

Silver Cross & Draculea

銀の十字架木と

クロス

IV

ドラキュリア

十月ユウ



ファンタジア文庫



Silver Cross & Draculea
銀の十字架とⅣ
ドラキュリア



ルシュラニダーム
ドラキュリア

せ ら れ い な
世羅玲奈

私が生まれたのは、
トラウママだけじゃなく、
きっとあなたのせい

Prologue

"Let me do it!"

During afternoon homeroom, the girl raised her pale arm proudly and declared.

All her classmates' attentions were drawn to this young otherworldly beauty who was completely flawless in appearance only—Rushella Dahm Draculea.

Perhaps she enjoyed being the center of attention, Rushella crossed her arms and nodded with satisfaction. Then greatly pleased, she asked the boy next to her:

"So hurry up and tell me, Hisui, what does 'relay' and 'final leg' actually mean!?"

"You raised your hand without knowing what it was about..."

Although this was well within expectation, Hisui still could not help but retort with a suffering expression.

Indeed, today's homeroom discussion was about the upcoming sports festival's various matters.

The distribution of various chores during the festival, confirmation of participating events, deciding on the future schedule—These were all being decided smoothly except for the final debate.

The final debate involved designating Rushella as the final leg runner for the relay race that she had just volunteered for.

Hisui originally thought the class only needed to pick a few participants to enter the race, but it turned out that all members of the class were obliged to participate.

Putting the issue of ordering aside, apparently not just Rushella but also Hisui had to take part.

"Say, what's with this kind of troublesome event...? Shouldn't this type of event be limited to the third years? ...It's not like this could serve as our graduation memories. This would only create mental trauma for the slowpokes."

"What are you rambling about incomprehensibly!? I'm asking you, what does 'final leg' mean exactly!?"

"...The last runner in a relay race. The person who gets the most attention and wins the most applause. Depending on the result, you'll either be seen as a great hero or a great sinner."

Hisui explained this cruel and unwritten rule of the sports festival.

But to an optimist like Rushella, this warning basically fell on deaf ears.

Seeing her eyes flash brightly, clearly she only heard the first half of his explanation.

"I see, then isn't this kind of role created just for me! Very well! Class Rep, let me do it!"

Before Hisui could stop her, she raised her hand up high and announced.

In charge of the class discussion, Sera Reina looked awkwardly at Hisui to seek his judgment.



In these kinds of situations, she always felt it was best to delegate the decision to Hisui who understood Rushella the best.

Hisui could only sigh and offer sound advice.

"Come on, stop it. Besides, the sports festival is held during daytime. Simply participating will be dangerous for you, okay?"

Hisui calmly hinted at Rushella's weakness as a vampire.

Due to her fear of sunlight, she always observed rather than participated in PE class.

She could use her vampire physical abilities to show off during indoor events, but unfortunately, there was no stage for her to shine in the sports festival.

The classmates and PE teacher were deceived using the excuse of a bodily condition of sensitive skin... which was not entirely a lie.

Currently, everyone's gaze seemed to be asking her not to act tough... It looked like no one doubted the lie at all.

"...So, let's choose someone else for the final leg. Please continue, Class Rep."

At Reina's request, Hisui released Rushella from the center of the debate.

Although Rushella sat down, naturally, she was not pleased with Hisui at all.

"Why not!? What does it matter!? If it's sunlight, just ask 'Senpai' for help again...!"

"Listen to how strange you sound. And it's not like you should rely on others so much. After all, she has her own life."

Hisui was worrying for a certain unofficial club member—Uno Kirika.

Using her skills as a "witch," she was able to make a light-blocking agent for vampires to screen out sunlight.

But naturally, that required a lot of effort and also involved practical matters like money.

"...Besides, even if you use that, you're still only at your daytime level, right? Maybe you're top among ordinary high school students, but against the track and field club's specialized sprinters, it's not so clear cut anymore... But then again, our school's athletic clubs aren't particularly strong, so you should be winning without a doubt."

"What does it matter!?"

"Of course it matters."

In any case, Hisui did not want Rushella to stand out too much.

Everything stemmed from this principle.

After all, her beauty was already superb. Attracting the attention of all teachers, students, parents and visitors could very well end up causing trouble.

"Mmmmm... What does it matter!? I'm just going for a run..."

"No."

Hisui tried his best to handle this problem child and let the homeroom discussion continue.

Excluding Rushella, everyone else hoped to select a candidate that they all approved.

In theory, boys from the track and field club would be the best candidates.

However, although Hisui's class had track and field students, none of them were boys specializing in sprinting.

Compared to the entire year group, there were a few boys in the class who were especially fast, but one of them was already selected as the first runner and could not take the final leg as well. He was sitting by the window, staring outside with disinterest, clearly with no intention to swap his spot.

This meant choosing from the remaining candidates... But no one apparently wanted to take on this heavy responsibility.

Actually, Hisui had no right to judge others, after all, he himself was trying his hardest to avoid the burden too.

Just as everyone hesitated, a boy in the first row closest to the black board spoke up.

His name was something like Kuroda—A speedy guy from the baseball club. Probably the best candidate for the final leg. His refreshingly short hair and deeply tanned skin left others with a deep impression.

"Say, this spot doesn't have to be a boy, right? Since it's a mixed-gender event in the first place, it's not like the final leg decides the victory. Class Rep, you should pick someone from the girls."

"Well..."

"Agreed. Don't restrict it to boys only."

"Any girls in the track and field club?"

"Ah, isn't Iga a sprinter?"

Agreement resounded all over the place.

The earlier discussion only considered boys for the final leg, so they restarted the debate again.

No one wanted to do it.

Just push it on someone else and prioritize keeping it away from me... Although it did not go that extreme, everyone was trying to minimize their chances of getting chosen.

Although Hisui felt the same, he could not help but feel a little displeased.

"Uh..... Then... Iga-san..... How do you feel about doing it?"

In a hesitating manner, Reina asked Iga Airi who was sitting in the middle of the classroom.

The usually inconspicuous short-haired girl whose appearance and grades were equally ordinary lowered her gaze and shook her head.

"Umm... I... can't run fast....."

She was not being humble. It was the truth.

Despite belonging to the track and field club and focusing on sprinting, that did not necessarily mean she could run the fastest.

Hisui had never heard praise for how fast she ran.

"...Say, if we're gonna pick from the girls, Seira-san is the best candidate, right? Aishin Middle School's Sera Reina is quite famous and has excellent achievements in running events."

These words carried nostalgia and a bit of hope.

Although the two of them were from different middle schools, they had met before.

Hisui was recalled Reina's self-introduction on the first day of class.

She seemed to have mentioned something about being good at all track and field events.

"Right, there's Class Rep too. Then let's go with Class Rep?"

"Yeah yeah... I support Class Rep. To be honest, it's quite unbelievable that you didn't join the club."

"Rather than picking a boy randomly, Class Rep probably runs faster."

"Seconded."

Agreement resounded throughout the classroom.

Not just the boys but even the girls were unanimous as well.

It looked like things were set beyond a doubt.

In actual fact, Reina's speed did rival the top male contestants.

Due to this fact, plus her lack of overt refusal, it looked like the final leg runner was decided.

But Reina remained helpless.

Ever since her middle school years were mentioned, her expression looked stiff.

Hisui noticed it.

"Not so fast."

His tone of voice was very casual without enthusiasm.

But because he seldom spoke out in class, all the classmates all turned one after another to look at Hisui in the back row.

With the entire class gazing at him, Hisui scratched his head with an annoyed expression.

Of course he found it annoying.

It was absolutely annoying to the extreme.

But he had no choice but to say it.

"All the other classes are probably going to send a boy as the final leg, right? Isn't it a bit inappropriate for us to send Class Rep there as the only girl? Even though she's fine in terms of speed."

He did not refute the class' approval of Reina's abilities but simply told them the truth.

He was not sure if this would change their minds, but at least it slowed them down to ponder.

Asking Reina to be the final leg was not a problem.

But that did not mean she must take on the role.

Although she could run very fast, but against other fast boys—what would the result be like?

Supposing Reina was the fastest runner in the class, but if there was no decisive lead before the baton passed to her, asking her to be the final leg was meaningless.

She was just one candidate at most.

Everyone returned to the discussion stage again.

This was exactly Hisui's goal.

He simply hoped to shift people's view slightly and avoid having Reina as the sole target.

"Anyway, let's write down the names of the candidates first and decide by voting or recommendation? A secret ballot is fine too. Worse comes to worst, we can simply decide it with rock-paper-scissors."

"Don't make things so complicated."

Hisui hurriedly covered Rushella's mouth and stopped her sudden speech.\

"(Stop it, what are you doing!?)"

"Fine, be quiet then."

Rushella struggled desperately while Hisui muffled her with all his strength.

Then the entire class smiled while watching their little farce.

Before their battle could be decided, the bell rang to signal the end of the period.

"Ah....."

In the end, the decision still was not made.

An uncomfortable atmosphere hung in the classroom.

Just as everyone looked at one another, Reina resolved herself and spoke:

"Well... Uh, let's tentatively have the final leg... as me, okay? As for the rest of the sequence, I'm going to pass out a form. Everyone please fill in your name and pass it along. If there's any conflicts, please discuss peacefully... Otherwise resort to rock-paper-scissors to decide. Anyway, it's all decided."

She smiled and offered an appropriate suggestion.

Although her smile was a bit stiff, at least there was a conclusion. All the classmates nodded in agreement.

"Then... I'll make the form and pass it out next time during break."

Thus homeroom ended.

During the afternoon break between periods, everyone was passing Reina's form around, writing their names down next to their desired number in the sequence.

The form was very simple. Apart from the first and final legs that were already decided, the numbers from two to thirty-nine were listed out. Once everyone wrote their name next to their desired position, the ordering was set for now.

If the position desired was already taken, negotiation was needed... But to be honest, that was kind of meaningless.

In actual fact, people simply wrote down their name where they saw a blank and were not really particular about the order.

Because the most troublesome position was already decided.

Hence, when Hisui received the form from Rushella, he simply wrote down his name in a blank spot without looking carefully.

"...Hey, there's only one spot left!? Are you bullying me!?"

"Shut up, I wanted to choose another spot too! Besides, this can't be helped, right? The people at the end are always left with no choice."

"...That's true. Since you're the one who handed it to me, that means you only had two choices available. Oh well, it actually doesn't matter."

Saying that, Hisui looked down at where he had written his name. It was the position of the second leg.

On the other hand, Rushella was thirty-ninth.

Immediately preceding the final leg.

To think the class left the first and last spots open, it felt a little malicious.

Although he could try negotiating another position, Hisui decided to leave it.

In terms of pressure, this was nothing compared to the first and final legs. "A mere sports festival, winning and losing are as irrelevant as clouds in the sky"—People were not that liberated in their ways of thinking.

Hence, Hisui was a bit worried about Reina in the last leg.

Hisui handed the completed form over to her in the neighboring seat.

"Here you go. I guess it's sort of settled now."

"...Yes. Thank you. Also during homeroom....."

Reina bowed her head and thanked him.

But Hisui did not think he had done anything worth thanking for. Neither was he that capable.

"...At the time, I'd look more cool if I said 'Let me do it.' But I don't have the courage. Besides, others probably won't approve if I'm the one doing it."

Despite making his words sound like the truth, Hisui knew clearly in his heart that he was just being a hypocrite.

Having sensed that Reina did not want to be the final leg... He should have offered himself instead.

In the end, he simply shifted people's perspective to push the burden onto others apart from Reina.

What he did was not villainous but neither can it be called justice.

Most importantly, the burden of the final leg still ended up on her shoulders.

"Is it really okay? Although you can run fast... This isn't obligatory. No matter which order you're running, you're still contributing to the overall victory, right?"

"...It's already decided. Someone has to do it after all."

Reina smiled.

But Hisui knew that her smile did not come truly from the heart.

"Then I'll hand this sequence report to the teacher... Eh, strange....."

"What's the problem?"

Seeing Reina's puzzlement, Hisui curiously looked at the form. Rushella also crowded over. But there was nothing out of the ordinary.

"No one was missed, right? Is there something strange?"

"Well... It's completely filled in. How odd, Kida-kun is absent today..."

Reina looked over to the desk that had remained empty all day since morning.

Hearing her explanation, Hisui also noticed what was strange.

A classmate was definitely absent. If everyone only wrote down their own name, there should be one blank remaining.

"Who helped Kida write his name...? Or did someone write their name twice?"

"Hmm, it's quite strange indeed. Very well, let's check it!"

Rushella gave the orders and Hisui pointed to the names on the form, checking them one by one.

Halfway through, his hand stopped.

His face twisted uncontrollably.

Then he exchanged looks with Rushella.

Naturally, Rushella was also displeased.

"What's the matter, have you discovered the problem?"

Reina looked over to where Hisui was pointing.

Seeing that name, her face instantly turned gloomy.

Fuwa Touko.

Who knew if it was by chance or deliberate—The name, written in red ballpoint pen, made Hisui and Rushella shudder in horror.

"Kyah....."

Reina also trembled and took a few steps back, accidentally bumping into a boy behind her.

"What's up, Class Rep?"

The boy asked.

"O-Over there.....!"

Reina pointed to the empty seat.

All the students still lingering in the classroom noticed the commotion and looked at where she was pointing.

In the seat which was supposed to be empty...

There sat a girl.

Long black hair. An old-fashioned uniform.

Translucent body, vague outline—objects can be seen through her body on the other side.

Feeling the student's gazes, she—Fuwa Touko—smiled lightly.

"Eh, no way, you can see me!?"

"A GHOST——!!"

...After that, screams filled the classroom as the students scattered and fled.

Leaving only Hisui and Reina who had fainted in his arms.

As well as Rushella standing there in shock.

With a displeased expression, she asked the familiar earthbound spirit:

"...What are you doing here?"

"I have arrived♥"

"This girl——!!"^[1]

Hisui could not help but spit out the same words someone used to comment on Rushella a long time ago.

After that, of the Seven Wonders of Seidou High, the "Touko-san" tale quickly rose to the top in prominence due to sighting incidents that were to follow.

Chapter 1 - Tales of Touko

"...So what are you actually trying to do?"

"...Sorry."

Touko apologized, her face filled with dejection.

Kneeling formally on the floor in seiza posture, her back was very straight while she fiddled her hands uncomfortably, looking up timidly at the judge who was staring coldly down at her.

Arms crossed, standing sternly in front of her was the arbitrator, Student Council Vice President Uno Kirika.

Precisely because this "witch" had allowed Touko to remain in school, she felt responsible for this incident—no, rather, the incidents that happened recently.

"Although you're allowed freedom of movement inside the school, you should know that everything comes with limits, right!?"

".....Sorry."

Touko hung her head lower with greater dejection.

The girl's already intangible body became even more transparent.

"During summer, according to reports from students participating in supplementary lessons and club activities, eyewitness accounts have been increasing nonstop. One could ignore occasional sightings, but instead, you are proactively approaching them. According to reports from the photography club, 80% of pictures taken in school recently are ghost photographs!?"

"Because as soon as I hear the shutter, I want to be photographed... and I want to make a good pose!"

"This ghost is really quite willful."

Observing from the sidelines, Hisui could not help but offer his commentary.

After the commotion in the classroom, they had delivered Reina to the infirmary then brought Touko to the empty classroom used as the Supernatural Investigations Club's base.

Kirika quickly learned of the matter, hurried over and began to lecture.

"Students at their age are very sensitive and will see you given a slight match in wavelength! And once someone sees you and the news spreads, it makes it easier for the surrounding people to see. Could you please consider the effects, okay!?"

".....But I want to be seen."

Touko pouted unhappily.

Her cute behavior belonged to a teenaged girl.

Even though she was already dead.

"Looks like you still haven't understood your position...?"

Kirika spoke coldly then reached out above Touko's head and rubbed her fingers together.

Then white crystals fell from her fingers and scattered over Touko's head.

"Ah, stop that, Kirika-chan, could that be...!"

"Indeed. Purifying salt. There was a recent funeral held nearby, someone I knew, so I attended it. Then I obtained this. Why don't I simply help you pass on right now?"

Kirika asked with a smile, but there was no laughter in her eyes.

To think a witch would use purifying salt, how rare, but it was working against Touko.

"Ah, stop it, it burns! Oh no, I'm disappearing..."

Originally hazy to begin with, Touko's outline became even less defined.

She was almost about to vanish.

Feeling that things were serious, Hisui had no choice but to intervene.

"Say, Senpai, show her some mercy! Touko-san is reflecting already..."

"Even if I don't take matters into my own hands, the school will take action on their end. The student council has already received many complaints and there are also witnesses among the teachers. They are currently discussing seriously whether or not to have an exorcism."

"...Really? Say, Touko-san, why did all this happen?"

"Because Hisui-kun, none of you guys were at school during the summer vacation, I was so lonely... I wanted someone to play with me! I just wanted to enjoy school life properly, then while I was wandering around...!"

"Yeah, I can understand how you felt..."

"I want lots of memories... I want lots of warmth!"

Saying that, Touko was about to cry.

Although Hisui wanted to say something to comfort her, he ended up making snide remark in exasperation.

"...Uh, where would warmth come from after dying?"

A calamity arising from the slip of the tongue.

"S-So mean... It's really a concern for me!"

"Uh, even if you're concerned but... Am I wrong?"

Hisui turned to the others behind him for agreement.

However, not only Kirika, who was still scolding Touko just now, but also Rushella, Sudou Mei and Kariya Eruru, who had all been observing silently, were glaring angrily at Hisui.

"Eh... What's the situation here?"

"Hisui, there are things that can and cannot be said, right? You need to be more considerate towards maidenly hearts!"

"Yeah, Hi-kun! Don't forget that she's a maiden in the springtime of youth!"

"...I just want to say, how about you try dying yourself?"

"She didn't wish to become like this..."

Kirika was the last to criticize him.

Nevertheless, she was the one who was trying to exorcise Touko against her will.

"Hey, when did you girls become so united!? What's with this occasional cruel combo play from the girl alliance!? It's like hassling a friend to

accompany her to a confession then telling the boy: 'Hey, hurry up and go out with her!' That's what it feels like!"

"Hurry up and go out with her."

"You really said it!"

Hisui shouted at Mei who went for the direct approach.

On the other hand, Touko seemed quite satisfied.

"No no no, this isn't right. Also, the reason we're gathered here is because of what happened earlier, so we need to seriously discuss Touko-san's ascension to her next life. Am I wrong?"

Hisui asked of Eruru who should still have calm mind.

However, the cool, petite beauty with half-rimmed glasses rejected his suggestion without hesitation.

"...If you are talking about satisfying the dead's lingering regrets, sure. Touko-san did not get a chance to enjoy the springtime of youth due to her sudden demise. Although I personally believe that equating romance to the days of youth to be cheap and sad, if that is her personal wish, who am I to question her? So long as you make the sacrifice, the issue can be resolved perfectly."

"Did you just say sacrifice...? You did say sacrifice!"

"I said it."

"Hey hey, could you deny it at least!? From the way you say it, I could very well end up cursed to death by her!"

"Indeed."

"Don't just assert that immediately!"

Arghhh, what a headache.

Hisui's everyday life already consisted of supplying blood to a vampire and having his virginity threatened by an artificial human. Adding ghostly possession to that would be no joking matter at all.

"Touko-san... Apart from a living human like me, umm... Aren't there other candidates among ghosts? I think there should be some inside the school....."

"Hmm, yeah there are. There's one with only half a face remaining....."

"Scary! That's even worse than an evil spirit!"

"He's apparently heading off to the next life and asked me if I wanna go together, but I rejected him. He's not my type."

"Hmm, okay... Hmm, I do believe you have the right to choose. Any other ghosts catching your eye?"

"Hmm... Ah, there's this guy with only a skeleton left who wears a black cape and carries a big scythe. He chatted with me a couple times....."

"I think that's Mr. Grim Reaper. To think he actually exists....."

Hisui could not help but recall the existence who reaped dead souls in legend.

In a certain sense, he was probably the most suitable candidate for taking Touko away.

"But his appearance is too scary so I refused. After that, we chatted a few times and I found out he's actually a nice guy."

"Hey, are you going about this like choosing a husband... You said you refused... And he even spoke!?"

"Yes. He said that this month's targets are quite high so the quota is kind of tough, and asked me to help. He even advertised 'hurry to the afterlife, don't think, just do it!...'"

"He even has to fill quotas!? What a tragic job!"

"But he's actually a nice guy, saying if there's anything he could do for me, just find him anytime....."

"Wow, what a role model of the service industry....."

Hisui was getting exhausted from making all these quips.

Touko's existence was basically overturning everything he thought he knew about ghosts.

"Hisui-kun, do you dislike me?"

Touko asked cautiously and floated around Hisui.

Ghostlights seemed to be starting to appear.

If anyone outside were to chance upon this scene, the Seven Wonders would probably increase by one.

"No, not at all... Then what on earth should I do? I'm guessing that even if I took you out on a date outside school, you won't be satisfied, right?"

"...Looks like you'll need to get serious and end her youthful days of innocence all at once. Hi-kun, hurry up and make her a woman!"

Mei clenched her fists and shouted with great emotion.

Oh man, can I give up on sarcasm?

"Hey hey hey, she's already dead. Could you stop making rubbish suggestions?"

"I did consider it carefully. To simply have Hi-kun get a woman's taste to whet your lustful appetite, perhaps that would make you desire me..."

"What an absolutely awful idea! And with a ghost, how is that even possible....."

This retort caused Mei to be stunned and plunged into deep thought.

After a while, with a completely serious expression, she answered:

"...Air sex?"

"I will absolutely punch you in the gut if you weren't a girl..."

Hisui's face was distorted.

However, Mei made a "bring it on" expression and stuck her belly out at him.

"I don't mind, bring it on? Surely, your fist will break, Hi-kun. If I clench my abs seriously, even a baseball bat would easily break."

Mei daringly lifted up her clothes, showing her belly, even her bra was almost visible.

Although the lines of her abdominal muscles could not be seen, it was not difficult to imagine the hardness if she were to get serious like she said.

"...That's true too~~"

Hisui was taken about in fright after thinking about it.

He had almost forgotten.

If he got in a fight with her, not only did he have no chance of winning, he would most likely end up pinned down, dragged to a bed, and something precious of him would be taken away.

On the other hand, standing behind Hisui, Rushella asked Eruru about unfamiliar words as usual.

"Hey, I'm asking you, what does air se..."

"Do not blame me for shooting if you dare finish that word, capish?"

Eruru threatened, having pulled out the sacred gun Argentum from somewhere, with her finger already on the trigger.

Naturally, this move did not suffice as an answer.

Speaking of which, was there anyone who could give a definite answer for this term?

"What does it even matter!? I just wanna know! Hurry and tell me! I already know the meaning of 'air' in front. I've heard Hisui talk about something called 'air guitars' before. So all you need is explain the remaining part in detail...!"

"That is even more unacceptable!"

"Ooooooh... What does it even matter!? If it's something fun, I wanna do it too!"

"S-Shut up! Have you no shame...!?"

"It's related to shame? Then hurry and tell me!"

"U-Umm...!"

Eruru's face was so red that she was about to short circuit.

However, Touko began to ponder with a serious expression.

"Oh right, there's that too... Then I'll be able to become an adult...!"

"No way no way. How do you intend to do it!?"

"Hmm... Oh yeah, recently, I've achieved 'automatic writing' and also entering people's dreams. If I make flexible use of these abilities....."

"So automatic writing was how you filled your name in the relay race sequence form. That's too paranormal! If you go inside people's dreams, surely they'll end up with sleep paralysis and spellbound beds!"

"Hmm, looks like everyone will have nightmares."

"That's basically haunting by an evil spirit! An exorcism really will be needed!"

"But, b-b-but, if it's inside dreams, I can also...!"

"Wait up, Touko-san, in that case, when Hi-kun wakes up, there will be a situation in his underpants."

Mei began to worry seriously.

Yes, what annoying consideration.

"Can you show a little restraint...?"

"Don't worry, I've already mentioned before, I'll personally wash Hi-kun's sticky underwear until they're clean..."

"...Whatever."

Hisui sighed in exasperation. At the same time, Kirika shrugged.

"It probably cannot be helped. However, ghosts definitely cannot linger forever in the mortal plane. If that were the case, this world would have been filled up by the dead a long time ago. Dead people will vanish eventually from this world. That is part of the laws of this world."

Kirika spoke as though teaching a lesson, causing the mood to cool down.

Indeed, these days could not persist indefinitely.

There must be an end.

"If there is a low risk of harm, I could turn a blind eye to the issue... But there always exist people with keen spiritual senses. Could you show a little more self-discipline?"

Finally free of Rushella's questioning, Eruru stated calmly.

Lectured by the two representatives of reason, the inexperienced ghost apologized timidly.

"Sorry... I'll pay attention."

"Very well, then I shall be going. The sports festival's preparations are quite hectic."

Then Kirika left.

Recently, she had been basically showing up then leaving like this.

Kirika was fundamentally different from a "go home" club member like Hisui. Clearly, the student council's work was very busy.

"Sports festival huh."

Staying in the classroom, Hisui muttered blankly.

He could not forget the gloom on Reina's face earlier.

He had considered simply leaving the final leg to Rushella, but he still could not decide if that was the right thing to do.

"Would it be better to let Touko-san participate in the relay race? It seems like she's so light it'd be an easy job for her..."

Just as he muttered to himself, Mei interrupted.

"Hey, that scene is simply terrifying if you imagine it. Besides, whether she can carry the baton is a problem. It's not like there's not enough people, why consider her?"

"Oh, that really is what it'd feel like, right? Say, why don't you do the final leg? Your leg strength is pretty good, right?"

"I don't want to draw too much attention. If I went all-out, that kind of brittle ground will break underfoot, hindering my speed instead."

"How high is your leg strength actually..."

In movies, the powerful monsters of Frankenstein were always portrayed as slow and heavy. As the latest model, Mei had already improved on the former design.

Nevertheless, power and speed still seemed to be mutually exclusive.

"Well, since Hi-kun is asking, I could try it out? In preparation for the sports festival, I've prepared bloomers. Navy blue, rouge, green, rich variations, everything you could want?"

"...No, I'm not interested."

"Don't pretend."

"I'm not pretending. Ever since I was young, that sort of interest went extinct a long time ago. By the way, Touko-san... Why are you wearing it!?"

Before he noticed, Touko had already changed into gym clothes.

With navy blue bloomers.

After all, as a ghost, she was apparently able to change her attire through her thoughts. How astounding.

"Eh, because it's what Hisui-kun wants..."

Touko shyly looked up and said.

She even had a bandanna tied around her head, looking like she was the one and only final leg candidate.

"W-Wait up, Touko! The final leg should be me! Victory is mine...! Okay, I wanna wear gym clothes and a bandanna as well...!"

In the end, even Rushella wanted to join in.

On the other hand, naturally, Eruru was looking at Hisui coldly.

"N-No, you don't have to do that! Besides, I find ordinary shorts and half-length pants more healthy and cute."

"Oh, so that's your fetish faction?"

Staying calm and rational, Mei confirmed.

Her serious eyes looked like they belonged to a professional market analyst.

"Hey, are there factions in such things!? Are there faction wars going on in secret!?"

"How naive, Hi-kun... Bloomer worshipers, shorts worshipers, spandex worshipers, tracksuit worshipers... Ever since the age of bloomers' supremacy was overthrown, girls' sportswear has entered warring states era of a free-for-all battlefield!"

"I've never heard of it. Even if it's as you say, what does it have to do with me in the slightest?"

"Of course it matters greatly. Suppose I trick you into the gym storeroom and lock the door, if you don't like my outfit, what would I do?"

"Let me state for the record, I'm absolutely not going there!"



"Don't worry, I'll drag you there by force♥"

Saying that, Mei raised her arm to display her combat strength.

The extremely feminine upper arm, with its snow-white complexion, would easily take off, let alone snap, Hisui's arm if she used her full strength.

"Scary! Besides, going to that kind of musty and moodless place... to do that, are you satisfied with that?"

"Rather, it should be said that that kind of environment helps build up the mood? As long as Hi-kun wishes, I'd gladly do it, even in a stable!"

"As if I'd wish that!"

Firm denial must be expressed here.

Excessively scandalous.

"Hisui, what are you two going to do in a stable!? Also, what should I wear for the sports festival!? So, treat it as a reward for your everyday efforts, umm, I-I could wear what you prefer..."

"...Thanks, but the thought is enough. Also, please ignore Sudou's comments, she's a bad influence."

Seeing Rushella ask shyly, Hisui could not help but sigh and reply to her discreetly.

By the time he noticed, it was sundown already. Hisui led Rushella and prepared to leave.

"It's about time to go home. The fridge is empty so I'll need to go shopping."

"Oh really? So, Touko-san, in order to conquer Hi-kun, let's have a strategy conference."

"No problem, you can count on me!"

