a bluff.

The only certainty was that the one man before his eyes had brought down five of his comrades in an instant.

“...Honestly speaking, we underestimated Saitama’s gangs.”

Chikage shrugged, as he replied to the boy who appeared to be the leader.

“Well, I didn’t come just to fight, so - it’d be great if you could apologise and compensate for the bikes you burnt.

And as for the injuries, I’ll let that go, since I’ve hurt you guys too.”

“You’re still in the mood to ask for compensation.”

“Ten people got hurt on my side. You’ve only repaid it halfway, but with respect to Kadota *no danna...*”

And there Chikage stopped.

Because a sound familiar to the *bosozoku* had reached his ears.

The impressive sound of half-idle exhaust, and the roar of music horns that had long become illegal.

One of his girlfriends had said she disliked the noise, so Chikage himself had never blasted such music when he travelled - but there were countless other rival groups that did so under the claim ‘Sound Itself is Justice’.

--This sound... The Gozumezu Guns from Nerima?

--No... There’s the sound of the guys from Poroshiamu, too.

As he identified the unique melodies of the nearing horns, Chikage frowned.

A *bosozoku* gathering was occurring at this timing.

Chikage was generally happy-go-lucky, but he was not the kind of person to attribute unexpected situations to coincidence.

The alarms in his brain were blaring.

But before anything could happen -

They came, scattered, into Chikage's vision.

Motorcycles immediately identifiable as *bosozoku* appeared in great number, and progressed onto Sixty Storey Street.

As he spotted faces in the group that had appeared, Chikage spoke.

"Oi, seriously, both Poroshiamu and the Gozumezu Guns are here."

"You're a little wrong there, Rokujo-san."

Chikage's voice had been drowned out by the roaring of the motorcycles, but Aoba, having understood most of what he had said, mumbled amidst the deafening noise.

"This is **just the start** of the lineup."

And as if to prove his words true -

Even more groups of motorcycles, tens of them, appeared; and even cars and vans began to gather on the expressway.

Anyone would be able to tell it was not merely one or two gangs that were present.

"These guys aren't *bosozoku* any longer."

As his face twisted into a dark smile, Aoba uttered words that would reach no one.

"They're members of the Dollars now."



Before Russia Sushi.

"What's going on?"

Nasujima furrowed his brows as he heard the roaring of motorcycles.

The member of the Blue Square he had possessed with Saika earlier had said nothing of this.

Had he not been informed, or had something unexpected happened?

It was not *bosozoku* alone.

People who appeared to be delinquents were arriving in the area on foot, but although he had put many of them under Saika's possession, they said things along the lines of, 'A friend invited me', or 'My senpai forced me here...'; they had all come without clearly knowing what was going on.

The only commonality between them was that every one of them appeared the type to blackmail and threaten others as part of their everyday life.

"Well, fine; if they're a motley bunch it doesn't matter."

Shelving the thought of the group he had under Saika's control, Nasujima smiled, despicably, to himself.

"At any rate, they'll all be my pawns in the end."



Somewhere in the city.

“Got it. Yeah, keep watching them from afar.”

As Akabayashi made his way to a certain location, he received a report from his trusted subordinate group, the Jyan Jyaka Jyan.

“But as far as you can confirm there’re thirteen gangs at least? They’re not in any kind of alliance, so I do want to let them off, honestly.”

As he heard the information across the line, he narrowed his eyes and instructed.

“Don’t join the mess, hear? You should stay away from the red-eyed guys as well. If you get bitten by a mummy you’ll turn into a mummy yourself.”

With that severe warning, Akabayashi hung up.

After a deep sigh, his smile vanished, as he murmured.

“Your games have gone a little too far, Ryugamine Mikado-kun.”



Roof of a mixed-use building.

“Oi... what’s going on?”

From the deafening noise of motorcycles from the roads around them, Masaomi stuck his head from the roof to look down.

The expressway still blocked the view to the ground, but from the sound of the motorcycles it could be gathered that something unusual was happening.

“Shit... I can’t see... Just how many *bosozoku* are there gathering... This...”

And then, from behind him, he heard Mikado’s calm voice.

“Not just *bosozoku*.”

“...Mikado?”

“I’m not sure if they could be called gangsters, but those types, they’ve gathered here, from even as far as Chiba or Saitama.”

Mikado said this evenly, but it felt as if his voice was tinged with scorn and contempt, and hatred.

“Are you saying... you gathered them?”

Masaomi whirled around to Mikado.

“No matter how... But isn’t it strange?! But... Mikado, you hate those kinds of people, you...”

“Yeah; I went around crushing them with Aoba and the rest, you know? But we could barely do a thing.”

Smiling self-mockingly, Mikado spoke.

“I’ve always kicked those types out of the Dollars... But I realised it wasn’t enough.”

“What?”

Despite Masaomi’s confusion, Mikado continued.

"That's why I investigated them."

"?"

"It's strange, isn't it. They beat people up so easily, but those guys, they get so nervous when you bring up information on their families. And when we made 'requests' of just those few who seemed like the leaders, the people around them followed along. Yeah, in the end, those people... It's because they're following someone that they can beat people up and cause trouble."

"No, what... are you saying?"

Masaomi failed to understand the meaning of what Mikado said.

No; to a certain extent he could imagine it, but he did not want to accept it.

In other words, Mikado had grasped the weaknesses of the people he despised, and called them here as his pawns.

There was no need to know the weakness of every member. If just one person acted, similar delinquents would follow and go wild.

If the motive was to have them rampage, that was likely more than enough.

There were two reasons Masaomi could not accept it.

The first was that he did not want to think of Mikado as a person who would do something so low.

The other was that there was no reason he would go so far as to do that.

"I don't understand... Even if the whole of Toramaru came, you wouldn't need so many..."

"Ah, you're wrong; it's nothing to do with Rokujo-san or Toramaru. I thought it was bad of me to have involved Rokujo-san, but I'm the leader of the Blue Square in the end, so..."

"Oi, Mikado, what are you saying?!"

Mikado was not in his right mind right now.

Masaomi concluded he could only beat Mikado up to return him to his senses, and focused on Mikado - and noticed.

Mikado's dangling right hand was gripping onto something.

Mikado gripped - the handgun Izumi Ran had passed to him.

He did not have his finger on the trigger yet.

The muzzle of the gun now faced the ground.

He was not wielding it with both hands, and so it was a situation where Mikado, an amateur, could not possibly take aim.

Because he was an amateur, it was impossible to know where the bullet would fly.

"Mikado...?"

Even Masaomi understood clearly that it was a gun.

And at the same time, he thought.

Mikado was not the kind of person that would whip out a model gun at this juncture as a false threat.

As he considered various factors, the hunch that it was a real gun slowly became a certainty.

"You... Where did you get something like that?"

"Somewhere."

But perhaps his anger at his close friend exceeded even his fear of the gun, for Masaomi did not turn his back on Mikado.

"Mikado, what is it you want to do? Making such a stupid mess, bringing out something like that... What are you planning with the Dollars?!"

"..."

"I pity myself! I thought of you as a friend, but I don't even know what you're doing now..."

Masaomi yelled angrily at himself, and Mikado shook his head slightly.

With the gun still hanging loosely from his hand, Mikado smiled troubledly, and spoke.

“It’s all right; it’s not your fault, Masaomi. I sowed all of this myself.”

Mikado, still holding the gun, smiled troubledly as he spoke.

“If it can’t be reset, the Dollars are better off not existing.”

“Eh...?”

And then he said, clearly, the answer that he had found; the end he wished for.

“Today, the Dollars will disappear.”



A little before Masaomi and Mikado’s confrontation.

There was a certain post on the largest of the message boards in the Dollars community.

One line.

They were insignificant words.

A post by a passerby, a post no one heeded.

Under the assumption it was a mistake, or that it had been made to cause havoc.

No one replied to it, and those who saw it forgot it quickly.

However -

It was the one line that dictated the fate of the organisation known as the Dollars.

‘The Dollars will disappear.’

The post, after its submission, was buried under the influx of new posts, and quickly sunk to the bottom of the sea of information.

As if to hint at the fate of the Dollars.



Sunshine Building. Roof.

On the stage of Ikebukuro, each with their own thoughts, they began to dance.

Set moving by desire or hatred, or by a sense of responsibility or duty, or fear, the people in the city began to squirm.

There was one person watching the scene of this city, expressionless.

More accurately, there was a Head looking down on the city.

Held by a Body straddling a headless horse, a living head, its face and hair beautiful.



“Huh?! What?! Why is Anri-chan here?!”

“K, Karisawa-san, I’m sorry...! Let me hurt you a little, just your finger!”

Anri, who came down next, was wielding a Japanese sword in her hand.

“Ehh---?! Wait, what, what’s going on?!”

“Karisawa-san, you might not realise it yourself, but you’re currently hosting an alien in sword form, and you’re on your way to living the life of a parasite!”

“What?!”

Karisawa was confused, and as Yumasaki restrained her, he continued.

“You can’t talk your way out! Your red eyes are the ultimate proof!”

At that, Karisawa remembered.

That she had put on colour contacts to deceive the slashers.

“Eh?! Ah, ahh---! You’ve got it wrong, all wrong!”

A few minutes later.

In the end, Anri, who had readied her sword, had realised Karisawa was not possessed by Saika, and without further ado Karisawa now leant exhausted on the back seat.

“Seriously---, my touching reunion with Dotachin was totally ruined---.”

“Sorry, Karisawa.”

Kadota said this from the passenger seat, to which Karisawa waved her hand.

“Ahh, it’s fine, it’s fine. The one more suited to crying and hugging you would be Azusa-chan. You can just get married then.”

Perhaps the events earlier had actually relaxed her; Karisawa had returned to her normal tone of voice.

Sighing deeply, she looked around inside the van.

“I don’t really know the situation, but what’s with all this commotion?”

On top of the fact that those on the van were clearly not the usual, the number of passengers exceeded the limit.

As the van was almost completely unable to proceed, Yumasaki had run outside to have a look at the situation.

The sound of exhaust was loud enough to imagine there were countless *boso-zoku* on the road ahead, and even now there were several motorcycles overtaking Togusa’s van occasionally.

“Where should we start...”

As Kadota considered where to begin his explanation to Karisawa, new information came through the radio.

‘Now, the weather for today... I apologise. New information has just come in.’

With the voice of the announcer at the radio station came the sound of paper flipping.

News causing the postponement of the weather report could be important.

Those in the van turned their ear to the information attentively, and -

The information was more important than they could have expected.



Roof of a mixed-use building.

“What do you mean... the Dollars will disappear?”

Mikado replied to Masaomi’s question.

“It’s as I said, literally. The Dollars will vanish.”

“You’re disbanding? So the noise of those motorbikes are from the disbanding meeting?”

“That’s not how it is, but... Maybe that’s how it’ll turn out. I think it’ll be the last meeting, too, so... I just wanted to show you and Sonohara-san where people gather under the name of the Dollars... what the Dollars is, Masaomi.”

From where he was in the middle of the roof, Mikado looked towards Masaomi, who was at the railing, as he continued.

**“What I made.”**

Mikado spoke somewhat morosely, and Masaomi asked in return:

“The Dollars... You said a lot in the past that ordinary life was tedious, but... Did you want this?”

“Yeah... At first I was thrilled. I thought I’d finally received what I always wanted.”

Mikado smiled like an innocent child, and shook his head with that expression.

“But things have changed now. That’s why I thought - I should make a place I could welcome you and Sonohara-san back, Masaomi. That I wanted to bring you into the Dollars I made, with my chin up.”

“Yeah... Then what’s with saying it’ll disappear?!”

“Izaya-san said to me, after the first meeting.”

“...?!”

Izaya.

The instant his name was mentioned, Masaomi stiffened.

Facing Masaomi, whose memories had awoken and rendered him speechless, Mikado began to reminisce, evenly.

“After the first meeting of the Dollars, Izaya-san, he said... ‘You might want to escape from the ordinary, but you’ll get used to the extraordinary soon enough.’”

“...”

“And then he said, ‘If you really want to escape the ordinary, the only way is to keep evolving.’ At that time I thought I understood what he said, but I don’t think I did until it actually happened.”

Smiling self-deprecatingly, Mikado gazed at the gun in his hand.

“The Dollars will become ordinary in the blink of an eye... It’s a dead end, after all. It was just as Izaya-san said.”

“Stop!”

Masaomi yelled unthinkingly.

“Those are all his lies! He’s manipulating you! With the same mouth he tells you those things, that shitty bastard’s having fun telling someone else something 180 degrees different, Mikado!”

“That might be.”

Mikado made no denial of Masaomi’s words, but even so, he continued.

“But I think even if Izaya-san hadn’t said those things, I would have realised it.”

“Making you think that way is his trick! No matter what kind of group the Dollars is, you are yourself, you hear?! Whether you’re just a high schooler, or the boss of some useless punks, don’t think Anri or I would hate you! Don’t look down on us!”

Masaomi began to run towards Mikado then.

As he had thought, Mikado was not thinking clearly.

It was not clear if he was drunk on himself, or caught by Izaya’s hints like Masaomi himself had been in the past, but Masaomi had decided he had to be woken up.

Masaomi gripped one shoulder and swung his arm, thinking that even if he could not open Mikado’s eyes, he would at least punch him for now; and he took a step forward -

But as he realised Mikado was pointing the gun at him, he stopped in his tracks.

"...Oi, are you seriously - pointing that at me?"

Without question, the gun was pointed towards him.

But Mikado was holding it with only one hand, and with the weight of the gun, his aim was unsteady.

Furthermore, he had not yet placed his finger on the trigger, and so his intention was unclear.

On the other hand, it was a dangerous situation, where if the gun was fired, they would not know where the bullet would go.

Masaomi stopped, but he did not turn tail in fear.

And his childhood friend, Mikado, still pointing the gun, asked.

"I thought you might ignore it and just beat me up anyway, but... Even you'd be afraid of a gun after all, huh, Masaomi."

He was not making light of the situation; his face was purely curious as he asked this.

Masaomi ground his teeth, and then stood right before Mikado, looking straight at him as he answered.

"Yeah, I'm scared."

But his eyes held no trace of fear.

Only - a quiet anger had begun to fill them.

"Bringing out something like that all of a sudden - there's no way I wouldn't be."

"I see... That's true."

"But..."

"Eh?"

The anger that had accumulated in Masaomi erupted, and he yelled angrily, as if wailing.

"What I'm scared of, most of all, is **what kind of situation it'd have to be, if even someone too kind, someone like you'd have something like that!**"

"Masaomi..."

"Don't mess with me! What's the hell's going on that a nice guy like you's got to have something like that!

Something's wrong, isn't it! It's not okay!"

Masaomi clenched his fists till his nails dug into his palms, and lowered his voice to a moan.

"...was it - my fault?"

"..."

"Yeah... Rokujo *no danna* said it just earlier, too."

This time it was Masaomi who smiled, self-mockingly - the smile cleared from his face, as he looked into Mikado's eyes and spoke.

"If I pushed you into this, Mikado, it's fine. I won't say anything if you shoot."

"You can't give up on yourself, Masaomi. I turned out this way by my own choice. It's not your fault, Masaomi."

"Then why are you pointing that at me?"

It was a perfectly natural question. Mikado answered, troubled:

"I'm not sure, either."

"...huh?"

"About **who I should be pointing this at**, from now on."

Masaomi was struck for a moment by this answer - but slowly, as he swallowed the meaning of the words he yelled:

"If you're being so half-hearted about it there's no need to have it at all, is there! Go throw it in some river while you haven't shot it yet! If anything I'll get rid of it somewhere! You don't have to take any more risks! In the worst case say you picked it up somewhere and just settle it that way, isn't that all right?"

Then, Mikado, still pointing the gun, said, happily:

"In the end, that makes you you, Masaomi. You're much kinder than me, much more of a nice guy."

Without lowering the gun, Mikado shook his head slightly.

"I shot it already."

"...ah?"

For an instant he could not understand Mikado's words, and Masaomi creased his brow slightly. In response, Mikado only spoke the truth, evenly.

"Twice, before coming here."



In the van.

'These are the details regarding earlier cases of discharge of firearms in the city.'

The voice of the news anchor reciting the news echoed in Togusa's van.

'One case occurred at the **entrance to the Ikebukuro Police Station**; as for the other case, it has been deduced by estimates of the general area that the other shot was fired at the **gate to the home of Awakusu Dogen, president of the Awakusu-kai**, a violence organisation under the Medei Group.'

Spoken in the clear voice of the anchor were the details of a new incident that had just occurred.

'Furthermore, in the vicinity of the crime scenes there are words painted before the firings; as the word also appears to be the name of a gang in the Ikebukuro area, the police are currently investigating the link-----'

"...Say, what do they mean by 'a gang in the Ikebukuro area'?"

Togusa murmured as he heard the news.

It was a question the answer to which he had already guessed himself.

As if voicing his thoughts in his stead, Kadota answered, his face disbelieving.

"There's a nine in ten chance it's the Dollars, probably."

"So - what's going to happen?"

In reply to what Karisawa said from the back seat, Kadota informed them, bluntly, of his own theory.

"The Dollars... is making war to both the surface and underworld of the city."



Somewhere in the city. A certain office.

"...good grief, things are falling apart more than expected."

The Awakusu-kai executive Aozaki let out a deep sigh, as he heard the report from his subordinate.

He stood slowly from the leather chair, and took his suit from the coat rack.

"W, where to?"

Aozaki replied, to his subordinate:

"The old man's place. I've to apologise for what happened."

When he had heard of the shots fired at Awakusu Dogen's home and the police station, Aozaki had first

thought of Ryugamine Mikado. It was certainly natural considering he had just had a gun passed to him a few hours ago, but even that aside, the destructive action of challenging both the police and the Awakusu-kai simultaneously could only point to Mikado.

Aozaki had not imagined something like this would happen less than a night after Izumi had handed the gun over, but he had experienced and survived numerous other hardships before, and so he showed no anxiety.

“The gate of the Leader’s house is the face of the Awakusu-kai. It was by my failings he fired that shot; I have to be prepared to lose a few fingers myself.”

And meanwhile, calmly, he relegated a terrifying ‘order’.

