

十月ユウ

Silver Cross & Draculaea

銀の十字架と



ドラキュリア



ファンタジア文庫

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SILVER CROSS AND DRACULEA

VOLUME 5

Written by 十月ユウ (Totsuki Yuu)

Illustrated by 八坂 ミナト (Yasaka Minato)

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Translated by **Baka-Tsuki**
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PROLOGUE

Rushella had disappeared.

Expressing this simple fact of reality did not require particular mincing of words, but it took Hisui a lot of time to accept it.

On the holiday after the sports festival, it was already midday by the time Hisui woke up.

The bloody mornings--where Rushella bit his neck to drink blood--were now a thing of the past. Replacing them was something no different from what ordinary people experienced... Continuous sleep until waking up naturally.

Despite feeling something was amiss, Hisui still went to wash his face, get a drink of water and got to work making breakfast for two as habit dictated.

"Hey, are you still sleeping?"

Rushella could not possibly have gone out on her own.

Essentially, she always went out with Hisui. Even if Hisui was sleeping, she would rouse him from bed.

Hence, if Rushella could not be found, she was most likely in her bedroom... Miraluka's former bedroom.

Hisui expected her to have the door and windows shut tightly, in full vampire style, having sweet dreams in the darkness.

"...Eh?"

No one was there.

Rushella was not in the room. The bed also had no signs of being slept in.

The bedding was neat and tidy without the slight trace of lingering body warmth.

So be it if these were the only things amiss.

However, the problem was that all of Rushella's personal belongings were completely gone.

Her usual coffin was gone.

Naturally, it was not something to carry around just to go out.

Only then did Hisui realize.

Rushella... had disappeared.

"What's with that girl..."

Anxiety in his heart was unavoidable, but Hisui carried some measure of optimism.

Surely she had simply run off somewhere again.

Coffin, well... Maybe she took it out for some kind of special reason.

"Just in case..."

Hisui decided to first text and ask Mei, Eruru, Kirika--basically every girl who might be with her or might know Rushella's whereabouts.

Luckily, Rushella's circle of friends was very small, so those girls were the only ones she could go trouble.

Hisui did not think he had done anything to anger her. Hence, the girls should be bringing good news soon--That was what Hisui expected.

"I dunno. What, did you get into another fight!? Then take this opportunity to have babies with me, how's about that♥"

"No idea. As the custodian, please keep clear tabs on her comings and goings."

"Sorry, I have no idea. By the way, next Saturday... Are you free?"

The girls replied respectively in their willful, distinctive styles.

Hisui sighed and ate breakfast helplessly.

In any case, she should be returning on her own by night.

At least at the time, Hisui was still clinging onto this naive notion.

However, when night descended... Rushella still had not returned.

Only then did Hisui seriously start looking for her.

Apart from the coffin, all of Rushella's personal belongings were gone as well. This worried Hisui even more.

Not a single note. The only thing left behind were the gold coins that used to be kept in Rushella's coffin.

In a certain sense, these coins were actually the most essential when going out. Perhaps this stood as her determination to part ways.

"Rent for all this time... Is that what she means? What a totally unfunny joke..."

Hisui placed the sack of coins on the living room dining table then ran out into the streets at night.

Everywhere Rushella had visited in the past or might visit, even with the slightest probability, Hisui searched them one by one.

But came up emptyhanded.

Along the way, Hisui asked everyone he met. Even if he failed to find her person, getting some sort of clue would be helpful.

But there was not a single clue.

Finally, he came to school.

After all, she should come here when it was time for class, there was no particular need to search this place now.

But Hisui still climbed over the tightly shut school gate and entered the deserted school.

Because the classroom block was locked and could not be entered,

Hisui had no choice but to wander outside.

As expected, Rushella was not found.

"Eh, Hisui-kun?"

In the end, all he found was the ghost roaming the school--Fuwa Touko.

Like a typical ghost, she was accompanied by ghostlights floating around her while she hovered in the air leisurely.