"...Yeah yeah, go ahead you two, do your worst."

Ignoring the artificial human and the ghost, Hisui left school.

All he thought about was visiting the supermarket and buying dinner's ingredients together with Rushella.

Originally, he wanted to make a combo of grilled fish and boiled vegetables, but there happened to be a discount on imported beef. Unable to resist Rushella's persistent pleading, Hisui ended up changing the dinner menu to steak.

"Hmm, tonight's dishes are very extravagant! If only we could eat meat every day."

"Don't be a picky eater... Well. You're a vampire so it doesn't matter."

Along the way home, Hisui muttered.

For a vampire, everything apart from blood would be considered junk food.

Despite not needing to eat at all in fact, most vampires were quite particular and extravagant in their tastes for food.

Hisui's foster parent was the same in the past.

She loved meat and only liked it medium rare.

But in consideration for Hisui, the dining table would offer other food as well... All cooked to perfection with strict standards for taste.

"Hmm? What's the matter?"

"...Nothing."

Rushella's voice expelled these thoughts from Hisui's mind, bringing him back to reality.

If she realized what he was thinking about, surely she would be displeased again.

"Also, why are you so concerned with discounts and compare them repeatedly? You also check out all the flyers. Are you a housewife!?"

"How sad, I can't find any words to deny... But isn't being economical a virtue?"

"Since it's food for me, what does a little extravagance matter? Otherwise, you should use my gold coins. There's quite a lot left, right?"

Just as Rushella pointed out, they were not actually so poor as to want for living expenses.

A small part of the gold coins from her coffin had been exchanged for cash, but the majority was still at home.

Finances were given to Hisui for full control, but he never used that money at all.

"Hmm, if living expenses to spend on you are depleted, I'll start using them, but there's no problem right now."

"...It's fine if you spend it too? Since it's my money, then spending it on me is only natural, right?"

"True, but it's still better to save money. Even if a vampire lives forever young, life would be hard without money. Especially the way you live, big spender."

"You're noisy. Shut up!"

Rushella pouted unhappily. Hisui ignored her.

He was not wrong. Besides, his foster parent who was of her kind, also shared the same values.

"Umm... Say."

"Hmm?"

"That parent who raised you, she must be quite loaded, right? After all, you're not worrying about living expenses right now."

Very rarely did Rushella bring up Hisui's parent—Miraluka.

Regarding money, it looked like Rushella had many opinions.

"Well... She apparently went to earn money quite often. Having lived for that long, naturally, she had quite substantial savings. If she wished, she could have spent her money recklessly on anything apart from blood and there was no need to be so economical."

"Umm... After she died, she left you a lot of things, right?"

Rushella asked awkwardly.

Because she knew that the deceased parent was part of the past that Hisui did not wish to bring up the most.

But for the sake of understanding Hisui more... She still asked.

"She did leave me a lot. Rather, she left too much. All rights to the house, bank account savings, etc... To be honest, I'm currently not too clear on what else. I think there's also a lawyer prepared. When I'm twenty, everything will be handed over to me. Right now, living expenses are fine, so there's nothing to worry about."

"What's that? There's a will? She knew... she was going to die?"

"No, I think... She probably thought that a day would come when she could leave me without worrying... Something like that. After all, there would come a day when I'd surpass her outward age. If we still stayed together, it'd be too unnatural."

"..."

Indeed.

An aging and decrepit human. An immortal vampire with eternal youth. They could not possibly live together forever.

Humans die eventually.

Even before death arrived, a weak and elderly human would not match an eternally youthful vampire either.

Perhaps people in the surroundings would notice the weirdness and cause problems.

A relationship doomed to end, never reaching eternity.

Miraluka very likely knew this very well.

Since antiquity, she had seen too many encounters and partings.

Perhaps because of that, she chose to leave behind a massive inheritance in preparation for the future day of parting.

"...Then what are you worrying about, just go ahead and use it? She left it precisely for you."

Rushella spoke unhappily.

Imperceptibly, she had wrapped her arms around Hisui's arm.

"Hmm... I'm also hesitating about whether I should use it."

"...?"

"As much as I don't like to admit, it's true that she raised me. Actually, that's quite enough already, so I don't want to continue relying on her. Well, tuition can't be helped and I can't really bring myself to work part-time like mad to earn money... Anyway, I don't want to keep relying on her."

An indescribable sense of loneliness floated in Hisui's eyes.

By this point, Miraluka still occupied a part of his heart and would continue to do so in the future.

Whether accepting her legacy wish or opposing it, neither result could escape from her grasp.

Rushella probably felt this level of meaning and terrifying expression surfaced on her face as she clung onto Hisui's arm tightly.

"Ouch, what are you doing, it really hurts!"

"So noisy, shut up!! Hurry and go home!"

"What the heck... H-Hey, you're pressing your bosom..."

"So noisy!! Stop saying rubbish! I want to take a bath first, so prepare dinner for me during that time!"

Rushella hugged even tighter, almost entangling her entire body around him.

It was difficult to walk.

Clearly his house was before his eyes, yet every step seemed so difficult.

"Stop it, could you stop stuffing that massive bust, so large and soft and puffy it defies science, into my armpit!? When I walk, it touches... Eh, did I touch something sharp?"

"What are you talking about!? Hurry and walk!"

Rushella ignored Hisui's struggling and dragged him forward.

From an observer view, they were clearly a couple with the boy being dragged by the girl.

For example, this observer standing at the entrance to his house, who knew what expression would be made?

"The two of you look like you're having loads of fun, eh?"

Leaning against the wall, a woman jeered.

Her black, short-cropped hair and slender physique stood out under the streetlight's illumination.

The black, woman's suit gave the impression of a career woman while the curves of her body resembled that of a gorgeous model—or a seasoned athlete.

"It's been a while, the two of you, eh?"

Oogami Rangetsu—that was her name.

Belonging to the Metropolitan Police Department's Supernatural Investigations Section like Eruru, she was a proper detective.

Nevertheless, Hisui and Rushella ignored her completely and went past her directly.

"...Hey, hold it right there, you two! Why are you ignoring me!?"

Seeing them ignore her, Rangetsu yelled angrily.

But they looked at each other and suspiciously eyed the uninvited guest.

"Hey, she looks angry... Is she here to visit you? She doesn't look like a vampire, could she be an enemy? Maybe she's related to your lost memories?"

"I don't know her! Fine, just ignore her!"

Rushella dragged Hisui towards the entrance to their home.

Rangetsu grabbed him.

"Hey hey hey, hold it right there! It's me! Oogami Rangetsu!"

Then she pointed at herself and announced her name.

Hisui made a look as though he remembered and clapped his hands.

"Oh... Right!"

"You remember now!?"

"Nope."

He answered expressionlessly and took out his key.

"...Hey, wait up! What the heck, you should have remembered with this sort of dialogue, okay!?"

"Sorry, who are you again?"

"That's right! No recollection at all! If you keep pestering us, we're gonna call the p'lice, okay!?"

Rushella was just as enraged as Hisui.

Both of them had forgotten Rangetsu completely.

"You two...! I am the police! Look, here's my badge!"

Just like in a television crime drama, Rangetsu opened up her badge to show her identity.

But the two cast skeptical glances at her.

"That's fake, right?"

"Hmm, I knew it, in these situations, we should call the p'lice..."

"You two are going too far! Have you forgotten the vampire incident last time!? It's me, the werewolf, Oogami Rangetsu!!"

She was supposed to hide this identity as much as possible, yet she yelled with reckless abandon.

By this point, Hisui seemed to remember.

"Oh, from that time!"

"Yes yes!"

"Sorry for troubling you last time. Goodbye."

"Farewell!"

Then Hisui and Rushella ignored her decisively and opened the door to enter the house.

But Rangetsu mercilessly grabbed Hisui's back collar and dragged him back.

"What are you doing...? Didn't I remember already?"

"What's the point if you do nothing more than remembering? What kind of reaction is this!? Even if an ordinary police came to your house, you should be a bit more surprised, right!?"

"I haven't committed any crimes. Don't be so full of yourself, dog of the state."

"Yes, that suits your name very well!"^[2]

Rushella crossed her arms and concurred.

Struck in a werewolf's greatest berserk button, Rangetsu glared viciously in return at them.

"You two really dare say anything you want... I am a noble wolf!"

"But based on biological classification, the boundary between dogs and wolves is very fuzzy, right? And it's not like one is inferior or superior to the other."

"Yeah, dogs are so cute, being so furry and fuzzy. Besides, for a werewolf-human hybrid like you, what right do you have to talk about pureblooded wolves?"

Rushella boldly pointed out the truth.

Unable to refute her words, Rangetsu gnashed her teeth.

"Then what business do you have? I still have to make dinner, you know?"

"Finally, you're willing to talk properly. But standing out here isn't really appropriate..."

"No, let's just stand here. Hurry up and finish it."

In a laid back manner, Hisui began to ask Rangetsu to leave.

At this moment, Rushella quietly whispered in his ear.

"Hey, maybe this bitch wants to enter the house?"

"Eh, why?"

"Because she looks like she's been waiting at the entrance a long time. And deliberately looking like she's waiting."

"Oh, you mean leaning against the wall, with her arms and legs crossed? If it were indoors, whatever, but a full-fledged adult shouldn't be doing that in the middle of the road, right? That kind of behavior is, at most, second year of middle school."

"Yeah, her long and slender limbs are quite a sight, but I can't bear the sight of them in person!"

"Yeah. And this wall is so rough, who knows if one might soil or rip clothes."

"Oh, no way!?"

Rangetsu frantically twisted her head to look at her back.

Naturally, a neck's range of motion was limited. After futile efforts to look behind, all she succeeded was hurting her neck.

Hence, Rushella very helpfully checked out the fabric on her back for her.

"Looks like there's no damage but there's a lot of white dust. Here, let me get it off for you."

Rushella brushed the dust away, saving Rangetsu from her embarrassing situation.

"Yes, it's clean now!"

"...Thank you."

"Okay, take care on your way back."

"Good luck with your work."

Hisui and Rushella smiled and sent her off.

Rangetsu bowed and turned to leave—Then suddenly braked hard and turned around.

"...Hey, why did you send me off so naturally!? I almost fell for it!"

"Oopsie. She saw through it."

Hisui stuck his tongue out mischievously while Rushella made an "oh no" expression.

"It's time for you two to behave yourselves... Stop playing adults for a fool!"

"...Then be quick with what you've gotta say. If you want us to invite you inside for tea, forget about it!"

"Like I'd care for that! There's a cafe nearby, how about my treat!? Don't underestimate civil servants, okay!?"

"Why do you want to talk with us so much? You and me... There should be nothing to say, right? So you're looking for Hisui. Are you trying to 'persuade' him again!? No, he belongs to me!"

Rushella hugged Hisui's right arm, no, his entire body and entered a high state of alert.

It was impossible for her to get along with a werewolf in the first place. And now, she was treating Rangetsu the same as Mei—a rival targeting Hisui.

"Why are you two sticking together so close... Hmph, so you've got a thing for vampires, huh?"

"...No."

Hisui denied verbally, but because Rushella's bosom was pressing tightly against him, he could not help but blush.

And did not resist either.

"I came here today because of the vampire incident last time. The results of the interrogation are almost ready. So I came to give you a report."

"Who cares about that. I'm not interested."

Hisui rejected flatly.

He was not pretending and really did exude an aura of indifference.

"Uh, but... You should understand the situation, right?"

"More precisely, I don't trust you. Perhaps you questioned that vampire called Fabru or Fester or whatever and got a lot of true facts out of him. But second hand from you, it could very well have changed already. I don't need your report, filled with bias and ulterior motives, so I'll just ask Kariya later."

Hisui rejected mercilessly.

In the earlier incident, they had been enemies for some duration. Even now, Hisui still had lingering fears.

The boy who treated all races equally yet was wary against supernatural creatures that resembled humans.

The most terrifying monster in the world—Humans.

He found it impossible to trust Rangetsu who was trying to turn from foe to friend, in accordance with her approach to survival.

Melding into human society, interacting with humans, disguised as a human, doing all this required eloquence of speech and craftiness.

"W-What... You trust Kariya-san that much!?"

"She's more trustworthy than you."

"...That's it? I thought it's because you like her? You like the petite type!?"

"...What are you talking about? Well, I do admit she's quite cute."

Hisui gave his honest opinion but ended up causing Rushella to grip him forcefully.

"...What the heck?"

"You're being noisy. Shut up."

Rushella pouted with displeasure and rubbed her face against Hisui's arm. She looked like a child who was hugging a favorite doll.

"Kariya-san... Is she really that worthy of your trust? Although the earlier incident changed her stance somewhat, in actual fact, she's just using you, right?"

"Whatever. I've received quite a lot of help from her, so I think we're even. If the things I do can bring benefits to her, I guess it's a good thing to be happy about?"

"...!"

The unexpected answer made Rangetsu agitated.

Why was there such a large difference between the ways he treated Eruru and her?

"She's only curious about your strange constitution... And concerned about this vampire, right? One day, she'll point the barrel of her gun at you, do you understand?"

"No, she does that on a frequent basis already. To be honest, I'd be totally grateful if that could be changed. Is this all you wanna talk about? Did you come all this way just to talk trash behind Kariya's back?"

Hisui was implying "finish what you're saying and be gone." His tone of voice did not try to conceal his displeasure at all.

Exuding an indifferent aura of evicting guests, Hisui was making Rangetsu a little intimidated.

"Th-That's not it! I-It's about... Last time... What you casually took away! Do you really think that kind of high-class holy water comes for free!?"

"What does it matter if it was used to defeat a 'Pure of the Pure'? It's gotta be used some time. I thought I asked Kariya to get some lenience for me already?"

"Uh, umm, I mean..."

"If you still insist that I recompense, then I'll go ask someone from the Vatican to give you a replacement."

Rushella asked Hisui quietly after hearing him.

"How do you have connections with the Vatican?"

"It's Miraluka who had some. Of course, her relationship with the Vatican was essentially one between enemies, seeing as simply stepping on that piece of land caused her great suffering, but there are apparently a couple acquaintances there. Due to getting involved with the Church's core members, she had a few interactions with them, similar to a real version of the Da Vinci Code. If I mention her name, getting holy water shouldn't be a problem. Or perhaps I might even have some existing in my basement already."

Without letting Rangetsu overhear, Hisui secretly whispered into Rushella's lovely ear.

From a third party's view, their exchange looked like loving whispers between lovers.

"What are you two flirting about...!?"

"This isn't flirting."

"There's no flirting at all."

Even though they were intimately entangled together, arm in arm.

Not a single gap could be seen between them.

"So it turns out like this huh... So in the end, this is the fact of the matter!?"

"...Have you made a serious misunderstanding?"

"Shut up! Enough, apart from what you used in the last incident, a few other confiscated items have gone missing. I was originally just trying to confirm in detail... There's no need now!!"

"Eh, are you serious? Oh... If you need any help, I'll try searching within my ability. Is it fine if I get instructions from Kariya?"

Hisui ended up adding fuel to the fire.

This young man would occasionally put certain taboos to words.

"So annoying! You vampire fetishist!"

"No no, Kariya is a dhampir, she'll get mad if you mix them up..."

"Shut up and go enjoy your blood-sucking play!"

"Could you not use the word 'play', okay?"

"Better watch yourself on a moonlit night! Especially the full moon!"

"Isn't the usual warning about a dark night? Oh right, you're a werewolf..."

Before Hisui's jab could finish, Rangetsu had already run off, almost bursting into tears.

As expected of a werewolf, her astounding speed caused her to meld into the darkness and disappear before their eyes.

"What on earth did she come here for?"

"I think she seems quite into you, right?"

Rushella's words carried barbs.

Although she was not particularly shrewd of mind, she already possessed a maiden's heart like a human.

"Huh? Me? My only good point is that I'm used to getting along with non-humans, nothing more, right?"

"I think that's exactly the point."

Indeed.

This was precisely Kujou Hisui's greatest advantage.

Due to his foster parent and his constitution, he did not hold biased preconceptions against supernatural entities.

Precisely because of that, he was surrounded by so many ladies fighting for his attentions.

"...Let's forget about that woman for now. Hurry up and make dinner! Grill the meat! For the sake of the relay race, I need proper nourishment!"

Rushella's thoughts turned to food. Dragging Hisui's arm, she urged him to hurry to the kitchen and get to work.

Their stomachs were already rumbling with hunger.

"Yeah yeah, I know I know. You want it medium rare, right?"

"Yes! By the way, I want red wine!"

"As if you're gonna get wine! ...That said, I guess I could add a bit to the side dishes or snacks. After all, there's more than I could ever use up in the underground wine cellar."

"...You will?"

Rushella did not expect his answer and asked with worry.

Indeed, kept in the basement of this house were uncountable numbers of excellent vintages from the past.

Vampires loved red wine. Naturally, the one who collected them was Hisui's parent.

Last time, Rushella had broken the bottle that carried the most precious memories from this collection.

Hisui did not seem to mind and never brought it up again. However, Rushella still felt guilty about that incident.

"This is similar to last time's holy water, I shouldn't let it go to waste. I can add wine to the beef and vegetables during cooking so there's no lack of opportunities to use it. Even if it's discount meat, adding this wine will improve its quality substantially."

"That's... right! What's yours is mine! Serve me well!"

"What a glutton you are. But could you not steal wine to drink? I can already foresee you getting drunk."

"I... will not. Umm... Only openly, two of us together."

"I'm not of age yet."

"Then... Umm, we'll wait until you're old enough!"

"Oh... Okay, that works."

"Yes!"

Hisui did not waste time pondering and readily agreed.

Rushella also seemed satisfied with the current state.

Thinking that this sort of everyday life could persist forever...

Forgetting that between vampires and humans—The difference in race.

"...By the way, your colleague came calling at my door yesterday. Did you hear anything about it?"

"No, this is my first time hearing of it."

During the lunch break, Hisui asked Eruru about last night but she flatly denied.

She did not even look at Hisui when answering him.

While eating a sandwich with one hand, she was staring at the notebook computer on the desk.

"And even though we are co-workers, we belong to completely different chains of command and standpoints. Do you not think you are asking the wrong person?"

"Yeah, but you're both under the MPD, right? Honestly, her hassling is quite annoying. I'm afraid to leave the house when there's a full moon at night."

"Perhaps all she wants is simply to see you?"

"Huh?"

"Even if she is unwilling to pass messages through me, she could call by phone or send a subordinate. There are all sorts of ways. Given she is contacting you in person like this and trying to recruit you, does it not make sense?"

"Why would she do that? Even if I'm more knowledgeable than average, I'm still a high schooler after all, right?"

"On top of experience, there is the matter between genders."

Eruru typed dextrously using one hand on the keyboard while making the kind of statement that did not suit her.

"In the earlier incident, she found out about the foster parent who raised you as well as your constitution. However, you can still keep the status quo. Most likely, she did not report to her superiors and discreetly hid things in her heart on her own initiative. You should express a little gratitude at least, right?"

"... Well, okay. Say, you immerse yourself in work all day long, is it that fun?"

Seeing Eruru still attached to work even during the lunch break, Hisui asked incredulously.

Eruru had infiltrated the school to monitor Rushella and essentially did not interact with her classmates most of the time.

Apart from Hisui, she did not even chat with anyone. Neither did she leave her computer during breaks. She always ate lunch alone in solitude.

"Say... Could you play the part of a student a little, how's that?"

"Are you asking a university graduate to play as a student?"

"Uh, what I mean is... Enjoy the springtime of youth?"

"Enough with the stale jokes. Has your mind regressed to Rushella's level?"

"Wow, that sounds really obnoxious."

Hisui sighed and looked back to his seat.

Next to there, Rushella and Mei had their lunchboxes laid out while they chatted casually, occasionally entering the usual arguments.

Comparing Eruru with Rushella—Indeed, the one over there was definitely enjoying her youth much more.

"Since you're at school, how about relaxing properly? At least do something more enjoyable and relaxing than work?"

"My presence here itself is already work. Please do not worry unnecessarily over me."

Eruru's stance remained firm.

Hisui also stopped with his irresponsible remarks and turned his direction towards lessening her work load.

"I heard from that woman yesterday that the Supernatural Investigations Section lost some of the confiscated items. Was it during the earlier commotion? Let me help you find them?"

"That comes under my responsibilities so there is no need for you to assist. Indeed, a few articles were lost and there was some damage, but the aftermath is almost complete. However, I did hear that one object still cannot be found despite all efforts."

"What is it?"

"No idea."

Eruru shrugged to express her ignorance.

Her irresponsible attitude caused Hisui to probe the issue deeper.

"Hey hey hey, what are you guys doing with taxpayer's hard earned cash?"

"I really have no idea. It is a chemical that was confiscated from a radical guild under a certain black magic system, apparently a liquid kept in a

suspicious-looking bottle... Of unknown purpose. It could be a poison or a drug, or even something completely harmless."

"What, that sounds totally scary!? What would happen if it got outside!?"

"Very likely, it's already outside. Originally, the staff intended to request someone outside to conduct a thorough analysis, but then the vampire commotion happened. The staff transporting the bottle was one of the victims."

Eruru spoke with a serious expression.

On that day, pointing her gun at colleagues and bringing salvation to humans, those dark and depressing memories could not be expelled from her heart.

"So... The bottle was not found among the remains?"

"Indeed. After all, the bottle is small and could have dropped somewhere or was picked up by someone... Most likely the former. Since the contents were not identified, plus the complicated incident, the police did not publicize this affair. They simply had someone file a report and ended the matter."

"I see... Oh, right, about that Fer-whatever vampire..."

"You mean Fergus. What about him?"

"What happened to the coffin?"

Making sure that Rushella's attention was not directed towards this side, Hisui leaned in close and whispered to Eruru.

The coffin dredged up from the bottom of the sea, made with the same craftsmanship as Rushella's coffin—its connection to Rushella's origins was still a mystery.

"Fergus' torture... I mean interrogation was completely entrusted to me. I have already asked him and he himself apparently does not know."

"Oh sorry, did you say torture? You really said torture!?"

"I said it."

"Deny it, okay!? If you corrected yourself, then don't admit it!"

"Do not worry. I have things under control. False testimony will not be forced out of him. Although he was very cocky in the beginning, after a few garlic injections, he started to froth at the mouth and his eyes went dead, then he told us everything."

"Scary! As expected of the great hero Kariya. Although I'm equally well-versed in vampire weaknesses, you effortlessly did what I could never do. I am totally impressed in reverence and trepidation, greatly intimidated~~"

"This is all thanks to you, making him combine with holy water on a particle level. He is already thrashing about so much he cannot speak clearly. Oh well, give it some time and patience to listen to him give out the full story. After that, I allowed him to rest for a few days. It should be almost about time now."

Eruru even smiled as she spoke.

This made Hisui's hair stand on end and he could not help but distance himself from her.

"What is the matter with you?"

"...Nothing."

"About the coffin, you could try asking Kirika-san's opinion, right? I happen to have this from Fergus and the sample you provided to me in the past."

Eruru took out evidence bags from her school bag.

Inside the bags were fragments shaved off from the two coffins respectively.

"Oh right. Then let me help you take them over. I'll be gone for a bit, so please help me watch Rushella."

"If anything happens, I will shoot. Do not worry."

"...Scary."

In emergencies, Eruru never hesitated. That was her style.

Carrying some level of unease, Hisui left the classroom.

Although he knew the location of Kirika's classroom, to be honest, he felt hesitant going to an upperclassmen's floor, let alone visiting a second year's class.

He originally wanted to ask her to come out using a text message, but after recalling her responsibilities in the school, another location opened up as a possibility.

"...Lemme try the student council office."

He had heard that she often worked at the office during the lunch break as well.

Seeing as the sports festival was looming near, she was probably more likely to be in the office rather than her classroom.

Arriving at the staff room's floor, Hisui looked up at the signs over each door.

He knew that the student council office should be nearby but he had never visited before.

"Hmm... Ah, it's here."

Finally, he found the sign which said "Student Council Office." Before him was Kirika's workplace.

This room was only half the size of a normal classroom. Its structure was similar to special classrooms like laboratories or preparation rooms.

Hisui was just about to open the door when a boy walked out from inside.

The guy was quite handsome. Unlike Hisui's androgynous features, he was a standard male. Darker complexion. Muscular physique.

A face that girls found attractive, Hisui recognized it.

Hisui recalled the student council president and third year student—He frequently gave speeches in morning assemblies. Reportedly, like Kirika, he was equally gifted in beauty and intellect, a student deeply trusted by the teachers.

"Excuse me..."

Hisui tried to talk to him but did not expect him to leave directly, ignoring him.

"Wait up! We haven't finished talking!"

Another girl chased out from the student council office.

It was Kirika.

"What is the meaning of this!? If the matters of the sports festival are not discussed seriously, you will cause others trouble in the future!?"

"I've already said, just do it your way, okay? After all, it doesn't matter whether I'm present or not. All the other council members think so too."

"But... Why can't you do your work properly!?"

Ignoring Hisui's arrival, Kirika scolded the president repeatedly.

"Because you go too far. Isn't it time for you to realize? That's why nobody wants to come here."

The president retorted impatiently. Kirika fell silent.

It looked like he had struck her in a sore spot.

"Like before, just do as you like. No one will object. If you want my approval to report back to the teachers, I give you my approval. Are you happy now?"

"..."

"I still have a club meeting, so I'll be on my way."

The student council president left Kirika, whose head was bowed down, and departed through the corridor.

Hisui and Kirika remained silent. Finally, Kirika was the first to speak.

"...Looks like you witnessed an embarrassing sight."

"No, it's okay..."

Although Hisui tried to comfort her, he sighed in his mind, lamenting he should not have seen this scene.

Although he had already heard rumors that Kirika did not get along with the other members of the student council, after seeing it with his own eyes, he could not say anything.

"Is it... Differences in direction...? Or different opinions on operation...?"

"...Pretty much. More bluntly stated, all the other members seem to hate me."

Kirika spoke with self-abandonment.

Never compromising, devoting herself to work altruistically was Kirika, compared to the other member's whose motivation was lukewarm... There was a decisive and unfillable gap in passion towards the student council.

"How about talking to the teacher who's the student council advisor...? Even if there are disputes, there can't be no solution."

Hisui made a practical suggestion but surely Kirika must have thought of it already.

She ended up scoffing derisively.

"I've brought it up many times. Every time, I was asked to compromise. Saying I am too headstrong and should accommodate others more. Is that what you want to say as well?"

Kirika turned her gaze towards him with some hostility.

But Hisui simply scratched his head unfazed.

"No~ I don't really care. After all, I only only know you, Senpai, so I'll only stand on your side."

"W-What are you talking about...!?"

Kirika was greatly shaken.

However, Hisui did not notice her blushing.

"Uh, exactly what the words say? Although they have their own ideas which might actually be correct, even so, I have never thought of siding with them. Rather, I don't want to do that. Besides, you're already so troubled. Senpai."

"I-It's not like... I'm troubled..."

Kirika fidgeted with her fingers, her face growing redder and redder.

Nevertheless, Hisui did not notice and kept going.

"It's not easy for one person to bear everything. Although being accommodating is important too, ultimately it still depends on how you want to do things, Senpai. If you find it tough then compromise. If you find compromising even tougher, then just keep things as they are. At any rate, I'm not gonna dislike you for it, Senpai."

"W-What do you mean by that...!?"

"...? Uh, basically what I said..."

Kirika suddenly leaned over, causing Hisui to retreat.

Although she did not get as close as Rushella would, it was still close enough to make him uncomfortable.

"Anyway, I've received a lot of your help already, so if you think I can be of use, I don't mind doing odd chores... The others can also..."

"I don't need anyone apart from you..."

This last sentence made Hisui completely puzzled.

"But, even if Rushella will definitely cause more trouble than helping, Sudou could mess things up if she used the wrong strength, I don't wanna trouble Kariya during the daytime, putting Touko-san aside... Eh, why am I the only one left?"

"...See. So it's best if you help me by yourself. I intend to enter the student council president election next year. If I'm elected, I will let you join the student council."

"Oh no, that's okay. It's troublesome."

"Quiet! I have already decided. Yes, this will do..."

Summing up on her own, Kirika nodded with satisfaction.

Seeing Hisui surprised, Kirika then asked him why he had come.

"...So, what do you need? You went out of your way to see me."

"Oh~~ Last time, that vampire's coffin is quite similar to Rushella's. I was wondering if I could ask for your opinion or get some help in investigating... But seeing you so busy, forget about it."

"Not at all, you are welcome."

Saying that, Kirika snatched the plastic bags from Hisui's hand.

"Oh, but..."

"I already said it is fine. But don't get your hopes up too much. How about... This coming Saturday... Would you like to come to my house?"

Kirika looked up and asked.

Her attitude suddenly changed 180 degrees.

"...Do you have something planned already?"

"Nothing, I guess..."