“Abduct Ryugamine Mikado.”

“Yes.”

“I don’t personally dislike that sick behaviour... But it’s another thing if the President’s been involved. In this situation it doesn’t matter he’s a kid; we have to **sink** him.”

After instructing his subordinate unhesitatingly, he stepped towards the door of the office to head for where the President was -

But a subordinate ran, anxiously, up to the door.

“What’s with the noise?”

Aozaki spoke seriously; and his subordinate replied, out of breath.

At the name that passed his lips, Aozaki, who had till then remained calm, frowned deeply.

“Akabayashi-san said you had to talk, and barged in on his own...”



Roof of a mixed-use building.

“You... What are you thinking! If you did that, the Dollars would really... No, before that - you’re putting your life in danger!”

Having heard from Mikado where he had shot the gun, Masaomi yelled at Mikado, as he prayed his friend was only making a bad joke.

But Mikado replied, promptly.

“Probably, I guess.”

“Probably, you say...!”

“But this way, the Dollars itself will disappear.”

“What...?”

As Masaomi frowned, Mikado began to tell him of his own hopes.

“When word gets out, no one will think of joining the Dollars, and those who were using the name of the Dollars up till now can only try to cover up, I think.”

That was certainly to be expected.

No one would want to be perceived as a member of an organisation that had garnered hostility from both the police and violence organisations, and was practically unprofitable.

There might be ones who remained staunchly in the spirit of rebelliousness, or showoffs who utterly lacked the imagination to consider the consequences, but whatever came on those people would be deserved.

It was believable that those who joined for fun or for their own righteous purposes, or those who had believed

the Dollars to be a healthy organisation like a university group, would escape for their own self-interest. Like rats escaping a sinking ship, they would jump into the sea, sink into the anonymity of an information society; one could imagine most would not dare to even breathe.

And then Mikado spoke a term that was, on some level, inappropriate.

“The Dollars... will become an **urban legend**.”

“An urban... legend?”

“Yeah, just a useless urban legend.”

As he saw Mikado, eyes shining like a child’s, Masaomi recalled.

Mikado’s eyes right now were the same as when the Headless Rider had passed by him when he had first come to Ikebukuro.

It was a face fearful; yet one that hid an overwhelming joy.

“But urban legends evolve. New rumours build on the old. They never stop spreading in the city.”

Mikado linked back to what he had claimed Izaya had said, and expanded on it with his own theory.

“It’ll lose its physical form, and live on only in name, a made-up legend.”

And then, doubtlessly, with pure happiness, Mikado proclaimed.

**“I realised that was my ideal of the Dollars.”**

The scene before his eyes had suddenly twisted; Masaomi felt such an illusion.

“You... for something stupid like that... you shot at the yakuza’s office and the police?”

“Yeah. The Dollars is a rather foolish thing, I think. But the Dollars were formed for a silly reason; it can’t be helped that it’ll disappear for a silly reason as well.”

Masaomi refuted those jaded words:

“But there’ll still be guys using the name to do evil, you know.”

“It’s all right. Those people won’t be members of the Dollars anymore - they’ll just be people using the name of the Dollars. **It’d be nice if they could at least be fertiliser to the urban legend, I suppose.**”

Mikado smiled as he said this, and Masaomi felt a chill run down his spine.

Was the boy before his eyes truly Ryugamine Mikado?

With the muzzle of the gun still pointed towards Masaomi, Mikado asked, casually:

“So... What will you do, Masaomi? Will you stop me?”

“Or... Did you come to put an end to everything between the Blue Square and the Yellow Scarves?”



In front of the Hands building.

“We’re grateful to you, Rokujo-san.”

Still wearing his balaclava, Aoba spoke to Chikage, who stood before him.

The motorcycles had parked at the mouth of the road, and so the waves of the sound of revving had grown distant, and the noise level had dropped to a level where it was possible to make conversation.

In the middle of the semicircle of motorcycles was Rokujo Chikage.

The members of the *bosozoku* that had gathered had quickly realised he was the leader of Toramaru and begun to stir, but they did not jump in to start a fight.

Having been absorbed into the Dollars by threats or, at times, after being crushed, they were unsure as to

whether Toramaru was part of the Dollars as well.

As he looked at the delinquents that surrounded the mouth of the road in a semicircle, Chikage shrugged, and said:

“These are just small fry getting riled up on their own. As expected, there aren’t any of Dragon Zombie- or Jyan Jyaka Jyan-class.”

“With time maybe we could have brought them in as well.”

Big Dog Star

“You talk big. What’s left is... Nuimura from B.D.S. isn’t here, huh. If an idiot of that level were here we’d have to prepare to have trucks rolling in.”

As he brought up the names of other *bousozoku* and gangs, Chikage continued to survey his surroundings. For now he chose to speak to Aoba, who appeared to be responsible for the ones in the blue hats.

“What’s your leader planning to do, gathering so many?”

“Maybe he doesn’t plan on doing anything at all.”

Aoba replied, easily, and Chikage tilted his head.

“Ahh---... In other words, it’s for the sake of it?”

“Our leader has no ideals. No beliefs. All he has is sentiment and curiosity. To go so far for just that, even with luck - it’s why I respect him.”

His reply was as if he wanted to say he had gladly been dragged into Mikado’s recklessness, which they had put on a pedestal.

And, as if introducing an interesting toy to a friend, Aoba continued to speak of the boy known as Ryugamine Mikado.

“For any ideal, any belief, any dream, there is a resolve behind. But he has nothing of the sort. He’s simply expanding an organisation; surging with meaningless resolve. Mikado-senpai had nothing; he struggled and struggled, clawed his way to the end, and this is the result.”

There Aoba shrugged, and said to Chikage, who was silent:

“Perhaps someone like you, who possessed various things from the start, cannot understand.”

And Chikage, who had up till then listened on expressionlessly, cracked his neck as he replied.

“I don’t really like smoking through things by being so embarrassingly poetical. Well, I have a girlfriend who likes it, so I won’t reject it altogether.”

“Kida Masaomi said to help his friend who’d gone crazy; all I’m doing is lending a hand on my own whim.”

“How cruel; isn’t that oversimplifying it?”

“There are things you can’t do unless you’re a kid gone crazy.”

“Ah, you might or might not have some great reason.”

Chikage said this irritably, but in truth, he had already heard the most of it from Masaomi.

Despite knowing things now were the result of Mikado being driven to a corner by himself, Chikage said, to Aoba:

“Let me tell you one thing.”

“?”

“Whatever reason you have for making such a commotion in the city at nighttime... It doesn’t change the fact that you’re causing trouble for other people. Everyone’s trash; we’re equal. You and me both as well.”

Having gone completely serious, Chikage continued.

“We have these tragic reasons’ - do you mean to explain yourself like that to the ones you’re fighting against, and those whose sleep you’ve disturbed?”

“...”

“Whether you blackmail and threaten for the fun and money, or to buy medicine for a sick parent...”

Behind Chikage rushed a member of the Blue Square, swinging a bat, but he twisted his body and landed a backfist to their face.

Looking at the fallen member from the Blue Square, he sighed as he spoke.

“It wouldn’t make a difference to the ones who get beaten up and robbed. It’s stupid.”

Chikage turned on his heel, and began to walk without a glance to Aoba.

"I've lost interest. ...You guys saw through everything, which means Ryugamine Mikado's where Kida is, right?"

Chikage then turned towards the mixed-use building, but Aoba spoke up, to him, with no anxiety whatsoever:

"After all you've said, I'm sorry I have to say this, but it would be troublesome if you were to go."

"Huh?"

"It's true that both Mikado-senpai and Kida Masaomi are there. But only the two of them."

Aoba typed something into his mobile quickly, and smiled boldly.

"Outsiders should stay out. You and me both as well."

At the same time, two giant figures blocked Chikage's way.

They were Houjou and Yoshikiri; both powerhouses of the Blue Square.

Chikage looked at the man yawning as he came closer, and the other tall man with the dangerously sharp gaze, and smiled, fearlessly.

"Oh? Looks like the ones with some backbone are here. Not bad."

But those two were not the only ones obstructing him.

Suddenly, the men on the motorcycles began to take out their handphones.

It was faded into the sound of the engines, but Chikage heard, faintly, the sound of their ringtones.

"...was that - a mass message?"

"An excellent observation. I only sent a short message."

The *bosozoku*, come down from their motorcycles, were all glaring viciously at Chikage.

To Chikage, who was faced with such murderous intent, Aoba cheerfully revealed the content of the message.

"Just... 'Rokujo Chikage is the enemy of the Dollars.'"



Before Russia Sushi.

"Looks like they're moving. He took out his phone... So, is that balaclava kid Mikado? Well, there's no mistaking he looks like the leader."

As he peered at the situation around the foot of the Hands building, Nasujima smiled crudely, and spoke to Haruna.

"If it turns into a free-for-all we'll go in as well."

"Yes... Mother."



Inside Russia Sushi.

“Is it just me, or have the motorbikes been really loud for a while now?”

Tom mumbled, his face tired, as he heard the sounds from the outside.

“Anyway, there’s the option of getting on the roof somehow and shifting to the ramen store next doors, but... Unless it comes to that, it’s a stalemate.”

“Oh---, if pulling doesn’t work we should push. Cowardice makes you hungry.”

As Simon said this, he continued to check on some equipment with Denis.

Tom did not ask about the equipment, and intended to stay blind to the worst of things; Denis, who had passed the time in silence, now spoke up to him.

“It’s bad luck. If Shizuo were here the guys outside could be dispersed easily enough.”

“That might be, but I think it’s a good thing.”

“Oh?”

“If we believe what Kine-san says, they’re just being controlled by something like hypnosis, right? It’d be one thing if they picked a fight and deserved it, but we can’t beat up normal people.”

Tom sighed as he said this, to which Kine, who had remained silent, said.

“You’re generous. With a man like that on your side you could rise to the top on the streets.”

“You’re thinking too highly of me. To me Shizuo’s just a *kouhai* from middle school, and now a colleague.”

Tom stretched hugely, and said, his eyes lonely:

“Shizuo’s always running riot with such a lonely expression; not stopping him, or at least joining him... isn’t anything to be proud of at all.”



Roof of a mixed-use building.

“Yeah.”

--“*What will you do, Masaomi?*”

Digesting Mikado’s question, Masaomi went quiet for a while, before he replied, clenching his fists.

“I couldn’t do anything for you. No - even now, just talking about doing anything at all for you is absurd, from an outsider’s perspective.”

With the muzzle of the gun still towards him, Masaomi took a step forward.

The hand Mikado held the gun with shook.

Even so, without stopping, Masaomi stepped across the floor of the roof.

“I’m not very smart, and I’m a coward. It’s pathetic, but all I can do, at most, is fight, a little... That’s about it.”

In Masaomi’s heart rose the conviction for two things.

The first, as with when he had faced Horada, was to stake his life.

Not in vain, but to open the eyes of the boy before him.

And the second, also to open the eyes of this boy -

Was to make a friend his definite enemy.

“That’s why, at the very least, I’ll fight you.”

Masaomi’s smile as he said this was the same one from their childhood.

“If you want to run riot, I won’t stop you. But I’ll do the same, the way I want.”

“Masaomi...”

“I will drag you back - to the ordinary life you hate so much.”

There was no longer hesitation in Masaomi’s eyes.

“I’ll beat you up, make you cry, make you remember.”

As if he would reject the boy before him truly becoming something unhuman, if it came down to it: Masaomi declared.

“That **you are not an urban legend like the Headless Rider**. That you’re an ordinary, pint-sized guy... honest, and kinder than anyone else, Ryugamine Mikado!”

Mikado’s face was wiped of expression for a moment, as if he were shocked at what he heard Masaomi cry - And next, with tears in his eyes, he murmured.

“You’re strong after all, Masaomi.”

“...”

“I always was envious. That’s why I wanted to really win against you.”

The words the boy spoke, from the bottom of his heart, were filled with certainly not jealousy, but envy.

“That’s why, now, no matter how... Even if I’m called a coward by everyone else...”

Gazing at his childhood friend with respect, Mikado **slowly put his finger to the trigger**.

“...I’ll reject what you say with all I have, Masaomi.”

And seconds later.

A gunshot echoed dryly across the sky of Ikebukuro.



In front of the Hands building.

The echo of the gunshot in the sky could be heard from even in front of the Hands building.

“What?”

As they heard sounds of destruction they were unused to, all of them looked around, but none could find the source.

Only some of the *bosozoku* were looking towards the expressway, the Amlux building, and Sunshine City, asking one another if they had heard the other sound from above.

And then they realised for the first time.

That the sky was dyed in a black unusually deep.

The area around the roof of Sunshine Building was swallowed in a black haze, completely obscured from sight.

“Oi, what is that...”

Gradually a commotion began to spread, but about ten seconds after, it halted.

Suddenly, black shadows wove between the men.

“?!”

The black shadow bounded on parts of the motorcycles to whirl in the air, occasionally leaping onto the front windows or the roofs of vehicles; effortlessly overrunning the area the *bosozoku* and gangsters had occupied.

“Oi! What is this! I’ll kill...”

One of the *bosozoku* who had had his motorcycle used as a stepping stone glared angrily at the black shadow, and his teammates yelled something, but -

In the next moment their voices stopped.  
Because the grating sound of friction had rung out from behind them.  
At this extremely odd sound, the *bosozoku* turned to look.  
There was a man, and what he dug behind him robbed them of words.

“Oi, did you hear that?”

Breathing heavily, Chikage yelled, but there was no one to answer him.  
Surrounded by members of the *bosozoku* and Blue Square, Chikage had become utterly stranded without help.  
Even so, he challenged the ones around him fearlessly.

“Haa... Strange. Even against all of you, I don't feel scared at all.”

“Don't act, Rokujo! It's the end for you!”

An executive of the Gozumezu Guns yelled this, but Chikage paid no heed and continued.

“Honestly speaking, three months ago I fought this scary guy who was like a monster; there was way more pressure back...”

And his provocation stopped there.

Crossing over the men's heads, a black shadow appeared before Chikage.

The shadow was a man clad in black.

“...who are you?”

Chikage muttered this as he saw the wound-ridden man, and the man, looking at the situation around them, smiled faintly as he spoke to himself.

“...there are more people than I thought.”

And noticing the red-eyed group, he tagged on a line:

“Half are Saika-possessed, huh. That's fine. Perfect.”

The man spoke as if to encourage himself - and looked towards Otowa Street.

Aoba, in his balaclava, ground his teeth as he saw the man.

“Orihara... Izaya!”

The moment that name passed his lips -

An enormous mass flew across the heads of the confused *bosozoku*, straight towards Izaya.

As they realised it was a motorcycle of the *bosozoku* that had been parked right in the middle of the road, even the Saika-possessed recoiled.

The sound of destruction rang out, and the motorcycle skidded across the road, scattering shrapnel along the way.

Izaya, who had dodged the motorcycle by a hair's breadth, stood in the middle of the space left by the crowd that had parted to evade the motorcycle; and waited, watchfully, for the monster.

And all at the scene, looking towards where the motorcycle had come from, cleared the way.

“Ah.”

Chikage let out a sound involuntarily.

The one who walked towards them, on the cleared path -

Was a man letting off a pressure tens of times greater than the crowd of *bosozoku* that exceeded a hundred in number.

“That's Heiwajima *no danna*, isn't it!”

And smiling bitterly, he said to Aoba:

“Oi, that guy's on your side too?”

“No. He's... no longer with the Dollars.”

“Huh?”

Chikage was puzzled, and Aoba, his face removed of expression beneath the balaclava, replied.  
“Perhaps him leaving the Dollars was one of the factors that broke Mikado-senpai.”

After throwing the motorcycle single-handedly, Shizuo slowly continued to walk towards Izaya.  
And Izaya made no attempt to move from where he was.  
It was as if luring him here was the motive from the start.

Where Masaomi challenged Mikado, who meant to become an urban legend -  
Orihara Izaya made as to challenge a ‘legend’ itself.  
As if he was done with his tricks, Izaya withdrew from his pocket his most trusted weapon: his large-scale  
switchblade.

Regardless of the similarity to the situation of Masaomi, Izaya gripped the knife, with an opposite objective.  
To engrave on the world the fact that Shizuo, as much as he tried to be human, was an ugly, terrible monster.



In the van.

“Just now... Did you hear that?”

Anri said this uneasily, to which Kadota replied:

“Yeah, I heard something like a gunshot.”

“Oi... Don’t say something so scary...”

Togusa face twitched, and Anri gazed out of the window at the sky.

And then she noticed.

That the sky of Ikebukuro was covered by an unusual darkness.

As she saw that the upper parts of Sunshine Building were covered in an overwhelming amount of shadow,  
Anri murmured, unconsciously.

The name of the supernatural being she trusted most.

“Celty... -san?”



And thus they assembled.

In the place the Dollars had begun.

To welcome its end.

And as if to reenact the events of the first meeting, the woman shrouded in shadow began to shift. What differed from the first meeting was that what she rode was not a motorcycle, but a headless horse. And this time it was from not the Tokyu Hands building, but the tallest point in Ikebukuro - the roof of Sunshine Building - that she raced down.

What was in the past the Headless Rider now took on fully the form of a dullahan. As if to flaunt her presence in the city - Once again, she swooped down on the streets of Ikebukuro.

Chatroom.

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There is no one in the chatroom.

There is no one in the chatroom.

There is no one in the chatroom.

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**LAST CHAPTER | WHEREVER YOU GO YOU MAY FIND A GRAVE**

In the past. Ikebukuro.

A boat, rocking, on its long journey to Japan.  
In the creeping darkness, the frightened boy met Her.  
At some point fear became dependence -  
Before long dependence turned to love.

And, to protect his love, he twisted everything of himself, and spoke.

“Hey, Celty, once you find your head, will you go home?”

Replying to the question of six-year-old Shinra, Celty wrote on the paper, her tone even:

‘Yeah, I will.’

“I wanna go too.”

‘...? Don’t say stupid things.’

“Then don’t go.”

With the pen, Celty wrote in reply, awkwardly:

‘I’m not your toy, you know.’

“Yeah. I can leave my toys wherever.”