On a certain level, Hisui came to school also in order to question her. Since the ghost was bound to the school grounds, Hisui's only choice was to make a visit.

"Touko-san... Have you seen Rushella?"

"Nope. Why, did something happen?"

"...She's gone missing. I can't find her anywhere."

"Oh, she ran away from home!? She didn't leave a note!?"

"She didn't... That's why it's so worrying."

That's right--If she had left a cliched note like "Don't come find me", at least it wouldn't be this worrying. Because that kind of note would actually mean "Come find me."

Even if he didn't look for her, she would surely appear herself and complain "Come find me!"

Rushella had not left a note.

Leaving without a farewell, this conveyed the strength of her determination to part ways.

Judging from the circumstances... She probably was not abducted by force.

This was almost certainly her own will.

After searching the streets all night, Hisui was beginning to understand in his heart even if he was reluctant to accept reality.

"Don't go keeping all your worries to yourself, okay? Have you asked Kirika-chan and the others?"

"That's the first thing I did. Kariya also seems to be searching... But no news yet."

"..."

"Thank you for your cooperation. See you tomorrow... No, it's already tomorrow. See you in class."

Hisui's body was already not in the best of conditions. Due to running his hardest at the relay race in the sports festival and the blood loss--His current physical condition was terrible. Combined with the fatigue and anxiety from the search, Hisui left the school with stumbling steps.

If he returned home, perhaps Rushella might be back already.

Perhaps she might throw a tantrum because no one was in the house--"Why didn't you come back earlier!?"--Complaining as if she were not the one at fault.

Nevertheless, Hisui's hopes were dashed.

Lying down carelessly on the bed, Hisui slept like a log.

When early morning came, he dragged his heavy body to school but Rushella was not in the classroom.

Asking Mei and Eruru yielded nothing.

During the lunch break, he went to exchange info with Kirika but the result was equally in vain.

The second day, the third day--He repeated the above but the result did not change.

Based on what Eruru said, even some of the Supernatural Investigations Section staff were mobilized.

Despite verbal claims refusing to help, Rangetsu was apparently helping.

Still, there was no news on Rushella.

She had disappeared, leaving no trace behind.

A week, a month passed by. Autumn was over, winter was gradually approaching closer.

Before he knew it, days without Rushella had become his usual daily life.

At least, none of the people around Hisui mentioned Rushella again, possibly in consideration of Hisui's feelings.

Hence, when Hisui heard Rushella's name mentioned again, after a very long time--It was from the class rep Sera Reina.

"Draculea-san... When is she coming back?"

"Who knows."

Hisui answered indifferently.

After school, they were going home together coincidentally and walked together for a bit... Then Reina brought up Rushella after seemingly resolving herself.

Stealing glances at Hisui, she stuttered while continuing the subject.

"Did she... return home overseas? Did something happen over on that side?"

"No idea... I didn't hear anything about it. But... She must be having a good time there. So she'll probably stay there. Isn't that for the best?"

Hisui crafted reasonable and logical lies in a dry and boring tone of voice.

The fabricated backstory, that of distant relatives living abroad, also came in handy to a certain extent while Rushella was missing. Due to Eruru's arrangements, the school also completed withdrawal procedures.

However, Reina did not seem to believe these.

Although she said nothing on the surface, neither did she ask anything until now... Reina kept gazing towards Rushella's empty seat with mournful eyes.

"During the sports festival... Did something happen?"

"..."

Reina asked, refusing to give up.

"Nothing much. Nothing happened to you too, Class Rep, right?"

Hisui deliberately emphasized the last few words.

The doppelganger did not seem to have left Reina with any lingering side effects. This neighbor in the classroom remained as virtuous and dignified as before... However, surely she could not have completely forgotten everything that happened.

To some extent, she should have inherited the memories of the self that had split from her, or even realized Rushella's true identity perhaps.

But after the sports festival, Hisui--

"You probably had a nightmare because of the fatigue from training too much."