"Then come. Also, my grandmother finally returned. Regarding these fragments and Rushella's matter... She should be able to answer many of your doubts. You're interested... too, right?"

"Well... I guess..."

Going over to a girl's home on a holiday—Although Hisui felt a little resistant, but given he had legitimate business to handle, there was no time to hesitate.

"Then... It's decided. Very well, I will also prepare some light-blocking agent. Just pick it up when you're visiting."

Kirika seemed to be finding a reason to increase the legitimacy of the visit.

Although Hisui felt grateful inside, he did not want to trouble others too much.

"You really don't need to do this. I'm sure you're quite busy."

"It won't take up a lot of effort. I have heard from Kariya-san, it seems like Rushella-san is quite enthusiastic about participating in the sports festival? Then isn't it very necessary?"

"Well... I guess..."

"Then stop making excuses. Saturday afternoon is fine, right? I will contact you about the specific time and location later."

"...Yes."

"...Well then, see you on Saturday."

Concealing a shy expression, Kirika left after speaking.

During her departure, the lively spring in her step was almost like a dance.

Although Hisui's unease was not completely laid to rest, the bell rang for the end of the lunch break and he had no choice but to make his way to the cleaning grounds.

Chapter 2 - Witch's Mansion

In the darkness, only a pale hand could be seen vaguely.

Beside the street light, a dark figure was clad in a black cape.

Engulfed in the shadows, even the figure's outline was difficult to discern.

Only the pale and delicate hand, extending out from the cape, was visible under the dim lighting, as though showing off its dazzling existence amidst the darkness.

The slender fingers were holding a small jar.

"Ah, I've obtained something interesting."

The quiet whispers echoed in the darkness.

A woman's voice. It sounded bewitching yet chilling to the bone.

Were it whispered by the listener's ear, surely one would break out in goosebumps with terror traveling throughout the body.

"Perhaps, this thing could be used to confirm if the plan would succeed or not. However, it seems a bit early for the main event to start immediately."

Her voice sounded slightly lost.

After a moment of silence, a person's presence appeared.

Turning around the corner was a high school student on her way home.

Dressed in her school uniform, the girl was walking with her head bowed.

Seeing her appearance, the figure in the dark smiled, her red lips forming the shape of a crescent.

"An excellent opportunity."

Who just arrived did not matter at all.

She simply wanted to take the opportunity to test things out.

This was neither fate nor preordained inevitability.

Simply because this girl happened to pass by.

The girl did not notice the threat hiding by the street light and was about to walk past there.

The girl's slender arm was grabbed by a pale hand.

"...?"

As a hint of wariness flashed across the girl's eyes, she looked in the figure's direction.

...Only to see a open jar presented before her eyes.

No liquid was being poured out. Instead, a red gas entered her nostrils.

"...!?"

The hand under the cape held onto the girl without letting go, ignoring her incessant coughing.

A moment later, a white mist-like gas was exhaled from the girl's mouth.

The gas expanded in the darkness and gradually gained self-awareness.

Then it took on a distinct and humanoid outline, down to the very details.

"Very well."

Having confirmed the effects, the dark figure left the girl.

Then melding into the darkness, she vanished without trace.

Left behind alone, the girl covered her mouth as she checked out her surroundings.

Perhaps due to inhaling the gas, her consciousness was a little hazy.

Although she was unable to figure out what had happened, in the end, she still continued on her way home.

Random passersby showed a surprised gaze upon seeing the girl.

A bizarre scene.

Like a mirror image, a figure was walking in the opposite direction away from the girl's back.

Clothing, hairstyle, physique—Everything was identical.

Regarding this clone that had departed behind her...

The girl was completely unaware.

On Saturday afternoon, Hisui arrived at Kirika's home as agreed.

Fortunately, he did not get lost and arrived on time.

A western mansion that stood out even in this high-class residential neighborhood—On first impressions, it was already obvious that it was Kirika's home.

A vast and majestic western style garden was fully visible even from outside.

With some nervousness, Hisui adjusted his loosened casual tie and pressed the intercom next to the gate.

The inhabitant had apparently been waiting for a long time—

"The door will be opened immediately."

Kirika answered then directed Hisui through the garden to a spacious entryway.

Everything was fine up until this point.

But when Kirika opened the door to welcome him, clear displeasure appeared on her face instantly.

"...Welcome."

"Thank you for your hospitality."

"Yes, we're here to enjoy your hospitality!"

Rushella smiled while speaking from beside Hisui.

Even worse, she had her arm entwined around Hisui's.

Although fearful of getting lost could be considered a reason, recently, whenever they went out, Rushella always insisted in walking arm in arm.

"Umm... Senpai..."

"...Never mind. This sort of development could be described as inevitable. It's my fault for not specifying clearly beforehand. I should have expected that you could not possibly leave her alone at home unattended on a holiday. It is my oversight. However... Why are the rest of you here!?"

Next to Rushella... were Mei and Eruru as well.

"Oh dear~ Senpai, stealing a march isn't a very nice thing to do, is it? Even I've never invited Hi-kun to my home, are you getting ahead of yourself?"

Dressed in a low-cut autumn camisole, Mei was smiling seductively.

Similarly dressed in decisive attire, Kirika was wearing a high-class blouse and miniskirt.

"...Oh well, I should have expected you to arrive uninvited as well. But Kariya-san, I never would have thought that even you would come..."

Kirika glared resentfully, but Eruru was unfazed by her gaze.

"I simply wish to know the results of the analysis. Well, if Hisui-san were coming alone, I had no intention of visiting originally, after all, I have no wish of being glared at by you like this... But since Rushella followed along, in order to prevent her from causing trouble, I should be present to supervise her. Rather, I am here in consideration for you, right?"

"Indeed, since those two are here, it is better that you came too. Anyway, that's enough for now, hurry and come inside."

"Okay... Ah, I've brought a little something."

Saying that, Hisui handed over the tea and western confectionery he had brought.

Kirika accepted them expressionlessly and had the maid beside her lead Hisui's group into the house.

"Hmm, this house is so spacious... I want to live in a place like this! Rather, I'm supposed to live here! This kind of house is more fitting for me!"

"A vampire living in this kind of house would attract too much attention. By the way, I never knew what a spoiled rich girl you are. Upon comparison, my gifts seem a bit too cheap. Is Senpai angry because of that?"

"Clearly not."

"Obviously not."

Two of the culprits incurring Kirika's displeasure—Mei and Eruru—refuted Hisui's speculation simultaneously.

"Really... Yesterday when I sent the text message to confirm the time and place, she used a whole ton of emoticons in her reply and looked quite happy."

"I would expect that."

"Poor child."

"What exactly do you two know...?"

Hisui remained uneasy. The group went through the house and arrived in a garden.

"Wow..."

Although Hisui had no artistic sense for flowers, the countless blooming flowers, centered around roses, still caused him to gasp in amazement.

Using the traits of different flowers in a perfect combination, this space produced a sense of harmony.

Compared to an ordinary reception hall, this place was undoubtedly more suited for entertaining guests.

Beneath the warm sunlight, the weather was currently perfect for an outdoor chat.

Passing through a small path that was filled with floral fragrance, they reached a set of white tables and chairs.

A lady seated in a wheelchair was already waiting for them. Noticing the arriving group, she smiled warmly.

"Welcome, welcome. Come, please have a seat here."

Hence, Hisui's group took their seats.

The first moment he laid eyes on the woman, Hisui understood that she must be Kirika's grandmother.

Just as Kirika mentioned, she was a true native of England. Friendly and gentle, she shared a certain resemblance with Kirika. In her youth, she must have had no lack of romantic pursuers.

Despite her advanced age, she was the kind of elder whose outstanding poise and presence was something that probably everyone aspired to achieve when they reached old age.

Since she was Kirika's teacher, naturally, she must also be a "witch." Nevertheless, her predominantly white attire and shawl gave off an impression quite removed from that identity. Knitting while sitting by a warm hearth and telling stories of her youth to grandchildren would probably match her current look better.

"Umm, a pleasure to meet you. My name is Kujou Hisui. Your granddaughter has helped me so much all this time..."

"Hello, you are too kind. Nice to meet you too, my name is Welfica. You are Miraluka's... Son? Putting it that way might sound a bit strange. Perhaps it might be more fitting if I call you her younger brother... Would it not?"

"You knew... her...?"

Hisui stared in surprise at the elderly lady before him.

Hearing the unexpected name, Rushella's face turned grim.

Even that "Pure of the Pure" vampire last time had not seen Miraluka in person before.

In the end, Miraluka only existed in Hisui's memories alone.

A sanctuary where none may trespass, a set of memories that none may share.

Nevertheless, today they finally met a human who knew her.

"You are... When did you meet her...?"

"A very long time ago... Back then, I was about your age. I only saw her once. Speaking of which, it's unexpectedly ironic that she would pass away earlier than a human like me."

Welfica reminisced.

For this elder who had experienced all manners of the world's harsh realities and separations brought about by death, her encounter with Miraluka the 'True Ancestor' was still a special memory.

"Is the tea ready?"

While Hisui was still immersed in his memories, Kirika returned with a tray of tea ware.

"Oh... Thanks."

"Please have some tea first. There is no need to rush the conversation."

Like the times in the club classroom, Kirika set out the tea ware and started a small-scale tea party.

The tea she brewed was delicious as usual. On the plates were also various exquisite snacks that were meticulously prepared.

"Kirika-chan, your skills are becoming better and better. Is it because you've found someone you like?"

"S-Seriously, please don't talk about that..."

The grandmother's joke caused Kirika to blush.

Despite the flawless image of perfection she presented at school, in front of her grandmother, Kirika was just a girl at the prime of youth.

Seeing the model student showing a new side to her, Hisui could not help but smile while drinking the tea.

Seeing the conversation drifting further and further away, Eruru spoke up to return to the main topic.

"By the way, Welfica-san, did you come to any conclusion regarding the fragments I handed to you earlier? I am certain that you must have heard the entire story from your granddaughter already..."

"Yes... I've seen them already. Both fragments seem to come from finely-crafted coffins. Even back when I was young, that type of top-class craftsmanship would still have been rare. However..."

"However...?"

"Actually, one of the fragments is recent... Even though I say recent, it must have been twenty or thirty years probably. For a vampire's coffin, it is far too new."

"Vampire coffins are usually antiques. That goes all the more for high-ranking vampires. The longer a coffin's age, the more powerful the magical power infused in it and serves to augment the owner's prestige. The coffin that you mentioned as recent, which one is it?"

"Not the one belonging to the 'Pure of the Pure' but the other one. I think... It probably belongs to the little lady here?"

Welfica calmly pointed out the key person.

Judging from the tone of her voice, Kirika probably had not revealed everything to her. Rather, she saw through Rushella's identity on her own.

At this moment, Rushella nodded, currently sitting in the shade that Kirika had prepared for her.

"...Exactly. So, what's similar between that Fergus guy's coffin and mine?"

"Made by the same craftsman... As much as I'd like to gloss over it like that, the fact of the matter is not so simple. These two coffins were created at least a hundred years apart. Probably not by the same person. Or perhaps... They were created in similar locations through similar methods... Or rather..."

"Rather?"

Eruru leaned forward and asked.

She was quite intrigued by this matter.

"Her coffin was based on that 'Pure of the Pure' vampire's... Or least, an imitation created by referencing that type of high-class coffin in order to reproduce the same craftsmanship... That is the impression given."

"What is going on here?"

Hisui muttered, quite interested.

However, at the center of the conversation topic, Rushella remarked with displeasure:

"Why is my coffin an imitation when I'm a 'True Ancestor' myself!? Isn't the order completely wrong? This is very displeasing!"

"'True Ancestor'...? You are...? How is that possible, apart from Miraluka, all of them already..."

Welfica's face was filled with surprise.

Could it be that she, like Hisui, knew a little about the truth of the 'True Ancestors'?

"That person again..."

Hearing Miraluka's name, Rushella complained resentfully with her fist clenched.

Indeed, no matter where, that name always popped up to cause trouble.

"Please calm down. Whether your coffin is new or not, it does not diminish your existence. Besides, it could very well be possible that the coffin was damaged and repaired for some reason. A mere coffin is not going to affect your prestige and position, right?"

Eruru interjected to relieve the tension and avert catastrophe.

Rushella found her explanation reasonable and cooled down her temper.

"Well... That's true too."

"Welfica-san, anything else?"

"Nothing special... Most likely, simply comparing coffins would not yield any further clues. At the very least, her coffin, as a vampire's belonging, it really is in the latest style. However, its creator must also have researched coffins that were passed down since antiquity, distilling their very essence to craft this coffin. I am absolutely certain of that."

"In other words, we need to find a different angle huh. Say, who the heck are you, anyway?"

"No idea..."

Rushella turned her face away and sulked.

Precisely because she did not know, that was why they came here to investigate.

But right now, her origins had become even more mysterious. Even worse, the name of Hisui's parent, whom no one else had met, came up again without warning.

The more Rushella thought about it, the angrier she got. All she could do is wolf down the snacks without saying another word.

Seeing the mood cooling down suddenly, Kirika stood up.

"Oh, Kujou-kun... The light-blocking agent is ready, let me get it for you first in case I forget later."

"Oh thanks..."

"Come with me to get it. Oh, also regarding the sports festival, may I discuss something with you? Last time, you said you were willing to help, is that right?"

"Yeah, that's what I said..."

"The materials are in my room. Let us talk there."

Saying that, Kirika left the table.

Although Hisui was a little perplexed, he felt that refusing would not be right.

After taking a glance at Rushella, in the end, he still stood up and followed Kirika to enter the house.

Rushella was about to get up and call to him but Mei and Eruru stopped her.

"What are you two doing!?"

"Let's just turn a blind eye this once. Once in a while should be fine."

"If you try to follow, you could very well end up suffering a witch's curse. Take this opportunity with Kujou-san not around. Now you can boldly ask all you want—about his family."

Hearing Eruru's advice, Rushella reluctantly sat down in her spot.

The old lady before her continued to smile affectionately.

"May I... ask you? About... Miraluka..."

"I shall tell you everything I know."

Welfica agreed immediately and chuckled amiably.

"Please sit anywhere you like."

"Okay..."

Despite answering affirmatively, Hisui was still standing in one spot at a loss.

Kirika had taken him to her bedroom.

Although the furniture was not as luxurious as Rushella's room, the stuff was still quite high-class. Both the room and the bed were quite large.

No, the main point was... This was a girl's room.

Apart from Miraluka and Rushella's room, Hisui had never stepped foot into any other female's room.

Probably due to this new feeling, Hisui could not help but look around.

Completely devoid of casual entertainment like celebrity posters or fashion magazines, the prim and proper room matched Kirika's style perfectly.

Textbooks and reference books were arranged neatly on her desk, the perfect testament to her excellent grades.

Turning his gaze, Hisui found her bed filled with cute, giant plushies. Beside her pillow was a fuzzy teddy bear.

Was that bear a body pillow...? As this thought crossed his mind, her adorability was skyrocketing.

It suited her quite well, how unexpected.

To be honest, Hisui really wanted to swap places with that bear.

"What is the matter, why are you spacing out while standing there?"

"Oh, nothing..."

Trembling, Hisui had no choice but to sit down where he stood.

"Why are you sitting there? True, although the only chair here is the one in front of my desk... Why don't you sit on the bed?"

"...May I?"

"You may."

Hisui cautiously approached the bed side and sat on the edge near the foot of the bed.

His body instantly sank into the mattress. It looked like it must be quite comfortable to sleep on.

"...Hey, what kind of rubbish am I thinking?"

Hisui quietly reprimanded himself and shook his head to dispel indecent thoughts.

Kirika immediately leaned over and sat down beside Hisui.

A fragrance instantly occupied his sense of smell.

"Why are you leaning so close?"

"This is my room. It is my freedom to sit anywhere I want, right?"

"...True."

"Here you go, the light-blocking agent. I made more than usual, so it should be enough for both the sports festival and during practice."

"Oh thanks."

Hisui received from Kirika's hands a sealed, wide-mouthed jar, just large enough to hold on one's palm. Quite sufficient in quantity.

"I don't know why but that girl is so fired up for the relay race... She even talked about going to practice. I guess she likes sports but PE class happens to be the one class that she can only watch. Must be a lot of pent up frustration she's been suppressing inside, right?"

"Your wording is quite lewd. What do you mean by pent up frustration?"

"Oh I don't mean it in that way."

Before he knew it, Kirika's face was up close, right in front of his face.

Very close.

Too close.

"Umm, Senpai... Didn't you say you had something to talk about for the sports festival?"

"Those issues don't matter. Right now, we are not lacking in manpower. If you're needed... I will message you to let you know."

"Then... Why did we come to your room? You could have given me the stuff on your way back..."

"You don't get it?"

Kirika leaned in even closer.

Almost close enough for their lips to touch any second.

A sweet fragrance filled his nostrils at the same time.

Unlike the scent of shampoo, it seemed to be perfume.

Nevertheless, even though it was currently a holiday, using perfume did not seem to be Kirika's style since she adhered rigorously to school rules.

Besides, that was something that was supposed to be used on a date with someone you like, but right now, she's simply inviting me to her home as a guest—There's no reason for her to be using perfume, right?

"U-Ummm..."

Crap.

If this continues, I'm in big trouble.

But... I can't muster any strength.

As Kirika leaned closer, Hisui was pushed down beneath her body and lying face up on the bed.

Due to being pushed down by Rushella and Mei regularly, Hisui realized that his current situation was quite precarious.

Yes, she's serious this time for real.

"S-Senpai...?"

Kirika's soft bosom was pressing against his chest. Although not to the Rushella or Mei's level, hers was quite sufficiently voluptuous already.

Faint glimpses of high-class, light purple lingerie could be seen from her neckline. It suited her quite well.

Her long and slender legs were entangling him.

Next, Kirika released her long and carefully tied hair.

Her wavy and gorgeous hair exuded the scent of shampoo.

But some sort of fragrance, even more concentrated, was filling the room.

Sweet, bewitching—A fragrance that banished one's rationality.

Hisui focused his eyes and found Kirika's expression a little strange.

Her face was bright red from excitement and her gaze was unsteady.

Hisui surmised that he probably looked the same.

How strange, his heart was racing like mad.

His body felt boiling hot and exhausted, probably not simply because Kirika was pressed up close against him.

Furthermore... Blood was currently flowing towards his lower body.

"What is... going on...?"

Hisui turned his head with difficulty and looked around, searching for answers.

He soon found the cause.

In a corner of the room, a scented candle was lit.

Amidst colored glass, the flickering flame exuded a bewitching beauty, full of fantasy.

The fragrance rising from there was filled with a seductive sweetness.

"Senpai, what's with that candle?"

"Grandma... gave that to me. Specially prepared by witches... made from an aphrodisiac indispensable for nights of passion. She said... when the fragrance fills the entire room... it'd help me..."

"H-Hey...! How could your grandmother recklessly give something so outrageous to her granddaughter... Thanks to her, each of us' virginity is in danger here!"

"Grandma said... Back in the day, she relied on this to conquer Grandpa too..."



"Woah, that's some dark history there. Hey Senpai, can you calm down a bit? Let's get up first..."

"You don't like me?"

Kirika asked with worry while her finger traced circles on Hisui's chest.

"No, it's not like I dislike you..."

"You spend all your time with Rushella-san, you are in the same class as Sudou-san, and you are always partnering with Kariya-san... Only me, you leave out?"

"No, it's not like that..."

Crap.

Seriously, crap.

Most importantly, Hisui was feeling his own consciousness getting hazy.

Before he knew it, Kirika had already unbuttoned Hisui's shirt. Her blouse was also open, revealing a light purple bra.

Her other hand was reaching towards Hisui's belt. Her lips were approaching.

The fragrance's effects were causing Hisui to lose strength throughout his body.

Even evading a kiss was beyond him.

"So... I'll listen a bit. The story about that Miraluka."

Rushella crossed her arms, scowling as she spoke.

Welfica closed her eyes momentarily then returned her teacup to the tray.

"Please forgive me for answering your query with a question. In actual fact, you need not ask me... Why not ask Hisui-kun directly? Most likely, he would know better than me. After all, compared to me, he spent far more time together with her."

"...No."

Rushella looked displeased. Just as Welfica pointed out, she had plenty of opportunities to ask Hisui about Miraluka.

Although Hisui was always tight-lipped about this matter, had Rushella insisted forcefully, he would probably compromise.

However, for some reason, Rushella did not want to listen to him talk about this subject.

She did not want to hear him talk about other vampires.

"Kujou-san was raised by the vampire Miraluka, hence it is inevitable that his perspective of his benefactor would be biased... In actual fact, he definitely views things with rose-tinted glasses. From a neutral point of view, in search of her true nature as a vampire, we also wish to clear up the matter."

Eruru ignored the conflict in Rushella's heart and supplemented in a calm tone of voice.

Like Rushella, she had plenty of opportunities to ask Hisui about Miraluka. She had not, out of consideration for Hisui's feelings... as well as the reasons she outlined just now.

"A boy raised by a 'True Ancestor'... Indeed, my perspective should be different from yours."

"You must have heard about the earlier commotion caused by the 'Pure of the Pure' vampire on the streets. Although the incident was resolved, it is possible that there still exist more hard-liner vampires who insist on maintaining vampire bloodlines. And the key lies in the 'True Ancestors'—If what you and Kujou-san say is true, then there should not be any 'True Ancestors' existing in this world anymore. What is going on?"

Eruru approached the core of the matter.

Ignoring Rushella who was sitting on the side, head hung in dejection, Eruru leaned forward, eager to seek answers.

"...I don't know either. More accurately, the secret of the 'True Ancestors' is only known to Miraluka herself as well as direct descendants of the bloodline. When I met her in the past, I only heard a few words. It was a very long time ago, as it so happened, I was similar in age as you are now—"

Welfica began to recount tirelessly.

In past days, she must have been as young and beautiful as Kirika. During that time in the springtime of her youth, she encountered a vampire.

"She was truly a beauty, to the point that it makes me reluctant to apply the description 'beautiful' on anyone else. From appearance, she only looked two or three years older than I was back then, yet her words leaked heaviness, profundity and darkness between the lines."

"What did she say to you?"

"It was simply small talk. Nothing beyond the realm of casual conversation. Perhaps to her, the entire world did not matter at all. Lonely... No, solitary would fit her best as a description. Vampires generally have a strong sense of kin and would devote their utmost efforts to strengthen bonds of kinship, but she was the complete opposite. She said she had neither family nor subordinates. Supposedly, she had never given birth to children nor take anyone as her servant."

"In other words, she killed every human she drank blood from?"

Eruru asked sharply.

Although she was compelled to drink blood in order to survive as well, she had no intention of viewing this cursed fate with calm indifference.

"Probably. In actual fact, she did it before my eyes. However, everyone whose blood was sucked was smiling, dying in joy and ecstasy. Considering they were homeless people on death's door, to them perhaps it might have been salvation instead."

"...What a weirdo. If I were her, I wouldn't suck blood from that kind of people. The taste must be absolutely terrible."

Rushella grumbled.

Precisely as a member of the same race, she found it all the more inexplicable.

On the other hand, Eruru frowned in a frightening manner.

"That was probably hypocrisy. Granting euthanasia to the dying, thinking it is fine to kill those who no longer wished to live... Can this constitute justification?"

"Impossible. She understood this clearer than anything. In order to survive, blood must be drunk. And she wanted to live on. Despite losing everything, she had to live on in solitude, living in the world that He saved—That was what she said. To her, perhaps drinking human blood was more like a kind of mental torture."

Welfica sighed in forlorn and sipped some tea. Having traveled far along her journey in life, almost reaching its end, perhaps precisely because of that, she could understand the feelings of a vampire whose life was endless.

"I was young back then, finding adults ugly and hating this world that was rife with war and conflict. So I begged her to drink my blood. I told her that I wished to be eternally beautiful just like her."

"...!"

Eruru stared wide-eyed in shock.

Humans who voluntarily offered their necks to vampires were definitely no small number.

And precisely because such people existed, that was how dhampirs came to be born.

"Please forgive my rudeness but that was truly foolish. To voluntarily give up on being human, that cannot be dismissed as mere youthful impulsiveness, right?"

"...Indeed. In the end, she refused me. She said she would continue to live on without needing anyone. Not too long earlier, the last of her peers had been destroyed. She was the only one remaining from among the ones who drank His blood on that day. In order to preserve His existence forever, she had to live on. Without giving birth to children, without taking in servants, for that would only cause her to become weak... After saying that, she vanished before my eyes. To this day, I am still very grateful to her. Without her rejecting me, I would not have such a cute granddaughter right now, neither would I be able to enjoy tea with you all under the sun."

Welfica smiled affectionately and placed her empty teacup onto the tray.

After a moment's silence, Rushella stood up and urged Eruru and Mei to get going.

"Let's go home. We should call Hisui too."

"This is enough? In the end, we didn't really learn anything about Miraluka? If I were you, in preparation for future strategies, it'd be better to continue digging for more info, right?"

Mei rested her face on one hand while she asked but Rushella did not heed her advice.

"Everything that needs to be asked has already been asked. That Miraluka was always alone. She definitely has no idea of that Fergus guy's movements. Even if she met him, she wouldn't have helped him."

"...Perhaps you are right. I have asked about everything I wanted to find out. But what about you? Why would a solitary 'True Ancestor' save a human boy, adopt him and finally..."

At this point, Eruru paused in her words.

She did not hold any respect for vampires. However, through the fragmentary descriptions of Miraluka's last moments that Hisui had given, Eruru could not help but feel respect.

"...Finally, why did she save Kujou-san and dying herself? Do you not care to know?"

Eruru deliberately used the word "dying."

This was the minimum level of respect she offered to Miraluka.

Rather than directed towards a vampire, it was directed towards Hisui's deceased family, directed towards her as a woman.

"I know without needing to ask. Besides, I've already heard roughly what happened from Hisui. That woman saved him, took him in, raised him... Everything on a whim. That's what Hisui said. Supposedly, that's what Miraluka said herself."

"Then why would she do all that for his sake?"

Welfica asked quietly.

She was the only person present who had met Miraluka once in person and could not help but feel perplexed by the change that had occurred to the one in her memory.

"She gained feelings. That's all there is to it. She fell for an insignificant human. That's all. To think she rambled so many lies, what an inane woman."

Rushella's words were filled with barbs but was not meant as an intentional insult.

Rather, her heart was filled with sadness and empathy.

"Gaining feelings... That wasn't one-sided, right? Hi-kun... Didn't he feel the same?"

Especially sharp regarding matters between genders, Mei spoke up expressionlessly.

Her rival was not Rushella. Miraluka was truly the most formidable enemy—She had already sensed that vaguely before but it turned out that her fears were not unfounded.

"Perhaps. What a useless guy, always thinking of someone dead. What do you call that, lingering feelings, right!?"

Rushella loudly ended the conversation and walked into the house.

Mei and Eruru bowed toward Welfica and followed.

"You're welcome to visit again any time. Although I have no idea how many days I have left, so long as I continue to live, let me help as much as I can."

"Yes, I will visit again."

Rushella smiled and the trio left.

"Safe, finally..."

Hisui's virginity crisis was over.

More accurately, the crisis had stopped for now.

The attacking Kirika was currently lying peacefully on Hisui's chest, fallen asleep.

Of course, this was not the aftermath. Kirika had suddenly fainted before she could make contact with Hisui's lips.

The reason was unknown.

Probably because the perfume's effects were too strong... As well as fatigue.

Academics, the student council's activities, Hisui's request, everything combined with her uncompromising personality probably resulted in Kirika's sleep deprivation.

"Really... I'm very sorry."

Hisui took care not to rouse Kirika and quietly escaped. He opened the window for ventilation.

The fresh air rushing into the room finally brought Hisui's body back to normal. The unbearable pain in his lower body finally subsided.

Although he wanted to escape the scene before the sleeping beauty woke up, Hisui felt that he could not leave her disheveled clothing alone.

If he left without doing anything, he would suffer divine retribution.

"...This isn't sexual harassment. Please forgive me."

Muttering to himself in search of excuses, Hisui helped Kirika arrange her mussed hair and gently covered her in a blanket.

Upon further examination, Hisui could not help but admit that she was actually the most feminine out of this bunch of girls.

Her slightly older age probably factored in, Kirika possessed a certain charm that Rushella and Mei lacked.

To be honest, Hisui was that close to crossing the line just now.

"...I guess I'm really wasting a precious opportunity."

Just as Hisui sighed, someone barged into the room without knocking.

"Say, it's about time to go home... Hey, what are you doing!?"

Crashing through the door, Rushella suddenly pointed in his direction.

Mei and Eruru followed behind her.

"Hey hey... Hi-kun... What's going on!? I reluctantly allowed you two to have some alone time in a room, why is your shirt wide open...?"

Mei's eyes burned with hostility... Rather, it was murderous intent.