‘Say sorry to the workers at the toy factory.’

“I’m sorry.”

Young Shinra took Celty’s words seriously, and ducked his head as he imagined the toy factory.

At the hopelessly serious boy, Celty pondered if this was how childhood was, as she wrote.

‘Why do you want to be with me?’

“...because we’re family.”

Celty accepted Shinra’s answer in her mind.

This child had not had a mother from a young age.

Perhaps that was why he felt something maternal in her.

But feeling motherliness from an existence like herself might result in a twisted upbringing.

‘Listen, Shinra. I’m not human, so I can’t be your family.’

“Why?”

‘Why, you say.’

Shinra said to Celty, whose hand had stopped writing:

“I can talk to you, like this, and we’re staying together, right? Or are you the type to say you’re not family if you aren’t on the census or certificate of residence, Celty?”

‘You know some really hard words.’

Celty, after some thought, chose her words as she wrote.

‘I am too different from humans. If we live together for long, you’ll surely come to hate me.’

“Really?”

‘Yeah, really.’

Celty replied, shortly, as if rejecting Shinra, who fidgeted as he said:

“Then, if I don’t hate you, will you stay in this house?”

‘If that happens, I’ll think about it when the time comes.’

Though she had not quite adjusted to human society yet, Celty had spent about two years gaining knowledge Japanese society through the news and dramas, and other media such as manga.

As she recalled the news saying childhood friends, unlike in fiction, seldom became couples in real life, she did not take what Shinra had said very seriously.

--Well, if he sees my face every day, he’ll probably get bored of it.

--Though I don't have a face.

Celty made this masochistic joke in her head, but -

In truth, it was a key point.

Her face was unknown, her voice unheard; she had not even an expression to be read.

It was possible that this was why Shinra could continue loving her unwaveringly.

To Shinra, the existence of Celty Sturluson was a blank canvas.

What expression she was making exactly, what made her happy, what made her laugh; collecting this information bit by bit, he painted the existence known as Celty onto the canvas.

After approximately ten years, the Celty that existed within Shinra was consolidated.

It was by no imposing of his own ideals; it was the pure result of having searched, continually, for Celty's true face.

That was perhaps why - he was able to continue loving her up till now.

Even as any kind of obstacle came between them.



Ikebukuro. A back alley.

It was an alley leading to Sunshine City, opposite the main road.

That the man and the woman encountered one another was certainly not a coincidence.

"...I was surprised. That you subdued Saika's curse within such a short time."

Her face bland, Kujiragi murmured, a hint of surprise in her voice.

Before her eyes was Kishitani Shinra.

Shinra had, when he determined Celty's location, seen a vending machine flying in the city.

Manami had deduced that Izaya would be on the other end of the machine's path, and ran in that direction.

Shinra had followed the trail of destruction, and had been walking towards Sunshine City.

In the midst of this -

Kujiragi, who was once more pursuing Shizuo and Izaya, had sensed Saika.

"Eh... Kujiragi Kasane-san... Can I call you that?"

His eyes bloodshot, Shinra asked this sheepishly.

"...Yes."

"Do you have the time to talk? Or will you cut me and kidnap me again, I wonder."

He said this apologetically, to which Kujiragi shook her head.

"No. There is no longer a reason to capture and confine you."

Looking at Shinra's red, bloodshot eyes, Kujiragi continued.

"I gathered that mere pain and mental conditioning cannot twist feelings even Saika cannot control."

"That's great. I thought you might say you'd kill me if you couldn't make me yours."

"No; I am not so in love with you as to do that."

Kujiragi stepped up to Shinra, and began putting her thoughts into words, calmly.

“However... It is true I am interested in you as a person. In stronger words: I might conclude I am jealous.”

“Jealous...?”

“As I investigated Celty Sturluson, I investigated you, her cohabitant, as well. You, who despite being a human, was in love with an unnatural being such as her.”

“That’s right.”

Shinra said this shyly, to which Kujiragi said:

“It may be rude to say this, but I was unable to believe it at first. I thought that under Kishitani Shingen’s instruction, in order to manipulate the nonhuman subject Celty Sturluson, you were putting on an act of love for her.”

“...”

“But the more I researched, the surer I was that your feelings were true.”

Kujiragi closed her eyes for a moment, and without surfacing her emotions, continued.

“I myself carry the blood of a nonhuman; I have had no memory of being loved by anyone. Even my biological mother parted from me in a way that was half abandoning me.”

Despite having been told so concisely by Kujiragi that she was not human, Shinra said nothing.

It was because he himself had long realised she was no mere human.

“By certain events, a few days ago, I gained my freedom.”

And then Kujiragi said, looking at Shinra:

“I spoke with others who owned Saika as well, and I thought. That if no one would love me, **I would try to love someone myself.**”

“And that was me? Well thinking on it I think it’s definitely more optimistic than if you’d started saying ‘I don’t need anything like love’; but why me?”

“Firstly, as I said before... I was jealous.”

Shinra could accept what he heard.

She had most likely been jealous of Celty, who, while a supernatural being, was living a happy life.

Which was why she had chosen to steal a part of that happiness from Celty.

Then Kujiragi added, further:

“And the other reason was, most likely... that I wanted reciprocation.”

“Perhaps I wished that in exchange for loving, I would be loved as well. And if it were you, who were capable of loving the supernatural, then... Perhaps that was what I thought.”

It was a personal matter, but yet much of what she spoke was speculation; it was likely even she herself could not fully fathom her own emotions.

Despite this, and despite her own awkwardness, she reassembled her thoughts, and continued, to Shinra:

“As I investigated the unique being that you are, I felt a certain envy. Because unlike other humans, you could become my hope. After you were injured by Adabashi, when I saw how your relationship with Celty Sturluson persisted... It would be strange to say this, having been indirectly responsible for your injury, but... I yearned.”  
Adabashi.

Hijiribe Ruri’s stalker, who had, on Shinra, inflicted severe injury.

Even with the mention of such a name, Shinra showed no panic.

Kujiragi left off there, and, confused, herself, concluded her emotions.

“**I have become a fan of yours.** Is that not enough?”

“...”

“So let me say this once more. Would you not accept my feelings?”

It was too frank - too frank a confession of love.

Silence consumed the two.

There was the roar of motorcycles in the distance, and other sounds of destruction, but - on this street was a pervading silence, as if time had stopped.

Then Shinra broke the long silence.

“Say, if I were a normal person, I’d probably be angry at this point.”

He smiled amiably, and continued, his eyes still red and bloodshot.

"I'd probably be thinking you'd injured me, kidnapped me for your own selfish reasons, done so many horrible things."

"..."

"But I can't find it in myself to get angry. But that's because of Celty."

"?"

As confusion arose in Kujiragi's mind, Shinra began to speak, like a guileless child:

"If Celty's there, I don't need anything else. I think it's a pity to even spend time hating anyone else. That's why it's thanks to Celty that I can even smile as I talk to you like this, Kujiragi-san."

Shinra averted his eyes slightly, before he raised his head again, and replied, gazing Kujiragi in the eye.

**"I have come to love you, but it is due to Celty that I can exist, like this, at all."**

It seemed also that he was saying it for himself to hear as well.

"That's why... I'm sorry. I can't return your feelings, Kujiragi-san."

"..."

Kujiragi closed her eyes for a while, and sighed lightly as she spoke.

"Understood. Being able to hear your answer out clearly is enough for me."

Although she was still expressionless, Shinra put on a serious face, as he said to her:

"It's weird to say something like this just after meeting you, but... I think you're a strange person, Kujiragi-san.

You're a villain, and you're awkward, but despite that you're so amazingly frank; and you're an otherworldly being, but you're working so hard to change yourself."

"What are you saying?"

"That, though not as much as Celty, you're plenty charming yourself, Kujiragi-san. It might not be my place to say this, seeing as I just rejected you - but in a world without Celty, I might have fallen in love with you."

After some time, Kujiragi asked:

"Could it be you're trying to comfort me?"

But Shinra shook his head.

"I'm not so great as to be able to do that."

And slowly, he stepped up to Kujiragi.

"There is only one thing I can do for you, Kujiragi-san."

"...what would that be?"

"To prove."

"...?"

Kujiragi was confused; Shinra straightened, enduring the pain of the wounds throughout his body, and said, firmly.

**"Someone like myself, so inescapably human; and the Headless Rider, the greatest beauty in the world. I'll prove that even ones so unlikely as us - can love one another."**

"..."

"Even you, Kujiragi-san, will surely find someone good. Until then... Whether it's family, or your close ones - it's okay even if it's yourself, so - please cherish someone. "

Shinra smiled kindly as he said this; and Kujiragi, after a moment of silence -

"...You're a cruel person, aren't you."

Spoke, with a faint smile emerging from the corners of her lips.

"Even after rejecting me, you make me love you even more."

Togusa's van.

"I think it came from the buildings on the left... But if the sound was reflected at high speed there's no way to know where it came from..."

Togusa said this, as he continued to look up at the city's buildings through the front window.

Tens of metres ahead was a congregation of *boso-zoku* motorcycles; the road was currently jammed. Naturally, the van could no longer move, and the countless vehicles whose drivers realised it was a *boso-zoku* gathering were desperately escaping into side roads.

"So, Karisawa, you're absolutely sure the guy with the host haircut is in front of Russia Sushi?"

"Yeah, I'm sure. Haruna-chan was with him, too."

"..."

At Karisawa's words, Anri moved her hands to her lap, and clutched the hem of her clothing.

Ryuugamine Mikado and Kida Masaomi.

Orihara Izaya had said they were standing on a burning rope.

With Nasujima's threat on top of that, Anri, unable to see the whole of the situation, continued to feel a deep uneasiness.

"At this rate, wouldn't it be faster to get off and walk?"

"Yeah, but there were really about as many people as during the first meeting of the Dollars, so..."

As Togusa listened in on what Seiji and Karisawa were saying -

He noticed a figure in the middle of the street, weaving through the congested traffic as it came closer.

As if injured, the person's movements were stiff.

--What?

--Huh? It... feels like I've seen him somewhere before...

Togusa creased his brow; and in the next moment, suddenly, the person swung a hammer, with unusual force, down on the windscreen of the van.

"Wha..."

A terrific sound was produced, and cracks appeared on the windscreen like a spiderweb; the view from the driver's seat was covered in white.

And following that there was a second, and then a third crash, and glass rained down from the window.

"Ba... Bastardddd!"

Togusa, enraged, yelled at the figure.

He stepped down on the accelerator with such force it could only result in them getting run over to death.

"Wait, Togusa!"

At the voice of Kadota from the passenger seat, Togusa stepped back into the realm of reason just in time.

On the other hand, the figure grinned, and looked around at the people in the van.

"Ho-hoo---... Delicious... What a delicious lineup... Aah?"

"Izumi..."

Namie muttered, her face unpleasant, and at the same time, tension ran through the inside of the car.

"Eh? Izumi? His image's changed...?"

Taking Karisawa's words in stride, Kadota smiled bitterly and spoke.

"Ha... You've slimmed down a lot in your time in detention. What happened to the pompadour you were so proud of?"

At Kadota's words, the temperature of the air around Izumi dropped by a degree.

"Kaaaadootaaaaaa..."

As he said this, his voice filled with resentment, Izumi glared at Kadota through his shades.

"Bastard, heard you got hit by a van, but aren't you looking better than expected... So you won't mind if I kill

you, huh?”

What Izumi said followed absolutely no logic, and in response, Kadota moved his hand to remove his seatbelt.

“Oh... Did I say it was okay for anyone to move?”

Izumi stabbed the hammer at Kadota, a vicious grin plastered on his face.

“It's gonna be a car-dismantling show; I'll give you the front seat, yeah?”

As Izumi said this, about ten other gangsters appeared from the shadows of other vehicles, effectively surrounding Togusa's van.

Each of them held a metal pipe or bat, or a shovel or pickaxe; it appeared that they truly intended to dismantle the insides of the van.

“Oi, there are girls here too; let them get off first.”

Kadota glared without a hint of fear, to which Izumi chuckled, shaking his head.

“I---diot, you betrayed me because I'm not the type of guy who'd do that, didn't you? Aah?”

“Bastard...”

Kadota's brows were furrowed; ignoring him, Izumi looked to the back of the truck.

“Now, Yumasaki, get ready... Huh? Yumasaki isn't here, huh...”

Frowning, Izumi saw the face of a girl in the back seat.

“Aah...?”

And then he gaped, before sneering deeper than before.

“Haha... Hahahahaha! You're... Kida Masaomi's girlfriend? I see, I see - Kadota saved you, and you've been sleeping together since then, huh!”

“...”

Saki remained silent, staring at Izumi.

Having had countless reunions today, she would not deny that this was no big change.

“So, should we throw a molotov in the van like you did to me? Aah?”

Setting aside his own trauma, Izumi grinned cheerfully.

“I was wondering what he was planning, calling me back just after I left; but to think I'd meet you guys again here! It's fate! Thank that Mikado!”

“...”

“...”

“...”

“...?”

With the exception of Mika and Namie, the people in the van stiffened.

“You... What did you just say? Thank who?”

Kadota murmured this question, to which Izumi replied:

“Oh, you didn't know?”

Shrugging unnaturally, Izumi winced as the rib Chikage had broke shifted.

But his expression quickly recovered, and he spoke, cheerfully, to the ones before him.

“I'm not the leader of the Blue Square anymore.”

“What?”

“...Your good friend Ryuugamine Mikado-kun - he's our boss now! Hyahahahaha!”

♂♀

Mixed-use building. Rooftop.

After the deafening gunshot, the scent of smoke remained in the air.

The two at the centre of this did not move, for a moment.

"..."

Smoke still wisped from the muzzle of the gun Mikado held.

Perhaps grazed by the bullet, or due to the shockwave from the gunshot: there was a cut bleeding on Masaomi's cheek.

The gunshot had entered his ear directly, and the echoes still ricocheted in his head.

It seemed Mikado was in the same state; and so for a while neither of them moved or exchanged conversation.

Though, conversation aside, the reason neither could move was because they were stuck together.

"..."

"..."

Earlier, just before Mikado fired -

Masaomi had kicked off the ground like a clockwork toy, towards Mikado.

He had abandoned his crutch, essentially making a leap with one leg alone.

The knee Izumi had cracked had creaked under the cast.

Analgesia reduced the pain, but even so, the shock had reverberated in Masaomi's brain.

Masaomi had pushed it down into his stomach, and grabbed Mikado's right hand with his left.

With the trigger squeezed under that force, the bullet had passed beside Masaomi's face; which led to their current situation.

The two remained in that position, frozen, for tens of seconds.

His one-legged jump - practically reckless - had succeeded half due to luck, but half of the reason was another factor at work.

Mikado had left a certain opening.

In order to grip the gun he had held single-handedly till then with both hands, he had begun to move his left arm.

Masaomi seized his opportunity in that one moment, and was able to succeed in grabbing Mikado's right arm.

Mikado's arm was so frail it felt as if it would have broken had he grabbed it with his full strength.

--Shit...

--You aren't even built to fight, idiot.

Masaomi gritted his teeth; not at the pain rippling through his body, but at his anger towards himself, for having driven Mikado to this.

And when their hearing recovered - his right hand still pressed down, Mikado spoke.

"I was surprised. You ran forward so suddenly."

"...You searched up on the internet on how to shoot, right?"

"Eh?"

"I thought that if it was someone as serious as you, Mikado, you'd hold it with both hands to shoot."

In a way, it was a bet he had only been able to make because he knew Mikado well.

"I see... You're amazing after all, Masaomi."

Mikado said this and smiled, and tried to push Masaomi away with his free left hand.

Masaomi moved his right arm, that had been set with bandages and tape, and brushed away Mikado's hand with the strength of his arm alone; and headbutted Mikado's face.

"!"

Taking advantage of Mikado's momentary daze, Masaomi tripped him with a leg, sending them to the ground.

Then he twisted Mikado's right wrist, forcing him to drop the gun.

With the leg in the cast, Masaomi clumsily kicked away the gun on the ground.

Clattering, the handgun rolled to a corner of the rooftop.

The next instant, Masaomi straddled Mikado, and without a second's pause punched Mikado's face.

His right fist, its fingers broken, set stiffly.

With that broken fist, Masaomi punched Mikado.

The impact exceeded the buffer the painkillers provided, and the sensation of his bones shifting accompanied the vicious pain, attacking Masaomi.

Even so, he continued to punch Mikado once more, and yet again.

"Idiot... Mikadoo! You idiot!"

His eyes filled with tears, Masaomi grabbed Mikado's collar with his left hand.

"A place we can go back to, you say? What if you couldn't come back anymore!"

"..."

"I ran away, but Anri's still in this city!"

Speaking the name of the girl who was not here, Masaomi yelled.

"I don't mind if you forget someone as thoughtless as me! But you can't make Anri sad...!"

At Masaomi's yelling, Mikado, his face swelling and mouth dripping blood from being hit - moved his split lips, and smiled.

"Even if I stop... the Dollars can't be stopped anymore."

It was a smile filled with not mirth - but resignation.

"That's why the Dollars must disappear."

And then Mikado moved his free left arm, taking something from his pocket.

"Oj, what - "

The moment Masaomi turned to look, considering it might be a knife or something like it:

A sharp, strong impact hit his leg -

And slightly later, a heat and pain he had never experienced hit him.



Aozaki's office.

"What are you planning, Akabayashi?"

"Well; a scheme of sorts."

Akabayashi leant on the wall beside the door, smiling.

Glaring at him, Aozaki sat down heavily on a chair in the receiving room.

"A scheme?"

"Ah, how to cook the Dollars, that is."

"...Tch."

Considering Akabayashi had already gotten hold of the information, Aozaki clicked his tongue.

"I've been looking out for the Dollars in my own way, but it seems you passed something to Mikado?"

"... I'll explain to the Leader myself. I'm not obliged to talk to you."

"Don't say that, Aozaki *no danna*. Aren't youngsters like the Dollars my division? If we let them continue running wild, it'll affect my rep as well."

"It's surprising you care about something like that."

It sounded like an uneventful conversation, but Aozaki's subordinates that were in the same room sensed pressure from every one of their words, and were drenched in cold sweat.