He covered up the issue with a simple sentence.

At the time, Reina looked like she had more to say but she did not press the matter.

She also seemed to have ideas regarding Rushella's disappearance but had kept silent all this time.

Perhaps this was part of her worrying for others but unfortunately, Hisui currently did not have any spare energy to be considerate of her feelings.

"...You're not going to pick her up?"

"Pick who up?"

"Draculea-san..."

"No news is good news, it means she's living well. After all, it's not like we're that related."

Indeed.

A vampire and a human--That was all their relationship amounted to.

Then Rushella had gone to the far side of the darkness.

"I'm going this way, bye."

Hisui waved indifferently and said goodbye to Reina.

He deliberately avoided looking at her face then started his lonely journey home.

Without Rushella around, the way home from school was extremely quiet.

But preparing for Christmas, the streets were noisier than usual.

There were decorated trees on the sidewalk, the neon lights were more striking than ever, waves of pedestrian crowds--Everything contrasted with Hisui's solitude.

He had already realized faintly.

Very likely, he will continue to be alone from now on.

Hence, when Hisui opened his home's door, he didn't bother with a "I'm home" greeting.

Even after discovering a pair of female high-heels at the entrance, he did not--

"...!?"

Hisui frantically took off his shoes and ran into the house.

Someone was in the living room.

He could hear the television.

"...Rushella!?"

He pushed the door open and ran into the living room.

But the instant he entered the room, Hisui could not help but show a troubled expression.

A woman was lying on the sofa nonchalantly.

That devil-may-care attitude and reclining posture was the same as Rushella's before, but the seductive effect was miles apart.

"Welcome home."

As though in her own home, she greeted Hisui nonchalantly.

The woman sat up. Her pale skin was clad in a black camisole dress, almost akin to underwear.

"Miraluka...?"

This existence, even more unexpected than Rushella, had appeared before Hisui's eyes.

This unforgettable woman who had turned into ashes once, disappearing after her sudden appearance at the sports festival.

"What's the matter, why are you zoning out there? At least brew me some tea, how about that?"

"...Stop joking around. I have tons of questions for you... She's already dead... Already dead, right in my arms. Then... who the heck are you!?"

While searching for Rushella, Hisui had been thinking many times.

His final conclusion--a fake.

There should be no mistake.

Surely this was the only possibility.

Although the woman before his eyes had perfect facial features as

exquisite like a finely crafted masterpiece of nature, pale white skin that seemed almost transparent, sleek black lustrous hair... Although her lips were even redder than blood and the words from her lips were sounding clearly in his ears... Nevertheless, she was already gone.

She had turned into ash, blown away by the unruly wind, disappearing without trace.

All that was left of her was a handful of remains in Hisui's hand.

And even now, those were already gone too.

For someone who knew the real Miraluka, a flawless imposter was only a sight evocative of contempt.

"...Who are you? If your playing a joke on me in poor taste, be careful or I'll--"

Hisui's eyes were flashing with dangerous light.

Normally, he would never say something like that. Hearing him, this woman possessing Miraluka's appearance simply shrugged in boredom before smiling seductively.

"Try it if you can."

CHAPTER 1

CRIMSON RETURN

"Sorry, I apologize to you for getting carried away..."

Hisui was kneeling formally in seiza on the cold floor.

Not only was his face beaten and bruised... But his entire body was stripped naked apart from a pair of shorts.

He was supposed to be used to getting tormented by girls, but this time was really quite a predicament.

On the other hand, the culprit who had used brute force was lying on the sofa, gracefully savoring the barley tea that Hisui had brewed.

"Seriously, have you forgotten how you ought to be speaking towards me? With such a weak body still, I can't believe what gave you the courage to go against me."

She sighed and exclaimed in a tone of disbelief then ignored Hisui and turned back to watching the drama rerun on television.

Operating the remote control with experienced ease, she really acted as casually as though she was in her own home.

Hisui silently endured this series of undeserved treatment while pondering the situation.