When her murderous intent reached a maximum, lasers would shoot out of her eyes. This was not a metaphor. Hisui knew.

"Could it be... This was what you intended from the start?"

Kaclick. Eruru's dainty hand was holding a heavy handgun.

Although Hisui was always baffled by where she pulled the gun out every time, he knew quite well the accuracy and power of her gunshots.

"Wait up, calm down, all of you... I-It's not what you think!"

"The two of you alone for roughly half an hour... Well, that's totally enough for one round, right?"

"Why is Uno-senpai asleep on the bed...?"

The three girls approached in a highly intimidating manner.

Probably woken up by the surrounding horrifying atmosphere, Kirika rubbed her eyes and sat up.

"Hmm, what happened...?"

"Oh, what perfect timing for you to wake up! H-Hurry and explain! Tell them this was just a prank you played, Senpai!"

While pleading to the witness, Hisui accidentally stared at Kirika's chest.

Indeed, her chest exactly.

Before putting Plan C into motion, Kirika had unbuttoned her blouse to reveal the light purple bra, which was a daring choice of color for her.

If only that was all.

However, even though that was not totally fine, it was not like Hisui had not seen bras many times already.

But because the bra was pushed slightly out of position when she sat up, it could no longer cover her breasts properly and almost revealed them completely.

Feeling Hisui's gaze, Kirika also looked down at her chest.

Fortunately, the most critical spots were not exposed, but certain light pink and circular outlines were already on the verge of entering into view.

Tottering on the thin line between exposure and non-exposure, the view was even more provocative.

Without exception, any male would focus his gaze in this kind of situation, desperately trying to catch a glimpse of what lay beneath.

Yes, Hisui was staring intently.

Then their gazes met.

Kirika's face turned increasingly red.

Next, the female trio behind Hisui also went red for a different reason.

With a witch in front and monsters behind, Hisui was caught in the middle. Confronted with the sight of Kirika's chest that he could not tear his eyes off from, Hisui offered his honest opinion in a hollow voice.

"Beautiful breasts, perfectly sized."

Those became his last words.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!"

Kirika screamed shrilly.

Tearfully, she burrowed beneath her blanket while another scream sounded from beside her.

"No, wait! This is a misunderstanding..."

"You're noisy, so shut up!"

"Hi-kun... Would you mind dying once?"

"You need to be shot between the legs."

Several minutes later, Rushella and the girls started on their way home.

Kirika remained shut in her room, so Welfica had to see their guests off in her granddaughter's place.

"...He's still young. Why not show him some mercy this once?"

The old lady advised affectionately. On the other hand, Rushella and the girls bowed and bid their farewells expressionlessly.

Four visitors had arrived but only three took their leave.

In Rushella's hands were the remains of a completely pummeled youth... Rather, it was a body resembling a certain someone, being dragged gruffly behind her. Who could it be? No passerby could tell.

Chapter 3 - Doppelganger

"Why must we go to school so early in the morning!?"

"Stop making such a fuss. You're partly to blame too."

Early in the morning, Hisui and Rushella were rubbing their sleepy eyes while hurrying to school.

There was still a lot of time before class started but the two of them had left home very early and come to school.

To help Kirika.

After the incident in her room, Hisui had sent her a letter of apology by text message... But she did not reply.

He had visited the student council office to apologize in person, but Kirika turned her face away and ignored him.

Speaking of which, weren't you the one who pushed me down first... The truth accidentally slipped out of Hisui's mouth, causing Kirika to slap him with a blush, making matters worse.

Apparently, her sanity had been stolen by the scented candle and she was quite bothered by it.

Perhaps she actually had no idea about the scent's true purpose and simply wanted to spend time together, just the two of them in a room...
Drinking tea.

Hisui did not have anyone whom he could discuss with for advice. Racking his brains, he still had no idea what to do. In the end, Kirika sent him a text message last night on her own.

I have something I want your help with tomorrow. Come to school at seven sharp.

Naturally, Hisui agreed readily. Hence, he arrived early at school today.

He could have let Rushella continue sleeping, but going out and leaving her behind at home would definitely get him a noisy earful after the fact. Thus he had no choice but to wake her up early to set off to school together.

"Ooh~... So sleepy... I didn't drink enough blood either..."

"Stop talking, the one who drinks from my neck nonstop the minute she opened her eyes."

"Fool, that position was no good at all! I knew it, nothing beats lying on top of you while you're sleeping, having a good long look at your sleeping face, rubbing your cheeks, then blowing into your ear, finally drinking your blood while hugging tightly!"

"What the heck did you do to me...?"

Usually, Hisui awoke to the pain of fangs sinking into his skin. Anything before that was unknown to him.

Deducing from what Rushella just said, she probably toys with him thoroughly before biting him.

"Recently, I keep dreaming of something soft pressing against my face, rubbing away, almost suffocating me. Is that because of you?"

"Hmph, is that the kind of dream you had? Speaking of which, I always feel something hard against my leg when hugging you, is this related?"

"Sorry, just forget about it. I don't want to talk about this."

"Why!? It feels like it gets bigger the more I touch it..."

"Stop talking about it... Please stop..."

Red in the face, Hisui silently went through the school gates.

The school yard was empty. Recently, club activities had entered a seasonal low and there were no students doing morning training in the sports ground.

But Hisui saw a familiar figure and walked over there.

"Eh, Class Rep...?"

"Kujou-kun..."

Dressed in gym clothes, Reina was in a corner of the school yard.

"What are you doing here so early? Could it be that you're getting up early to practice for the relay race?"

"Yes... I'm the final leg, after all. I haven't been running lately, so I need to get back into shape as quickly as possible..."

Reina looked down without much confidence.

Being devoted to training was a good thing. And this sort of responsible mindset was very much in line with her personality—But somehow, Hisui felt that something was not right.

Since she did not belong to the track and field club, why was she so intent on the sports festival's relay race?

"Hmm, that's wonderful spirit. Why don't you learn from her!?"

"Spare me. By the way, Class Rep, you don't need to push yourself so hard. No one will blame you even if we lose. I won't let them either."

Hisui's words made Reina blush.

But she still continued to look down, like the time when she decided to be the final leg.

"Yes, but after all, I was selected... I haven't really gone running seriously ever since middle school, so I do need some last-minute practice at least."

"You've been participating normally in PE class. So it's not some kind of physical ailment, right? Could it be mental trauma?"

As soon as he spoke, Hisui realized he had misspoken.

Because Reina instantly went expressionless and bit her lip with her head bowed.

In order to relieve the heavy atmosphere, Hisui changed the subject.

"Well, if anything, a relay is everyone's responsibility. In a class like ours, no matter how hard you try, Class Rep, if this girl messes up before passing the baton to you, all your efforts could end up wasted."

"What did you say!?"

Hisui pointing the finger at her caused Rushella to scream with displeasure.

But she apparently did not understand the meaning of his words.

"...What is a 'baton'?"

She was asking seriously.

"Eh, this kind of basic question? What did you think the relay race was about?"

"Everyone running in sequence as decided!"

"Yes, that's not a wrong description, but you're definitely mistaken on one point. In a relay race, everyone is linked by the baton. You basically hold a small rod while running then pass it to the next person, this goes on repeatedly. Finally, when you pass the baton to Class Rep and she finishes running, then the race ends."

"...In other words, if I pass this parasol to her instead of the baton, that's against the rules!?"

"Yeah, that's right. I feel like you're really gonna do that, so please pay more attention. If you do something like that, there's no way I can cover for you."

Hearing Hisui's mutters, Rushella frantically threw her schoolbag to the ground.

"Grrrrr... In that case, to prevent making a mistake during the race, I must practice more! Class Rep, help me!"

"Eh, ah, okay... Passing the baton... That's a crucial part."

"Very well, let us not dally. Hisui, I have something urgent now to do!"

Like a super busy person, Rushella started to put Kirika's light-blocking agent on her body.

Then she even sprayed it on her hair to further improve the sunlight resistance.

Hisui had already told Reina that Rushella had a frail constitution that was weak towards sunlight, so Reina did not find her behavior strange.

However, just when Rushella was about to strip and change into gym clothes, Reina finally spoke up to stop her.

"W-W-Wait up, Draculea-san... Your clothes...!"

"Hmm?"

Her uniform top was already completely unbuttoned. Rushella was about to unbuckle her belt and paused in response.

The unexpected series of high-speed undressing movements took place before Hisui's eyes throughout the entire process. At this moment, Rushella and Hisui met gazes.

Naturally, her face went red instantly.

"Y-Y-Y-You jerk, what are you looking at!?"

"No, it's you who suddenly stripped..."

Just as Rushella swung her fist as usual, her skirt slid down.

"Wah, that's so bold!"

"I told you not to look——!!"

The second punch struck Hisui in the chin, flooring him face up.

The moment he fell down, a dazzling bit of white fabric seemed to have entered his view. Knowing that a third punch was unavoidable if he spoke up, Hisui chose to remain silent.

Several minutes later, Rushella was all changed by the time Hisui stood up.

"...So, you want to practice?"

"That's right, victory is in my hands!"

"...Yeah, okay, remember the rules then. So, Class Rep... I'll leave her... with you? I still have something else to do."



"Yes, okay. Then first of all... Let's begin with some warmups?"

"Okay, watch me!"

Then casting Hisui to the back of her mind, Rushella focused on morning training.

Despite the unease in his mind, Hisui still departed after some hesitation.

Previously, Rushella had insisted on sitting out of all outdoor PE classes, but now with Kirika's help, perhaps she could participate henceforth.

In any case, with Reina watching her, it should be fine.

Hisui could not help but smile while heading towards Kirika's rendezvous point.

The rendezvous point was in a corner of the school... The gym equipment storeroom.

It was a separate building from the classroom block. Apart from PE class, Hisui almost never went there.

"Finally here."

Arms crossed, Kirika was waiting at the storeroom's entrance.

Although Hisui was a little late, the time was still much earlier than when he usually came to school.

"Where's Rushella-san? Why are you alone?"

"She's training for the relay race. There's a capable girl looking after her, so it should be fine."

"I see... Very well."

"So, what do you need me for, Senpai?"

"I need your help with confirming the equipment for the sports festival. Counting tents, hurdles and the like. These will be taken out to place during first period today, so they need to be checked as soon as possible."

"Uh... But wouldn't it have been better to check them two days in advance?"

"...There were other things to busy with. Due to the recent shock I suffered, I couldn't concentrate when working."

Saying that, Kirika glared at him. Hisui could only avert his gaze.

Continuing the subject further would be asking for trouble.

"So, let's go in..."

"Ah, this should be locked..."

Kirika took out a set of keys she had borrowed from the staff room but it turned out to be useless. Because in actual fact, the door was not locked.

"Eh, it's open?"

"How odd..."

"Let's go in first."

Unconcerned, Hisui entered the storeroom first.

As expected, it was filled with a musty smell. Furthermore, it was dark and difficult to see the situation inside.

"I don't think there's a light here..."

"Yes. Do you know the rough layout here?"

"I do, but it'd be bad if we get locked in here."

"...Don't get any strange ideas, okay?"

Kirika walked to his side and said warily.

Did she misunderstand something about him?

Clearly, he was the one who needed to be careful around others.

What if she were to light up some weird scent and push him down?

"No, not me... It's not like I'm Sudou."

"For me... In this kind of place... I would still be reluctant... A hotel feels so immoral... Raising criticisms about upbringing... A-After that happened, my own room does not seem to be too... In the end, Kujou-kun's room would be best, I suppose...?"

Hisui seemed to be seriously misunderstood. Her thoughts were all confined in a certain direction.

Venturing deeper into the storeroom, Hisui decided to ignore the girl who was fiddling with her fingers, immersed in her delusions.

Equipment like tents should be there.

"Uh, is this it?"

In a corner of the storeroom, the metal frames for putting up tents were leaning against the wall.

Another important component, the fabric that could be said to be the tent itself, was folded and kept on a shelf next to them.

"Let's move these outside before counting them carefully?"

"Yes, since they will be put up soon, we should move them out first."

Kirika agreed. Hence, Hisui picked up a large roll of fabric.

Although it was not as heavy as the tent frame, the heavy sailcloth was still not easy to carry in his arms.

Hugging the fabric, Hisui left the room and threw it outside the storeroom.

"...Hmm?"

Throwing down the sailcloth, only then did Hisui notice.

It was damaged.

The sturdy sailcloth was not supposed to rip or tear under normal conditions, but right now, it was all torn up.

"What happened... A prank!?"

Hisui spread the sailcloth out to inspect the damage.

Behind him, still in the storeroom, Kirika called out in alarm.

"...Who is there!?"

Sensing danger, Hisui returned to the storeroom to look out.

Previously, when he entered, he had not sensed anyone... Was Kirika mistaken?

Inside the dim and vast room, if anyone hid on purpose, it would be difficult to find them.

Before Kirika unlocked the door, someone had definitely visited.

Hisui could not let Kirika handle things alone, so he went inside.

At the same time, someone cried out "Kyah!" lightly.

It was Kirika.

A figure collided into her and sent her falling.

"What are you doing here!?"

Hisui hastily rushed forward and supported Kirika before she fell.

"Wait!"

While stabilizing Kirika, Hisui reached out to grab the intruder in the storeroom.

What he touched was an arm even more slender and delicate than his.

Evidently a girl, she was also wearing the school uniform. The arm grabbed by Hisui was also holding a boxcutter, with a shred of sailcloth on the blade. Clearly the tent vandal was her.

"Hey...!"

Just as Hisui was about to subdue her, the person looked back.

Hisui was instantly stunned.

The girl's uniform was not a disguise, rather, it was perfectly natural.

She was student in this school.

And someone he recognized.

The person he had caught was Reina.

"...Why!?"

Faced with his questioning, she remained expressionless—No, a light grin was surfaced in the corner of her lips.

Unlike the gentle and moving smile she usually displayed in the classroom, it was treacherous expression of hidden malevolence.

The unexpected development made Hisui frozen on the spot.

Using this chance, Reina shook off Hisui's arm and fled.

"Wait..."

Kirika was going to chase after her, but on second thought, knowing who the culprit was already, there was probably no need to pursue relentlessly.

"Ah, Senpai, that..."

"I am fine..."

Kirika became shy and escaped from Hisui's arms. She looked fine.

"What was with that student...?"

"You saw her face?"

"I did... I see her in regularly held class committee. She is your class' representative, right? Why was she hiding in the storeroom and even cutting up the tent?"

"This..."

Hisui wanted to deny.

She was not someone who did such things. Neither was there any motive.

But he could not deny.

After all, here were two eyewitnesses. The facts were undeniable.

"Seriously... What is she thinking? Anyway, I should report to the teachers first..."

"Ah, wait a sec..."

Hisui was just about to dissuade Kirika when a familiar voice interrupted them.

"What are you two doing stuck so close together!?"

The new arrival was standing with one hand on her waist while the other hand pointed at them. Naturally, it was Rushella.

Having finished her morning training, random sweat drops still glistened on her skin. This additional layer of healthy color added to give a different charm from usual.

"In this deserted place, leaning so close together... What are you doing!?"

"N-Nothing much..."

Normally, Kirika would have argued back harshly, but currently, her voice was almost inaudible.

Not only that, she was looking down, fidgeting with her fingers, making furtive glances at Hisui to seek his help.

"Hmph, that Mei aside, all these girls I can't be careless with. Hisui, do you just take anyone who throws herself at you!?"

"A boy of my age will always welcome girls, okay... Anyway, I've got something to ask you..."

Hisui put on a serious expression to ask about an important matter.

But the answer soon came out on its own.

"What's the matter, Draculea-san? Eh, Kujou-kun is here too... You said just now that you had something to do, did you mean making preparations here?"

Reina tilted her head adorably as she asked.

Due to the physical exertion, she was covered in sweat as well, using a towel hanging on her neck to wipe her forehead.

"Class Rep..."

"You came at the right moment!"

Before Hisui could speak, Kirika had already rushed forward to interrogate Reina.

"What is the meaning of this!? Why did you do that!?"

She pointed at the shredded remains of the tent.

However, Reina seemed perplexed.

"Excuse me, Senpai, what did I do...?"

"That's right, what are you accusing her of doing!?"

Rushella stepped forward to shield Reina. Kirika clicked her tongue in annoyance and continued to question with righteous authority.

"Silence, you! Let me hear your reasons first! If the situation turns out to be serious, it must be dealt with strictly..."

"Hold on, Senpai."

Hisui went up and pulled Kirika's hand.

"What!? Didn't you see the culprit's face clearly too!?"

"Yes, I did see. By the way, Rushella, how did practice go with you two?"

Suddenly asked, Rushella did not know how to answer instantly.

But she soon puffed out her voluptuous chest and proudly answered:

"Yes, the baton passing was perfect! You should look forward to my magnificent performance in the real event!"

"That's wonderful. Then Class Rep was teaching you all this time, right?"

"How rude, I was simply accompanying her, okay!?"

Rushella remained arrogant as ever.

Hisui nodded as though figuring out something.

"Hey... What are you asking about? Shouldn't we clear up that matter with her first..."

"Senpai, you saw as well, right? The culprit dressed in uniform just now..."

"Of course... Eh, ah....!"

Only now did Kirika carefully examine Reina from head to foot.

Reina before her eyes... was wearing gym clothes.

No matter how you looked, she had been wearing these clothes and exercised for quite a while.

More importantly, Rushella served as her proof of absence.

On further thought, she was clearly doing morning training on the track far out. Coming here to hide in the storeroom before him was completely impossible.

"...What's going on?"

"I would like to know too."

Hisui and Kirika looked at each other.

Rushella and Reina watched them in bafflement.

"...Why are these two talking weirdly all this time?"

"No idea..."

The four of them were respectively confounded.

Even when class started, they still had not solved the mystery.

"...Consequently, my Supernatural Investigations Club will be responsible for unraveling this mystery!"

After school in the empty classroom that served as their base of operations as usual, the "club president" Rushella was announcing at the lectern.

However, the remaining "members" did not share her enthusiasm and were occupied with their own thoughts.

"No, speaking of which, this is totally none of our concern, right? There are backup tents anyway, it's not like it'll affect the sports festival from being held, right?"

Mei was completely unmotivated.

She had already heard from Hisui roughly what happened during morning practice.

Since Kirika had reported to the teachers, the homeroom teacher had also mentioned during homeroom.

"That's not the issue! My classmate is under suspicions, okay!?"

"Granted that may be... But she has an alibi, right?"

"...Yes."

Sitting on the right side, Hisui nodded.

As for spotting Reina, Hisui and Kirika had withheld that detail from the school.

Since both of them saw her, it was definitely not illusion. But Reina also had absolute unshakable proof of absence.

"Besides, what motive does Class Rep have? A model student who is devoted to morning training, why would she do something that would wreck her everyday efforts in an instant?"

Mei sought agreement from Hisui but Hisui did not nod.

The hardworking and persevering girl could not possibly have done this. He knew very well.

But he felt quite concerned about the gloom on her face when she was selected as the final leg for the relay race.

"No matter what, if this is left alone, the rare sports festival is in danger of being suspended! For the sake of letting the world witness my magnificent running form, the culprit must be apprehended!"

"Such a pain. Besides, isn't it just a prank? As long as there are enough tents, surely the sports festival won't be suspended..."

"Not necessarily. This morning, this was received in the school mailbox."

Sitting to Hisui's left, Kirika spoke gloomily.

She stood up and raised an inconspicuous sheet of A4 paper to show everyone.

Written in blood red cursive script was a concise warning.

Stop the sports festival now. Or else the school will be harmed.

Almost filling up the entire page, the words displayed heavy pressure, instilling terror in the reader.

Although anyone could have written this kind of threatening letter, due to the content, Kirika's expression was very grave.

"If all that happened was this sheet of paper, the school would have treated it as purely a prank, but combined with the tent matter... Just to be safe, the school has contacted the police as well. Currently speaking, the school will increase security to make sure the sports festival is held as planned, but if anything else happens, it could very well be suspended."

"Grrrrr! Unacceptable! The villainous culprit must be caught now and taught a lesson!"

"Probably very soon."

The unexpected voice drew everyone's attention to a corner of the classroom.

The speaker was Eruru, who had been typing away on her computer's keyboard, always distancing herself from all the noise of the other club members.

"This threatening letter is the original, right? Also, the words are written instead of typed, it is most likely the culprit's handwriting."

"Yes, I borrowed it from the staff room."

"May I borrow it for a look?"

Kirika nodded and handed the threatening letter to Eruru.

Eruru compared back and forth between the paper and her screen, tapping rapidly on her keyboard.

"What are you doing?"

Interested, Hisui stared at the screen from behind her. Rushella and the girls also followed over. Everyone gathered around Eruru.

"Simple handwriting examination. Comparing handwriting samples gathered from different people with the writing on this threatening letter, clues can be gathered to some degree. Although it is not enough to serve as evidence, that type of precise result would best require a professional, this method could still serve to guide us to a certain extent."

"Huh... Please stop playing police. Whose handwriting are you comparing with? It's not like you have every possible suspect from school, right? Or maybe you have a hunch already?"

"I am not the one who discovered the clue. It was you and Uno-senpai."

Hisui and Kirika were stunned.

At the same time, Eruru's hands also stopped.

"The comparison matches. Even for amateur eyes, it is unmistakable. This is the person who wrote this threatening letter."

Eruru pointed at the screen while she spoke.

Instead of a person's face, there were enlarged words.

The picture came from someone's handwriting sample and really looked quite similar to the cursive script on the threatening letter.

"Although the script style is different, if the same person wrote it, there will still be many similarities. The sample I gathered came from that person's normal script. If writing maliciously in cursive... It should probably look like this threatening letter's style."

"Stop holding back the answer. What's displayed on the computer is..."

"Sera-san's handwriting. I collected it from the notes she took during morning lessons. It is virtually certain that this threatening letter was written by her hand."

A grave silence followed.

Hisui and Kirika's face were stiff while Mei looked to be in disbelief. Floating on the side casually without any worries, Touko continued to display a pure and innocent yet adorably vacant expression.

Only Rushella firmly denied the analysis results.

"I already said it can't be the class representative! You must be wrong! Besides, she was training together with me all morning!?"

"I did not say that the culprit was the Sera-san who was training together with you."

"Ha!? What nonsense are you talking about!?"

Eruru did not bother with Rushella's overbearing indignation and turned towards Hisui behind her.

"Since you saw her yourself, surely you must have some ideas, right? Or did you recognize the wrong person at the time, or someone went through an elaborate disguise?"

"...Probably not. Senpai and I definitely saw Class Rep herself. And likewise, the one who practiced with Rushella was Class Rep herself too."

"Incomprehensible! What rubbish are you all talking about!?"

"Wait, Kujou-kun, could what we saw be...!"

Kirika exclaimed in surprise.

Hisui nodded and gave the answer.

"Doppelganger, I'm pretty sure of it."

This famous cryptid—No, if anything, the term "phenomenon" would be more apt. Everyone present had heard of it before.

A doppelganger was another self that was completely identical in appearance to the original person.

The same person appearing in different places at the same time.

The alibi provided by Rushella, Hisui and Kirika's eyewitness account, the threatening letter's handwriting, Reina's personality—This phenomenon was the only explanation that could resolve all the contradictory elements of the incident.

"There are several theories on the relationship between doppelgangers and the original. Normally speaking, they are not on good terms with their originals. Death upon mutual encounter, with one person representing good while the other represents evil—In any case, having two selves pop up is truly a troublesome thing."

Eruru closed her computer and shrugged.

It looked like the current matter required her participation in the investigation.

"I understand it more now. In other words, the doppelganger damaged the tent and sent the threatening letter to the school while the other one is Class Rep herself!?"

"Although it is currently unclear which one can be considered the real person... Yes, you are correct."

"Why? Why would the doppelganger do bad things!?"

"Then you will need to ask them yourself. Despite identical appearances, their minds are two separate people. So, Kariya, what now? What can we do?"

Hisui asked for a concrete solution.

But Eruru shook her head coldly.

"Even the Supernatural Investigations Section itself does not have a unified policy towards doppelgangers. In this regard, they are even more troublesome to deal with than vampires. Furthermore, there are still many mysteries related to how doppelgangers come about and the precise details in the phenomena. Theories passed down since antiquity also have numerous variations. The term 'doppelganger' is just an umbrella for a variety of similar phenomena involving 'another self.' Hence, the cases must be approached individually and handled with practicality."

"Neither this nor that, so what on earth should we do? All we can do is wait for the class rep's doppelganger to do bad things?"

Mei grumbled and voiced her opinion.

Just as no one could answer her, a laugh of mockery was heard from the classroom's backdoor.

"My, the amateurs have no choice but to surrender, right?"

Everyone looked back.

It was Rangetsu.

Leaning against the sliding door, arms crossed, she scoffed.

"I heard everything. Ultimately, that's all a half-baked club like yours is capable of. 'Supernatural Investigations Club'... That's the name, right? I can totally understand your wish to copy us, but don't you know it's very annoying if you rush about with no idea what you're doing?"

Rangetsu's words did not disguise her hostility at all.

The members of the club all decided to ignore her.

"Hmm, although it's a troublesome enemy, we can't sit back and ignore. Anyway, let's split up and catch her!"

Hearing Rushella giving orders, the other members nodded and accepted.

"That's right, perhaps we might find something useful in our search."

"I don't mind at all as long as I get to team up with Hi-kun, okay?"

"...After all, I have no wish for the sports festival to be suspended. As the student council vice-president, this is part of my duty."

"In any case, I will check the Supernatural Investigations Section's database to review past cases."

"Let me help as well~"

When Touko raised her hand to sum up, Rangetsu exploded.

Rushing violently into the classroom, she roared:

"Hey! Don't just go ignoring others so readily! Have any of you heard what I said!?"

The five of them plus a ghost distanced themselves from the glaring Rangetsu, huddling in a circle to discuss how to react.

"Hey, that wolf girl is butting in again... She said she had been listening to our discussion, but I totally didn't sense her presence. She's even more like a ghost than Touko-san."

"Don't police have jobs to do...?"

"For the sake of the police's reputation, I must clarify that she is a special exception. Please do not get biased about all the other cops who work seriously in the country."

"...By the way, aren't outsiders forbidden from entering school on principle? Isn't this illegal trespassing?"

"Should we call the police...? Touko-san, without letting her notice, could you quietly use telekinesis to dial a number?"

"Yes, I'll try!"

Listening to Kirika's instructions, Touko focused her mind to unleash paranormal powers. At this moment, Rangetsu barged her way into the middle of their circle.

"Hey what is with you all!? Also, I. AM. THE POLICE! Look, here's my police badge even!"

"Sigh, what the heck... Kariya, could you help show her the way out, she's your colleague, right?"

"Please do not compare me to her. Besides, Oogami-san, why are you here?"

Eruru asked her with clear displeasure.

Rangetsu answered, equally displeased.

"Didn't the school call the police regarding the threatening letter? After all, with so many supernatural creatures in this school, I came over just in case. Furthermore, I have something to report to you all."

"Report...? What is it?"

Rangetsu ignored Eruru's question and picked up the threatening letter from her desk.

She brought it up to her face and sniffed it, then showed an expression of certainty.

"I knew it."

"You smell something?"

"That wording of yours pissed me off. Well whatever, with this I am certain. The true identity of the doppelganger you people talked about, shall I reveal it?"

"Is it related to the confiscated items that had gone missing, what you mentioned last time?"

Hisui figured out what she was about to say and spoke up before her.

Although it was just a half-baked hunch, Rangetsu was clearly shaken in response. Hisui's stab in the dark was apparently right on target.

"H-How did you know...?"

"Oh, you came over on purpose to talk about that, so I was wondering if this time is related as well."

"What were you able to find out from the magic guild where that substance came from?"

Apparently grasping the situation vaguely, Eruru asked calmly.

Everyone else made a look that seemed to say "stop posing around and tell us honestly."

Glared at by six pairs of eyes, Rangetsu confessed reluctantly.

"...Just as you guessed. The effect of that confiscated drug is to artificially produce the doppelganger phenomenon. Without needing someone to drink it, all it takes is a sniff of the gas to take effect. Being too volatile and evaporating too easily is its drawback."

"Wait, you said it artificially produces the doppelganger phenomenon...?"

"Yes. That said, there are all sorts of strange explanations for the doppelganger phenomenon itself. For example, clones, spirit body separation, other selves from different timelines, illusions caused by brain damage. Ultimately, this doppelganger is just their theory."

"I don't need you to write a manual, okay... After breathing in that missing drug, what happens to a person?"

"Part of the person's soul leaves the body, producing the doppelganger. A so-called doppelganger is composed by the spiritual substance called ectoplasm, exhibiting both ghostly and human traits. To a certain extent, it can interfere with solid objects, yet suddenly vanish like a ghost on occasion... A typical doppelganger."

"This typical kind is truly troublesome. Then what is the personality of the produced doppelganger?"