After all, it was a situation where the fighters of the Awakusu-kai, dubbed the Red and Blue Demons of the Awakusu, were assembled together. Moreover, the atmosphere was not one of friendly talk and laughter.

"Well, Aozaki *no danna*. I didn't come here to fight."

Akabayashi tapped his cane - that was also his weapon - on the floor, and, smiling, said:

"Won't you let me deal with the Dollars?"

"...What stupid things are you saying?"

"You're thinking this, aren't you, Aozaki-san? **To vanish Ryuugamine Mikado** with this incident, and have some kid under our group take over. It's an organisation whose leader was unclear in the first place. If we put down even the strongest influence in the Dollars, the Blue Square, we can use it for revenue however we like."

"I don't know what you're saying."

Aozaki blatantly played dumb, to which Akabayashi continued.

"Well, I won't say you're wrecking havoc on my turf. When it comes down to it, my work is to supervise young people. Not to control them. If you had to interfere in drugs or even underage prostitution, I wouldn't have anything to say. But just this one time, won't you leave it to me?"

"There's someone you're protecting?"

"...I'm not obliged to talk to you about that, either."

"..."

After some thought, Aozaki shook his head.

"It's impossible. It's true that, considering our revenue the first priority, it's all right to ignore one kid... But that kid dirtied the Leader's face. There's no way to overlook that. If you're going to beg for his life, you'll have to go to the Leader."

Akabayashi sighed.

If he were to ask the Leader, perhaps Mikado's life would be saved. But he could not have the name Ryuugamine Mikado remembered by the Leader and the other executives.

In any case, the boy was too deeply involved with Anri. It seemed they were not yet romantically involved, but considering the hints about 'Saika' in the chatroom, Sonohara Anri could become a great influence.

He did not wish to imagine a situation where, in order to find Mikado, or even to save him, Anri would pit herself against the Awakusu-kai.

Hiding those thoughts, Akabayashi said to Aozaki:

"You're old-fashioned, too. Shiki and Kazamoto will laugh, you know?"

"Let them. I'm not so skilled as to live any other way."

"Me as well."

"You've already softened; what are you saying? Anyway, on top of shooting the Leader's home..."

As he spoke to this point, a subordinate who had been in the back of the office appeared, and moved to Aozaki.

"Aozaki-san, are you available now?"

"? What?"

The subordinate, his face serious, whispered to Aozaki.

Aozaki frowned -

And after thinking for some time, he scoffed, and spoke to Akabayashi.

"Somehow it looks like we worried too much, gathering here."

"?"

"Say maybe I did pass a handgun to the leader of the Dollars."

Feigning ignorance to the end, Aozaki continued.

"It seems there's been contact from our friends in the police..."

"The gun shot at the police station and the Leader's house was of a **much smaller calibre**, compared to the ones I deal with."

Mixed use building. Rooftop.

"Wha... Guaaaaah!"

At first Masaomi had thought a thousand knives were gouging at his thigh.

But as he noticed something off with his ears, Masaomi realised.

At the same time the impact hit his leg, he had heard a gunshot somewhat softer than the one just before.

Looking, his pant thigh had a small hole through it, and red blood was seeping into the cloth around it.

It felt as if, on the inside of the hole, heat itself had taken up sentience and was raging in his thigh.

"Gah... Ah..."

The smell of blood - and above that, the smell of fresh smoke - filled Masaomi's nostrils.

As he felt cold sweat break out over his whole body, Masaomi tried to press down on the bleeding.

At this point Mikado twisted his body, and Masaomi, unable to control his position, fell to the side.

"Mika... do..."

Masaomi moaned in pain, and looked up to Mikado, who had stood.

Through the thin smoke a strange object appeared, gripped in his right hand.

On first sight, it seemed to be - something resembling brass knuckles.

"American terrorists used this in the past, apparently. Uh... I forgot the name..."

A small device of a disturbing shape, resting in the palm of his left hand.

"The HFM... it's called. Hand... What was it, I wonder."

With the bruise swelling around it, Mikado's right eye was most likely incapable of much sight.

"I said just now that I shot twice, right?"

Even so, Mikado was smiling.

"I wanted to test some shots on this one."

He looked down at Masaomi with a lonely smile, and continued conversationally.

As he held a **second gun**, an object completely beyond Masaomi's expectations.

"Because even the internet didn't have anything on how to aim it."



Before Russia Sushi.

As he heard another gunshot in the distance, Shijima shuddered.

In actual fact the sound was much smaller than the one before, but Shijima was unable to make the comparison.

He was not in a state where he could consider such things calmly.

--It can't be.

--Is he really using it?

--That - Ryuugamine kid...

It was a handgun Nasujima had instructed him to pass to Mikado.

Or, more accurately, an object like a handgun.

--'I borrowed it from Kujiragi's warehouse.'

--'**Borrowing** from offices is my forte, after all.'

*--'It's a fist gun, a kind of concealed weapon; made by several manufacturers. Apparently this is an improved version from a guy who founded some American terrorists. You can shoot it with both hands, or, with one hand, if you clench your fist and press it against someone, it'll fire a bullet.'*

It was a firearm not unlike those in spy movies.

Around the world there were guns that could be hidden in lemons, or cigarettes, or mobile phones, so the existence of such an object, in itself, did not shock Shijima extremely.

'I even bought this to protect myself. I'm too scared to carry it around, so I want you to look after it. Please accept it as proof of my trust.' When he had said that, passing it over, he had never imagined Mikado would accept it smiling.

It did not seem as if he had mistaken it for a toy, either; and it was at that point in time that Shijima realised the boy Ryuugamine Mikado was not a normal person.

--Shit, seriously. If he actually shot someone with that the Dollars are really in trouble.

Nasujima had said he would turn some number of the police red-eyed and control them, and have them arrest the appropriate persons to spread fear of the Dollars; but was this really all right?

"Nasujima-san, Ryuugamine probably shot..."

Shijima had decided to just discuss this for now, but he stopped there without thinking.

Nasujima was completely blue, and he shook violently as he looked towards Sixty Storey Street.

"...Nasujima-san?"

Nasujima did not reply to Shijima, and, breaking out in cold sweat, began to bite at his thumbnail.

"I, i-i, i, i... idiot, that bastard, wa... wasn't he in d, d, detention?!"

The shudders running through his body spread even to his lips, and he was unable to even express himself properly.

Before his eyes was a man with his hair dyed gold.

At the crash a moment ago, Shijima, having seen the motorcycles rolling past, had thought some idiotic gangsters had caused a collision.

But Nasujima had understood.

That the grim reaper hunting him down had appeared here.

"T, there's no more time! Hurry! Break down the doors, the windows of the sushi place! T, take over that dreadlocked four-eyes now!"

By the order of Nasujima, who had lost the very last drop of the luxury he had to maintain his previous calmness -

The Saika crowd surrounding Russia Sushi lunged for the store in unison.



Before the Hands Building. The intersection.

Diagonally left from the front of the Tokyu Hands building was the intersection between Sixty Storey Street and the street Russia Sushi was on.

Towards Izaya, who stood, wordlessly, in the centre of the intersection, Shizuo walked, forward, by a step; and then another.

"I, is that Heiwajima Shizuo..."

“Shit, wasn't he an urban legend?”

“Seriously, did that guy throw a motorcycle...?”

“Oi, he's dragging a vending machine along...”

The delinquents that were raring angrily to bring Chikage down had quietened as though they had been drenched in cold water.

“I, if we take this guy down, we'll be the strongest, right...”

One of them, in the heat of the moment, lifted his metal bat, and swung it towards Shizuo.

But -

There was a crushing sound, as Shizuo gripped the bat with his empty hand.

“A, a, ahi, ahyaaaaah?!”

Still holding the bat, which had been crumpled like a cardboard tube, the delinquent's legs collapsed beneath him, and he wet his pants.

As a jolt rippled through the air, the *bosozoku* backed away unconsciously, and ran away through the cracks in the crowd.

But Shizuo paid no attention to them, and simply strode forward, a step at a time -

And so, he came before Orihara Izaya.

Chikage made as to call out to Shizuo, but as he saw Shizuo's eyes, he stopped.

He realised it was a state where contact with no less than full preparation would be unwise.

On the other hand, Orihara Izaya had made no attempt to escape in that interval.

As he toyed with the knife in his hand, he faced Shizuo's murderous intent head-on.

This time - it was for only a few seconds that the two confronted one another face to face.

But the surrounding people sensed it to be a very long time in actuality.

Both the ones who knew Shizuo and Izaya and the ones who did not - held their breath in unison.

It appeared that the man clad in black was challenging the monster in the bartender uniform.

How would Heiwajima Shizuo use his overwhelming strength?

And what would result of the receiver of such a blow?

Faced with a tragedy of whose result could be visualised, the delinquents, Chikage, the members of the Blue Square, and even Kuronuma Aoba - forgot what they were doing, and watched the scene that awaited them.

The response of the group of the Saika-possessed was split in two.

The group with Nasujima as its Mother stirred at the appearance of the strong human known as Heiwajima Shizuo -

And as though the aftereffect of Ripper Night had spread through Saika, the group with Haruna as its Mother was, distinctly, fearful of Shizuo.

These traits, completely opposite from Nasujima, who feared Shizuo, and Haruna, who did not, were taken on by the Children; and the united front of the Saika-possessed, who had appeared under control up till now, began to crumble.

“...”

“...”

As the distance between Izaya and Shizuo shortened to a mere two metres, Shizuo stopped walking.

A distance one step from both could cover.

Their eyes met.

And in the next moment.

Shizuo, with the speed at which a sword could instantly be drawn and cut down its opponent, swung the vending machine he was dragging behind him -

The streets of Ikebukuro were consumed by a magnificent sound of destruction.



Togusa's van.

Just a little before.

Seconds before Shizuo and Izaya's clash began.

Anri stiffened at the words of the man smiling in front of the van.

"Just now... What... did that person say?"

Ryuugamine Mikado.

Why was this name turning up here?

Was the man before her a comrade of Nasujima?

As various thoughts swirled in her mind - the sound of something breaking came through the hole in the broken front window, bringing her back to her senses.

--It can't be that the sound just now...!

--It feels a little wrong, but...

With the mention of Mikado, uneasiness rose rapidly in Anri's heart.

As she suppressed that, she quietly made up her mind.

To control the men before her with Saika, and hear as much as possible about what was happening.

However -

A blinding light flew into her vision

"Well, though I don't know what Ryuugamine's up to now, ei... ther...?"

A few seconds before the light appeared, Izumi saw.

The gentle-featured man standing on the pavement, retrieving something from his rucksack.

"...Is that... Yumasaki?!"

He did not know why Yumasaki was outside the van, and pointed as to direct his comrades.

"Oi, go... huh?"

Izumi noticed, then.

That what Yumasaki had brought out from his rucksack was a fire extinguisher.

--A fire extinguisher?

--Him?

--A distraction?

--Putting out fire.

--Yumasaki?

--No.

After various thoughts and flashbacks to scenes of the past, Izumi's mind reached an answer.

"Yumasaki! Bastard..."

At the same time he shouted, Yumasaki pointed the mouth of the extinguisher at Togusa's van.

And -

"Here I come! Sure-kill Innocentius, my version!"

In time with his strange yelling, the extinguisher in Yumasaki's hands spewed forth hellish flames.

Flames from a flamethrower Yumasaki had modified, himself, from a fire extinguisher.

As the flames lit the surroundings brilliantly, they travelled an unexpected distance from the pavement, towards Togusa's van.

"Uwahhh?!" "Wait, seriously?!"

The situation was completely beyond the expectations of the delinquents, who wielded only pickaxes and metal pipes.

Running from the flames, they hurriedly escaped from the area around the van.

But Yumasaki did not go so far as to target and burn them to death, only letting out small bursts as a threat, chasing away the gangsters around the van.

"Yu, Yuma... saki... Bastardddd!"

On the other hand, Izumi, with his past trauma with fire, hid behind a nearby vehicle, still gripping his hammer.

"Now! Get out of the van!"

Heeding Yumasaki, Kadota and the rest immediately escaped from the left side of the van.

Only Togusa, who was in the driver's seat, took some time, but somehow all of them alighted successfully.

"Bastard... Kadotaaa! Don't think you can run!"

Guarding against Yumasaki's flamethrower, Izumi yelled from behind yet another vehicle.

The drivers of the nearby vehicles, prizing their lives, were escaping from their cars at the sight of Yumasaki's fire, and screams and chaos filled the surroundings.

In the midst of this situation, Kadota, who could barely move, straightened as he spoke to Anri and the others behind him:

"Oi, leave this to us, the girls should run for it."

In accordance to his words, Karisawa, Togusa and Yumasaki stood before the delinquents to block them off.

"B, but...!"

"It's okay; let the adults handle this."

Togusa smiled as he said this, and Yumasaki continued enthusiastically.

"Honestly! I always wanted to get to say this! 'Leave this to me, go on'....!"

"Ahaha, isn't that a sure sign you'll die?"

Despite the large number of enemies before her, Karisawa still smiled.

Anri hesitated, but Kadota continued.

"These guys are just bastards acting like idiots at their age. If you mix with them you'll become idiots as well."

And then, to Seiji, who stood as if protecting Mika, he said:

"Oi, take your girlfriend and run; protect her properly."

At Kadota's words, Seiji wavered as to whether he should stay and fight - but he saw Mika standing behind him, and Namie glaring at her.

--Even if I tell *Nee-san* to take care of Mika... It wouldn't work out, would it.

If they ran away on their own, it was certain that Namie would assault Mika.

And so, in order to protect Mika, he chose to leave, albeit reluctantly.

"...I will. Thank you very much."

"Don't thank me. I said it already; we're just joining a fight between idiots."

Kadota, as he said this, knocked down one of the approaching delinquents.

The punch seemed nothing like what would come from a patient requiring rest, and the people around them cowed.

And in that opening, Kadota said, to Saki:

"Kida's unexpectedly weak-hearted, so... Take care of him well when you meet."

"...I will!"

Saki nodded strongly, and took Anri's hand.

"Let's go, Anri-chan."

"But..."

Anri hesitated.

If she were to use the power of Saika, she could easily cut all of the them, and have Saika possess them.

But Kadota, detecting those thoughts, warned her.

“These guys aren’t worth burdening you with, Jou-chan.”

“...!”

“Just go! Protect Mikado, in your own way!”

“Kadota-san...”

Anri bit her lip tightly, and bowed her head deeply.

And then started running, with Saki, on the pavement.

“Ah, wait bitches...”

As a delinquent tried to chase them, Togusa hit them with a spinning kick.

“Gahah...”

“Bastards... You weren’t thinking you could get away with hurting my van, were you...?”

And so, here, chaos began.

The fights breaking out, one by one, on Ikebukuro’s streets.

It was as if they were a chain of fireworks.

In order to burst brightly, fleetingly, before vanishing - they merely continued to burn.

Unaware that a dark shadow loomed close.



Mixed use building. Roof.

“Mikado...”

Masaomi groaned in pain, sprawled on the ground.

The Mikado he saw smiled gently, and said.

“It’s all right, Masaomi. I’ll tie you up and call an ambulance; you’ll be fine, I think.”

And then Mikado, **his gaze still on Masaomi, began to speak to himself.**

“...Ah, I shot him.”

“...?”

“I see, just now, I just, shot him... Kida-kun...”

“Mikado...?”

Masaomi endured the pain in his body, and continued to look towards Mikado - and noticed he was quivering.

“I was wondering how much I hoped for the extraordinary. I didn’t know, myself. How far I would go, what I would do, before I could stop.”

Mikado walked, slowly, to the corner of the roof where the first gun had landed, and picked it up.

“But, I... Even when Masaomi beat me up, I couldn’t stop. And instead... I shot him.”

“Hey... Mikado?”

Masaomi asked this as he crawled on the floor, but it was unclear if the words had gone through to Mikado, who looked into the emptiness as he continued.

“Even if it were Kadota-san or Yumasaki-san or Karisawa-san, I would surely shoot. Even Kishitani-san or Izaya-san or Shizuo-san, or Harima-san or Yagiri-kun, or Aoba-kun, or Takiguchi-kun, or Miyoshi-kun...!”

As he listed the names of his close ones, Mikado’s voice escalated.

It was as if he was reproaching his very own self.

But his voice suddenly softened.

“Ah, yeah, yeah, Masaomi... I'd, surely, for my own selfishness...”

And there Mikado went silent for an instant, before slowly, he uttered a name.

“I would shoot even Sonohara-san, I think.”

In the faint light, Masaomi realised that Mikado was crying.

And then, Mikado -

Slowly turned the gun in his right hand, the first gun, to his own temple.

“?! Oi, Mikado?! What are you doing?!”

Masaomi shouted at Mikado's sudden action, as even his own agony left him.

“You're kidding me! It's the most unfunny one today, idiot!”

As he heard those desperate screams, Mikado spoke.

“Surely... I'm beyond hope, now. I'll surely want to do things crueller than what I just did... And bring trouble to way, way more people, I think.”

Tears falling from his eyes, Mikado smiled the same smile as before.

“That's why I have to disappear as well, with the Dollars.”

Mikado was smiling and crying at the same time; and Masaomi yelled, angrily:

“Oi! I won't let you die to run away! And even if you died, it wouldn't be by your own will! You're completely under his control! It's that bastard Izaya's fault! I'll definitely take revenge! I'll kill him, even if I've to put my whole life into it!”

“...”

“So, so stop, Mikado... Don't make me waste my life for you like that...”

As he yelled pleadingly, he punched his bandaged right fist into the ground.

A spike of pain wracked through him, but Masaomi's eyes never left Mikado.

“...”

“...”

A moment of stillness enveloped the space between them.

Mikado closed his eyes for a moment, and then, with a happy face, he spoke, sorrowfully.

“Thank you, Masaomi. ...I'm sorry.”

“Mika... do...?”

“Even at a time like this... I'm a little excited. About what there'll be after I die. About how I might be able to go to a world I've never seen before.”

As he pressed the muzzle of the gun against his own temple, Mikado smiled, as if to reassure Masaomi.