Trying to act cool in a rare moment and even making a cool ultimatum... He ended up defeated in an instant.

First a finger flick to his head made him dizzy, then a punch to the gut and a kick arrived without him being able to put up any resistance. Finally, he was stripped of his clothing.

This level of treatment was totally on a different dimension.

Nevertheless, this was precisely the kind of daily life he used to

share with Miraluka.

That's right... Hisui recalled it.

She was more seductive than Mei, more merciless than Eruru, more intelligent and sharp than Kirika, more elusive than Touko, more agile and faster than Rangetsu.

Furthermore, she was even more tyrannical and unreasonable than Rushella.

This was precisely the kind of woman he used to live with.

"...I just want to ask, where the heck did you come from? I know I can't beat you and it's also clear that you have vampire-level abilities."

In any case, using force was hopeless. Hisui asked with a strained face.

Eyes glued to the television, the woman replied nonchalantly.

"I am Miraluka. You can't even recognize the one who raised you? What an ingrate."

"Like I said! That woman died already! Stop bringing that up again and again, it's very hurtful..."

Recalling Miraluka's last moments, Hisui felt as though knives were stabbing into his heart.

The scene from that day was the only thing that he could not numb himself against, let alone forget.

"Vampires may have eternal life and youth indeed, but they are not indestructible. That's what she taught me. Although True Ancestors have especially powerful vitality, they also possess all the weaknesses of common vampires precisely because they are the progenitors of vampires. In particular, they fear sunlight and crosses. This is an unshakable rule that no True Ancestor can escape. Back then, Miraluka's light-blocking agent passed its time limit. And there was no time to reapply it. Because she was

occupied with performing chest compressions on me."

"..."

"That's why she was under direct sunlight and went beyond her limit. Her body turned into ash and scattered away. In such conditions, how could she possibly die and resurrect?"

It was a memory that Hisui had no wish of recalling.

Yet recalling it precisely now, all he could feel was endless despair in his heart.

Under those conditions, a vampire could not possibly survive.

"Hmm... Well, it's not illogical for you to think this way."

"What do you mean, for me to think this way? That's the reality that I saw with my own eyes. What now, are you saying you have reasons that can convince me otherwise?"

Hearing his challenging tone of voice, the woman turned her gaze away from the television finally.

"It's a long story."

"Hurry and tell me. I will listen to all of it patiently."

"In actual fact, I lived. Done."

Summarizing in mere seconds, she turned back to the television again.

"...Hey, that's too brief! I knew it, you're just toying with me...!?"

Hisui stood up, clenching his weak and powerless fist, howling.

Then an ice-cold voice instantly smacked him.

"Who permitted you to stand up...? Looks like you need to be re-educated anew...?"

Hisui reflexively straightened his back and sat back down in formal seiza posture.

His body moved on its own.

Instead of a vampire's mystic eyes, this was rooted in a command that applied to all humans.

A son's inability to oppose the mother.

This command was apparently etched in their genes, rendering Hisui's own will powerless, causing his body to react first autonomously.

Hisui understood vaguely.

That Miraluka, her beauty was something that no magic, no matter how high level, could recreate.

It was said that numerous artists had begged her to serve as their model, but this sublime and unattainable beauty meant that she was a woman who ruined the careers of many artists.

They all ended up breaking their paintbrushes or self-mutilating with their chisels.

Miraluka had apparently bragged about this once when she was drunk. To be honest, it didn't sound like lying at all.

But in that case, then this woman, who looked identical to Miraluka--

"...Would you kindly explain more concretely, Onee-sama?"

Hisui compromised and spoke with a stiff face and cautious tones.

In any case, acting more humble was the only way to make progress right now.

"Looks like you finally remembered how you're supposed to speak. Hurry up and put your clothes on. How much longer are you going to force me to look upon that skinny and weak body of yours?"

"You're the one who stripped me first, okay..."

"What did you say?"

"Nothing."