"Normally speaking, everyone suppresses a negative personality under the surface—In other words, everyone possesses an ugly side to them. That personality is materialized and separated from the main body."

"Does that mean that the more proper someone behaves, the more evil the doppelganger...!"

With that, Reina's doppelganger's actions could be easily understood.

As expected... she really did not want to be the final leg for the relay.

But being kindhearted and strictly adherent to rules, Reina hid this at the bottom of her heart.

Then her other self, the one separated from her, acted in accordance with her true wish.

"...How long does that drug last for?"

"No particular time limit. But the main body will gradually grow weak and die. The limit is roughly a week. Once the main body is gone, the doppelganger will also disappear in the end. If you don't want a death, the doppelganger must be found as soon as possible so that they can be merged back into one. But the problem is that the clone won't behave obediently, so who knows what other trouble might arise?"

"..."

Hisui frowned deeply and looked up towards the sky.

Although not to the point of absolute evil... Reina's doppelganger's actions were already a thin line from criminal activity. Even if the Supernatural Investigations Section already grasped the truth of the matter, if the crimes came to light, the main body—Reina herself—would most likely be punished.

Furthermore...

"The lost item still hasn't been found, right?"

"We are still devoting full effort to searching. Although the drug's quantity is small, there is probably still enough to create a number of doppelgangers. To prevent further crimes, of course we will try our best to investigate... Currently, the unresolved issue at hand is the school's incident. So like I said, you few should not interfere."

"That's not wrong... But your side's manpower is limited, right? We're still willing to help out, you know?"

"That's right! Let the Supernatural Investigations Club assist you under my command!"

Rushella stepped forward resolutely.

But Rangetsu scoffed.

"I've not fallen so low as to seek help from a vampire. Let's end the amateurish games here. Why don't you hurry home and lie in your coffin?"

"What did you say!?"

Throwing insults, Rushella and Rangetsu began a dispute.

Hisui frantically intervened to prevent a battle from erupting here.

"What are you doing!? Let me personally censure this ignorant bitch...!"

"Stop it now, none of us are adult yet. Well, although I don't know how old you actually are."

"Why are you talking like that as well!? I shall handle my own school affairs...!"

"Well said... I believe that if you're trying to search inside the school, wouldn't it be more convenient for students to do so?"

Hisui coldly looked at Rangetsu.

"W-What? A-Although I'm not familiar with the interior of the school..."

Hisui deliberately ignored the opening shown by Rangetsu and secretly winked to the other club members.

First to pick up on Hisui's gaze was Mei.

"That's so true~ Police trying to interfere in school would take a lot of work. If I were a detective, I'd recruit collaborators from within first."

"Agreed. A school is essentially a sealed, miniature society. I specifically took on the guise of a student to work more efficiently in this place... It is truly regrettable that someone else from the Supernatural Investigations Section does not understand this principle. Oh well, to each their own, though it is hard for me to agree."

Eruru shrugged as though worrying for her colleague.

"Uh, I didn't say... I'm not seeking help completely..."

Rangetsu began to compromise in a quiet voice.

Naturally, everyone heard her, but no one responded.

"Logically speaking, from the student council's position, I would like to assist even more than the Supernatural Investigations Club... But it cannot be helped. After all, I am the students' representative, helping resolve school problems is only natural. Even seeking help from the police would not be strange... Since they find us a hindrance, it cannot be helped."

Kirika expressed her stance to respect Rangetsu's intentions.

Hearing her flawless speech, Rangetsu's face began to perspire uncomfortably.

"No, umm... It's not like... there's much hindrance... Ah, isn't there something called civic responsibility, right..."

"I am a ghost so I can investigate various places without worrying about danger. But since I'm a hindrance, forget it. Originally, a ghost could be so useful..."

Touko spoke with forlornness.

Indeed, she was not afraid of dangerous tasks.

Because she was already dead.

"...No, umm... I-If you all want to help that much... It's also okay? Treat it as practical experience? What I mean is, go ahead and try? Right, everything is about experience..."

Halfway through, Rangetsu found everyone staring at her with icy cold gazes.

Cough, she cleared her throat and bowed her head deeply.

".....Please help."

"By this point, what are you talking about?"

"How totally lame! After saying all that in the beginning."

"Aren't you embarrassed?"

"The police force's shame."

"I don't wanna be like that when I grow up."

"In her shoes, I'd die from shame. Oh well, I'm dead already, however."

With Touko summing up with black humor, Rangetsu began to scream, almost about to cry.

"What on earth, you're ganging up on me!? I'm already bowing down to you all!"

"Then show us your sincerity."

"Sincerity... What do you mean by that?"

"Stick out your hand."

"...?"

Despite feeling perplexed, Rangetsu presented her palm towards Hisui.

Then a coin fell into her hand.

"...What is the meaning of this?"

"Get me a drink."

"Why are you treating me as an errand girl!?"

Rangetsu angrily threw the coin into the ground.

Her anger was hardly surprising.

"Ah, what the heck! What's wrong with asking you to buy a drink?"

"Don't treat me like a fool! Can't you buy it yourself!?"

"No, but I just think you'll be super fast."

"Well, doing the 100m dash in nine seconds is totally possible... Hey! You're still treating me like a total errand girl!"

Rangetsu howled, so infuriated her shoulders shook.

Hisui picked up the coin with impatience.

"Fine, I'll go myself. Oh, what does everyone else want? I might as well get everything along the way."

Hearing his altruistic suggestion, Rushella stepped forward.

"Hold it, Hisui. It's better if I go buy drinks for you all. As someone of high stature, it is necessary to display generosity from time to time. Allow me to

serve as a role model to show you the difference between my race and those werewolves!"

Giggling, Rushella made no effort to hide the mockery in her tone of voice.

Rangetsu gnashed her teeth in response but Rushella pretended not to see.

"Wait. It's just buying drinks, don't talk like everyone owes you. Why don't I go instead? Since it's still daytime, I'm still the strongest until sunset, right? Unlike a certain skinny bones tomboy."

Mei threw Rangetsu a glance and stepped forward.

She proudly puffed out her bountiful bosom, causing Rangetsu's anger to reach new heights.

"Hold on, what is required in this situation is not strength but wealth. I have no wish to make the entire police force or even all the civil servants suffer despise due to a single miser. Allow me to treat everyone and buy the drinks."

Eruru took out a long purse that looked like it was bulging with cash and stepped forward.

She did not even look at Rangetsu.

"Wait up, no matter how much money you have, upon my pride as a senior, how could I allow an underclassman to buy drinks for me? Let me go as an elder. Oh well, although there do exist useless members of society among those who are older."

Kirika looked at Rangetsu with eyes of pity while taking a step forward.

"No no, speaking of age, I should be eldest, right? Let the big sister do this! Using my paranormal powers, I can just shake the vending machine without spending any money! Despite how I may look, at least it's better than someone who contributes nothing, wasting the world's resources, right?"

Touko pointed at Rangetsu, making a strong statement.

Finally, Rangetsu exploded, unable to tolerate anymore.

"...That's going too far!! Fine fine, I'll go buy a few cans of damn juice!!!"

In the end, all six members of Hisui's group reached out towards Rangetsu in concert and spoke in perfect unison:

" " " " " "Please go." " " " " " "

"Sheesh, what the heck!"

Rangetsu threw the guest indoor sandals to the ground and even stomped on them.

Her anger seemed to have blown a fuse, even she probably was no longer clear on what she was doing.

As Rangetsu rushed into the hallway, entering a startup pose like a sprinter, no, it was virtually like a beast getting ready to accelerate on all fours.

"Don't underestimate a werewolf's speed! I'll get there in the blink of an eye, bringing back the purchases faster than anyone!!"

"Oh, I'd like a mineral water."



"Gimme strawberry milk!"

"I want a soda~"

"Please get me a coffee, no milk or sugar."

"I would like some tea. Hot, not cold please."

"Tea please~"

Even the ghost who did not drink tea placed her order nonchalantly.

But Rangetsu did not notice. After hearing the orders, she sped off down the hallway like a rocket.

A whirlwind was kicked up in the surroundings, causing the girls to hastily hold down their skirts.

The rapid charge almost made one worry for the integrity of the floorboards. Finally, Rangetsu disappeared into the other side of the classroom block.

"..Well then, let us adjourn for today. Everyone, please leave before that person returns. Do not let her discover you. Now that the Supernatural Investigations Section is mobilized, that person's presence is irrelevant."

"Are you a demon?"

Hisui felt that Eruru was going a bit far, but she ignored his remark.

"This will teach her a lesson. After all, she will be back. Allow me to report to everyone the doppelganger's details once I gather information. Perhaps human wave tactics might be required, so please coordinate when the time comes, everyone."

"Okay."

Then the group dispersed.

Roughly one minute later, Rangetsu returned to the deserted classroom. Naturally, the newly bought drinks became the sacrifices for her to vent her anger.

"Crap, I forgot to shop..."

That night, Hisui began to worry while standing in front of his fridge.

Although he had already had dinner with Rushella, the remaining ingredients in the fridge were not enough to make lunch for tomorrow.

For Hisui himself, eating at the cafeteria or buying from the snack shop was fine, but recently, for Rushella's sake, he had been preparing lunchboxes for the two of them.

"Drinks will also be out soon... Need to buy more."

"Yes, you go!"

"Yeah, I am planning to go... What about you?"

"I'm very busy!"

Lying on the sofa in the living room, Rushella was watching a variety show intently.

Normally, when Hisui went out she would always follow along. But apparently, she was prioritizing her entertainment this time. In comparison, the television in front of her was more important.

"...Oh well, that's less of a pain for me."

"Ah, I wanna go to school early tomorrow too! The class rep agreed already! We can't be lazy with the relay race training!"

"Oh... Sure, that's fine. Then go to bed early, okay? Sleep after this show's over, got that?"

"Yes!"

A vampire who slept and rose early without being a night owl—Definitely an endangered species, but it was probably more healthy.

Hence, Hisui changed into jeans, put on a jacket and left the house alone.

Bathed in the chilly autumn air, Hisui made his way towards a nearby twenty-four-hour supermarket.

Not wanting to spend unnecessary time on shopping, he went directly to buy the ingredients he needed for lunch tomorrow and picked up some daily necessities that had run out at home.

After buying these things and leaving the shop, he met someone unexpected.

"Eh, Kujou-kun?"

"Oh it's you, Class Rep..."

Reina was in her school uniform, standing in front of the automatic doors.

"Did you go for cram school? It's so late already, that must be tough."

"Isn't it the same for you, Kujou-kun... You're out shopping this late?"

"The princess wants a packed lunch, so her royal wishes are difficult to oppose."

Hisui smiled wryly. The two of them naturally walked side by side.

"Ah~~ Thank you for this morning, taking the trouble to accompany that girl."

"...? Oh, don't worry, it was nothing at all."

"She's probably quite unused to teamwork events. If only she'd improve a bit."

"...It'll be fine... probably? Looks like she's getting used..."

"Hopefully. Oh Class Rep, I want to ask you something."

"What?"

"Are you really okay... with the relay race?"

Although Hisui was unsure if he should mention the past, he still asked.

Perhaps he was worrying too much.

Or maybe Reina herself did not mind.

In any case, he still decided to ask her.

Due to the doppelganger's threatening letter and the tent incident, Hisui felt that the reasons stemmed from this matter, unable to be dispelled from her heart.

"No problem... It's just running at the end. Just a little bit of pressure, that's all."

"A bit...?"

Despite feeling guilty, Hisui decided to dig to the bottom of the matter.

This word made a shred of gloom flash across Reina's face.

"If you're really unwilling... Rushella would gladly swap, you know?"

"...It's fine. Reluctance cannot be considered an excuse."

"..."

"In middle school, I took part... in a relay race in the final track and field meet, as the final leg. Because my record in the club was the best prior to that... I was assigned that position."

Head bowed, Reina slowly recounted the past.

Hisui silently played the part of a loyal listener.

"But... I made a mistake when receiving the baton, dropping it. In addition, I even fell over... And ended up finishing last."

"..."

"The teammate before me kept blaming herself. But I knew clearly in my mind that it was my fault. I dropped the baton."

"This kind of problem can't be blamed on one side, right? Although as an amateur, I'm not too qualified to comment."

Even knowing that comforting words were futile, Hisui could not bring himself to do nothing.

Reina must have heard these words from others hundreds of times. She was perfectly capable of comforting herself as well.

"...Maybe. Actually, whether first place or last place, I don't really mind... After all, my love for track and field ended with middle school. My parents demanded it. They believe that track and field sports can't last a lifetime, so in order to get into a good university, the three years in high school must be spent studying hard in preparation... So it's fine. I've thrown away my sports gear already... This is actually better, I can concentrate more on studying."

"...But now that you're the final leg in a relay race, you have to stand on the track once more."

"After all, everyone has to participate... It can't be helped. This time, I won't make a mistake..."

Reina's voice grew quieter and quieter, and finally could not be heard.

Mental trauma over something trivial in the past had become for her a set of heavy shackles.

Never taken part in any club activities, Hisui probably could not understand that agony, but to her it must be an unerasable wound.

"Even in high school, you can't completely bury yourself in studying and ignore everything else. Ah, but you're already working very hard in your studies, right? Still wearing your uniform so late at night, you went to cram school, right? I think there's a new one recently opened nearby?"

"Yes, right..."

"If you stay up too late, you won't be able to get up tomorrow, you know? Morning basketball practice with Rushella must be tough for you too. Will you be able to get up?"

"No problem. I'm going to bed as soon as I get home."

"Really?"

Hisui stopped walking.

Without noticing, they had reached a deserted alley.

There were very few people out on the streets. This was only natural, born not of conscious intent.

But luck was favoring Hisui.

He did not want anyone to hear the next part of the conversation.

"So... Who the heck are you really?"

The atmosphere changed rapidly.

Reina shifted her gaze away and took a few steps back.

"What are you talking about...? I am..."

"You are Sera Reina, the class representative. Well, that's true indeed, because both of you are real, the real person. However, even though the real Class Rep might be going to cram school this late, unfortunately, there's no cram school nearby. I made it up on purpose. Also, you're training with Rushella for the relay race. So the memories are not shared after splitting into two. That's too easy to discern."

"So you suspected me already..."

Reina—her doppelganger—bowed her head and smiled.

The grin on her lips made her seem like a completely different person from usual.

The girl formed from the dark side of Reina's heart, although her appearance was identical, she was not exactly the same.

"When did you notice...?"

"Since I already know the existence of a doppelganger, how could I believe so easily without confirming which one I'm meeting? So I was skeptical from the start. As soon as I heard you talk about throwing away your sports gear, I decided to set a trap. During morning practice, Class Rep was even wearing cleats. Those couldn't have been bought just for the sake of a mere sports festival, right?"

"...I see. But I was also speaking the truth. The other me, has always been troubled by that last race. Giving up on track and field because of parents, pushed into the final leg position, all these are the truth. If you reject all this, you are also rejecting her, you know?"

"Reject? I never said anything like that."

Hisui asked in puzzlement.

He never intended to treat this person as an enemy.

He could never do that.

After all, she was the great class representative who took great care of Rushella.

"Actually, I'm not too concerned about your wish to suspend the sports festival. Although I don't want to make a big deal of things, I don't want the innocent Class Rep to take the fall either... Honestly, I'm not interested in

the sports festival and I'd rather not bother with the relay. If it'll end things peacefully, I'd rather get the sports festival canceled. After all, I don't have parents coming to watch either."

For just an instant, Hisui's eyes were filled with nostalgia.

Indeed, he had no interest in showing off in something like a sports festival to begin with. There was no point to putting in that kind of effort. After all, no one was coming to watch.

"..."

"If you really are Class Rep's dark side, then this is quite apt. If you strip down a layer of skin, aren't all humans the same? However, that would be far too difficult to get along with one another, that's why everyone wears a layer of conscience, morals and rationality as outer clothing to bind themselves. Actually, it must be painful for you like this? Then hurry and go home, return to the main body. Complement each other and reach a perfect medium."

"Don't speak as though you know everything!"

"I don't know everything. That's all the more why the two of you should sit down and talk. After all, you're the same person, right?"

Hisui still acted the same as usual.

Because he was facing Reina.

Faced with this being that could be considered a monster. Seeing his attitude, the other Reina could not help but smile wryly.

"What an interesting person you are."

"People say that from time to time."

"So... This must be why you managed to attract both of me."

"Huh?"

"I was born not only because of mental trauma. It must surely be because of you. Because you sit next to me in class but are always so happy together with Draculea-san. Because you're always acting dumb, unwilling to show your heart, always pretending not to see."

"..."

By the time he realized, Reina was up close in front of him.

The doppelganger with the exact same appearance as her.

No, she was Reina and Reina was her.

Her lips leaned in close.

Reflexively, Hisui evaded with his face.

With a mournful look, the girl asked:

"What kind of person is the real you?"

An acrid scent entered Hisui's nose.

Only then did Hisui noticed that Reina was holding a small bottle in her hand.

The lid was already open, the escaping gas invaded his body through his nostrils.

"You...!"

"Next time... I would like to see the real you."

Consciousness fading, Hisui was having difficulty standing.

Hisui fell over on the spot and could only watch as Reina left.

After fainting for a short while, he finally stood up and stumbled his way back home.

There was a strange feeling.

Like a hole had been opened in his chest.

But he could not understand.

The white mist slowly took on a humanoid shape, standing behind him. Hisui did not notice.

Walking in opposite directions, the two figures separated. After that, the newly born "him" went who knows where.

Chapter 4 - Crimson Cohabitation

Part 1

Surprisingly, Rushella was a morning person.

To begin with, a nocturnal life was more desirable by vampirical biorhythm, but waking up early was not a bad thing in itself.

Though she was simply timid about staying up late and dozing off later during evening class only to be woken up by Hisui. However, waking up in the morning was a refreshing thing.

To be honest, she usually wakes up earlier than Hisui.

And sneaks into his room.

This aspect was as one would expect of a vampire.

The door to Hisui's room was left open. As even if he locked the door, she would just break it. That's why invading his room doesn't take much effort.

Today, once again she woke up before Hisui's alarm clock rang, and tried to wake Hisui up before the clock rang, or rather suck his blood.

Yesterday, she slept before Hisui came back from shopping, it seems he returned back home properly.

As always, his sleeping face under the blanket was peaceful with zero alertness.

"Fufufu, again with the sloppy face, in reality you want to have your blood sucked by me don't you?"

She licked her own lips while murmuring, and leaned on him carefully to not wake him up.

As the crimson lips approaches the nape like always, Hisui opened his eyes within a click.

"What's this? You woke up. Well its fine, just stay still"

"Who (are you)?"

While rubbing his eyes, Hisui tilted his head.

It might be that he was not able to see the face very well in the dark because of the closed curtains, but only two people live in this house.

"What are you day-dreaming about? Did you forget the face of your own master?"

"...Master? What are ya talkin about?"

"So your still half-asleep? Its me, hurry up and wake up!"

Rushella grabbed the collar of Hisui's T-shirt and shook him up.

Hisui blinked, surprised.

With certainty, he should be awake completely, but he still seemed puzzled.

"Seriously, who are you? A thief? A burglar? You have courage, I'll give you that. Well it was fortunate that you came to my room. If it was Miraluka's room, it wouldn't have ended with just being chopped into minced meat. Get lost, before you suffer from any painful consequences."

"What are you saying? Who are you calling a burglar!? Well, since I am staying in this Miraluka's room, I will punish any daring insolent one right away!Wait, That is already my room! As if I care about someone who is already dead!!!"

"What are you going on about? Hey, I will seriously call Miraluka and have her beat you up.... She is an absurdly heavy sleeper. If she ever learns that she was woken up because of you, you will have to suffer tremendously."

"Is something going to happen if you call someone who is not even there? There is a limit to how drowsy you can get!?"

"Ehh..... not there? Oh, so that's why you came in.... Man, is she strolling around somewhere again? Or rather, who are you? You... are not a burglar right? Ehh.. Why.. Why am I being embraced by such a magnificent beautiful girl? I can't see this exchange completely."

However, upon hearing Hisui's compliment, Rushella smiled broadly.

"Wha.. What's with you? You're rather honest today"

"Well, its because I haven't seen such a beauty except Miraluka. On top of that, what is this... a na... naked white shirt?^[3] What's with those breasts?"

Hisui blushed and stared at Rushella's breasts with sparkling eyes.

Usually Rushella would have slapped him across the face at least once, but upon seeing a new reaction, she smiled satisfyingly.

"Ohh.... Does it interest you?"

She elevated her breasts by clamping her arms. As if to provoke him.

Hisui's face reddened even further, and Rushella was getting immersed in an unspeakable sense of superiority.

"Ehh..... What does this mean? Such a magnificent beauty, in my room..... Ahh, I know, this must be a dream! Hey, hey, even if I am a middle school student, I am letting my lust out too much..... Excellent, do it more!"

".....I knew it, he is still half asleep. Very well, think of this as a dream if you want. Because to you, the time that you spend with me is always like a dream!"

During the out of sync exchange, Rushella nodded as if she was satisfied.

"Dream.....I see, so that's how it is. Well then, such an action... is acceptable too right?"



"Silence, shut up!!! Its fine already, without further ado, I'll leave after sucking your blood!!!"

Rushella opened her mouth widely.

Hisui made an impaired expression upon (seeing) the white sparkling fangs.

"That...Impossible, are you a vampire?"

"What are you saying at this point? Just listen up and be silent."

Lips drew near the nape, and the tip of the fangs bit into the skin.

Hisui made a frightful face, until now a yet to be seen expression.

"He..Hey stop..... What are you trying to do?"

"Silence!!"

Just as it was, Rushella thrust her fangs into the nape of Hisui, while pressing him down with great strength.

Hisui's face distorted.

Rather than yelling like always, he was only expressing the look of disgust and fear.

"Stop..."

His tone was weak, and his resistance too, was but little.

Even while feeling unease, Rushella violently continued to drink more than the usual amount with anger imposed in her deed.

Slurp, she detached her mouth from the nape, and as a finishing touch lightly licked the dripping blood with the tip of her tongue.

"Umm, it was delicious as always. Good grief, that's enough of your drowsiness! Come now, wake up already, and start preparing the meal! I have to eat properly, since I have morning training today!"

Rushella arranged her disordered clothes after triumphantly getting out of the bed.

At last her usual tension returned, but Hisui didn't even try to get up.

Just continued to emptily stare at ceiling with a pale face.

"Just for how long, are you going to sleep? You're a rather recalcitrant fellow. Something of this level shouldn't be anything to you."

She looked at Hisui while sniffing.

At that moment, she noticed the abnormality.

.....

The wounds on Hisui's neck were not disappearing.

At that soft neck, there were still two marks, gaping wide cavities left there from the fangs.

The complexion didn't return to that face immediately, which was signifying that the amount of blood has not been recovered.

"What does that mean? What the heck happened to you?"

"What..... are you blabbering about? Aren't you the one who sucked it!"

Hisui got up while staggering, and replied in a provocative tone.

On a face that has lost its complexion, strangely only the lips retained the charming crimson.

And the shining fangs sticking out from his lips.

Suddenly increased in length, and of course Rushella knew what it meant.

The one standing before her eyes was an existence, closest to her.

Someone who existed in the gap between vampire and human.

The boy who repelled that curse despite having his blood sucked on many occasions, was now within the fate filled with blood.

Hisui gazed at Rushella who was standing still dumbfounded, with hostility and inquires anew.

"Who the heck are you?"

Part 2

"What's the meaning of this?"

Mei's shout echoed within the class room that was always empty.

Eruru, Kirika, Touko, Rushella and even Hisui was there but, rather than enjoyably relishing their meal, everyone was bewildered at the strange event.

Especially Hisui, who was looking around anxiously as if he did not understand the situation.

"Was this place called Seidou High School? I wasn't really planing on taking the exams, or rather why am I a high school student? Certainly.... My name was called out by the teacher, so I am properly enrolled. My height has grown too but..... Why? One year has passed no matter where I look, be it the newspaper or television.... Seriously what's going on?"

Explain the situation, he apealed with his eyes, but no one was able to explain it to him.

Hisui was strange.

Hisui was the only one out of it.

For the time being he was dragged by Rushella to school

However it seems, he doesn't remember being enrolled in this school, because he was frequently tilting his head in confusion.

But he was somehow able to make it though the morning class, even though it seemed like he had no idea about the content, he was not even trying to take notes.

Naturally he does not remember anyone, including Rushella. Even when he was greeted, he just tilted his head in confusion and asked (Who are you?)

The abnormality, obvious even by the eyes of an outsider, the scar on the neck hidden by the bandage became the deciding factor, and in the afternoon break, he was brought to the empty classroom.

"He became a vampire, on top of having no memories? Hey, what are you doing?"

Rushella only hung her head down in shame, upon being questioned by Mei.

Although she answered several questions asked by Eruru, she was still just like that from the morning, and had not even engaged in the conversations properly.

"What could be the problem? It would still be understandable if he had only lost his memories, but to have even his constitution change."

Kirika frowned with a serious face.

The neighboring Touko was also in deep thought, while drifting in air.

The instant that he met her, he made a scream upon confirming her form for the first time.

While every one was in deep thought, Eruru who was straightforwardly questioning Hisui and Rushella, spoke.

She drew the girls near and started to theorize, in a way that Hisui would not be able to hear it.

"I think that drug which causes the doppelganger phenomenon is involved here. Since then, I researched various cases and even looked into the manufacturer, the Magic Association, but it seems something like this can happen too."

".....Which means?"

On Kirika's question, Eruru spoke in a grave manner.

"In the doppelganger phenomenon, one is split in two rather than being duplicated, that kind of reference is more appropriate. In other words, last night after Kujou-kun.... parted with Rushella(her) and went shopping, he met with an accident. Was it an accidental incident, or a planned attack..... Leaving that aside, one more of him was split and born from his own self."

"In other words, the other Hi-kun took the memories of this past year and,"

"Split, and took his constitution too. In short, the Kujou-kun here is a normal human being with the mind and memories of his third year of middle school. Though right now he is someone on the verge (of becoming a vampire)."

Eruru affirmed the words of Mei, and glared at Rushella.

She was biting her lips, her head still hanging down in regret.

"Eruru-chan quick question"

"What is it, Touko-san? And, asking a question is fine, but please stop slipping through my body."

"Iya, it kinda became a habit. Well.. Is the Hisui-kun here the real one? You know, if it's a doppelganger, it happens often right, in reality the real one and the clone switch places kind of thing! Well, they both might be real but.....Ehh, then who's the fake? Huh, huh ehh?"

The ghost who had stepped into the puzzling road of philosophy, started to wander around with a "?" mark across her face.

"That was a very good way to look at this. Certainly, he was split, so that's why both of them can be called real. The line between the real one and the fake is simply within the personalities that appeared, which one is the usual Kujou-san, who we know..... It's just a problem of that degree. However, the only thing that confiscated drug caused was a doppelganger with a half-self.... As expected, there is a difference between the "original" and the "clone". The Kujou-san here is without a doubt the "original" with a complete body, there is no mistake in that."

"....I see. So, How can Hi-kun return to being normal again? Do we just have to find this divided clone?"

Mei inquired with a serious face.

Although everyone was worried about Hisui's well being, but she was specially not looking good.

"That's how it will be. Theoretically, the clone's range of operation should be restricted to original's immediate vicinity, around school grounds level maybe. But it wont go that easily."

Eruru frowned, looking at Hisui who was sitting in a separate place.

Within all kinds of stories related to Doppelganger, there are very few that end without a tragedy.

The other self, the embodiment of the hidden evil side, was generally not a friendly existence to the original self.

"Even if we search, he may be hiding himself intentionally. As you would expect from half-self, he will be quite hard to catch. He may be easier to find for someone like Touko-san."

"I see..... Then, I will try searching too! For what it's worth, should I go out of the school grounds? Kirika-chan, release the seal!"

"I will not. It will take lot of time, and if you make a mistake, it will develop into an even bigger uproar."

Kirika refused firmly.

It was simply cruel for Touko who had continuously brought about troubling rumors recently within the school grounds. Though fundamentally she was a good person.

"However, just losing the confiscated item seems to have developed into a serious matter. As predicted, someone took advantage of the ruckus and snatched it.....?"

While Eruru was contemplating, Hisui who was watching until now, had started to approach nervously.

Even though his body was that of a High school freshman, his mind was still that of a third year student of middle school, just as one would expect with memory loss, his behavior was unusually formal.

"Umm..... In the first place, what's my relationship with everyone.....? Or rather why am I acquainted with such beauties? What, did my popular breakthrough occur before I knew it?"

"You sure are carefree. As I thought, it seems fundamentally, you have not changed. Listen to me carefully, you're now--"

When Eruru sighed and tried to reproach him, Mei barged in and entangled her arm with Hisui's while pressing her breasts (against his arm).