“Celty-san... The Headless Rider exists, so there might be a world after death. ...No, for all I know I could become something like the Headless Rider...”

After mumbling quietly, he spoke to Masaomi again.

“Thinking things like that... I'm not in my right mind after all, I think.”

“Oi... Wait, stop! You're perfectly normal! We're the ones who pushed you into this, we're the ones who aren't!”

Desperately trying to persuade Mikado; mustering all of his body's strength to stop him.

He seemed to be just nearly able to stand, but -

Mikado, having gauged this, looked at Masaomi as he spoke.

“Masaomi... I'm sorry.”

And just like that, the boy squeezed the trigger, as far as it would go, without hesitation.

The third gunshot echoed in the surroundings, and -

The world of Ryuugamine Mikado was engulfed, without even the slightest light, into darkness.



Beside Tokyu Hands. The intersection.

It was a fight to the death, fully accurate to the description of 'grand'.

Heiwajima Shizuo, and Orihara Izaya.

There was an overwhelming disparity between the physical strength of the two.

Izaya had been on equal ground up to now only because he had before now focused essentially on running away, and taken advantage of the theatrical chase that ensued to attack Shizuo.

At times he would have Shizuo hit by a truck; at others he would have him fall into manholes; he had dragged him into the fights of the Awakusu-kai before as well.

When Izaya attacked directly with his knife it was generally preemptive; to provoke Shizuo by way of something like a greeting.

Because even if he were to honestly stab Shizuo with the knife, it would go no deeper than a centimetre.

Of course, if he were a normal person - he would have given up fighting altogether, let alone with a knife.

And, in this moment - Izaya forsook the way he had always fought.

He chose the path of fighting a dinosauric monster head-on, with a single knife.

As the impact of the first vending machine drew close, Izaya did not move backwards or sideways; he leapt forward.

By moving forward, conversely, he was able to dodge the machine.

But being that it had been thrown from a distance where Shizuo's arm could reach him, it was also by a timing where his neck could have easily been broken had he made the slightest error.

As would be expected, as he evaded the machine, Shizuo's free hand came at him.

Izaya avoided it by a hair's breadth, and proceeded to make a series of attacks with his knife.

Each time the blade sliced Shizuo's body, Izaya was overcome by the illusion he was stabbing at something akin to a heavy-duty tyre.

He was able to cut past a thin layer of skin, but regardless of how much force was used, it was impossible to penetrate the layer of muscle beneath.

Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee.

It would be a fitting statement, but in reality he was neither a butterfly nor a bee, but rather more of a fly challenging a human.

It was a situation where taking even one blow would destroy him easily, but even so Izaya continued to challenge Shizuo.

Each of Shizuo's blows were potentially lethal.

Dodging everything by a hair's breadth, Izaya, with a frequency several times that, carved at Shizuo's body.

As if simply to say that even if every slash shed not even a drop of blood, Shizuo's blood would sooner or later dry out completely.

Looking at the way Izaya fought, nothing but reckless, Chikage, a witness to the battle before he knew it, murmured subconsciously.

"That guy... Does he have a death wish?"

"He's fine with winning, but even if he loses and dies, it'd be a win to him, probably."

As Aoba said this from behind him, Chikage frowned.

"Ah? What do you mean - he wins if he dies?"

“They’re making such a scene of killing one another, in front of such a large audience. It wouldn’t just be arrest for murder. With that - Heiwajima Shizuo would probably be, well and truly, recognised by the world as a monster. Not some brutal hero with abnormal strength - a bloodthirsty beast.”

Aoba heaved a small sigh, and looked towards Izaya with both derision and pity in his gaze.

“Orihara Izaya... The guy in black, he can’t stand how human Heiwajima Shizuo is. That’s why he wants to look down on him as no more than a monster. He’s fine so long as he can make it such that no matter how much the other guy yearns to be human, humanity will reject him.”

“And why would you know that?”

Faced with such an extraordinary battle, Chikage, unthinkingly, asked Aoba this with a normal tone of voice. At his question, Aoba glowered in Izaya’s direction, as he replied.

“Because he and I are alike, in some ways. Somehow.”



Before Russia Sushi.

“Good job! It’ll break soon!”

Even as he pounded with both arms in high spirits, Nasujima’s face was blue.

Because he was at a distance where he could see Heiwajima Shizuo out of control.

Just the thought of that violence directed at himself was discomfiting.

But conversely, so long as Shizuo raged where he was, they could continue their activities here without attracting attention.

In his terror, Nasujima had chosen to take bold action.

If he were able to take control of the man in this sushi restaurant by the name of Tanaka Tom, he could use him as a hostage, or even a foothold to take control of Heiwajima Shizuo himself.

Anything after would be only a matter of time.

This was Nasujima’s train of thought; but he did not know.

That the door to Russia Sushi, which he was currently having the Saika-possessed group break down, was a Pandora’s Box for him.

After being rammed into repeatedly, the front entrance to Russia Sushi finally broke.

“Great! Take over everyone inside!”

With a vulgar smile, Nasujima moved towards the entrance himself -

But in the next instant, as if to negate the smile that shone on his face, the interior of the store shone, physically.

A few seconds ago.

Just as the Saika-possessed began to tear down the door and enter, they heard something landing on the floor. Before they could realise it was a flashbang stun grenade - the light and sound detonated, robbing them of their sight and vision, as well as their sense of judgment, in an instant.

And then a low table from a tatami mat room, positioned like a shield, came towards them -

And like a bulldozer, pushed the entire Saika crowd, still confused, out of the store.

“Guahhhh?! Wha, what?! What’s going on?!”

In his confusion, Nasujima pressed down on his eyes, as multiple cylinders landed in his surroundings. His eyes dazzled, his ears still reverberating with the aftershock. As if a final blow, a glaring light dyed the shadow-covered streets of Ikebukuro.



Before Tokyu Hands.

A glint at the corner of his vision.

Noticing that for one moment was the misfortune of Orihara Izaya.

As he realised the source was a stun grenade, the knowledge and experience Izaya had accumulated thus far sent his body into a natural state of alertness.

But what he faced before him was not so much a stun grenade. It was a phenomenon surpassing any tame explosive.

At a time where he needed to focus all of his attentions on the demon before him, even one second he failed to give his all -

Became a lethal opening as a result.

Shizuo's blow, which Izaya should have been able to dodge by a hair's width, grazed his shoulder.

And despite the fact that it had merely brushed him, an unnaturally strong impact ran through Izaya's body.

"Gah..."

It felt like the kind of impact that would have resulted if his shoulder had collided with an express train speeding through the station platform.

A force this strong assaulted Izaya, and spun his body.

When Izaya had somehow stood and regained his posture - he saw Shizuo's fist closing in on his own body.

"...!"

The timing was such that it would be impossible to evade it completely.

Izaya attempted to cross his arms before him to take the blow, and jumped backwards to kill its momentum.

But it was not the kind of might that could be stopped by such commonsensical means.

In the case of a cannonball, regardless of whether one buffered the attack with their arms or took it head-on, they would, similarly, be thrown back.

In the instant Shizuo's fist connected with Izaya's arms -

The sound of the bones in Izaya's arms breaking was heard by all around them.

Then Shizuo finished his punch diagonally downwards, and Izaya, both arms broken, hit the ground, flying several metres as if he had been victim to a traffic accident.

If Shizuo had directed the blow upwards, Izaya would most likely have been sent flying as high as a building.

The overwhelming strength of the blow was sufficient to inspire such thoughts in its witnesses.

But Izaya's efforts were not in vain.

For if he had not chosen to sacrifice his arms, the likelihood was that his ribs would have shattered, and his heart ruptured.

The cost was his arms.

In exchange, Orihara Izaya's life did not end, and he was able to stand up before Shizuo.

But from the perspective of the spectators around them, all that could be observed was that he had extended his life by a mere few seconds.

--I'm still alive, am I.

His arms, not only broken, had dislocated from his shoulders and hung uselessly, but even so, Izaya remained conscious.

He had stood with the strength of his legs alone, but after the impact when he had hit the ground, he could not even breathe.

It was an impact beyond that of before, when he had been hit by a steel frame and sent flying through to the next building.

Spitting blood from his mouth, Izaya looked to Shizuo.

Shizuo as well was bleeding all over; it certainly appeared he had taken no light damage.

Dyed through with blood, he took a step, and yet another, as he came closer to Izaya.

--If I'd fought this way from the start... Might I not have won?

--Really, it's ironic.

Looking at Shizuo's bloody form through his hazy vision, Izaya had such thoughts.

Perhaps his brain's natural analgesia was coming into play; the pain in his arms and throughout his body was already dulling.

As he regretted, Izaya smiled.

He simply smiled.

From this point on, accepting his death; expediting it.

With his own life as a sacrifice, Heiwajima Shizuo would be, as a monster, banished from the human world.

If he could prevent a future where a monster could stroll amongst humans so brazenly, it could be said that he had won, couldn't it?

With such thoughts through his mind, Izaya continued to stand before Shizuo.

Continuing to stand - was the limit of his ability.

As Shizuo grabbed a vending machine that had fallen to the side, and took yet another step closer to Izaya - Izaya wrested his voice from the pit of his lungs.

"...do it, monster."

Before he could ascertain if his words had reached Shizuo, Izaya's body was struck by a force.

But it was not a blow from Shizuo.

Shizuo was still carrying the vending machine.

It was as if he had looked at Izaya and stopped moving.

"Eh...?"

And then Izaya noticed something wrong with his body.

Something was stabbing in his side.

As he realised that it was a blade, shining silver, Izaya detected a shadow on the edge of his vision.

Standing, hidden one step in the ring of spectators formed by the delinquents was -

**Pointing the bladeless hilt of a knife towards him - Vorona.**

Her sober eyes fixed on Izaya, she discarded the hilt, and wielded the object that was in her left hand with both hands.

The moment they registered it was a handgun, the onlookers began to clamour.

The muzzle of the gun was pointed straight at Izaya; the spectators around her and those behind Izaya yelled as they dispersed to the sides.

"Vorona...?"

Shizuo turned, slowly to look at Vorona; in his eyes, mixed with his rage towards Izaya, was a sense of bewilderment.

Looking between Shizuo, and Izaya, who had fallen to his knees -

Vorona said, evenly, to Shizuo:

"Shizuo-senpai - is human."

It was not that she knew of Izaya's thoughts.

But by simple coincidence, her words were a rejection of Izaya's thoughts.

"The need to become a beast - is nil."

And then, Vorona aimed the muzzle of the gun at Izaya.

To shoot his head and heart, and ensure he was annihilated from the world.

As Shizuo understood the situation, the light of reason gradually returned to his eyes -

And, with a panicked expression, he yelled to his kohai wielding the gun.

"Oi idiot, stop! You can't become a murderer!"

Vorona - smiled faintly at Shizuo's voice, and replied, her gaze never leaving Izaya.

"I request your reassurance."

"I have, from the very start... been a beast that enjoys killing."



Before Russia Sushi.

"Oi... Isn't that Shizuo?!"

Tom raised his voice from where he was the Saika-possessed crowd, which were mostly either unconscious or crouching with their eyes covered.

Tom's group had decided to throw some stun grenades and smoke bombs and attempt escape from this street, but now they had come out into the open, an unbelievable scene stretched before their eyes.

As they had looked around to find a way with the least number of people, a strange crowd had come into sight; and there was a vending machine that had landed amidst them.

In other words, the person in the bartender suit beside it was, unquestionably, Shizuo.

"Ohh---, Izaya's there too..."

Simon, with his good eyesight, had looked towards the intersection at what Tom had said - only to see that a part of the crowd had, as though spiderlings dispersing, parted to the sides.

In that cleared area, Simon sighted Vorona, pointing a gun towards Izaya.

"!"

Simon's following actions were extremely fast.

Without a words, he pulled the pin from the stun grenade he held.

After calculating the timing, he aimed towards the intersection and threw it, with all of his strength.

"He---i!"

The stun grenade flew, and without bouncing, landed in the intersection -



Before the Tokyu Hands Building. The intersection.

--To think... Such a stupid end.

As he saw Vorona point the gun at him, Izaya felt a great disappointment.

But he smiled, somewhat as if he had given up, and looked straight at Vorona.

--It's all right; I'll allow this. Because I love humanity.

"...you're human. As human as anyone anywhere."

Unable to understand the meaning behind what Izaya had murmured, Vorona was confused for a moment -

But unlike when she had pointed the gun at Shizuo, she felt no hesitation at pulling the trigger.

And, seeing Shizuo turn to face her, she made as to shoot Izaya before he could stop her.

However, something completely beyond her imaginings entered her vision.

Even before she realised that it was a stun grenade from her father's company, one she often used herself - without hitting the ground, it exploded midair; and the surroundings were consumed in light and chaos.



Before Russia Sushi.

After Tom, Simon and the rest of the group ran towards the intersection - the emotions of Nasujima, who had been left behind there: his anger and shame, and his rising fear of Shizuo as he was blinded - exploded.

"Damn it... Cut them! Everyone, and those *bosozoku* as well, take them all over with Saika, you hear! Don't hold back anymore! Take over everyone on this street!"

"Yes, Mother."

The first to reply to what he said was Haruna.

Perhaps she had been some distance from the stun grenades; it appeared that she had regained her sight already.

And then the pedestrians Haruna and Nasujima had gathered, who had up till then remained mere observers, assaulted the crowd of the Dollars en masse.



And so, centred in the area before the Hands building, chaos broke out at a large scale.

The *bosozoku* watching Shizuo and Izaya's match from afar were suddenly faced with a glaring light, after

which the red-eyed group suddenly assaulted them.

The *bosozoku* fell into a panic as if they had been thrown into a zombie movie, and without knowing the situation, they met the assault of the group possessed by Saika, metal pipes and other weapons in hand. It was clear that things would not end with a mere skirmish; it would be carnage, and deaths would come to pass.

However - at that point, a miracle occurred.

No; perhaps it was too sinister an occurrence to be called a miracle.

Shadow pelted down like rain, all of a sudden - and, binding both the *bosozoku* and the Saika-possessed, sealed their movements.

In an instant they were restrained by the black shadow, and could barely move their bodies, at which point - Her voice came, reverberating in the ears of all consumed by the shadows.

“【I have understood the situation.】”

As if the voice was being emitted from the shadow itself, her voice shook the eardrums of the people.

In a way most had never experienced, in an uncanny voice - She continued.

“【**Before I leave this city**, I will eliminate the trouble my Body was involved in.】”

The voice, from which strength could be sensed despite its evenness, continued to resonate in the people's minds.

“【It is the least repentance I can do, for the turmoil my Body brought onto these streets.】”



Roof of the mixed-use building.

When he came to, all of the air was wrapped in darkness.

From the sky above the roof, Shadow had rained down, and consumed Mikado and Masaomi instantaneously.

This had occurred at about the same time as the sound of the gunshot.

That was why Mikado had mistook it for his own death.

--Ah, there's no pain...

--But everything's dark.

--I wonder... if everything'll be dark like this, from now on...

How many minutes had passed?

As he calmed down, Mikado's eyes began to fill with tears once more.

--...Sorry. I'm really sorry, Sonohara-san, Masaomi...

A moment after Mikado thought this -

“【I have understood the situation.】”

So came a strange voice, echoing in his eardrums and in his mind.

“【**Before I leave this city**, I will eliminate the trouble my Body was involved in.】”

And then Mikado understood.

He could still feel himself gripping the gun in his right hand.

--Could it be... I'm still... alive?



towards herself -

And in the next moment, the firearms were dismantled by the shadows.

“【I do not know what my body told you, but it cannot be allowed for my existence to be the reason you hold hope in the face of death.】”

As the parts of the gun clattered to the ground, Celty continued, calmly.

“【It appears that you were the one most affected, by the existence of my Body in this city.】”

“Affected...?”

“【That is why, human boy. Let me bid farewell to you in person.】”

As her shadows writhed, Celty told Mikado.

“【**After regaining consciousness**, I spread my shadow over the sky of this city, and collected information thus. It was beyond expectation that in a mere twenty years, I would have wandered to a different land.】”

“Celty-san, what are you...?”

Mikado, confused.

And then -

The sound of new footsteps came from the direction of the emergency staircase.

“Ryuugamine-kun... And Kida-kun?!”

“Masaomi!”

At the voices of those who had just appeared, Mikado and Masaomi cried, one after another:

“...Sonohara-san?!”

“Saki?! Why... Why are you here...”

It was not only the two girls. Behind them was Yagiri Seiji and Harima Mika as well.

As Kadota had told them to, Anri had been running on the pavement, but she had not known where to head towards.

Should she bring Saki to take refuge in a safe place, or go to the area before Russia Sushi, where Nasujima was?

As Anri and the rest were thinking this this, they had heard, from above their heads, the third gunshot.

“?!”

And then, following that - the scream of a familiar boy.

--'Mikadoo!'

Anri, hearing Masaomi's scream, had looked up frantically -

And seeing the deep-coloured Shadow that filled the rooftop, with uneasiness in her chest, she had run up the emergency staircase of the building.

Finally, Anri, struggling, reached the rooftop.

At the sight of Mikado, who she had most wanted to see, Anri was deeply relieved.

At the same time, she began to tear.

However -

The scene before her eyes robbed her of the chance for a touching reunion.

“Masaomi-kun...?”

Masaomi, sprawled on the floor of the rooftop; and the headless horse behind him.

Under the arm of the knight that straddled the horse was a face exactly similar to the person standing behind

Anri: Harima Mika.

“Celty... -san?”

Before the Hands building.

When Shizuo recovered from the bright light that had dazzled his eyes, a strange scene stretched before him. Inexplicably, both the red-eyed crowd and the bosozoku all had their limbs bound by a black shadow. For some reason he himself was unbound, and when he checked, his limbs were free to move. Anxiously, he looked around at his surroundings - but Orihara Izaya was gone; all that was left was remnants of blood.

"..."

The anger that had dissipated due to Vorona's actions reignited, but remembering she was there, he looked in her direction.

And where she had stood before was now Tom, Simon and Denis -  
One of them was carrying the unconscious form of Vorona.

"! Vorona!"

Blood flowed from the wounds on his body; but heedless of it, he ran towards her.