Hisui turned to the side and put on his clothes. Then sitting on a cushion by the low table, he rested his chin against his hands, intending to listen to a story.

The speaker finally switched off the television and turned towards him.

"So... What on earth happened?"

"Because I am a True Ancestor."

"No, I know that already..."

"Those known as True Ancestors each possess unique powers. Do you still remember?"

"...Yeah."

Ever since early childhood, Hisui had learned a lot of knowledge about vampires through various tidbits from chats and conversations.

Although legends about vampires varied greatly, they all had the common feature of turning into vampires the people whom they sucked blood from, or using the mystic eyes. Vampires also had various individual powers unique to them.

For example, turning their body into mist, sharing certain senses with animals like bats, making their tangible body vanish and all sorts of transformations--These abilities were not shared by all vampires.

These special abilities were only passed down from parents to children and from masters to servants.

In other words, the presence of such powers depended on the progenitor of their vampire bloodline--The True Ancestor.

"These kinds of powers are on a fundamentally different level for True Ancestors when compared to descendants or servants. But even True Ancestors cannot possess every special power. And each bloodline can only have one ability... Isn't that right?"

Hisui recalled this theoretical knowledge that was totally useless in ordinary day-to-day life.

Although he did not learn it deliberately, this knowledge was already stuck in his mind from regular immersion and contact.

"Precisely. In actual fact, I definitely cannot turn into mist, nor undergo transformations. In that case, let me ask you, what is my special power?"

"How would I know? I've never heard you mention it despite how long we've lived together."

"Indeed, after all, in the past, I didn't know either."

"...Hey."

"I didn't know until that particular instant. That particular instant when destruction was imminent."

Hisui was dumbfounded.

The instant Miraluka was referring to was surely the time when her body collapsed and turned into ash and dust.

How had she escaped that unavoidable fate of destruction?

"Then what's your special ability...?"

"Expressed in words, it's simple. Ultimate regeneration."

"All vampires have regeneration, right!? Even for True Ancestors, they just have higher level compared to other vampires. But even so, it can't possibly overcome weaknesses... It can't overcome sunlight, right?"

"Indeed. Incinerated by sunlight, even I will be destroyed but I can last a lot longer than those small fries. And it was precisely this resilient body that saved me."

"...?"

"My body really did collapse and scatter in the wind, but back then, inside my body... the part that could be considered the core

was not completely incinerated by sunlight. Oh well, even so, it was just a brief duration. But precisely during that brief fraction of a second, I obtained fresh blood."

This simple word was extremely convincing for Hisui.

To vampires, blood was the source of power.

Even when burnt by sunlight, on the verge of destruction, as long as blood was obtained, resurrection was definitely possible.

"But... your body was almost turned to ash completely and scattered in the wind, right? How did you obtain blood? Did the wind bring you blood?"

"You're half right. It was my loyal servants who brought me blood."

"Huh!?"

"Birds and insects... Countless beings flying in the sky. They brought me blood. It's a shame that bats are not active during the daytime and did not participate."

She spoke in amusement.

This queen, capable of turning all creation into her servants, her eyes flashed with a crimson glow.

"Mystic eyes...? No, you couldn't have used them under those conditions... Did you tame the creatures beforehand...?"

"It would have been a good idea to prepare them in advance as a precaution against emergencies. In fact, many vampires do use bats as familiars. But I'm a little different from them. I mentioned it just now, this is my power. When on the verge of death, almost losing my sense of self, all existence in the immediate surroundings will automatically turn into my servants to bring me fresh blood. This is a power that's completely useless except when on the verge of death, yet a power existing only to sustain eternal life."

Hisui finally figured it out.

This was not impossible nonsense.

Loyal servants played an important role in the immortality of vampires. Preparing means to replenish fresh blood were necessary for them.

However, life was unpredictable.

The woman right here possessed precisely the ultimate power to maintain eternal life and youth, the power to survive even this type of unpredictable and abnormal situation.

But it was not omnipotent.