"Oh yeah, by the way I'm the girlfriend, we started going out at the same time of enrollment into the high school."

"Eh, for real!?"

"To add, we have already progressed till B, and even further then....."

"Ehhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!?"

Hisui faltered.

It was ill natured , since a part of it was true.

"He..Hey wait a second! Li.. its a lie Kujou-kun..... You're going out with me!"

Kirika entangled her arm with the opposite one from Mei's.

She rebuked Mei, but she did the same thing herself.

"Eh, what, what does it mean..... Two timing?"

"Tha.. that's wrong! Since the other day, you even came to my house! And in my room...."

"Eh, what.... what happened in the room!?"

He demanded, inquired for an answer, but Kirika face just reddened, and did not reply.

The crowd, did not deny, since it was true.

"Just what is happening to my high school life..... I believed, I've been living a pretty normal life without causing any special waves.....?"

"Ah, to tell you the truth, you're going out with me?"

Taking advantage of the situation, Touko joined too.

She hugged him from behind, and wrapped her arms around Hisui's neck, who had both of his arms stolen.

"Ehhiiiiiiiiii!?! I, even laid my hands on a dead person.....?"

"Ah, that way of speaking hurts my feelings! In love things like the gap of life and death should be fine, shouldn't it. I want to love, even if I am ghost!" ^[5]

"First of all, please rest in peace."

Eruru cut her off indifferently.

Eruru took her eyes off of Hisui, who had his hands full with two people plus one ghost, and looked at Rushella who did not try to break into the conversation.

In this kind of situation, she would usually charge in and cling to Hisui, while scattering the other women, but she just hung her head in shame.

"The urgent matter here should be Kujou-kun's body..... But I wonder what happened?"

Eruru twisted her lips, after she took a glance at the scar made by fangs on Hisui's neck.

It was being hidden by bandages but still having that detestable scar near itself, did not fit well with her.

"As I anticipated, should we take the most effective way of dealing with this?"

In an instant, Eruru got close to Rushella and thrust the muzzle of the sacred argentum gun to Rushella's forehead.



A speedy technique that could not be captured by the eyes..... It should have been that, but it was not like with Rushella's reflexes she couldn't have dodged that.

But, she just bit her lips, and did not try to move.

Even if she was a vampire, if a silver bullet was shot at point black range and blew her brains out, she would certainly perish.

"Just!"

Wait, Kirika tried to continue, but kept her silence after she took a look at Eruru.

The Eruru now was filled with murderous intent, that is she wouldn't allow anyone's to object.

"Even if Kujou-san's doppelganger was found, and managed to successfully fuse with him..... There is no guarantee that body will return to how it was before, since it was abnormal until now. A constitution that could easily absolutely nullify vampirization, perhaps I had gotten overly familiar with that kind of thing, which was even more vague than an illusion."

"....."

Rushella did not move, merely made a small clenched fist, and was just firmly clenching it tightly.

"I had warned you, the reason your actions weren't restricted was just because there have not been any victims, but now we have a victim here, who had his blood sucked by you and put his leg into the destiny of the cursed tribe. Have you made up your resolve?"

Eruru put her little finger onto the trigger.

And, if she put just a little more strength into it, Rushella's brains would blow inside out.

Even if it was afternoon, nonetheless, if it was a vampire, he/she would probably be able to dodge a bullet in its initial velocity.

However, Eruru would move taking all that into consideration.

Rushella already lost the moment she had gun point pinned to her forehead.

And nobody tried to stop it.

Just as Eruru had mentioned, the most effective remedy for Hisui's body now, which was put in an unprecedented state, was the method which had been passed down since ancient times, the only and absolute method, which was to destroy the vampire that sucked the (victim's) blood.

"Stop it"

Hisui moved.

After he forcefully freed himself from Mei and the others, he grabbed the barrel of argentum.

"What are you trying to do? Even if you have forgotten about this past year, you surely have not forgotten the knowledge regarding vampires too, have you? Then you should comprehend, just what kind of situation you have been put into?"

Eruru coldly stated.

In a certain sense, she was the one who was most disturbed by the current situation.

"Well, it's just as you said, but it's not like I want stop being human. It's only, shouldn't that be the last resort? We start from finding this clone of mine. If that does not work....."

"If that does not work?"

"I will think about it at that time"

Hisui optimistically answered while looking at Rushella who still had her head hung low.

Eruru shrugged, and lowered the gun.

".....As I thought, you have not changed. Well it's fine, for a short while continue on with that body, and face your own foolishness."

".... No"

Rushella finally raised her voice.

Clenching her fist, she stated with a compelling tone.

"As I thought.... This is some kind of mistake!! Even until now, wasn't he just fine the whole time!! Even when he was sucked by other vampires, he was completely fine.....Even my mystic eyes didn't work at all. As if that kind of guy would become my blood relative with utter ease!!!"

Those words, they could be taken as trust.

Mei, Kirika, and Touko looked at each other with an inexpressible expression.

Since Hisui clearly became a vampire, Rushella's words could easily be put off as a bluff.

However, Rushella had an grim expression, and like her, she won't let out the words to deny the trust (they had) in Hisui.

Only her, Eruru alone spoke with coolness.

"Then, try to test him. Did he really sink into becoming your slave or not?"

"What do.....you want me to do?"

"A very simple thing. Please command him. A command that he will absolutely not follow normally. He who is your servant now, after becoming a vampire by having his blood sucked. He should obey your orders. Of course, with his willpower and extent of his progress as a vampire, resistances is possible to certain degree, but he should not be able to oppose if we include your, a {Shinso} mystic eyes. So how about testing it out."

Eruru conveyed with a provocative tone.

Rushella's stiffened face eventually changes, and with it her tone returns to the normal arrogant one.

"Have it your way. If he was a man that will become a slave that easily, then I won't face anymore trouble too. Hey Hisui, come here. Kneel beneath me, and lick my feet!"

Rushella conveyed proudly while she sat on the desk and crossed her long legs.

She lit the crimson light in her pupil. Even though she said it in a completely commanding tone, but from the start she didn't believe Hisui would just obey.

It will just end with "Who would do that" comeback. Yes, Rushella did not doubt that.

Excluding Eruru, other girls were hoping for that too.

Even so..

Hisui easily kneeled with hollow pupils.

He indubitably looked up at Rushella who sitting in a high place, as if he was looking at his master. With his tongue he started to move towards those legs...

"St... Stop it!!"

Rushella restrained him, and clattered her legs. With that vigorous momentum, Hisui's was kicked, and he unsightly fell backwards.

"It hurts..... Huh, what was I doing?"

Hisui, after regaining his sanity, blinked in surprise while caressing the area around his nose.

He noticed Rushella hugging herself while trembling continuously, but did not understand the reason entirely. Same with Mei, and the others who were looking at him with speechless faces.

"With this its all clear. The present Kujou-kun is a victim of a complete vampire. I will take him into my custody."

Just like that, Eruru took Hisui by his hand, and lead him outside the classroom.

For an instant, Rushella extended her hand, but gave up immediately, and lowered her hand powerlessly.

"Hey Eruru-chan, where are you going!?"

"For now I will take him to my home. It will become troublesome even if I explain the situation to the Supernatural Investigations Section, having said that, it just won't do if I just neglect this. Either way, as he is now, he won't be able to keep up with high school classes, and for me it wasn't necessary in the first place. I am leaving early, well then."

Eruru dragged Hisui just like that towards the staff room after answering Mei's question indifferently.

Strongly even though she had small stature, Hisui was not able to oppose.

"Or rather, who are you? I thought others, well excluding Ghost-san, that everyone were high school students, but why is a middle school student? Or perhaps for worse even elementary school student geboh"

Before he could say it, Hisui was hit with a powerful body-blow, and was dragged along while he had cuff coming out from his mouth.

The remaining three excluding Rushella, looked at each other, started to plan what to do from here on.

"What do we do?"

Upon Kirika's inquiry, Mei murmured while looking at Rushella.

"For the time being..... I will take over."

Part 3

"...Why are you here?"

That night, two people sat opposite each other at the dining table.

Rushella and Mei.

Hisui and Eruru had left. After school, Mei and Rushella returned to Hisui's home together.

Along the way, the two girls remained silent. After getting there, Mei had gone to the kitchen to prepare dinner. Currently, beef steak, cooked vegetables, salad and consomme soup were on the table.

Of course, the food had portions for two.

"Hi-kun's not here so it's not like I want to be here. I am here to keep you under surveillance. You have to understand your current position. Now that you've sucked someone's blood and made him turn into a vampire, using human terms, you are a criminal. I have to watch you so that you don't go to jail or get into more trouble. Hurry up and thank me."

"Like anyone would..."

Rushella turned her face to the side, sulking.

Mei started to eat without saying anything.

"Hurry and eat, don't waste the food I made, okay? My cooking skills were meant to perform in front of Hi-kun, but I never expected you to enjoy them first."

"It's not like I asked you."

Despite not backing down verbally, Rushella still started to eat.

But as soon as she put a piece of meat in her mouth, she frowned.

"...This is overcooked. The meat has no juice left!"

"Shut up. I eat it how I like it."

"The salad's nothing special either. Hisui's is better."

"And whose fault is it that you can't eat that tasty cooking right now?"

Struck in a sore spot, Rushella shut up.

Mei pressed the advantage.

"...Say, you didn't notice anything unusual about Hi-kun when sucking his blood?"

"...Shut up."

"Why exactly do you stay with him, have you never thought about that? Hi-kun's constitution doesn't mean that he will be immune to vampirization forever, right? Even if this time it turns out fine, perhaps one day it will come to an end. This time is okay, he is still turning, but if you didn't notice soon enough, he could have turned completely into a vampire with no chance to go back. Ah, perhaps that might be better for you... Isn't that your goal all along?"

Mei stared at Rushella and asked.

Indeed, she used to keep mentioning this catchphrase.

"I'll make you mine!"

And right now, Hisui was officially Rushella's possession.

If Rushella wanted, they could share senses even when separated far away.

She could even call him using thoughts.

But Rushella did not do that.

Rather than unable, she chose not to do it.

"I don't want..."

"Don't want what?"

"I don't want things to be like now... I don't want this kind of Hisui..."

Rushella whispered in loneliness.

Seeing her act quite far from her usual conceit, Mei did not press further.

"Pay more attention before drinking blood. I guess Hi-kun really should live in my house after all?"

"That guy is in the middle of vampirization, you know? You, umm... want to make babies with a human, right? Right now... No, even back then, he's not an ordinary human no matter how you look at it. Even so... You're still willing?"

Rushella went on a counter offensive.

Mei was also struck in a sore spot and pouted unhappily.

"Well... That's true. Although he keeps calling himself nothing more than a high schooler, that's clearly impossible."

"...In that case."

"However... In my heart, that doesn't really matter although I'm quite surprised too. But... Isn't this true love? Without reason, following no rules, going against logic... This feeling of wanting his babies♥ in spite of everything?"

"...Hmph."

Rushella scoffed unhappily, scowled and continued to eat her food.

Meat was supposed to be her favorite and the taste did not seem bad. Even greatly displeased, she still shoved food into her mouth.

"Hey, I've got a lame question."

"What?"

"Since vampires have no concept of starvation from lack of food, you don't really need to eat, right? Why are you wolfing things down?"

"The body wants..."

"Yeah, I've heard a theory before, like so-called phantom limbs hurting. When a human turns into a vampire, the brain retains the feeling of 'hunger' from its time as a human, so the body wants it even if it doesn't need food... But you're a True Ancestor, right? That feeling shouldn't exist in the first place?"

"...W-What's wrong with this? Besides, that parent of Hisui's also eats and Hisui says she's very particular about food!"

"Well, since she's lived for so long, surely she tasted human food before and it became a kind of habit? But... what about you? How long have you lived? Or, how old are you?"

"No idea... If I did, it wouldn't be so tough for me."

Rushella's memory of the past was still a total blank.

She had appetite.

And was picky.

But speaking of flavors she missed, her past favorites--she could not recall any.

If anything--She liked everything Hisui made.

"What a girl who's hard to serve."

"You're noisy, shut up! Stop talking about this unimportant stuff... How's Hisui?"

Rushella was more concerned about this most important issue.

The originally sort of harmonious dining table atmosphere instantly grew much heavier.

"You should know better yourself, right? Curing vampirization means destroying you... Or finding Hi-kun's doppelganger to merge them. Is there a third solution?"

"But what if finding that guy's doppelganger doesn't recover it...?"

"Then Eruru-chan doesn't need to take the trouble. I'll personally put a stake through your heart when the time comes. Don't worry."

Mei boldly claimed the last piece of meat with her fork.

The flying meat juices seemed to predict a battle between them as the worst outcome.

"Just you try."

"I won't show mercy."

Sparks flew from their gazes as smiles emerged from the corners of their lips.

Vampire and artificial human, formidable contenders for the throne of the strongest monster--Who shall be the victor, one day it will be decided.

"Say... Umm, Hisui's doppelganger, that guy..."

"If you want to search, you need permission from Eruru-chan first. But Hisui's over with her, so it's better to leave things to them. Do you have any ideas on where Hi-kun frequents? For the last year would be best."

"I only met him in April, you know? I don't know anything about before that... He usually just goes to school and comes home, shopping as well..."

"To accommodate your lifestyle, his circle of activity has shrunk all at once. Oh well, let's try searching this house first. The basement is very spacious, right? He could be hidden there."

"...Maybe. But there's the Tzara Blade down there, I don't really want to go..."

"Then I'll go. You search some other place."

"Don't order me around!"

Despite retorting, Rushella still followed the suggestion and began searching the house seriously.

Mei went to the basement to look for the other Hisui... Naturally, the search turned up nothing.

"That sword... Where did it go?"

A room resembling a study in layout, a vast library, storeroom, wine racks, searching the basement thoroughly, she did not see the cross-shaped sacred sword, the Tzara Blade that Hisui took out occasionally.

A careful examination of the floor showed signs of where the Tzara Blade was originally embedded but it was empty now.

That sword could not be found anywhere.

"Taken away... Who did it? It must be Hi-kun, right...?"

The answer could not be known, Mei's only choice was to leave the basement.

It was late at night, so she headed over to Hisui's room.

Although he was not around, since she was already at his house, of course sleeping in his room was the right thing to do.

"To welcome Hi-kun's return any time, I have to mark his bed with my fragrance♥"

...Making up this sort of reason, Mei put on the highly revealing babydoll she had worn before and jumped on Hisui's bed.

But greeting her was not the sensation of the mattress springs but a soft yet elastic body and bosom.

Yes, Rushella.

Rushella still kept her habit of wearing Hisui's uniform shirt and had taken the bed first, giving off steady breathing noises.

"...Why are you here!?"

Mei grabbed her collar and shook Rushella forcefully.

Woken up, Rushella rubbed her eyes in annoyed anger.

"So noisy, shut up!! Where I sleep is my freedom!"

"Go sleep in your own room! Or perhaps you're seeking his warmth in his bed since he's not home!? Why do I find this situation so familiar!?"

"So noisy, once you're here, I can't smell that guy's scent anymore! Scram!"

"I'm the one who wants to blame you! Hand over Hi-kun's pillow right now!!"

"Like anyone would give it to you!"

Rushella buried her face into the pillow and began to rub it as though showing off.

Then shoving the pillow in her bosom, she swore to defend it to the point of death.

"A battle of superiority here after all...? Hi-kun's bed is mine!!"

"Shut up, it's mine!!"

The battle for the title of the strongest monster began for this super stupid reason.

Finally, striking each other simultaneously, the two girls rolled off the bed onto the floor, falling asleep on the cold wooden floor. That happened an hour after the battle started.

"...I feel a chill down my spine, like some disaster is going on behind my back in my domain."

Hisui grumbled while lying on the sofa.

Despite sleeping on high class stuff, it was someone else's home after all and it felt unfamiliar.

Unfamiliar ceiling, furniture, air, even that unfamiliar stranger--She was taking a bath.

After skipping afternoon lessons, Hisui was first taken to Seidou Hospital.

Then going through vampire tests, there was a detailed examination of his vampirization rate. He heard that he had received this kind of testing before, but he had no memory of it.

Due to Rushella sucking too much blood at once, compared to one instance of blood feeding, the vampirization was quite severe. Reportedly, his blood loss had reached 60% of full vampirization.

"So that means I'm closer to the vampire side now, huh."

Hisui touched his lengthened fangs and sighed.

These series of questions left him scratching his head.

Along the way, he had asked that Eruru girl about the situation.

To be honest, a lot of it was totally incomprehensible and difficult to believe.

But she did not look like she was lying and the one year blank in his memories was real.

Whether newspapers or television, everything proved the passage of time. Only he was out of touch with the times.

It looked like what those girls said about another him was true.

But just the fact of his constitution was incomprehensible.

Despite his unusual upbringing, a constitution immune to vampirization was unheard of.

No wait.

Miraluka seemed to have mentioned it.

The key to unraveling the link between humans and vampires.

One of the theories exhibiting the possibility of coexistence.

"No good, I still can't recall it... I remember her talking about something after drinking too much red wine..."

The foster parent who had raised him, more than a thousand years old, occasionally murmured incomprehensible things filled with philosophical flavor.

That itself was fine, but the worst thing was that every time she got totally drunk, she ended up hugging him.

Despite such a slender body, those breasts pressing against him were unreasonably massive... Plus the ear-biting attacks, it was too stimulating for a boy in puberty.

Rumor had it that getting blood sucked by a vampire was accompanied by arousal and pleasure, that could very well be true.

Although getting his blood sucked this morning was super painful.

Really painful like dying.

Apart from that... Truly so beautiful.

Those lips touching his neck, the tongue licking every drop of his blood, all was beautiful to the point of suffocation.

However, when that girl found out he was turning into a vampire, her face went pale as though she saw the end of the world.

Why?

Clearly she was a vampire.

"I really don't get it..."

Hisui muttered blankly, stood up and checked out his surroundings.

After the hospital examination, Eruru took him to her house.

It looked quite a classy high rise apartment and she lived alone.

Just as he was hesitating at the door, wonder if it was appropriate to enter, a kick to the shin sent him inside.

"Am I always treated like this?"

It seemed like he was particularly popular with girls since high school, this unsettled Hisui.

Speaking of which, how did he get to know this person?

With such questions, Hisui looked at the spacious living room.

Earlier, she said feel free to drink anything from the fridge.

He wanted to just grab something to quench his thirst but when Hisui saw the other fridge, he could not help feeling curious.

The other fridge was only half the size of a personal fridge and looked like those simple ones in hotels.

Living alone, a single fridge was more than enough. However, Hisui did not find this fridge out of place.

Because it was the same in his home.

There was the normal fridge for his and Miraluka's food.

Beside it was another small fridge.

That was exclusive to Miraluka, he had never opened it before.

Rather, Miraluka forbade him from opening it.

If this fridge here was the same, contained inside was--

"Are you thirsty?"

Just as his hand touched the handle, Eruru appeared in the living room after her bath.

She was still using the bath towel to dry off the beads of water dripping from her hair.

Eruru was dressed in cute pajamas of pure white, decorated with abundant frills like her casual clothing. For some reason, her tone of voice was so cold.

"This fridge does not have anything for you to drink. Please open the adjacent one. There should be mineral water and milk."

"Isn't this one more suited to the way I am now?"

Hisui pointed at the small fridge.

Eruru turned her face away, basically saying yes.

With that, Hisui was certain of the fridge's contents.

"Inside this fridge... It's blood, right? Blood packs."

"..."

"Because my parent did that before. She has meals normally as well but the main staple sustaining her life is this. But she never allowed me to see her drinking blood and forbade me from opening that fridge. Actually I don't really mind. What's so strange about vampires drinking blood. But you..."

"I am a dhampir."

Eruru confessed without looking at Hisui's eyes.

For Hisui in his amnesia, this was her first time revealing her identity.

But Hisui did not seem to panic.

"I see... That's why you understand vampires so much."

"This has nothing to do with parents. It is the result of my own learning. Also, it is totally your fault that I keep blood packs for backup...."

"Huh?"

"Y-You were the one who told me to stop taking those drugs for suppressing the urge to drink blood, that is why I...!"

Unbelievably, Eruru actually lost composure and started to explain.

Naturally, the current Hisui did not remember what he had said.

He simply scratched his head and imagined what he felt at the time.

"...I said something like that huh. But yeah, dhampirs are like vampires, there's a limit to endurance, so drinking in moderation is better..."

"I know that! Otherwise, sanity cannot be maintained. Truly tragic. Say... Are you actually thirsting for blood?"

Eruru leaned over and asked, clearly without displeasure, apparently worried about Hisui's body for real.

Dhampirs inherited dual traits from vampires and humans. In this sense, they were quite similar to victims of vampires.

Just as a dhampir craved blood, vampire victims also thirsted for fresh blood as though trying to refill the blood that had been sucked away from them.

"No... Not really. I can still bear it. On the other hand, I'm a bit thirsty."

"...Very well. Tell me if you cannot bear it. I will send you to the hospital for a transfusion.

"..."

In principle, blood should be taken orally as a vampire's food, transfusion had little meaning in this sense.

But for a victim in the process of vampirization, it was still possible to suppress the urge to suck blood as a method for replenishing lost blood, hence it was an effective type of treatment.

Even if losing rationality from severe vampirization, transfusions could produce an alleviating effect to some degree to maintain sanity.

"But... Isn't drinking blood less of a hassle?"

"You want to choose such a horrifying solution?"

"Who knows."

Hisui took out a bottle of mineral water from the normal fridge and sat on the sofa.

Drinking a bit of water, he spoke slowly.

"When I was small, I fell over in front of my parent. My knee was scraped and it bled."

"..."

"There was a lot of blood and it was very painful. I ran to her, crying. Then.. She licked her lips."

"Very normal. A vampire after all."

For a vampire, blood was the desire prioritized above all thought.

Even with a young child holding the injury and crying, as long as there was blood, in the first instant, their eyes would ignore all else.

Instinctively, she wanted to suck blood.

No vampire could escape this fate.

"...Right, as a vampire it's perfectly natural. But when she noticed me looking at her, her face went pale all at once. She held her breath and turned her gaze away from the wound, bandage it frantically. It was my first time seeing her in a panic."

"What are you trying to say?"

"Nothing much... Her look that time was very similar to Rushella's expression. When Rushella sucked my blood and discovered I was turning into a vampire."

"Since she regrets it, why not avoid sucking blood in the first place? If self-control does not work... Then she should not live with humans."

"Maybe. But Miraluka also never did anything to me... I really don't mind. Although I didn't mind in my heart... I never told her. Of course, I never mentioned that incident after the fact."

Hisui recalled his parent back then.

After his wound was bandaged, he still could not speak out.

Towards the vampire side his parent displayed--He must have felt fear back then.

Then afterwards, all along... all along, he failed to tell her.

Then what about himself during that blank period?

Himself for the past year?

Did he say it out?

"Say... Where's my parent, do you know?"

"..."

Eruru was unable to answer.

She tried to be an expressionless listener throughout the entire process but no matter how she feigned calmness, her wavering face could not be controlled.

"I looked at the house before going to school today. Her room feels like it's changed, but there's no note. She used to leave notes for me when leaving the house and there's no record in my cellphone either. The calls and text messages are all from you girls. What exactly... happened to her?"

Hisui stared straight at Eruru. She was at a loss for words.

To be honest, the current Hisui was in an unstable state. Eruru was very hesitant on revealing the bad news to him.

But Hisui was surely going to find out the truth on his own soon.

Redundant fake kindness might hurt him even more.

"I heard she passed away. You told me."

"...I see."

Unexpectedly, Hisui's answer was very calm.

He neither broke down crying nor was angry, simply accepting the truth indifferently.

"Are you not curious? Her death and the whole story... Although I know very little. Or do you remember vaguely?"

"No, no impression at all. I also feel that I'm supposed to be very depressed... I didn't expect to be this calm. What happened over the past year?"

"I only met you in April. If anything huge happened, there was only your meeting a vampire."

"...How unlucky am I exactly?"

Hisui smiled in self-mockery, lying back on the sofa.

Eruru did not ask about his past anymore and switched to more practical issues.

"To avoid speeding up the vampirization, please do not make contact with Rushella-san. If she visits you, do not let her in."

"...What if she breaks the door down?"

"I will shoot."

"Okay, I won't see her."

"On our side, we will also track down your doppelganger. Please do not... take action alone. Right now, you are totally an ordinary human."

"I know."

Hisui muttered and closed his eyes.

Probably due to the sun's rays, he felt no strength in his limbs.

Combined with the symptoms of vampirization--his anemic body was also causing him suffering.

Sighing, Hisui drifted off to sleep.

Eruru covered him with a blanket but Hisui was unaware, having fallen in to deep slumber.

"...Is that okay?"

Reina was standing in a dark alley that looked like a gangster hangout.

More accurately, it was the other Reina--Her doppelganger.

The girl's main body had returned home already, most likely gone to bed.

But the other her was still in school uniform, loitering in the streets at an hour that would surely elicit questioning from the police.

Also, she was meeting someone in an alley downtown.

No, whether the other person was human was still unknown.

While wandering the streets, a tall, dark shadow called to her.

Then she was given the drug that gave rise to her birth.

There was only one command received--Make Kujou Hisui smell the drug.

Only that.

The girl only agreed because she wanted to know Hisui's true nature hidden in his heart. She wanted to know how much she meant to the boy who hung around Rushella all day, occasionally showing sighs of sorrow.

Of course, supposing his doppelganger was born, it might not be a good thing for her necessarily.

Relying on uncertain phenomenon only meant obtaining uncertain results. No one could guarantee this could help her.

If it were her other self, if it were her who was always considerate of others, surely she would not choose this path.

--Hence, I shall be the one to take this path.

"You are really seeking your own destruction. As expected, your main body is still more human."

"Are you praising me?"

Reina answered briefly to the seductive voice.

Her voice sounded more like a boss lady from a night establishment pulling customers from the streets rather than the usual honors student.

"You will eventually disappear. But if you do not return to the main body, that body cannot escape the fate of weakening. That is how doppelgangers work. If the other self gains too well-defined an ego, then both will disappear. But if you return to the main body, you will be sunk into the depths of consciousness again. That highly self-disciplined true self will not allow you to see the light of day again."

"...What do you want me to do?"

The other person did not answer.

That person shrugged in an exaggerated manner, looking like it did not matter.

Taking the small bottle from Reina's hand, she had no intention of issuing other missions.

"You are free. Do as you wish. Do something the other you cannot do."

"...Who are you? Why do you... Kujou-kun...?"

"I want to understand him more. Also, I want to test that irregular 'True Ancestor.' These are my only two goals."

"...?"

"We will probably never meet again. Act according to your wish, that's all."

She lifted her long cape and vanished into the air like a bird spreading its wings.

Reina was left alone under the night sky.

Her translucent body outline would make one wonder if the entire world had abandoned her.

Finally, the girl's figure was swallowed amidst the scenery of the streets at night.

The next day, there were many rumors among students--The serious and hardworking class rep was seen late at night downtown. Of course, the serious person in question had no idea of any of this.

There was another rumor--Under the color of night, a boy was roaming the streets with a cross-shaped white package carried on his back.

He did not do anything special, simply frequenting shops and convenience stores then shaking his head in loneliness.

Only one ramen shopkeeper had seen him before, together with a woman who seemed to be his relative. When he saw the boy standing outside his shop, the shopkeeper made conversation with him.

"Hey, little lad, I think you used to come here frequently..."

"Yeah, I came with my family. The flavor here is not bad and you don't use garlic."

"...Hmm, eh, what happened to the pretty lady?"

Hearing the shopkeeper's question, the boy simply smiled with loneliness.

It was a tearful smiling look, concentrating infinite sorrow.

He turned and left without answering.

As the shopkeeper watched him leave, he heard a pitiful sigh:

"Miraluka..."

Chapter 5 - Sports Festival

Eruru woke up but found it difficult to open her eyes.

To begin with, the vampire blood coursing through her body suppressed her biological activity during the daytime. Furthermore, she had drunk black coffee before going to bed in spite of the consequences. The caffeine resulted in very light sleep and prevented her from waking up to a refreshing start.

Yawning adorably, she left the bedroom to wash her face.

Even after doing that, she still felt sleepy.

Due to not wearing her glasses, she found the living room quite blurred in view.

In any case, she began to remove her pajamas to get changed.

Having another coffee later would fix things.

...As soon as she made mental plans to make herself presentable, she discovered she had forgotten to prepare her change of clothes.

Whatever, undress first then return to the bedroom... After taking off her pajamas, Eruru noticed a familiar smell.

The refreshing and energizing fragrance of coffee.

This was rich coffee prepared by skills superior to her own.

Her consciousness gradually growing more awake, Eruru looked towards the kitchen.

This kitchen, which she seldom used, was currently fulfilling its worth while a superbly skilled cook was preparing breakfast inside.