"Shizuo... Oi, you okay?!"

Tom said this, to which Shizuo nodded strongly.

"I'm fine. But more importantly Vorona..."

Shizuo asked this worriedly, and Simon and Denis replied:

"Oh---, she's only passed out. When she wakes up, we'll give her hot tea."

"She has some injuries, but it isn't anything life-threatening. Overexertion and a stun grenade. Looks like even she couldn't handle it."

"Vorona... Why did you..."

Shizuo, remembering Vorona's actions, said this; to which Denis replied:

"Well, we only saw some of it, but... She probably didn't want you to become a killer."

"...I see."

Various thoughts swirled in his heart.

If he had killed Izaya there and then, perhaps she would have thought that avenging her had made Shizuo a killer.

--...

--I'm still weak...

--I'm sorry, Vorona.

Sighing deeply, he swallowed down the sputtering flame of his hatred towards Izaya.

--Though well, if I find him still loitering around, I might just lose it and kill him anyway...

As he thought this, Shizuo looked around at his surroundings once again.

And then a single spot caught Shizuo's eye.

"...That's -"

What came into Shizuo's sight was not Izaya -

But the form of his childhood friend in his white coat, walking with a crutch in the middle of the road.

Roof of the mixed-use building.

"I've found her... My... love."

"..."

Yagiri Seiji murmured this dazedly, while Harima Mika glared wordlessly at the head under the knight's arm.

At the sight of Mika, Masaomi, still suppressing his pain, grew confused.

"Ah. Wha... They have the same face after all, don't they...?"

"Masaomi! More importantly, we need to stop the blood...!"

Saki ran up to Masaomi, so as to look at his wound.

And in the next moment, Masaomi's leg was wrapped in shadow, stopping the bleeding from his wound.

"Uguah...?!"

For an instant pain wrested through Masaomi's body, but next, the shadow writhed, in a complex manner - and extracted the small bullet that had remained in the wound.

"?!"

"【It is not to be tolerated for a conflict with my Body to be the underlying cause of a human's death. I am unable to erase the memories of those who know me, but let us at least minimise the sacrifices.】"

The multitude of words, businesslike, were spoken with an even voice.

"It can't be Celty-san's fault... This is entirely my fault!"

"【Human boy. Let me ask: Had you never met the Headless Rider, would you still be facing the reality of shooting your friend now?】"

"...!"

Mikado could not answer those words.

It was he who had established the Dollars - but it was because he had seen the extraordinariness that was the Headless Rider, and gotten connected to events involving her, that he had been able to realise the Dollars, physically, during the first meeting.

If that had never happened, perhaps now Mikado would be living as a normal high schooler, and the misunderstandings with Masaomi and Anri could have never happened.

"【By my presence in this city, Yagiri Pharmaceuticals was led on the wrong path; Yagiri Seiji was steered to a meaningless love; Harima Mika forsook the face she was born with.】"

"A meaningless love...? What are you saying?"

His expression still dazed, Seiji gazed at the living head.

Celty made no reply to Seiji, and continued, evenly, to describe her own opinion.

"【This is no more than an example. No doubt there were countless other lives derailed by the illusion of the 'Headless Rider'.】"

"Celty-san...? What are you saying?"

Anri asked, her face filled with unease.

The dullahan's head turned its eyes on Anri, and uttered, revealing no emotion.

"【Let this be clear, girl, bearer of the demon sword. My current self holds no memory of the life with all of you. I am, merely, speaking the truth I know from the information I have collected.】"

"【What is certain is that by the existence of myself, the fate of this city was altered greatly. This should be immediately clear, from the unrest today.】"

"No way... No! You're wrong! It wasn't your fault! There are so many people who were saved just by meeting you, Celty-san! Even if..."

"【Bearer of the demon sword - saving them, as well, was no more than a wrong turn of the gears.】"

"Eh...?"

“【I am merely a system. One that, in accordance to a greater will, within a limited territory, informs the chosen of their death. There is no need for you humans to know meaning behind this, and even should you know, you would be incapable of understanding.】”

“【Interfering in a system with no place for me, causing all of you to waste unnecessary time - it was unfortunate, I think. In the end, it has brought happiness to no one.】”

“【I will return to my home, and resume my duty. As I bid farewell to Ryuugamine Mikado, the human with whom I shared the deepest link, whose fate I affected the most, my duty in this city has come to an end. Forget me, humans.】”

“Oi, wait... Wait!”

“【What you have come to love is not me; it is only my head, a part of me. And I have neither the duty nor the want to reciprocate those feelings.】”

“I won't give up...! Even if you're returning to your hometown, I'll follow even to the other side of the earth!”

--No.

--Celty-san, she's lying.

--Because the one Celty-san shared the deepest link with...

--The one whose life Celty-san changed the most...

The instant she made as to voice the man's name, to keep Celty from leaving -

“Celty, you're... a liar, today.”

The man's voice rung out from behind Anri.

It was not forceful; if anything, his voice was kind.

But his voice echoed clearly across the roof -

The headless horse's legs stopped, promptly, midstep.

But Celty did not answer, and shook the reins lightly.

“【...What's wrong, Shooter. Forward.】”

As if she had not heard the voice.

And to her - the man behind Anri spoke, loud and clear.

“Eh... 'Forward, Shooter, you hear? If you stop here, wouldn't all my lies have been for nothing?' ...was it?”

“【...】”

In response to the man, the head held under the black knight's arm turned, around, to face him.

At the man before her eyes - Kishitani Shinra, in his white coat, **his eyes clear** - Celty opened her mouth, slowly.

“【Human... Who are you?】”

At what she said, Anri felt enormous shock.

It was not her alone who felt this; Mikado, who knew of the relation between the two, had widened his eyes as if he had seen something unbelievable.

But - only Shinra, the one in question, continued, smiling gently.

“Let's see... 'But why are you here? Even though it'd only be painful to part if we met; even though I thought you would give up if I pretended to forget everything! And why are you talking like I haven't lost my memories in the first place!' ...was it?”

Like a stalker fantasising, Shinra began to voice her thoughts on her behalf.

The Head, hearing this, spoke expressionlessly.

“【What? This human, what is he saying?】”

“I don't doubt you've regained your memories. And to the same extent, I believe, you know. That your

memories of this city are still in you.”

“【What stupidity is this? I have no memory whatsoever of the past twenty years.】”

“It doesn’t matter. Because I was hoping. But now, speaking to you like this, I’m sure. You’re kind after all, Celty. Though a little too kind.”

Shinra was not unhurt.

He had taken painkillers, but initially he had been, like Kadota, in a state that needed rest.

But, as though he felt not even a sliver of this pain, he clacked his crutch against the ground and continued.

“Ah, what about this... ‘Stop! I can’t exist in this city! Shinra was hurt so bad because of me, and just by my being in this city, I changed even Mikado’s life!’ ...”

“【You waste your time. I cannot understand what you say.】”

“...That’s why, that’s why I wanted to at least end all of the mess in the city before disappearing! I thought if they knew my true nature as a cruel monster, everyone would forget me quickly! I thought if I made them think I’d forgotten, everyone would give up! I wanted you most of all to forget, so why are you the one ruining it all?’ ...was that it?”

“【Idiocy.】”

With her face towards him, Celty laughed, derisively.

“Don’t say that; look here, Celty.”

“【...】”

Her head was already facing Shinra.

But her body had its back to him.

“【That is enough, human. Your delusions are many.】”

“Uwah - ”

Celty extended her shadow, wrapping Shinra.

Turning her back on Shinra, who had landed on the floor, she kicked lightly at Shooter’s side.

“【Go.】”

*Qrrrrrrrrrrr -*

Shooter let out a small whimper, and without moving forward, thumped its heels against the ground.

It seemed to be urging for something, but Celty raised her voice:

“【Go! We’re going! Shooter!】”

And at that moment, both Mikado and Anri understood.

That it was most likely just as Shinra had said.

“Celty-san...” “Wait, Celty-san!”

Just as Anri and Mikado started, Shooter let out a sorrowful cry, and began to walk, slowly, on a path of shadow that had formed in the sky.

Celty remained unspeaking, and merely ascended towards the shadow-covered sky.

As if she were attempting to disappear into the deep darkness herself.

Mikado and the others, who could not even speak up to her, were overcome by an illogical sense of helplessness and could not move -

But yet another new voice appeared on this scene.

“Oi... Was it Celty flying just now?”

When they turned to look, it was Shizuo, with cuts all over his body, bleeding from some parts.

“Shizuo-san...?!”

As all of them exclaimed in shock, one man stood slowly.

“Ah, Shizuo-kun, just in time.”

It was unclear what had happened, but Shinra, having **escaped from Celty’s shadows that had restrained him**, spoke to Shizuo.

“Oh, I saw you coming into this building... And I saw Shooter and someone like Celty on the roof, so I came up,

but... What's going on here?"

Shizuo frowned, and Shinra smiled at him.

"What's going on? Here, from now on, it's where I become the bad guy."

"Ah?"

"Hey, Shizuo-kun, remember our promise from high school?"

"...?"

Shizuo frowned at the sudden mention of their high school days.

But as Shinra's eyes were serious despite his smile, Shizuo chose to keep his silence, and hear what he had to say.

"...Try me."

"That if I were to become the villain, for the person I love... **When the time came, you'd send me flying to the end of the sky for her...** Something like that."

"...Yeah, I did say that."

"The time is now."

Shinra looked up at Cely's shrinking figure, and said, to Shizuo:

"From this point on, I'll be doing something awful to Cely. But Cely's kind, so I think she'll forgive me."

"..."

"Which is why... As you promised, won't you send me flying all the way to the sky?"

Shinra joked; and Shizuo asked, his face serious:

"...you serious?"

"Yeah."

"If you fall, you'll die, 100 percent. At that angle even I can't go to catch you. Speaking of which, are you planning to make me a murderer?"

Shizuo thought of Vorona as he said this, and after a silence, Shinra answered.

"Ah, if it comes to it... Sorry. But I trust Cely. You probably don't know what's going on, Shizuo, but I can say just this. Won't you trust Cely - won't you trust me?"

"..."

Shizuo fell into thought for a while, and then he smiled wordlessly -

And grabbed Shinra's leg, throwing it with his strength far from human.

With his countless wounds, Shizuo was by no means in top form, but -

"Don't regret it, bastarddddddd!"

Even the deathmatch with Izaya included, it was by far, certainly, the throw he put the most strength in.



The sky.

"【Don't be so upset, Shooter.】"

In the sky, with no one around them, Cely spoke to her beloved horse.

"【It's better this way. If I live with humans as I am now, with all of my memories, I'd only give them painful thoughts the longer I stayed...】"

As she ascended towards the darkness of the sky, the making of her own shadow, Cely continued to talk to Shooter.

“【Ah, it's hard, Shooter, it really is. If it brings such emotions, I won't ever involve myself with humans again...】”

Despite the sorrow in her words, Celty's head remained expressionless throughout.

“【Even though I hoped Shinra would forget me... I don't want to forget Shin... ra...?】”

And there her words stopped.

In the sky of Ikebukuro, wrapped in shadow, plunged in an abnormal darkness.

Passing by right next to her, in contrast to the night sky, came a figure shining white.

The instant she realised it was Shinra - Celty's mind went blank.

“【Wha...】”

“Well.”

“【Wha, whawha... Whawhawhawhaha... What are you doing!】”

At the sight of Shinra, who was slowly making his way on a downward trajectory, Celty held her arms out instinctively.

As if reading the atmosphere, Shooter kicked off from the path of shadow, leaping towards Shinra.

As a result the head tumbled, but that was not a significant problem.

The neck was now completely connected to the cut end of the head by thin shadows.

So long as it did not fall, she had not lost it.

Because the souls of the head and body were now completely linked.

Whether by a saw or explosives or any other method, nothing could detach the head, linked by a Shadow that could even be called a soul.

Save for - **a demon sword said to cut the soul.**

“...Celty.”

Catching up with Shinra, who murmured this as he fell, Celty stretched out her hand.

“【Grab on!】”

It was no longer a situation to put up an act, and Celty spoke plainly; and Shinra replied:

“Sorry.”

“【Eh?】”

And there, with Shinra, plunging downwards, and Celty, who chased him:

Celty saw.

They were not bloodshot.

Shinra's eyes were, like Anri's, letting off a brilliant red light.

And then she saw: **the moment a sharp blade emerged from Shinra's right palm.**

“【Da...】”

In that instant, a metallic light shone in the night sky -

And the shadow binding Celty's head and body - was slashed across by Saika.



Celty leapt off Shooter, and from a gap in her armour took out the PDA she had kept for memories' sake, and thrust it before Shinra, who had passed out.

'Please! Wake up! Don't die!'

Celty typed, desperately, as she shook Shinra's shoulders.

And then, to her - Shinra opened his eyes slowly, and spoke.

"...Celty, you can't... shake an injured person like that."

'...Shinra!'

Shinra had woken up; she pounded at his chest lightly.

'Idiot! This idiot! You're a good-for-nothing idiot!'

"Ahowowow... It hurts, Celty."

'Wh, why did you do something so dangerous?! If you'd made even one wrong move... You would've died...'

Shinra, you would've died!'

Celty quivered as she thrust her PDA at him, to which Shinra said:

"I - rejected your resolve."

Smiling, Shinra spoke.

"I insulted the way of a dullahan's life... and the future you chose."

Stroking the back of Celty's neck gently, the underground doctor smiled.

"If I didn't at least risk my life, it wouldn't balance out, would it?"

And to Shinra, Celty typed into her PDA.

They were words she had typed before, at an important time.

But at the same time, they were the one line she had grown most used to.

'You're really... an idiot.'



Before the Hands building.

"Now... would it be all right to think the party's over?"

In reply to Chikage, Aoba smiled bitterly, as he said:

"Maybe it would. I never thought it would end this way."

"...And by the way, why is it I'm not tied up but you are?"

Compared to Chikage, who was moving freely, Aoba, as well as Yoshikiri and the others, like the *bosozoku*, were on the ground, their limbs bound by shadow.

"I wonder. I didn't think our fight would be decided like this."

In actual fact it was due to Celty's judgment after having watched Masaomi's movements all along, but to Chikage and Aoba, both unaware of this, it was no more than a difference of luck.

"Decided, huh... Honestly, if I'd fought with those two giants over there, and the people from the other groups, the one on the ground might've been me."

Chikage moved closer to where Aoba was on the ground, and tore off his balaclava.

"...!"

Aoba glared up at Chikage indignantly, to which he said:

"But I'm not such an idiot I'd beat other kids up and say I won in this kind of situation. I've remembered your face. ...more or less. Well, your group started off so you could take your time after this, so."

And then Chikage looked towards the red-eyed people also on the ground, and tilted his head.

“Anyway... what are these people...? Their eyes are still red...”



A pavement.

Mikado, having descended from the mixed-use building, was walking on the pavement, Masaomi's arm over his shoulder.

They had worried over Shinra, who had been flung into the sky towards Celty, but they had been able to track him visually up till the two made contact. Trusting that Celty would save Shinra - they decided to put bringing Masaomi to the hospital as the first priority.

Shizuo had returned to the foot of the Hands building, claiming he was worried for his *kouhai*; Seiji and Mika had run towards Sunshine City saying they would check on Celty's condition.

And so, with Masaomi supported on both sides by Mikado and Saki, they were heading toward Raira General Hospital -

But for a while, Mikado could not speak.

Having had Celty, the very one who had pulled him into the extraordinary, reject their meeting as meaningless, and even say not to make his death her responsibility, it was as if he no longer knew what he should do.

“Oi, Mikado.”

As Mikado was in that state, Masaomi spoke to him.

“...”

To Mikado, who had his mouth agape, Masaomi spoke.

“How are we gonna cover up for the gunshot in my leg?”

“Eh...?”

“Think about it; if it's a bullet wound, the police will get involved, you know? How about saying... one of the *bosozoku* lying around there happened to have a gun? That way they won't know which gang did it, either...”

In spite of the pain rippling through his whole body, Masaomi joked.

“...”

Masaomi continued to Mikado, who had grown teary:

“Oi, tears of joy at getting to see Anri-chan? If you don't confess soon, I'll steal her, you know?”

“Aw, stop it, Masaomi.”

Saki smiled as she said this, and bumped her head against Masaomi's lightly.

As he watched their exchange, and Anri, who was looking over worriedly as she walked beside them, Mikado averted his eyes downward, and replied.

“I - might have wanted someone to hate me. I wanted to be the bad guy, to have someone just stop me, I think...”

Mikado teared slightly, but he fought to form a smile.

“I was thinking - wouldn't it be nice if that someone was Sonohara-san or Kida-kun?”

“Just call me Masaomi... Isn't it weird to go back to the old formalities at this kind of timing?”

At Mikado, who was forcing a smile, Masaomi said this, as he limped along.

Seeing the two, Anri felt relieved from the bottom of her heart, and tearing a little herself, she smiled.

“The three of us, we're all... together again.”

“Though there are four of us right now,”

Saki pointed out, and smiled as she closed her eyes lightly.

“It’s all right; the three of you can just talk. Pretend I’m Jizo-san.”

*(T/N: Jizo: deity in Japanese Buddhism, protector of (deceased) children; often sculpted into statues.)*

Anri smiled thankfully at what Saki said, and, moving a few steps ahead, spoke.

“We promised we’d talk about our secrets if we reunited, didn’t we.”

“...yeah, we did.”

“What? You made a promise like that? Oi, am I the only one left out?”

Masaomi smiled bitterly; Mikado and Anri exchanged glances and smiled as well.

“Yeah... Who’ll start?”

“It should be Mikado, shouldn’t it? I want to leave Anri’s secret as the dessert.”

Masaomi continued to joke, hiding the pain in his body.

Even as his heart ached at this, Mikado felt it relax, a little.

The ticket to the ‘extraordinary’ he had received on the night of the Dollars’ first meeting.

When he had stabbed Kuronuma Aoba’s right hand in the Golden Week, it had been switched for an express ticket.

He felt as if a small part of what he had lost as payment had returned within himself.

--Ah, I see.

--It’s just like what Sonohara-san said, in the past.

--A never-ending ordinary might be what’s truly unordinary.

Recalling the days of the past, tears streaming, Mikado looked at Anri’s face.

And then -

He noticed a person rushing from behind Anri.

“Eh...?”

Holding a small knife, their eyes bloodshot.

His hairstyle resembled that of a host for some reason, but Mikado was familiar with this man.

--Nasujima-sensei...?

--Why...?

Before Mikado’s confused gaze, Nasujima smiled vulgarly, and plunged the knife towards Anri’s back.

-----

Instinctively, Mikado left Masaomi’s side, and jumped before Anri.

Before Masaomi, who staggered, and Anri, whom he had jumped in front of, could grasp the situation, Mikado blocked Nasujima’s way -

And the knife sunk into Mikado’s abdomen.

“Ah...”

Unable to even scream, Mikado felt heat and pain surge through his body from where he had been stabbed.

And Nasujima, clicking his tongue, cursed him for blocking the attack, and stabbed Mikado’s side a second time, and then again.

There was a scream.

Was it Masaomi? Or was it Anri’s?

Unable to identify even that -

The world of Ryuugamine Mikado was engulfed, without even the slightest light, into darkness.

Chatroom.

.  
. .  
.

There is no one in the chatroom.

San-san has entered the chatroom.

San [Let's meet again]

San-san has left the chatroom.

There is no one in the chatroom.

There is no one in the chatroom.

.  
. .  
.

## **EPILOGUE**

And Tokyo embraced the sunrise.

But even as the hands of the clock passed 6 in the morning, and then 7 - no sunlight came down on Ikebukuro. Even terming it as cloudy would have been an understatement; a pitch-black Shadow swallowed the city. The scene, as if night had not ended, disturbed the masses, and was avidly reported by the morning news.

Just before noon the shadow vanished completely; society regarded it as a natural phenomenon due to abnormal haze; and the usual everyday life returned -

But for those deeply connected to the Shadow, it was a morning they embraced various changes.



In a car.

“...”

Amidst his faint consciousness, Orihara Izaya noticed he was being jostled.

It appeared he was sitting in the passenger seat of a car, adjusted backwards.

Looking to the side, he saw a bald man driving expressionlessly.

“...Kine-san...?”

“You were lucky I happened to be nearby’... It’d be a little hard to say that.”

“...”

“Your injuries were bad enough you had be rushed to the hospital, so I was fifty-fifty about helping you.”

Kine spoke, blandly, of his own opinion.

“Honestly speaking, rather than that knife in your stomach, it’s the bruises that seem worse. It looks like your insides are in a bad state; you did well fighting Shizuo like that.”

With this, Izaya looked towards the side of his abdomen.

Indeed, there was a projectile-type knife embedded in it.

But Shadow coiled around the wound, suppressing the bleeding as much as was possible.

“You shouldn’t remove it. If you let it bleed your fifty percent chance would drop to ten.”

“...”

“Well, before you die, at least thank the person behind. She helped move you while Shizuo was blinded.”

“...?”

Still pale-faced, Izaya turned his eyes to the rearview mirror, and there he saw a girl, her expression cold - Mamiya Manami.

“Don’t misunderstand; I just wanted to see you to your death without interruptions.”

The girl looked at him through the mirror, with obvious hatred and contempt.

“If you died here, I would say, ‘You were killed by Heiwajima Shizuo. Serves you right.’ If you survived thanks to that Shadow, I would say, ‘You’re living so freely thanks to the Headless Rider. Serves you right.’

“...Haha... Don’t say... such hateful things.”

“I heard a lot from Kishitani-sensei just now. About what you might hate.”

“Damn... him...”

He smiled bitterly as he heaved a deep sigh, and with glassy eyes, he looked up at the pitch-black sky through

the window.

Izaya fell silent, and Kine asked:

“What now? Would it be more convenient to leave you at the A & E nearby, or at an underground doctor I have connections with?”

And Izaya, glaring at the Shadow spread over Ikebukuro’s sky, said, ignoring his own state of near-death:

“Ahh... First would be to get out of this city... Go somewhere far, if possible...”

“...”

“Because I would rather die... than be seen by a monster.”

Izaya smiled in bravado, but his face was slowly losing its colour.

Kine said nothing, and continued driving, while he planned a route to evade any possible police checks.

Eventually, the car that carried him disappeared from the city, into the outside.

And so Izaya’s form disappeared from Ikebukuro - information about his survival was hidden in the darkness.

Because the informant himself, the one to tell it, had left the city.



Eventually the darkness in the sky thinned, and at the same time, the shadow binding the *bosozoku* and the Saika-possessed dispersed.

“...huh?”

When Niekawa Shuji regained consciousness, he had ended up somewhere on Ikebukuro’s streets.

“Why... am I here?”

Looking around him, the surrounding people were also looking around disbelievingly.

“Uh... I was... looking for Haruna... And what happened after that...”

As he remained confused, his mobile phone rung, signalling a text message.

It was from his daughter.

And there was only a single line.

‘Don’t worry, Tou-san. I’m with the one I love.’

Though that one line could give no possible comfort.



Somewhere in the city.

--Huh?

--Where is this...?

When Nasujima Takashi awoke, he was in a dimly lit room.

“...Ah... Guah...!”

When he tried to get up, his body could not move.

Moreover, his body was in extreme pain.

--What... What happened...?

As the pain of his body wracked through his brain, Nasujima began to remember.

The events leading up to when he had lost consciousness.

Fearing Shizuo, Nasujima had proven fortunate enough to hide in Russia Sushi, thus escaping the binds of shadow.

There he had begun to seek a new pawn -

And at that point, he had happened to spot the figure of Sonohara Anri walking down the pavement.

Furthermore, her focus had been on an injured person; her guard had been down.

At the thought that he had landed the greatest of pawns, Nasujima had licked his lips and moved closer, but -

--Right, that weird kid got in the way...

He had stabbed him multiple times in anger, at which point Anri had screamed - and, producing a Japanese sword from her body, slashed towards him.

--Then... Uh... I didn't get cut.

--Huh? Why wasn't I cut by Sonohara?

As he felt his spine creak, Nasujima tried to remember more.



In the moment Anri's Saika should have pierced Nasujima -

Haruna, who had come between them, blocked the strike with a knife.

“...?! Haruna-san!”

“You can't do that... You can't, Anri... I'll hand over all of my friends, but Takashi, Takashi alone...”

Goosebumps rose all over Nasujima's body as he heard what she said, drunk on anger.

“N... Niekawa...? Weren't you... under my control...”

And then, after a moment of silence, Haruna replied.

With the eyes of a girl in love, her body squirming - as she twisted her lips as far as they would go.

“...that's because **you wanted me like that, didn't you, Takashi?**”

Had she been acting all this time, or had she gone under Saika's control voluntarily?

“Sorry I couldn't stay what you wanted me to be, Takashi... But if I didn't do anything, I thought this vixen would steal you away...”

One way or another, events were unfolding completely opposite to Nasujima's wishes, and he cried out pathetically, turning his back on both Anri and Haruna.

“Ah... Wait, Takashi...!”

--Shit! Shit! Damn it! Why?! Why this!

--Didn't I get my hands on power?! Why is this happening to me?!

Regardless of his status as a teacher the proverb 'you reap what you sow' had been completely deleted from his mental dictionary; Nasujima ran with all his strength through the streets to escape.

And spotting a van coming his way, he stood before it, waving his arms

"Oi, stop! Let me on!"

Whether it was a normal vehicle or one from the *bosozoku*, the moment the driver stepped out he could cut them with his knife. With that in mind he stood right in front of the van, but -

"Oi, someone ran out in the middle of the street."

Togusa mumbled this as he drove the van with its front window broken.

Earlier, when shadow had rained down on the city, Izumi's group had been restrained and fallen to the ground, but for some reason Kadota and his friends been untouched, and so they had decided to leave Izumi and escape the scene for now.

They were planning to call Anri once they had covered some good distance, when a man had suddenly come to block the middle of the road.

As Karisawa saw the man from the back seat, she said, unthinkingly:

"Ah! It's him! The boss of the red-eyed people, the one who threatened Mikado-kun!"

"...Ah? Isn't that... **the guy who had the Slasher hit me?**"

The instant he heard so, something in Togusa snapped.

"Ah, oi, Togusa wait..."

Kadota was unable to stop him in time, and Togusa stomped down on the accelerator.

And with the sound of a collision - Nasujima Takashi lost his consciousness.



"Yeah... I was hit by that van..."

Having remembered everything, Nasujima noticed yet another irregularity.

His limbs were tied to the four corners of the bed by leather restraints.

"Wha... Guah..."

Perhaps it was his wounds from being hit by the van; his body was in great pain.

"What happened... Where is this?"

And in reply came a voice from the corner of the room.

"Ah... You've woken up, Takashi..."

"Eh..."

"This is one of the safehouses Orihara Izaya prepared. Don't worry; no one will come, and no matter how eagerly we consummate our love, it can't be heard from the outside..."

"Ah?!"

When he turned to look, it was Haruna, her eyes ecstatic.

"I thought of cutting the one who hit you, Takashi... But I decided to forgive them. Because it's thanks to you getting hit that our bond will grow way, way stronger..."

Shining in her hand - was a knife.

"Aaah! Aaaaah!"

Nasujima screamed in fear, but perhaps attributing it to the pain from his injuries, Haruna stroked his cheek, before opening a locker beside the bed.

“Don’t worry, Takashi... I’ll heal you.”

The locker was separated into multiple shelves, on which were lined various bladed objects, from smaller ones such as scalpels and scissors to saws and axes and even a chainsaw.

Scooping these objects in her arms, Haruna revealed her intentions to Takashi:

“I love you, Takashi.”

“Ah... Aaaaah...”

love

“Your pain... I’ll paint over it all with my own pain.”

Nasujima’s scream echoed through the room -

And without a bother to anyone else, a meaningful time began between the two.



Somewhere in Ikebukuro.

‘Yes; in other words, the team responsible for the retrieval of the Head is transporting it to the airport right now. The plan is to have it sent to the main branch in Chicago as a specimen of unusual human anatomy.’

Shingen spoke, exasperatedly, in response to the strange Japanese of the voice across the phone - Emilia’s. “You called in a team to retrieve it? Good grief; you’re hopeless at cooking, but when it comes to these things you’re ridiculously meticulous.”

‘I couldn’t possibly give you more work, Shingen-san.’

“I’m happy you feel that way, but if possible stop mixing gunpower into the food.”

The exchange, deviating from a normal loving conversation, continued for a while, until Shingen hung up and spoke to the woman standing behind him.

“So, that’s how it is; what will you do, Namie-kun?”

“Do about what?”

She had wanted to strangle him to death, but behind her the Russian-looking man’s eyes had flashed, and so she was prevented from doing so.

She had taken action personally to retrieve the Head before Seiji, but Shingen had caught her halfway, delivering an unpleasant notice:

--‘*The Head has already been collected by Nebula.*’

Her anger had yet to be quelled, but Shingen said, brazenly:

“Whatever it is, just saying: your uncle’s in a catatonic state due to shock, and on top of that he has a heart drawn on his face saying ‘*I Love Head*’; he’s exceeded the realm of humour into pitifulness. He’s no longer in a state to do anything to you.”

“...And?”

“You’ve been obsessed with the head longer than anyone else; as Nebula, we desire your abilities?”

“What, are you planning to recruit me?”

“Oh my, I’ve been so blunt and you’re still not sure if I’m recruiting you; is it possible you aren’t all that smartgogohgagagah! My throat... It’s rude to poke your thumb into someone’s throat, stopgogogogogoh...”

In the end, Namie’s assault continued until Igor interfered - and at that time, the black Shadow left the sky

completely.

And slowly, the days began to pass.



A few days later. Seiji's apartment.

"Is it really okay?"

"Of course!"

"It's one thing to say you'll go, but it'll take time and effort, you know."

"Anywhere you go, I'll follow, Seiji!"

A conversation like this continued between Seiji and Mika.

It was not about having a date somewhere in the neighbourhood.

The both of them were discussing studying abroad in America.

After hearing that his sister was heading to America, Seiji had heard from Mika that the head was, it seemed, being transported to Chicago, and began planning at once to go to America under the excuse of his studies - but as if it were completely natural, Mika had begun preparing as well.

"But... Why did you tell me the head was in Chicago?"

"Eh?"

"Wouldn't you have a better chance of getting the head and destroying it if you went alone quietly?"

"Even so, it's better to be with you, Seiji!"

Mika smiled honestly, and Seiji mumbled:

"...I'm in love with that head, still."

"Yep!"

After the usual exchange, Seiji added a single line:

"But even if it's not in a romantic way... I think of you as something like family, Mika."

Mika said nothing in reply, and only hugged him tightly from behind.

Seiji as well showed no unhappiness at this - and the unthinkable relationship between the two continued, straight towards the Head.

Knowing that however far they went, they would be lines parallel to one another.

But even so, with the warmth of one another right beside them, the two simply continued forward, forward.



Somewhere in the city.

When she heard from her manager that a suspect for the serial killer Hollywood had surfaced, Hijiribe Ruri had

thought her time had come at last.

Revenge for her parents it had been, but a crime was a crime.

She had thought the time to atone had come, and readied herself.

The only regret she had was that the mastermind, Yodogiri Jinnai, had escaped - but she was no longer of a mind to kill him, by this point.

It would be fine to accept everything.

So long as she did not bring any trouble to Hanejima Yuuhei.

As she thought so she listened on to her manager's next words, which threw her into confusion.

'It looks like Yodogiri Jinnai and his secretary Kujiragi Kasane have surfaced as the culprits behind the serial killings.'

It had not been announced publicly, but the police were currently pursuing them as suspects, and might question Ruri, who had once been a member of Yodogiri's office.

That was all her manager said, and Ruri, still not knowing what was going on, had gone on her way home in the night.

She would discuss it with Hanejima Yuuhei.

As she thought this, she was entering a lane not far from her apartment -

When she noticed a truck closing in from the front.

She moved to the side of the road to evade it, but then she noticed an oddity.

On such a narrow road, the truck never slowed in the slightest, and instead rushed straight towards Ruri.

--!

Her observation had come too late.

The 'infatuation' of the man in the driver's seat, saturated in madness, swallowed her heart in an instant.

Hijiribe Ruri did not know.

That the man in the driver's seat was an obsessive stalker of hers - and the son of a man enemy to her father, who she had killed - Adabashi Kisuke.

"Haha... Hahaaah... Hahahaha! Hyahahahaaaaahahaa!"

Adabashi, who had escaped Izaya's hideout dragging a broken leg behind him, had reached Ruri by sheer force of will, and was now attempting to hit her with a stolen truck.

Ruri possessed superhuman strength, but faced with the delusions of an abnormal man who saw destruction and love as one and the same, she completely missed the window of time she had had to dodge.

And just before she was violently run over by that mass -

The owner of a strength surpassing Ruri's took her body under an arm, and, stepping on the hood of the incoming truck, leapt upwards.

In the next moment, the sound of a collision echoed, and the front of the truck, having crashed into a telephone pole, was crushed.

As she heard the creaking of the broken pole, Ruri realised who had carried her and jumped.

"Ah, you're... Kujiragi-san...?"

To Ruri, who was unable to grasp this fact and still confused - she spoke.

"Do you hate me?"

"Eh..."

"I apologise for declaring this in so one-sidedly, but... I am jealous of you."

At Kujiragi's sudden confession, Ruri asked, unthinkingly:

"Um... What do you mean?"

What surged forth, before hatred, was doubt.

But without answering Ruri, Kujiragi continued with her truly one-sided 'declaration':

"Which is why I have stolen from you. The chance to atone for your crimes, as the serial killer Hollywood."

"?!"

"This is repayment for my sins against you."

"I will steal all of the sins of the serial killer Hollywood. Such that **you may never attain joy from redemption.**"

Kujiragi dragged an unconscious Adabayashi out from the crushed driver's seat, and turned her back on Anri as she slung him over her shoulder.

"...As much as you can, with the torment of an irredeemable sin, please live happily."

"What... are you saying? Why did you... do something like that?"

"Confessing won't work either."

Answering none of Ruri's questions, Kujiragi spoke, her eyes shining red.

"Because I have a hand deep in both news agencies and the internal affairs of the police."

Ruri quivered at those abnormal eyes, and then persisted.

"Please wait! What are you..."

But in the end, Kujiragi, without saying anything concrete -

Smiled self-deprecatingly as she replied with a single line, and left the scene with a leap of superhuman strength.

"I am merely one who bears jealousy and envy towards you... a villain."



A few days later. Raira General Hospital.

"I'm really sorry for all the trouble Mikado caused, Masaomi-kun."

"But Sonohara-san... was it? I'm glad you weren't hurt."

The two adults standing before Masaomi and Anri spoke with kind voices.

"From now on as well, somehow... please take care of Mikado."

"Thank you so much, for being his friends."

After watching the middle-aged couple return to the ward, Masaomi and Anri slowly headed for the entrance of the hospital.

"That would be the first time you met Mikado's parents, wouldn't it, Anri."

"Yeah."

"They're so normal it's surprising, aren't they? But they're good people. When I was a kid, they always treated us to watermelon and stuff."

As he spoke, he thought of the faces of Mikado's parents once more.

Mikado had said in the past that his father was the head of the human resource department at a printing company.

From his hair he seemed to be a man with many worries; but that included he gave off the impression of an ordinary father. Mikado's mother, on appearance alone, was the exact image Anri had of a typical mother, and she was a kind person who worried after Anri even when her own son was severely injured.

In the end, the story was that they had gone out to hike in the early morning, only to be caught in the fight of the *bosozoku*, at which point Mikado had taken a stab from a ruffian to protect her.

As for the wound on Masaomi's leg, the crucial bullet had been removed cleanly, and the bleeding had been stopped cleanly by the shadows, and so it was classified as not a bullet wound but an unexplainable injury.

And so - despite having kept his life, Ryugamine Mikado remained unconscious.

"With his parents having that kind of vibe, it couldn't have been his family that made Mikado that way... It makes me feel like it might have been all because of me."

"That's..."