Hisui made breakfast while trying his best not to look towards Eruru, advising indifferently:

"...You'd better put on some clothes first."

This sentence made Eruru completely awake.

Blushing, she frantically checked her condition.

All she was wearing was underwear.

A cute pink bra covered the gentle curves of her chest, accompanied by a pair of panties.

Her pajamas were haphazardly scattered in the surroundings.

"Y-You...!"

"Yeah, I know, after all, it's your own home... Right? My parent used to go around naked all the time... Yeah."



Hisui brought the salad and fried eggs to the dining table and consoled her.

However, his eyes were furtively glancing at Eruru in her underwear.

"E-Erase those memories instantly!!"

"Hey, don't point your gun at me! Where the heck did you pull that out from!? Where did you conceal that gun!?"

"Shut your trap!!"

Although she did not shoot, she still used Argentum as a bludgeoning weapon to whack Hisui hard.

Several minutes later, face still red, Eruru was dressed and sitting at the dining table with a furious look.

"Remember your lesson..."

"No no, that's the wrong reaction, right? I'm the one who's heavily injured."

All bruised up in the face, Hisui sat opposite to her.

Although Eruru did hold back, Hisui was suffering terribly from external wounds and internal bleeding, having lost his special constitution that healed his wounds quickly.

"Say, you really should pay more attention with a boy in the house... You're totally unguarded when you wake up, you know?"

"S-Shut your trap!! Why did you keep staring!?"

"You're the one who ran over. Oh well, it's quite common for people who act all reliable outside to have an undisciplined side at home. Hurry and eat, okay?"

Hisui spoke and urged Eruru to start eating.

Eruru's face was still red but she finally drank a sip of coffee and picked up the newspaper.

"...The taste is not bad, but if you think this is enough to make me forgive you, you are thoroughly mistaken... Speaking of which, why did you make all this?"

"Uh, since you let me live here, I went with the flow. Say, your fridge is totally empty and your kitchen is pretty much unused, clean as brand new. You really should do more house work."

"Such a nag... All I need is minimum nourishment!"

"In terms of food, that vampire who used to live in my home was a lot more particular than you. Say, why do you live alone? I heard yesterday that you're already working."

"...I live separate from my mother. Because there is no need to live together."

"Your dad?"

"...I have no father. Please do not mention this word again."

With a face filled with resentment, Eruru finished the bitter drink in her cup with one gulp.

Seeing her reaction, it was obvious which of her parents was the vampire.

For his own personal safety, Hisui decided it would be best not to mention her father.

"...Want more coffee?"

"Another cup."

Still miffed, Eruru passed the empty cup over.

Hisui smiled wryly while refilling Eruru's cup, then cleared the utensils to wash.

The way it looked, Hisui was totally the master of the kitchen.

"So... What are your plans?"

"What plans... I was thinking yesterday, ultimately, an official request needs to be made to the Supernatural Investigations Section. The best course of action is to ask them to track down your doppelganger. It is also quite worrying what treatment Rushella might receive... In the worst case scenario, I shall personally keep her under continuous surveillance to prevent others from arbitrarily issuing extermination orders."

"Sure... Thanks."

"Why do you sound so unconcerned!? Do you understand your current situation!?"

"More or less. I've thought about it overnight and organized things. Also, you're a good person. That's one point I managed to clear up."

"..."

Eruru gnashed her teeth without saying a word, her face red.

Hisui had apparently said that in the past.

As expected, people's true personalities never change.

"So, I'll leave the rest of the dishes to you. I'll be late if I don't leave soon."

"...? Wait, where are you going!?"

"Hmm, it's school. Of course, I mean high school, not middle school."

"What are you talking about...? You are currently...!"

"I don't have my current knowledge or memories. But I'm still a high school student. I'm sure my tuition is paid using Miraluka's money, so I can't go skipping class."

"But...!"

"If I feel an urge to drink blood, I'll bite my lip and drink my own blood. Although it's a last resort, it does work to some degree for someone like me who's in the middle of turning into a vampire. Could you tell those people I met in school yesterday, to help out in case of emergencies."

Hisui finished in one breath, not showing any intention to skip school.

Stopping him was easy.

Although he was in the process of turning into a vampire, he was no match for Eruru after all.

There were tons of ways to stop him.

But Eruru agreed reluctantly.

"Do as you wish. However... Please do not leave my side in school."

"Yes yes."

Hence... The two left the house and went on their way together.

Two beings suffering from the same miseries--a vampire's victim and a half-vampire. Under the sun's direct rays, they rushed into the classroom as the bell rang, bearing tired faces.

Rushella was already in the classroom. Looking at the two of them with depressed eye, she then averted her gaze.

Hisui went to his seat, neighboring hers.

"...Good morning."

He greeted her but Rushella did not respond.

In the end, the two of them did not exchange a word until after school that day.

After school, Hisui and Eruru went to the empty classroom together.

Hisui had no memories of this classroom or the club..

But according to Eruru, the ghost and the student council vice-president were running around for his sake so he should show up to listen to the report of their findings at least. As for other circumstances, Eruru had not mentioned them.

Rushella... apparently wasn't coming.

After all, she was currently a criminal suspect. Mei was in charge of her surveillance and so was absent as well.

Although Hisui had no memory... Rushella's affairs made him especially worried.

The expression she showed when she realized Hisui was turning into a vampire...

Although apart from his parent, Hisui had never met any other vampire. But definitely, no other vampire would show that kind of face.

Even if he really had that kind of constitution for the past year... A vampire was not going to make that kind of expression towards prey.

Hisui could not figure it out, so he scratched his head.

Hisui and Eruru finally reached the classroom, Hisui pushed the door and entered...

"Ah...!"

Someone was changing inside.

She did not look anything like a high schooler, but did not appear to be a teacher either, a woman with a trim and tight physique. She had just taken off her women's suit, leaving a black sports bra and simple shorts that matched.

"...What are you doing? Oogami-san."

Eruru was the first to speak.

"Hmm, just as you can see, I'm in the middle of changing... Hey, what are you looking at!?"

"I'm not looking."

Hisui answered calmly then frantically shifted his gaze away.

Mmm, that muscular athlete's body.

Graceful and limber.

There probably exist people with a thing for that.

But Hisui had no such fetish.

"W-Why are you acting so uninterested!? Ah... Maybe you're shy? Well, you are a boy after all, well? Still a high schooler? Can't be helped... Since you want to look, it's not like you can't..."

"Let's go outside, Kariya."

"Yes. Sorry for disturbing you while you are changing."

"What, that bored face as a reaction!? Hold it right there..."

...Rangetsu was just about to chase out the door when she suddenly remembered how stupid it was to be only wearing underwear, leaving her no choice but to retreat with a reddened face.

Hisui closed the door and bid farewell to Rangetsu's exposed body, asking Eruru:

"Hmm, who's that?"

"I believe there is no need for you to remember. Rather, it would be better to forget directly."

"Yeah, I get the same feeling."

Just as Hisui crossed his arms and nodded in agreement, he was grabbed by the back of his collar and dragged into the classroom.

"Hey, what the fuck!?"

"I'm changed. So how is it, does it suit me?"

Rangetsu made a pose in the middle of the classroom.

It looked quite legit... But her attire was greatly problematic.

She was wearing a plain black tracksuit without any decoration.

Normally, this would a PE teacher's workclothes. Right now with the sports festival coming up, all teachers and students were training and getting ready so other subject teachers were willing to wear this sort of tracksuit.

"Eh, what's the situation?"

"An undercover investigation... Well, it's not that exaggerated, I'm simply changing clothes to blend in so that I can move more freely in school, you see? Nominally, I'm an instructor hired from outside for the sports festival period. The school is informed already. Although I can't be stationed at school all the time, up until the sports festival this weekend, I've already planned to lurk here already, you know?"

"Yeah, good job..."

"What's with that unmotivated answer? Don't you want to be instructed by such a good-looking teacher like me?"

Rangetsu flaunted her slender body and leaned over but Hisui was unmoved.

"No... Um, this look suits you very well."

"Oh my, aren't you honest today?"

"Although I find women who are suited to tracksuits are a bit unusual."

"Putting aside an athlete's airs, you are completely unattractive as a woman."

Eruru entered the classroom and expressed her view with displeasure.

Rangetsu scowled viciously, revealing her long canines but Eruru was unfazed. In a contest of fangs, she had her own set anyway.

"...Speaking of which, Kujou-kun... I smell blood on your neck? What's the matter?"

Rangetsu looked at the bandaid on Hisui's neck and asked acutely.

As expected of a detective from the Supernatural Investigations Section. Hisui's current condition could not escape her sense of smell of course, rivaling a police dog's.

"Actually..."

Eruru sighed and explained things roughly to her.

"...I see, I get the situation now. But it's not commendable that you're not reporting to the Supernatural Investigations Section, you know?"

"...I know."

This was all Eruru acting on her own and could not be considered a wise plan.

Hisui and Rushella were supposed to be quarantined instead.

"That said, we currently lack manpower and you seem to have minimum safeguards... Whatever, Kujou-kun, if you have someone to supervise you, I allow you freedom of movement. Also, about that vampire called Rushella..."

"No problem. Don't mind her."

As the victim, Hisui seemed unconcerned.

Rangetsu's former self would definitely not have compromised so easily but unbelievably, she now accepted.

"Is that so...? Actually, the situation remains the same, just that your body has produced symptoms. In any case, there is Sudou-san in charge of

surveillance... However, if anything happens, you will take full responsibility, is that clear?"

Rangetsu was staring at Eruru in a terrifying manner while asking.

The two were originally enemies in a struggle between factions but were sent to the same battlefield simply due to their mission. Having them cooperate fully would be asking for too much.

Now that she was lending Eruru a favor and could use this as leverage to make Eruru take the fall and get kicked out if the situation turned south, Rangetsu stood to gain no matter what standpoint things developed.

"No problem. I have already resolved myself to take the responsibility. But even so, I did not really expect you to agree so easily."

Rangetsu went hmph and looked at Hisui then changed the topic while resting her face on her hands.

"...Then what? What are your plans next?"

"Please listen to these girls first."

Eruru's sharp hearing had already picked up on the footsteps approaching the classroom.

Although it was one person's steps, two individuals entered.

Kirika and Touko.

"Eh, you are... Oogami-san, right?"

"Oh, it's the errand girl."

"Who is the errand girl!?"

Rangetsu protested against Touko's comment before facing Eruru again.

"They are the collaborators you mentioned?"

"Yes. Please have a seat, you two. Let us confirm the many plans we have ahead of us."

Kirika nodded and sat down while Touko hovered in the surroundings as usual.

Ignoring Touko, Eruru started the Supernatural Investigations Club + Supernatural Investigations Section joint meeting.

"Currently, the sports festival is being held as scheduled. So... Have there been any more threatening letters?"

Eruru asked Kirika. The vice-president shook her head.

"None received. Due to the earlier tent incident, the teachers and the students in sports clubs have been more on guard. None of the facilities and equipment have shown damage so far."

"Oh, I was also wandering around school to help watch, you know?"

"...As for sightings of Touko-san, witnesses have increased greatly, how troubling..."

Kirika grumbled bitterly.

The ghost with great initiative really wasn't saving any effort.

"...However, Touko-san's presence really is a great help. About the doppelganger matter I have asked grandma already. This type of half-tangible body case is quite hard to capture. However, if Touko-san does it, she should be able to sense the doppelganger. After all, doppelgangers are considered pseudo spiritual entities, they should be able to interfere with each other."

"Conversely, the other side will be on guard against Touko-san. To this date, he has not come to school, probably because Touko-san is present?"

Hisui spoke slowly.

Although he had lost his memories and was in the process of turning into a vampire, his observation skills and knowledge on supernatural entities remained unchanged.

Rangetsu showed an impressed look after listening.

"You're quite sharp. Then what do you plan on doing?"

"Nothing much. But since it's hard for him to interfere with the school before the sports festival, he'll probably make a commotion on the day of the festival, right... Say, the doppelganger of the class rep who sits next to me, any news on that?"

"The only ones who saw her directly were you and Uno-san. Currently, your memories are unclear. Have you recalled anything?"

"Nothing. But... I know class rep is a good person and very kind to me."

Hisui answered Eruru's question while plunged into deep thought.

Seeing him in deep thought, Eruru turned the topic to the day of the sports festival.

"Right now, we must maintain vigilance and the problem is the actual day of the sports festival. Currently, there is Oogami-san's help and Touko-san can also contribute... Also... We will handle things as the situation changes, I suppose. The biggest problem... is confirming Sera-san and Kujou-san's doppelgangers. Although they are certain to be nearby, if the state of separation persists, they will all disappear eventually... I am not worrying excessively, am I?"

Realizing the gravity of the situation, Rangetsu nodded solemnly.

"Indeed, finding the doppelgangers is top priority... But how should it be done?"

"Oh, grandma told me about this. Since they are sure to be nearby, a barrier can be erected to slowly decrease their area of movement. But this type of barrier has its limits, so I am not too sure how small an area they can be forced into..."

Kirika supported her face while frowning and looking at Hisui with worry. The vampirization process and the weakening caused by the doppelganger were causing Hisui great suffering.

"...Just try it, make the area as small as possible. What would be best would be this... Force them into the school."

Hisui responded to Kirika and hoped she could give a specific plan.

"That is possible, but... Why the school?"

"Having a precise location is best. My doppelganger aside, class rep's one should take the bait easily, after all, this is where her goal is located."

"...Possibly. My side will take care of manpower and equipment on the barrier. Finally, one more question I'd like to ask... Is that vampire really okay?"

Just as the plan was being settled, Rangetsu raised an uncertain element.

Although the doppelgangers were a tricky problem, Rushella's issue was also worrying.

"According to Kariya-san, she has not sucked blood from anyone apart from Kujou-kun. But that's no longer an option in this incident. If she sucks another person's blood, she will surely become a target for extermination."

"We have not confirmed that fact yet. If indeed she has sucked another person's blood, I will personally execute her myself."

Eruru spoke coldly.

After all, she had pointed her gun at Rushella before.

"I was thinking yes, I don't need to worry about that. But the problem is if she insists on her principles and suppressed the urge. Suppressing is very painful, right?"

No one said anything

Apart from Hisui, everyone present knew Rushella's personality, in other words, they held a certain kind of trust in her.

Most likely, Rushella was not going to suck anyone's blood but Hisui's.

She will choose to endure.

But once endurance reached a limit, vampires went berserk.

"Kujou-san's blood has been collected on a regular basis to use for transfusions to Kujou-san himself and as Rushella's emergency rations. He has a certain level of stock at home, so it should be enough to last until this incident is resolved."

"...Very well."

Hearing Eruru's explanation, Rangetsu also accepted the contingency plan and stood up.

"Then I'll take a casual walk around school. Before the sports festival arrives, everyone do their jobs properly."

"...Yes."

Then the joint meeting ended.

Time for school to end, Hisui went on his way home.

However, he went to Eruru's home instead of his old and familiar house.

Staring at his house's direction, Hisui's eyes reflected the setting sun.

How was Rushella now?

"Say, you..."

"What?"

Mei was currently preparing dinner while Rushella was on the side, sprawling on the dining table.

Although Rushella did not help out at all, bored with nothing to do, she simply waited nearby.

"...Don't you need to drink blood? Hi-kun's blood... There's stock stored up, right?"

Mei pointed to the small fridge next to the normal fridge and asked.

This was essential in any vampire or dhampir home, a fridge for storing blood packs.

"...Speaking of which, if using blood packs could satisfy vampires, why do they still need to attack humans? Sure would save the hassle."

"Although it quenches the thirst, the taste is terrible! After trying it once, I want to vomit every time I recall the taste! Even Hisui's blood is the same. I want to suck blood directly and it has to be the neck! Although other parts are way better than blood packs, it's still not satisfying!"

"...How picky. You sound completely like some kind of gourmet food critic's ego."

"Don't humans seek delicious food, not satisfied with merely sustaining life!? Otherwise, can't humans just eat a bit of those 'supplements!'?"

"You sure know how to pick at weakpoints. Perhaps what you say is right... But humans don't attack other people."

"..."

"Had you endured a little at the time, Hi-kun wouldn't have ended up like this."

"...Shut up."

Rushella shouted then fell silent.

Mei did not press the matter and turned to more practical matters.

"Although I get that you don't need to drink every day, you're almost at your limit, right? Oh, but the higher a vampire's rank, the stronger the endurance, right?"

"According to Hisui, that parent of his went cold turkey for one year as her best record. But that was going quite far to the limit. Luckily she drank backup blood kept for emergencies. A little later and she would most likely have started attacking people indiscriminately."

"How scary. I don't think you have that level of self-control, so hurry up and drink some. If you cause trouble, you'll surely get executed, you know?"

"...Shut up and hurry with dinner!"

"Like I said, isn't it fine even if you don't eat this? Jeez, why do I have to cook for you... Oh, how about I make a lunchbox for Hi-kun on the day of the sports festival~ After all, Eruru-chan definitely isn't going to do it, perhaps it's a chance?"

"That guy... Will he come?"

Rushella muttered to herself.

The sports festival was imminent.

Hisui was not very motivated in the first place and now with his health in this condition... Will he still participate?

Left to roam free in a place among crowd... Will Eruru permit it?

"Who knows... But weren't you all fired up for it? You're still having morning practice with the class rep, right?"

"...Yeah. But she seems quite tired. Is it because of the doppelganger's effects..."

"You have to do your best too. Of course, I'll have to properly prepared a special lunchbox for Hi-kun♥"

Mei was filled with anticipation for the coming sports festival.

Rushella first glared at her unhappily then thought of something and stood up from her chair.

"Lunchbox huh..."

"...What? You're not asking me to help make you one, are you? Seriously, isn't it better if you drank blood instead on that day? Although you have the light blocking agent, being under the sun is still unpleasant, right?"



"So noisy, shut up. Well, umm... Just think of it as practical experience. It's not like I can't help you with cooking, you know?"

Unbelievably, Rushella compromised and walked over.

Although she still had her arms crossed and her face held up high.

"Forget it, your help's not needed. The kitchen is innocent."

"What does it matter!? Don't be shy!!"

"No, it's really not needed! Hold on, hey, I'm holding the kitchen knife here!!"

"What does it matter!?"

Several minutes later, because Rushella insisted on helping, the kitchen's sorry state could only be described as a battlefield.

"Like I said, don't come over! Not only is the pot overflowing, but it's also about to explode!?"

"Okay, let's turn up the heat...!"

"Arghhh, I've had enough!!"

...In the end, their dinner that night ended in shambles.

Meanwhile, at Eruru's home.

"...I feel like something big is happening at home. It must be that, that whatever linking of senses between a vampire and the victim, probably a bit more reliable than premonitions."

"If she cuts the link, it is pointless, right? This is purely your own premonition. Although I feel that premonitions tend to be real."

"Say, Kariya, why am I the one to cook and do the dishes every time? Although you're providing a roof for me, can't you cook once in a while?"

"Pizza and sushi can be ordered for delivery. The convenience store is close by too. If you walk a little further, there are many restaurants."

"I'm beginning to understand why your growth is stunted."

As a result, Eruru gave Hisui a kick while he was washing the dishes.

The first weekend in Hisui and Rushella's separated lives arrived.

Usually a holiday, this Sunday also carried the special significance of the sports festival. Students filed into school.

Announcing the sports festival's opening, fireworks flew into the sky while all students were lined up at the opening ceremony.

Standing there unsteadily, Hisui seemed like an odd one out.

Mei stood near him and asked with worry.

"Hey... Are you okay?"

"...Seems... a little something's up. Although I can overcome the hazy consciousness and dazed mind that comes with the vampirization process... Sunlight is terrible. I guess I should have gotten a transfusion first...? Also, my doppelganger... If it doesn't get found, looks like it could get dangerous..."

"Oogami-san and Touko-san have been patrolling the entire school. I heard that Uno-san has to stay in festival's hosting headquarters. Once the festival ends, she will join in the search. Say... You should be resting at home today, right? Why did you come running here on purpose?"

Eruru leaned in as well, whispering quietly with both care and reprimand.

Hisui felt a bit apologetic but still answered with a brave face.

"...If I'm absent, Rushella would feel bad, right?"

Saying that, he glanced secretly at Rushella, but she happened to be looking at him as well.

But as soon as their eyes met, she instantly turned her gaze away and bowed her head.

"What an idiot you are."

"I know, okay. Time to do the march. Hurry to your spot."

Mei and Eruru had no choice but to return to their positions.

The teachers on the main platform gave orders and the entire student body moved to their assigned positions on stand by according to year and class.

The sports festival was raising its curtain officially.

No sooner had it began, Hisui's stamina had already reached a limit.

Although the actual events he was participating was a sprint in the morning and the full class relay at the end in the afternoon, due to the heavens giving an ideal sunny day as a gift to the sports festival, he felt terrible even when sitting down.

It came as no surprise that he was last place in the sprinting event.

The short distance run made Hisui rapidly drain his remaining energy. Coming to a certain tent in the the resting area, he collapsed in a heap like a corpse.

Even when the bell rang to signal the lunch break, he remained completely still.

"Umm... Are you okay, Kujou-kun...?"

When he noticed, Reina was on the side, looking at him with worry.

"Oh nothing. Class rep, are you okay? I see your face not looking too good?"

"Hmm, I'm fine..."

Unlike Hisui, she was not undergoing vampirization, but likewise, she had half her soul separated.

Also, she participated in many more events than Hisui in the morning.

This is likely physical exhaustion right now.

"Next up... I just have the relay remaining."

"Really...? Oh, it's noon, have you eaten yet? Are your parents bringing you a lunchbox?"

"My parents aren't coming... Then I'll be off? You really should take care."

"Yeah..."

Once high school rolled around, many legal guardians didn't bother to attend sports festivals anymore.

The issue of lunch were mostly handled by groups of friends together.

So where Reina was running of to was easy to guess.

That said... Hisui still forced himself to stand up and chase after her.

After that, Rushella came to Hisui's spot.

She was carrying two lunchboxes... An apprehensive look on her face.

But Hisui was already gone.

After looking in the surroundings, she ran off to find Hisui as well.

After parting with Hisui, Reina came to a deserted spot behind the school building.

Her body felt terrible.

Very tired, lacking in strength all over.

To avoid heat stroke, she had drunk water frequently today, taking care to avoid direct sunlight.

However, her stamina kept draining nonstop.

No appetite and it felt like everything she swallowed instantly evaporated.

Reina sighed and started doing self-massages and simply stretching exercises to alleviate her fatigue.

There was still the full class relay in the afternoon.

She had to make the most of her time to recover her energy and run for a good standing.

"I cannot fail anymore."

Originally, she thought that her fatigue came from the mental stress of past failure, but she did not seem that obsessed with the past.

Thanks to accompanying Rushella in morning practice, her mindset had relaxed a lot.

Very incredible... Even though it was such a serious case of mental trauma.

"Am I overthinking things?"

"No."

"Eh?"

A familiar voice was heard.

One that she heard every single day.

Her own voice.

Turning around, she saw herself.

One dressed in uniform, one dressed in gym clothes--two people like mirror images but with different clothing.

Before Reina could scream, the other her swung her right arm.

"...!"

The iron pole in her hand struck Reina's leg, making a blunt sound.

This was violence coming from another her.

Reina clutched her right leg and collapsed on the ground.

No fracture nor obvious external wounds... But it was so painful she could not walk.

"W-What are you doing...?"

"This is your wish, you know? Don't want to run, want to escape... That's why I was born. The lack of burden in your heart is thanks to me."

"...!? What are you talking about? I...!"

"No problem. I am your shadow. You just need to relax. This ends here. You can forfeit the relay completely."

The other Reina spoke, raising the iron pole above her head.

She was aiming a second strike at Reina's head.

Reina closed her eyes in fear, enduring the pain and terror.

However, the final strike did not fall.

"Kujou-kun...!"

She looked up and saw Hisui grabbing the other her's arm.

"You...!"

"Stop it now, it's enough, you know?"

"Let me go... This is our problem...!"

"...That's true. That's why you hit yourself."

The other Reina instantly went expressionless.

But she quickly recovered, rather than a vicious face filled with negative emotions, it was her original, calm expression.

"Even without destroying the sports festival, there are many ways to make class rep not have to run. Actually, she just needs to forfeit on her own. If she's injured, no one will blame her. This method doesn't hurt others but hurts herself deeply. So that's the conclusion you reached, that's right, because you're also class rep."

"Don't talk like you know everything...!"

"I don't know. Sorry, I currently lost my memory. But even just interacting with you for these few days, I know you're a good person. Don't hurt yourself anymore."

The other Reina bit her lip hard.

The iron pole had fallen from her hand onto the ground.

"I won't say insensitive stuff like telling you to face your mental trauma bravely. After all, you already accompanied that girl for morning practice for so long, you don't need anyone else to comfort you. So... Don't bear the burden alone. Having the two of you complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses is the best."

Hisui pointed at the Reina who was kneeling on the ground.

That was her other self.

"Although... I don't quite get it... Still, sorry."

The girl who had resorted to violence bowed her head in shame.

"Umm... This is my fault, I guess? So... I will be considerate of you from now on!"

Finally, she smiled while speaking.

In that instant, as though something possessing her had left, the other Reina collapsed.

Even the outline of the body was vanishing. In this manner, she fell upon her true body.

And Reina caught her.

Overlapping, the two bodies became one.

Within the blink of an eye, only one Reina remained.

"I..."

Reina held her leg while looking up at Hisui.

Due to the confusion in memories, she did not seem to understand what took place before her.

Simply holding her right leg, she sat in a crouching position unsteadily on the ground.

"Hey, what just happened!?"

Dressed in a tracksuit, Rangetsu was running over athletically.

She seemed to have sniffed something during her patrol.

"You came at the right time. Could you take class rep to the infirmary. Her doppelganger has returned to her body."

"Really!? Thank goodness... What about yours?"

"That one, I have a hunch somewhere. I'll go try my luck."

Chapter 6 - The Last Runner

It was near the end of the lunch break when Rushella went to look for Hisui.

Seeing him enter the classroom block, Rushella originally intended to call out to him but seeing some kind of determined look on Hisui's face, she changed her mind.

Hence she hid her presence and secretly followed him.

Hisui went up the stairs and towards the roof.

Because it was during the sports festival, the classroom block was very deserted. Plus the lunch break was about to end, there was almost no one there.

On this empty roof, waiting for Hisui was--the other him.

Rushella gulped and hid in the shadow of the roof shed while watching the two Hisuis meet.

"Hi, me."

Hisui waved and greeted himself.

The other him grabbed the metal net fencing on the roof edge and looked down.

Dressed in the high school uniform, carrying the cross-shaped sacred sword, the Tzara Blade, wrapped in white cloth.

He turned around. His face was identical to Hisui's.

But the deep sorrow in his eyes made him a completely different person from the usual Hisui.

It was Hisui's doppelganger, carrying the Anti-Drac mode constitution and his memories from the past year.

However, what he possessed was not limited to that.

"...How did you know I was here?"

"After all, it's my own thinking."

"..."

"For this kind of event like sports festivals or athletic meets, Miraluka always observed from this kind of place. She didn't want to attract too much attention. Also, carrying a parasol would hinder other student's parents from photographing them. Besides, her eyesight was amazingly good... Watching from up here would be good enough. So, did I guess right?"

"Yeah. As expected of myself."

The other Hisui answered weakly with self-deprecation.

"Then... The question is, what are you doing here?"

"Since it's you, you should understand, right?"

The other Hisui asked him in return.

Hisui leaned against the shed's wall and looked up at the sky.

"Miraluka's dead."

"..."

"I don't remember. Because you have that memory. But I heard from other people. Strangely enough, I don't feel sad."

"I thought so."

"I should be terribly sad. In fact, I do feel like there's a hollow in my heart, but it's nothing serious. Clearly I should be utterly sad. In other words... Carrying these feelings, you must be in great suffering. You are bearing all this for me, right?"

"..."

The other Hisui did not answer.

The feelings and memories after Miraluka was lost--were all with him.

He must be immersed in a swamp of sadness.

"I was thinking, if Miraluka was gone, what would I do? I think I'll be very depressed and shocked."

"Correct. In fact, that's what your summer vacation was like. Having few friends to begin with, you ended up being further estranged. And started

not trusting anyone. Using a hyperbole, you didn't trust the world. You didn't trust this world which did not have Miraluka."

The other Hisui spoke in a torrent of words.

Talking about sadness, talking about loneliness, talking about his feelings for that woman who had passed away from this world.

"Then... Finally pulling yourself together, you entered the high school entrance exam. For a change of pace, to make a clean break of the past, you chose this high school where no one knew you. What a lame reason for your choice of school."

"Isn't that great? Also, don't insult yourself so much, it'll make me sad."

Hisui lowered his gaze in sadness.

After all, the other guy was himself. Whether speaking ill or self-abusing, it all reflected on himself.