Just as Anri made as to refute this, another boy's voice resounded from beside them.

"It'd be better if you weren't so pretentious."

"?"

When Masaomi looked, there was a boy standing there.

"You don't hold so much influence over Mikado-senpai."

"Kuronuma-kun..."

At Anri's murmur, Masaomi suddenly recalled the face of the boy, and glared at him.

"Kuronuma Aoba... Bastard, what'd you come here for..."

"I don't plan to get in a fight in a hospital. Believe it or not, I'm here to visit Mikado-senpai. Is that wrong?"

"You dare be so shameless..."

As he suppressed his urge to attack Aoba, Masaomi asked,

"Are you guys... planning to involve Mikado again?"

Aoba sighed as he replied.

"No, and I just **got warned by this scary old man**, too... We reached most of our goals, so we won't be pushing Mikado-senpai any further."

"Goals...?"

"Because the Dollars has made its name as a dangerous group, as planned. As it is, most people will have been scared off, and related sites and the sub admin Tsukumoya Shinichi have all disappeared, so by right, it's a situation where it only exists in name."

"...so you Blue Squares get to move freely behind the scenes, huh. And lay all the blame on the Dollars."

Masaomi said this angrily, and Aoba shook his head with a bitter smile.

"Truth is, I really did want to swim with Mikado-senpai. **The tank had widened considerably, and the view was getting good.**"

"Hey..."

"Well, though I wouldn't know how well that would go. And Rokujo Chikage's completely aware of my existence, too... And it looks like Dragon Zombie's boss Ei Libei's coming back to Japan, and the Izumi Ran you hate so much, Kida-senpai, is planning something; so we can't afford to be careless. Of course, there are the Yellow Scarves as well."

"If you get Mikado involved, or try to pull him back where he was before again... If that happens, I'll crush you guys."

"I'll take care."

Sighing, Aoba flashed a smile, just slightly real, at Masaomi and Anri.

"I hope you don't misunderstand, but...I do respect Mikado-senpai as well, you know?"

Seeing that Aoba had headed for Mikado's ward, Masaomi muttered angrily.

"Honestly; Anri, take care as well. You go to the same school, right?"

"Yeah, but... The atmosphere was always different, so I was surprised just now..."

Anri had heard of her kouhai's true nature from others, but having witnessed it firsthand for the first time today,

she appeared confused.

Masaomi returned the conversation to where it was before, and asked Anri once more:

“Hey... When Mikado wakes up, what should we say?”

“Well...”

There was still no sign that he would wake, but they believed.

That Mikado would definitely open his eyes.

That was why what they had to say when he awoke was so important.

After some thought, the two of them - Masaomi and Anri - arrived at the same answer.



When Masaomi left the hospital, Saki was waiting outside.

“What, you came?”

“Yeah. But I thought it might not be good to get between the three of you.”

Saki smiled softly as she spoke, and Masaomi replied, surprised.

“Don’t mind that so much. I can’t introduce you to Mikado when he wakes up if you’re like that, can I?”

Anri smiled as she listened to the conversation between Masaomi and Saki, and then noticed a familiar face coming towards them from the entrance of the hospital.

She did not know this, but - it was no other than the ‘scary old man’ who had issued Aoba a warning.

“Yo, Anri-chan.”

“Akabayashi-san? Why are you here?”

Perhaps having sensed Akabayashi was not of a respectable profession, Masaomi went on his guard - but reassured by Anri’s introduction, he went home with Saki.

As he watched them leave, Akabayashi said, to Anri:

“Well; I wanted to at least thank the boy who risked his life to save you - he’s not awake yet?”

“Yes...”

“I see, that’s a pity.”

Akabayashi shrugged.

In his mind, the memory of his negotiations with Aozaki a few nights before rekindled itself.

To Aozaki, who had shown little sign of willingness to relinquish the future dealings regarding the Dollars and Mikado, Akabayashi had made a proposal.

*--‘We’re in this trade, after all. I won’t ask for it to be overlooked for any pity or obligation.’*

He had proposed a deal to Aozaki.

*--‘Part of my power... Well, it isn’t anything big, but I’ll pass it over to you, so won’t you let me handle this?’*

Aozaki’s eyes had shown some surprise along with his suspicion, but he had understood that Akabayashi was serious, and accepted the trade.

*--‘You really have softened. I was looking forward so much to having a real fight with you, too.’*

Akabayashi had smiled self-deprecatingly, as he answered.

*--‘It’s the opposite. I’ve no plans to become so senile I’d let a kid have a reason to kill. It’s the duty of an adult to lend a hand when the children go off the path.’*

Then, shrugging, he had added, self-deprecatingly:

--'Well, I won't be dragging them back so much as giving them a push.'

"By the way, say, there's something I want to ask you again; is that all right?"

"? Yes..."

Anri nodded meekly, and Akabayashi paused a moment before he asked:

"That boy, Ryugamine Mikado, do you like him?"

"...!"

Anri widened her eyes at the unexpected question, but after some time, she nodded, firmly.

"...yes. I don't really know myself, but... I might."

"It isn't... by anything other than your own will, right?"

"Eh...?"

Suddenly, Anri realised.

That Akabayashi had been an acquaintance of her mother.

And that he would most likely know something of Saika.

But without addressing this, Anri replied, directly.

"Yes, they're my... They're my own feelings."

"I see; if that's the case, I can relax."

Akabayashi did not say anything further regarding Saika, and smiled contentedly as he tapped his cane.

"Enjoy your youth."

He remembered his own past, and spoke, genuinely, unlyingly.

"Because I couldn't."



A few weeks later.

"It's autumn already, huh."

Despite the sunlight glaring in from outside the van, Karisawa said this.

"...It's midsummer, you know?"

Kadota, who had after being rehospitallised been safely discharged, retorted; and Karisawa and Yumasaki replied:

"I don't know what you're saying, Dotachin; for indoor people the temperature doesn't matter."

"Exactly! Whether it's autumn or not's determined by whether the new autumn anime's aired yet!"

In response to the two, Togusa, who had finished the repairs on the van - namely with the front window - and had finally quelled his temper, sighed.

"You're riding someone else's van to Animate; you guys aren't indoor people."

Ignoring his retort, Karisawa broached a completely different topic with Togusa:

"Ah, speaking of which; apparently Hijiribe Ruri-chan's stalker was arrested?"

"Ugh, it was some bastard called Adabashi Kisuke. It's unbelievable, but seems like he tried to hit Ruri-chan with a truck. They say a fan that passed by dragged him out and beat him up, and left him in front of the police station half-dead."

"They left him?"

“‘cause it’d be illegal to lynch him. They probably thought it wouldn’t be worth it to get arrested themselves.”  
Saying this calmly, in the next moment Togusa glared as he continued.  
“If it were me I’d run him over without handing him to the police.”  
Kadota sighed at the man in the driver’s seat, who was silently emitting his murderous intent.  
“Really, things went back to normal in the end.”  
And, looking through the glass to the scenery of the city that rushed past, he smiled instinctively.  
“Well, I do like this atmosphere, after all.”



In front of Rakuei Gym.

At the same time the van Kadota’s gang was taking passed by, a number of girls and a woman in her twenties emerged from the gym.

“You were great today, Akane-chan---! Beating two boys older than you! A rising star! Like the birth of a new heroin in the world of Jojutsu?”

*(T/N: Jojutsu - martial arts with a staff.)*

“No, it was a fluke...”

Awakusu Akane shook her head hurriedly, and went red at Orihara Mairu’s praise.

As she did so, Orihara Kururi stroked her head lightly.

Even luck is a subset of true strength

“Luck... Strength...”

“Y, you’re embarrassing me!”

Akane blushed and shook her head, and the assistant instructor walking behind the three of them - Sharaku Mikage - spoke.

“Well, lucky or not, it was that kid’s fault. It turned out that way because he thought you were just a girl, and got careless. ...I suppose you pass, if only for using that opening well.”

After saying this, Mikage asked her new apprentice:

“But well, Akane-chan - you’ve started learning martial arts this young, and you’re training harder than anyone else already; is there a goal you’re after?”

“...there’s a guy I need to beat...”

“Oh? Is it a bully in the class?”

Akane shook her head vehemently, and, in a small voice, said the man’s name.

“...Heiwajima Shizuo-san.”

And Mikage’s face was stunned for a moment, before she burst out laughing.

“Ahahaha! That’s good! A huge goal.”

Seeing that Akane had reddened further, ducking her head, Mairu and Kururi objected:

“Hey---, don’t laugh, Mikage-san.”

Poor thing

“...Cruel...”

“Ah, sorry, sorry, I wasn’t making fun of you.”

And then she challenged that monster, in her heart, as she remembered the man who had vanished from the city; and she said, emphatically:

“I’ll make you strong. Because I’d like to see more than anything else... whether there’s a human who can



Most likely it had come from the road between Russia Sushi and Sunshine City.  
At the strange sound of an engine, almost akin to a horse's neigh, Shizuo and Tom, Denis and Simon, as well as the other employees and customers, smiled.  
At the urban legend, roaming the streets in broad daylight.  
As if they were comforted by the sense of an unchanging everyday life, from knowing that that which lay far beyond the ordinary still lived on strong.



Somewhere in the city.

At the end of a road, a motorcycle without headlights came, slowly, to a stop.  
'We should be far enough already.'  
Reading off on Celty's PDA, Shinra smiled from the backseat.  
"Thanks, it was a great help, Celty. The leg I broke hasn't healed yet, so I definitely couldn't have escaped on my own."  
'Honestly... What did you do to get chased by both the Chinese Mafia and the Asuki Organisation...'  
At her exasperated tone, Shinra replied, cheerfully.  
"Blessings come in disguise, and weal and woe are two sides of a coin; if there's joy there'll be suffering too. Even without any reason there'll be days like this."  
'Though it feels like that coin of yours says woe on both sides...'  
"What are you saying?! Having a drive with Celty like this is enough of a blessing, you know. Maybe being able to hug you like this brings greater joyeheheheguboboboh -"  
As she used her shadow to squeeze Shinra's face, Celty typed, exasperatedly.  
'Then you have to reset the balance with suffering.'  
The usual conversation.  
A casual exchange.  
After such an exchange, Shinra, having escaped the binds of the shadow, said, his face serious.  
"Hey, Celty."  
'What?'  
"Do you really not have any memories left from your Head, this time?"  
'Why this so suddenly?'  
Since that night, Shinra had never mentioned that incident.  
It was true that infection and refractures from his previous wounds had given him no leisure to ascertain this, but even after he had recuperated considerably Shinra had not asked about Celty's memories.  
One would daresay he had judged now to be a good timing, and prepared himself mentally before he spoke.  
"It wasn't cut when you were asleep this time; it was when you were fully awake, so..."  
'Something like that doesn't matter, does it.'  
Before Shinra could finish his question, Celty typed this.  
It was not to distract from the question.  
Celty typed those words with her true heart, and showed them to Shinra.  
'I will always be with you.'

“...”

‘If you can read people’s hearts so well, don’t make me put this in words; it’s embarrassing.’

“...Celty!”

Overcome by emotion, Shinra hugged her tightly from the back seat, and Celty hurriedly used her shadows to try to pull him off.

‘You idiot! Don’t get carried away! We’re in the middle of the street.’

Celty looked around as she typed, but all of a sudden her fingers froze.

Because the moment she turned to the side, she saw a familiar face.

“Yo.”

It was a white motorcyclist, smiling widely.

“You showed yourself, monster.”

‘Um, this is’

“I feel bad for being happy about this, but... You know parking’s banned here, and you’re flirting around on top of that?”

In the next moment, Kuzuhara, seated on a white motorcycle, stopped smiling, and at the same time, with the sound of engines revving from all directions, countless white motorcycles appeared.

Shinra, having noticed this, asked Celty, who had cowed:

“Uh... Celty, what’s with this situation?”

‘Shinra.’

“Yes?”

‘Don’t die.’

--Eh?

Just as he was about to ask what she meant, Celty extended her shadows into the surroundings, and accelerated quickly in an attempt to escape.

With Shinra clinging to her back, breath stolen by the roller coaster-like acceleration, she leapt.

Celty Sturluson was not human.

Known as a dullahan, she was a fae originating from Scotland and Ireland – to those soon to breathe their last, she was an existence that called on their homes to inform them of their imminent deaths.

With her own severed head under her arm, riding a two-wheeled carriage drawn by a headless horse – known as the *cóiste bodhar* – she would visit the homes of those nearing death. If one were to carelessly open their door, they would be drenched with a full basin of blood – similar to the banshee, as a harbinger of misfortune, the dullahan was a subject of European folklore passed down the generations.

But that was the past.

Now, as a living urban legend, and as a woman, she continued an everyday life loving the man known as Kishitani Shinra.

As she prayed that this everyday life would forever continue -

The urban legend - sped through the city once more today.



A certain month, a certain day.

How much time had passed exactly?  
The boy woke from a long dream of darkness, and cracked his eyes open.  
The light was blinding, and his vision blurred.

As he slowly turned his neck, he heard the shocked voice of a nurse.

*--'Ryugamine-san woke...'  
--'Inform his parents...'*

And following that, he felt as if there were people calling his name.

*--'Mikado!' --'Mikado-kun!'*

Male and female, nostalgic voices.

“...Ah... Uwah...”

He tried to speak, but his tongue could not move.

And after a long time more, he was able to produce his voice.

“...Masaomi...? ...Sonohara...-san?”

His words came no louder than a whimper.

Even so, they seemed to have heard him, and the boy and girl held Mikado's hands tightly, and told him, clearly:

'Welcome back, Mikado-kun.'

'Welcome back, Mikado.'

Amid the blurry lights in his vision, sensing their smiles as they said this -

Even before he understood his own situation, without know the meaning behind, Mikado began to cry.

Always, always.

Whether in the ordinary or extraordinary, he felt in their words something he had wished for all this time.

The boy simply continued to cry.



This is a twisted story.

A twisted love story.

With the neigh of an urban legend,

with the tears of a boy,

with the return of the ordinary,

with the disappearance of the mastermind,

and with the hints of a new story beginning -

the story of twisted love now closes its curtains.

For their love is no longer twisted.

## AFTERWORD

With that, the arc of Durarara!! surrounding the Dollars and the Yellow Scarves is complete.

Thinking back, it was a long journey.

The initial arrangement was for Volume 4 to continue 2 years after the events of Volume 3, without the appearance of Mikado's lot, with a different plot - but a number of things occurred and as a result, while worrying over the three children along the whole way, it turned into a grand story of up to 13 volumes.

With this the curtains close on one scene of the story of Mikado and those around him, but it would be great if everyone could, from the other side of the curtain, pray that they continue to form new connections with others.

Also, regarding Kine and Mikage Sharaku's pasts, which were not quite touched on, there was actually a book that was to be published midway through last year - but due to some situations there are no plans about its publication yet, and it may require some more time.

Now, switching out of the Durarara!! mood, next might be Vamp! or Baccano 1935's continuation or maybe 5656 Two or Vamp! or Hariyama-san or a new work or Vamp! or... That was what I was thinking, and discussing with the in-charge.

As a result -

Me: "Then, the next plan..."

Editor-san: "About that, it'll be the 10th anniversary of Durarara!! in April 2014."

Me: "Yes."

Editor-san: "So together with the 10th anniversary commemoration, let's do Durarara!! next."

Me: "All right. ...? ...eh?! No, but I've only just finished writing the end of the first part... And anyway it's the 10th anniversary of Vamp!, too..."

Editor-san: "Since the first part's finished, let's emphasise - 'Durarara!! will still be carrying on in the second part!' - and move everything forward with the 10th anniversary!"

Me: "I, I see... So that's one way of doing it..."

And with that, the second part, Durarara!! SH will begin in spring.

The story that was supposed to have started in Volume 4 - regarding Ikebukuro two years after the Yellow Scarves incident in Volume 3 - will be an adventure story about everyday life in Ikebukuro, so some support would be great...!

As to what SH is short for, it will be revealed in the book itself as well as the afterword, so please look forward to it.

Also, with the 10th anniversary, I thought it would be good to announce some plans to everyone, so please enjoy this Durarara!! year!

Firstly, new comic adaptations of Durarara!! will be starting in Sylph and Dengeki Maoh...!

The two works will be a comic adaptation of the PSP game Durarara!! 3way standoff -alley- by Izuko Fujiya, and Minidura by Youko Umezu, featuring nitoushin chibi-characters!

Please enjoy it with the original work by Akiyo Satorigi, Durarara!! Yellow Scarves Arc, currently serialising in G-Fantasy.

Furthermore, in Suzuhito Yasuda's original work Yozakura Quartet's anime BD will be a limited edition collaborative manga between Yozakura Quartet and Durarara!!! I enjoy such collaborative works a lot, so I'm looking forward very much to the completed product!

And then, also, in the collaborative fighting game between Sega and Dengeki, Dengeki Bunko FIGHTING CLIMAX, Shizuo Heiwajima has been selected to be a playable character, as well as Cely as an assisting character! They are both characters with fairly advanced abilities, so if there comes a chance to play please

use Shizuo and go as wild as you want...!

And so there have been many plans laid out for the 10th anniversary of Durarara!!, of which I do not have a full understanding myself - but I believe any more announcements will be made in Durarara!! SH and Dengeki events this spring, so please wait till then!

Finally, acknowledgments:

Very sorry to Papio and everyone down at the AMW printing office for all of the inconvenience I've brought up till now that the first part has ended...!

I hold the utmost gratitude towards the readers who have supported the somewhat special district of Ikebukuro and have read this far.

Also, from the illustrator Suzuhito Yasuda, to all of the staff of the anime, manga and game - thank you very much for sharing the story Durarara!! and working to spread this perspective of the world.

As I put on paper an Ikebukuro host to interactions between various types of characters, I myself have also been able to make connections with different kinds of people, and that is the greatest of gains from this work.

In addition, I want to thank my friends and acquaintances as well as family for their support all along.

This may be repetitive, but thank you truly to everyone who has watched over this story of the Headless Rider about the Dollars, Saika and the Yellow Scarves; these three high schoolers; and the many other characters!

It would be my pleasure to meet everyone again soon.

December 2013

Ryohgo Narita