"Can't be helped, during the most depressing time, you were me. Until yesterday, I was wandering the streets. Carrying Miraluka's past possessions, going to those place visited together before. Really fucking lame."

The other Hisui laughed in a lonely manner.

As the listener, naturally, Hisui did not laugh.

How could anyone laugh.

"Although I already know that she's no longer here. But... I still feel so reluctant to accept it. After all, I didn't even get to say anything..."

"...Yeah. I understand. Not even a word of thanks."

The current Hisui did not have complete knowledge of Miraluka. However, he still knew that they had parted suddenly.

Back when he scraped his knee and Miraluka showed her true nature as a vampire for an instant--After that, he had not even said a simple "I don't mind" to her.

All this time, all along, he was never able to say it out.

"So even now, you still feel sad, right?"

With abject pain, Hisui asked his other self.

Just like Reina.

It was all his own fault for being incompetent, which was why the doppelganger before his eyes had to shoulder the heavy burden.

"It's the same for you, right...? These feelings are enough for two people... No, even two people cannot shoulder it all."

The other Hisui answered.

His eyes carried bottomless melancholy.

These feelings would be better off forgotten.

However.

"It's about time you return. At this rate, I'm gonna croak. If it means forgetting for a lifetime, I don't want it."

"Perhaps your current state is better."

"Give it up... No matter how painful, I still want to be able to remember at least upon my death."

"..."

"Only because it's you, I'll tell you this."

Hisui took a deep breath.

No one else is allowed to hear this.

For a whole lifetime, he absolutely won't tell anyone this.

Apart from himself, never.

"Once upon a time, I loved her."

Hisui heard the sound of something falling on the ground behind him.

Like something rolling on the ground, rupturing, breaking into pieces.

As it happened, a sudden gust of strong wind blew, covering up that sound. Even the quick and light footsteps leaving downstairs could not be heard by Hisui.

"Perhaps it was love for a mother, or love for an older sister, or a first crush... Anyway, I loved her, I was serious."

Finally, he said it out.

In this world without Miraluka.

Although saying it out had no meaning, at least he managed to say it out.

The other Hisui smiled tragically, turning into a grieving audience.

"Aren't you embarrassed to say that?"

"So noisy, shut up. If you think it's embarrassing, then you go ahead and feel embarrassed."

"If I return, you'll surely feel more suffering?"

"I know. But... Lacking memories is also painful. Not only Miraluka... But Rushella as well."

"..."

"The reason why I can still live my days properly after Miraluka was gone, it's actually thanks to Rushella, right?"

The other Hisui did not answer.

Silently, he smiled and stepped forward.

The two Hisuis intersected and overlapped.

The instant the Hisui in uniform touched the main body, they merged into one.

The clone left behind the Tzara Blade, falling to the floor with a crisp clink.

Hisui picked up cross-shaped sacred sword and stretched lightly.

"I finally managed to retrieve my original feelings."

He lightly reached towards his neck and tore off the bandaid.

Touching it, he confirmed the disappearance of the fearsome teeth marks.

"Now I can stop worrying. Wow, the afternoon competitions have started already... I'd better hurry to the relay match... Eh, what's this?"

Just as he was about to go downstairs, Hisui noticed a lunchbox by his feet.

Probably the plastic lid popped off when it fell, the contents were all spilt. Luckily, the cloth wrapped around the lunchbox was still intact, so the food did not scatter all over the floor.

"...Hmm?"

This cloth and lunchbox... Hisui recognized it.

Those were clearly his.

"Why...? Could it be that girl!?"

Hisui looked downwards, then frantically ran downstairs and looked all around.

But the classroom block seemed to be empty.

Rushella had already ran off.

"...Idiot."

Rushella grumbled, wandering behind the school building.

Students, teachers and parents were all gathered at the sports ground right now so no one came over to this classroom block.

Hisui... was probably still over there.

Definitely.

Rushella knew very well in her heart.

She knew from the start.

Even had she not bitten him, even if just an ordinary person... A long time ago, to this date, continuing into the future, Hisui's heart always belonged to Miraluka.

While she walked like this, tears naturally fell down.

Unstoppable.

Rushella could only cover her face with both hands.

Pressing her fingers to seal her tears in her eye lids, she desperately suppressed herself.

After a while, she put down her hands but her vision was blurred by the tears.

Then a dark mass appeared before her, dark enough to distort rays of light.

Clad in a pitch-black cape, the tall shadow was rich in vampire style, exuding an aura that dyed the surroundings of this little path red as blood.

The long black hair resembled a piece of darkness that was plucked then combed into threads while those crimson lips were even redder than fresh blood.

Most unforgettable of all was that skin of pure white, surpassing all creation in this world.

She seemed to have applied light blocking agent, her skin exhibiting a subtle sheen, blocking sunlight.

This was supposed to be artificial armor that reduced a vampire's beauty.

But the absolute beauty of her skin did not suffer at all from this.

Whether her lips or her black hair, everything was so perfectly flawless.

To sum up her face in one sentence, that was a beautiful face born from darkness.

The same kind of beauty as Rushella's, but more refined and honed, the beauty of maturity.

To this date, Rushella had seen many beauties.

Although differences in beauty varied from person to person, categorizing them into three, six or nine ranks perhaps depended on personal preference.

But this woman before her was undoubtedly more beautiful than her.

More accurately, there was a difference in fundamental nature.

In front of this woman, she was at best a cute little girl--Rushella could not help but feel a sense of defeat.

"...Who are you!?"

"I am one of your kind, in every sense of the word."

Her face closed in.

Also those blood-red lips.

Even as a fellow female, it produced a sense of lust in the viewer, so seductive it compelled one to suck on them.

The woman parted her lips slightly, exhaling sweet breath.

The instant she smelled that scent, Rushella felt intense dizziness.

"What... are you... doing!?"

"Trying out a toy I obtained. It's already used up now."

With her porcelain-like hand, she crushed the small bottle in her hand, turning it into powdered glass scattered on the floor.

"It's the doppelganger huh...? No way, I am...!"

"You are a vampire. In a certain sense, vampires cannot be considered complete entities, they are existences intermediate between physical bodies of flesh and spiritual bodies. Hence, you won't turn out like that girl or boy. Just that your true nature will be exposed completely."

"...!?"

"You are thirsting, right?"

She reached out to stroke the throat of Rushella who was collapsed on the ground. With sharp finger nails, she clawed at her skin.

"I understand... that thirst enough to drive one mad. For a vampire, it is essentially hell. It would be better if one were used to it. It would be better if one could accept any filthy blood, no matter how lowly. But not for you. Because you have sucked Hisui's blood, you are already accustomed to that fragrant blood and taking it for granted."

"Who... on... earth... are you!?"

She did not answer.

Then she left Rushella.

"W-Wait...!"

Despite knowing it was useless, Rushella still reached out a hand towards her.

Her other hand pressed down on her own throat.

Because the terrifying thirst was surging up.

Irrepressible desire spread throughout her entire body.

For Hisui and Reina, their inner self was liberated.

But vampires could not do the same.

They simply exhibited the true selves hidden within.

The struggle between reason and instinct.

With a scream akin to vomiting blood, Rushella called for the one she desired.

"Hisui...!"

"Sorry I'm late. It's my fault for putting us in last place..."

Hisui got back from the relay track and headed over to Mei and Eruru, bowing his head in apology.

He barely managed to return in time for his spot as the runner for the second leg of the race, rushing onto the track to receive the baton and run at full speed.

Hisui's class had already fallen behind with the first runner, so due to the leg delayed by Hisui, they fell to last place.

"...Don't worry, it's fine. By the way... Is your condition okay?"

"I won't die. Ah, but I wanna puke."

"Why are you holding your belly after running such a short distance? That is way too weak of you."

Eruru's reprimands were perfectly reasonable.

Although Hisui currently was not in perfect health, he was running way too poorly.

Plus clutching his belly right now.

"It wasn't easy catching my doppelganger. The class rep's was found too, although she forfeited the relay. Happy ending, right?"

"Well... I guess."

"Then only Rushella is left, right?"

Mei and Eruru had run their part already and were resting on stand by.

They both held back, so Hisui's class was still dead last.

And the difference was quite large.

"Hey... Isn't it almost time for her to run? And we need to choose a new final leg... In this kind of situation, someone has to run twice, right?"

"They're discussing it right now. Oh, coming up, she's here."

Mei pointed to the other side of the circular field.

Each leg of the whole-class relay race was half a circuit around the track--hence, the runners must separate into odds and evens, standing on opposite sides of the track, waiting for the baton to pass to their hand.

And this moment, it was Rushella's turn to stand on the starting line.

Because they were trailing far behind the other classes, Rushella was standing there alone.

"Thank goodness, she finally came. I can watch the results of her training... Hey, isn't there something wrong?"

Hisui was the first to notice the unusual situation.

Even from far away, he saw very clearly.

Rushella was trembling all over, hugging herself desperately.

On the hands hugging herself, the fingernails were exceptionally long.

"Hey... She looks really thirsty. Isn't she a 'True Ancestor' at least...? Can't she bear it for a bit...?"

"I do not know the specifics regarding her condition but this clearly an emergency. As much as I am reluctant to cause a scene in public... There is no choice now."

Argentum's luster already flashed in Eruru's hand.

Hiding behind Mei, she tried to be as inconspicuous as possible. If necessary, she was going to shoot.

"Hey stop it... What are you thinking!?"

"That is my line. Do you not understand after seeing the way she looks...? Clearly an abnormal state. You should know very clearly what a vampire in thirst is like, right!?"

"..."

This was the destiny of blood that no vampire could escape.

When the thirst for blood reached a peak, they lost all rationality and turned in beasts feeding on fresh blood.

Hisui anxiously looked towards Rushella then revealed a smile.

The runner before Rushella reached out to her, handing the baton.

Then... Rushella caught it.

Although her hand trembled somewhat, she caught it steadily.

"...See, the results of practice is showing, right?"

"Please stop feeling impressed about the inconsequential."

Eruru scolded strictly. Beside her, Mei also showed a solemn face.

Nevertheless, Hisui ignored them and turned towards the nearby classmates who had also finished running.

"Sorry everyone. I'll take the final leg. After all, you guys still haven't decided, right?"

"Eh~~?"

"That's not too good, right?"

"Although being dead last is for certain, giving up in despair is a bit..."

"Say, has your stomach ache stopped?"

...Looks like there was grumbling aplenty.

Hisui knew very well his position in the class.

Just as Hisui was at a loss, a voice from behind helped him out.

"Let Kujou-kun go."

He turned around to see Reina.

Her right leg was wrapped in bandages while she spoke with a smile. Rangetsu was supporting her.

"This was originally my responsibility... Kujou-kun, I'm counting on you."

"...Thanks."

Hisui accepted Reina's request and headed over to the starting line.

Since Reina spoke up, the others had no objections... silently watching Hisui.

Then... Rushella arrived.

Although the sunlight was intense, she was running way too slowly.

Desperately fighting against the impulse inside her body, she was reaching her limit.

After all, Hisui was right before her eyes.

The desired blood was within reach.

"Hisui...!"

Calling out at the same time, Rushella licked her lips.

Her running speed suddenly rose.

The baton in her hand was becoming hard to hold.

Her other hand, empty, reached towards the flesh and blood she had desired for a long time.

Mei prepared herself, gathering sunlight in her eyes.

Eruru lifted the gun.

Rangetsu made a stance like a carnivorous and ferocious beast.

But Hisui took action faster than them, faster than anyone else.

In contravention of relay race norms, he ran over towards Rushella.

Then to avoid letting others see her horrifying appearance, he spread his arms and hugged her.

Hisui proactively put his neck towards Rushella's mouth, letting her drink his blood.

Without making a sound, he endured all pain.

Simply running up to embrace the girl who was collapsing from utter exhaustion--That was surely what spectators saw.

The entire school's eyes were focused on the two of them.

In a duration too short to call an instant, Hisui whispered in Rushella's ear:

"The lunchbox was delicious."

"...!"

The light of rationality lit up in Rushella's eyes.

Because of Hisui's words or because of Hisui's blood... Surely both reasons were responsible.

Hisui's existence managed to rescue Rushella's mind, on the verge of collapse.

"If I had to say something, you're still at a developing stage. Honestly, why is the omelette looking like that and the hamburger steak is raw, it's totally mind boggling."

"You're being noisy... Shut up..."

Rushella protested in a trembling voice. Her dainty hand clutched desperately at Hisui's back to avoid falling over.



"B-But the effort nearly killed me... Treated like an idiotic by that girl, cutting myself in the hand, getting up early..."

"I know, I know. Now you can understand some of my pain, right?"

"So noisy... In any case, in any case, it's Miraluka who's better...!"

"You're more important than that dead person."

These words caused all strength to drain from Rushella's entire body.

She was already on the verge of tears.

No matter what era, sweet words were the easiest form of instant cure.

Even between a vampire and a human... it was the same.

The baton slid off from Rushella's hand.

Just before it hit the ground, Hisui caught it.

"Sorry, I'm leaving this girl to you."

Hisui gently pushed Rushella away, entrusting her to Rangetsu.

Rushella looked like she had something to say. Hisui deliberately ignored her gaze and touched his neck.

His bleeding had stopped.

But the body that was vampirizing only just earlier was seriously anemic.

And just now, Rushella had sucked with reckless abandon.

In fact, standing was difficult with this body that had suffered excessive blood loss.

Nevertheless, this was what allowed him to do what was not usually possible.

"Eli Eli lama sabachthani...!"

Accompanied by increasingly loud heart beats, Hisui chanted the incantation.

The black emblem resembling thorns appeared on his neck.

There was no worry even if other students saw it.

After all, this was only going to flash through their memories briefly.

Together with this body, flying past before their eyes.

Anti-Drac mode, activate.

Instantly, Hisui's outline blurred.

The only people who could capture him in their view were Rushella and the girls, the supernatural creatures.

Hisui raced along the track with lightning speed.

The distance with the other classes was shrinking.

Originally wide enough to be despairing, he closed the distance within the blink of an eye.

"So fast... Kujou-kun is too fast!! He passed three people all at once!!"

The announcer's energetic voice was relaying Hisui's heroic feat on the track.

It was Kirika who had snatched the megaphone, so emotional that her cheeks were scarlet.

After the live announcement, cheers began to sound repeatedly as the entire school focused their eyes on Hisui.

This was good.

With that, no one would remember Rushella's scene just now.

Although this contravened Hisui's philosophy of an ordinary school life...

"Once in a while, I guess."

Hisui sighed and entered the final stretch, the straight part of the track.

The final leg runner in first place was just ahead, a few meters away.

"I know this counts as cheating, please forgive me."

"Finally only one person left to pass! Kujou-kun, you are too amazing!!!"

Hisui's speed dropped all at once.

Also, the entire school's gaze focused on Kirika.

Red in the face, she returned to her spot at the student council.

Then... As though his tense nerves had snapped, Hisui was slowing down.

Before he knew it, the emblem on his neck had vanished.

"Ah, it was no good after all."

Leaving these last words, Hisui crossed the finish line, falling over forwards.

Naturally, he was second place.

"You great idiot! I can't believe you failed to get first having gone this far! Doesn't this make my training go all to waste!?"

"Don't say anymore..."

Hisui had no strength to argue with the unreasonable Rushella.

If he did not wait quietly for his blood to recover, or get a blood transfusion quick, his life really would be in danger.

"Oh well... Whatever, I forgive you."

Saying that, Rushella hugged Hisui in her bosom, pressing his head tightly between her breasts.

"Ah! Hey, that's my job! Move aside!!!"

Mei ended up hugging him as well.

Getting crushed by two pairs of giant breasts was no joking matter. Hisui felt his consciousness flying far away.

Crap crap crap crap crap crap crap, super crap hyper crap.

However, there would be no regrets dying like this with his consciousness far gone.

His classmates, particularly the boys, were staring at him with murderous eyes.

Eruru and Rangetsu's eyes were filled with despise.

For some reason, Reina was getting tearful.

Finally abusing public authority for private intentions, Kirika grabbed the megaphone specifically and yelled "Hey over there! Hurry and get off the track once you finish running!"

"...Oh well, whatever. Oh dear, I'm really out of blood..."

"Ah, hey, don't sleep! Pull yourself together!"

Several minutes later, Hisui was carried to the infirmary.

After that, he received a transfusion from the blood delivered by Eruru, lying on the bed while listening to the closing ceremony speeches. Thus Hisui's sports festival was finally concluded.

Epilogue

"...Is this reasonable? I'm so tired I collapsed, but I'm still forced to stay behind and clean up the sports festival venue, is this reasonable?"

"Cut the crap and work fast. Seriously, why do I even have to..."

Rangetsu grumbled while carrying the tent's frame to the storeroom.

The sports festival ended on a successful note. Now all that remained was clean up work to put away the tents, chairs, sound equipment etc.

The student council members had cleared up a portion and left the remainder for Vice-President Kirika to handle.

The Supernatural Investigations Club plus Rangetsu were helping out Kirika, doing the clean up.

Undoubtedly, Touko was simply cheering for them, moving her mouth but not her hands.

Because sunset was fast approaching, as a ghost, Touko was getting rambunctious.

"So, Touko-san, I've got a very simple question. Where were you during the sports festival? Were you wandering in school all this time!?"

"Of course not. I spectated every event properly... Ah."

"How stupid of me to even think of relying on you."

"Because I want to enjoy the springtime of youth... During the relay race, I was running alongside you guys, didn't you notice!?"

"Scary! If the parents took photos, they'd surely end up with ghost photos!!"

"Don't worry, I'm very photogenic! Although it ends up a bit blurry, only a part of my body shows up in the photo..."

"Hmm, please choose one of the following: find an exorcist or join one of those paranormal shows on television. I beg you, please please keep a low profile in events like these."

Hisui shooed the wandering spirit away with displeasure, immersing himself in his work.

It was almost sundown when the clean up was done and the Supernatural Investigations Club plus Rangetsu could finally leave.

"Man~ I'm dead tired. My only salvation is that tomorrow is swapped with today to give a holiday..."

"Yes, it's time for proper relaxing!"

"He can't relax with you around, right? Say, Hi-kun, would you like to take this opportunity to live with me!?"

"I should advise you to give up, Sudou-san. If he were to peek when you are changing, do not say I did not warn you, okay?"

"Hold on a second, I cannot ignore this... What is going on, what happened when Kujou-kun was staying in Kariya-san's home?"

"Jeez, it's just changing clothes. He saw me already, you know?"

Rangetsu interjected seductively.

But the faction of four girls coldly shook their heads.

" " " "No one cares about you." " " " "

"What kind of treatment is this!? What value are you placing on my naked body!?"

"To be honest, I find Kariya more of a sight."

"What did you say?"

"Nothing."

Feeling Eruru's tone of voice sound as cold as knife's blade, Hisui quickened his steps out of the school gates.

Just as everyone left school, about to return to their respective homes...

She came.

Darkness followed her, the canopy of the night descending at her command.

Everyone felt an unusual aura.

Small animals, birds, insects... All creatures' presences vanished.

Clad in a cape, the tall lady walked on the street. As though fearing the arrival of a monarch, as though opening a path for her, all creatures fled from her.

"It's you...!"

Rushella drew a dagger.

She had not told Hisui's group about the earlier encounter yet.

But even if she had not mentioned it, everyone noticed the unusual change in the surroundings.

Mei, Eruru, Kirika, Rangetsu, they all entered combat stances.

Only one person, Hisui, stayed rooted to the ground in shock.

Hisui recognized that peerless, beautiful face, standing out clearly against the color of the night.

No photo.

No video.

Drawings could not recreate her beauty.

Mirrors could not reflect her appearance.

Only memory could record her peerless visage.

"Hello again."

She smiled faintly.

Like a tender mother.

Like a mischievous older sister.

Like a seductive lover.

As though gliding, she approached Hisui.

Until her graceful and slender hand brushed against Hisui's cheek, no one made any reaction.

Because her action was too natural and due to the look on Hisui's face, almost about to burst into tears.

"Don't touch him!"

Only Rushella sprang into action.

Holding her dagger in a reverse grip, she stabbed towards the woman's arm!

But the woman remained unconcerned, standing there unfazed.

The laser from Mei's eyes was effortlessly neutralized by the wave of her hand.

Kirika's curse was completely ineffective against her.

Eruru's bullet was blocked harmlessly by her hand.

Rangetsu charged, but collapsed on the ground after a light shove from her.

"Miraluka...!?"

Finally, Hisui called out her name.

The name of the person he once loved, the one who had raised him.

The name of the person who had originally died.

"Why are you...!?"

"How lively your surroundings have become. Oh well, is this what is known as growth? How lonely it feels for me, yet delightful too... But contemptible."

These words were said by her as his mother, his sister and lover at the same time--Covering all "female" identities.

Her crimson eyes were especially filled with hostility towards Rushella.

"Imposter and failure. You have no right to suck my Hisui's blood. Make yourself scarce now."

"...What are you talking about? You're the imposter... Miraluka is already...!"

"Do you really believe that? My immortality... as well as the impossibility of my leaving you, casting you to the winds. Shouldn't you know this best?"

Hisui fell silent.

She was right.

A vampire with eternal life and youth, a True Ancestor to boot.

Could not possibly have died.

But she definitely died.

For me.

"Since you are alive, why...!?"

"I am very confused too. One day, you and I must bid farewell to each other. That is the way things are between humans and vampires. However... Due to a pest's infestation, I cannot stand aside."

Her crimson lips approached Hisui's neck.

Stop--Everyone called out to stop her.

Rushella reached out.

But Hisui himself was unmoved.

The crimson tongue extended from her lips and licked lightly.

Then it moved towards his lips.

A light kiss, parting quickly immediately.

"You must be exhausted today. Go home and rest properly. Let us leave the talking for next time... A good long talk."

"Wait up... Hey!"

Miraluka ignored Hisui and turned towards Rushella.

"Today I finally understand completely. Sure enough, you are the imposter. Let alone a True Ancestor, you even have no right to call yourself blood kin."

"...What are you talking about!? I...!"

"You are nobody. No family, no friends, no servants either. This is only natural, because you are merely just a doll, born out of thin air."

"...!?"

"Were you a True Ancestor, in this kind of night, everyone present should be bowing down to you as subjects. Are you capable of that? You cannot. Furthermore, can you restrain your desire for blood? Although even one such as I cannot escape the destiny of blood, I am at least hundreds, thousands of times superior to you. A vampire that cannot restrain themselves is worse than an insect, let alone a human."

"Bitch...!"

"Your desires will end up killing Hisui. It's about time you realized that."

These were the last of her words.

With a flutter of her cape, Miraluka turned and departed. No one chased after her.

Originally expected to chase after her for sure, even Hisui sat collapsed on the ground, drained of strength.

"What the fuck... What the fuck is this!?"

No one could answer.

No one knew how this came about.

The group dallied for a while before leaving.

Finally back home, Hisui was still showing shock in his face.

He did not get changed but simply lay down on the living room couch, staring blankly at the ceiling. Then Rushella got on top of him.

"You're so heavy."

"So noisy, shut up! Stop thinking about that woman! So outrageous, kissing directly..."

"She is a kissing demon. She already took my first and second kisses along time ago. Sigh, I really don't get it... I'm not going to think anymore, going to bed now, move aside please."

"No."

Rushella had already changed into her usual shirt and kept Hisui pinned down firmly.

In order not to let him escape, she pressed her voluptuous bosom against him.

"Hey, move that aside."

"No~!"

Thumping her arms and legs, she rubbed her face against Hisui's chest.

Indeed, she really did lack a True Ancestor's dignified airs for sure.

"...Why do you regress into a child as soon as you stick to me?"

"...I don't know, so you're believing that woman...?"

Rushella's eyes were glimmering with tears already.

Hisui smiled wryly and extended his hand, placing it on the top of Rushella's head.

"I already said, my mind is a super mess. Even if that really is her and she's still alive, what I want to express first is anger to demand that she explain things clearly. Also... Although she insulted you thoroughly, you really aren't that strong as a True Ancestor, plus you're a bit lacking in stateliness, you know?"

Rushella did not speak, simply hammering Hisui haphazardly.

Indeed, she was showing signs of regressing into a child.

A voluptuous body, lost memories, childlike innocence.

"My bad, okay, stop it. I have no intention of kicking you out either."

"..."

"Worst case scenario, I'll just have to leave this place and live alone. Anyway... I'll talk with her, talk about all sorts of things. So... What? Hey! Rushella-san?"

Before he knew it, Rushella was already asleep.

Her sleeping face looked relaxed and peaceful, her massive bust weighing on Hisui's body, heaving up and down with her breathing.

"Ending with this move huh?"

Hisui also gave up on grappling with the issues in his mind and chose to sleep.

After all, the next day was a holiday and he was going to be woken up by her fangs again... Oh well, that could not be helped either.

After all... This could no longer be separated from his daily life.

Because this kind of everyday life had become matter-of-fact.

Dawn came the next day and Rushella woke up first as usual.

But she did not suck his blood.

She simply brought herself close to Hisui's face.

"Such a sloppy sleeping face again."

Rushella rubbed their faces together but Hisui did not wake up.

"I know without needing that woman to tell me."

With eyes filled with determination, she murmured faintly.

Indeed, compared to that kind of woman.

Compared to the kind of woman who simply lived with Hisui in the past.

She understood Hisui better.

Worrying about Hisui's safety.

Yesterday, Hisui had almost lost his life again due to her.

That happened last time and the time before that as well.

It will probably happen again in the future.

Staying by his side, sucking his blood, fighting those who plotted to harm her.

Hence--

This morning today, a vampire's kiss was not needed.

Instead, she bestowed a true kiss upon him.

Rushella gently pressed her lips onto Hisui's lips.

Perhaps this was the first and last time, a true kiss.

Hisui remained asleep.

Separating their lips, Rushella smiled at his sleeping face and said:

"I had a happy time."

This was her farewell.

Tears were seeping into her smiling eyes, but no one knew.

Rushella slowly got up and left without returning.

"...Eh, Rushella?"

When Hisui opened his eyes, Rushella was not present.

Although he found it strange for the sun was already up high, Hisui still made lunch out of habit.

He finally understood.

Rushella's presence had disappeared completely.

Checking her room, he found the coffin gone.

Hisui called Mei and Eruru... No one knew Rushella's whereabouts.

As the cliched saying went, people only cherish things after they've lost them.

On that autumn morning, Kujou Hisui's high school life was liberated from a crimson fate.

Afterword

Hello everyone, I am Totsuki.

I am not a vampire but just an extremely ordinary human. But while writing this book, I lived a messed up life with all sorts of upside down schedules, living like a vampire completely.

Including the editors, I've caused many people lots of trouble, so I should simply put on a stone mask and forsake my human identity in exchange for writing speed and creativity--I seriously considered this kind of question.

Giving up on being human or giving up writing, if I had to choose between the two, I guess I'd choose the former after all?

Oh well, I don't leave the house much usually and get much sun, perhaps it's too late already. Next time, I'd better check the length of my canines.

...Okay, I should end the chatting here and get back to the main subject.

I will enter spoiler territory here, so please be careful, my friend, if you haven't read the book yet.

During the writing process, I realized there were great shifts in the story's development.

Hisui and Rushella's story was gradually reaching a climax. I intended to consider future developments while reviewing the story's opening, so I dug out some settings I never got to using.

When I first started wanting to write about a vampire theme, I intended to make the protagonist a vampire boy.

Of course, the setting was that he drank milk instead of blood.

Think about it, everyone... Blood and milk fundamentally come from the same materials, right?

...Then, since the protagonist has lived for centuries after all, his suckling technique is quite awesome, causing many ladies to be lost in ecstasy, all conquered by his mouth. But the protagonist himself enters sage mode every time after suckling... No, what I mean is that with his desires satisfied, he says something like "Phew... Why are you still here? Get lost already." As though he was very exhausted.

Yes, I read my earlier file and then silently closed it.

How should I comment on this? Officially known as unused ideas, I feel like this is basically a book of dark history.

Of course, the the editor in charge never mentioned that idea and I now understand why this series was chosen.

Ever since, I have caused lots of trouble for the editors. I reflect deeply.

Not only for the editors but also all the readers to see the ending to Hisui and Rushella's story earlier, I will work my hardest to make that day come earlier. I hope everyone will support me to the very end.

Totsuki Yuu

References

1. ↑ This girl(彼女): this is a repeat of the Volume 1 Chapter 1 scene when Rushella made her entrance in the class. Kanojo(彼女) in Japanese is used as a third person reference for females (her/she/this girl) as well as meaning "girlfriend."
2. ↑ In Japanese, Oogami sounds the same as the word for wolf.
3. ↑ A concept similar to naked apron in otaku culture.
4. ↑ A sound effect.
5. ↑ 幽霊でも恋がしたい！ (Yuurei-demo-koi-ga-shitai !), does it remind anyone of anything?

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