Just as she said, if the messengers bringing blood had been an instant later, she would surely have turned into dust, vanishing into the atmosphere.

Although the word "miracle" felt very wrong to associate with vampires whose lives were cursed, there was no better word to describe what had happened on that day.

"...What you say makes sense. But... why didn't you return immediately?"

Hisui asked unhappily.

Without noticing, his tone of voice sounded like a whining child asking to be spoiled.

"I couldn't help it. After all, my body was already battered and broken. With great difficulty, I finally regenerated my head and torso, but was lying pitifully sprawled on the ground, only able to crawl like a worm. Finally, I managed to crawl to a safe place shaded from sunlight but couldn't move anymore after that. Then I had the animals in the area bring me fresh blood. Luckily, rivers of blood were plentiful in a warzone, but the quality was terrible. The time needed to recover my entire body took an appallingly long time. Were I not a True Ancestor, it would very likely take as much as a hundred years. After I regained free mobility, full recovery took further time. Added to the fact that the two countries were cut off at

the time, returning to Japan really took monumental effort. Having lived over two thousand years, I've truly never suffered this much."

She sighed like a human.

Her beautiful face also seemed to darken, clouded by those experiences.

Despite being a True Ancestor, having been burnt to near death by sunlight, a full recovery would have required substantial time and energy accordingly.

"In addition, the regeneration process was really quite a pitiful ordeal. I consider myself someone who has experienced trials and tribulations, but those days were truly unthinkable. Most contemptible of all, vultures even pecked away at me, treating me like a corpse. I never expected something like that would happen to me one day."

"Stop making me lose my appetite right before dinner! Keep those details to yourself!"

"You're the one who asked me. Surviving in that harsh environment and restoring myself anew required suffering pain and spending time accordingly."

Miraluka refuted him nonchalantly. Hisui had no choice but to change his direction of questioning.

"Then... What about recently? Since you survived and came back to town, why didn't you come over to me directly? But... Umm... From the way things looked, the class rep's doppelganger was your doing, right? And when the sports festival ended and you came to find me, couldn't you have explained everything to me directly... then come home together...?"

Although the question was rhetorical, Hisui's tone of voice was weak and did not intend to reprimand.

After all, he had almost no doubts about the woman before his eyes now.

"That time earlier, I simply wanted to see you, that's all. Although I could move about, due to the sunlight's scorching, my skin was heavily scarred and damaged, an embarrassment to show others. That was also why I was wearing clothing that covered my skin completely. I didn't want to see me in that state. However, I am now as you see here."

Showing off, she released the shoulder strap of her camisole to reveal skin as smooth as polished ivory.

"...I don't care about that kind of thing, okay? Besides, it was my fault as well."

"Don't forget that I am a woman, you know? Please do consider my feelings a bit."

She smiled seductively at him.

Even if her body were covered with wounds, surely just by using that beautiful face of hers, she could definitely establish herself in some position of value.

"...What about the class rep? Don't tell me you did it to kill time or else I'm gonna puncture you with the Tzara Blade, okay?"

"Just try if you can."

Seeing Miraluka's haughty manner, Hisui realized he had misspoken.

Yes, definitely no chance of winning.

"...Speaking of which, this is something I wanted to ask you. Back then, although I returned to Japan, I still hadn't decided whether to meet you or not."

"...Huh?"

"You're already sixteen years old. It's not like you can't live on your own. Besides, I've left you plenty of money. In that case... Not seeing you again would have been fine. I was already destroyed... That would count as a decisive farewell already."

"..."

Perhaps so.

Hisui had felt this vaguely.

In a few more years, he was going to overtake Miraluka's outward appearance in age.

He will grow old gradually while Miraluka remained eternally youthful and beautiful.

This would cause surrounding people to grow suspicious for sure.

Even if they hid from others and stayed indoors, for vampires, there were upper limits to how long they could live in one place.

Even without the sudden goodbye last time, one day, the two of them must part ways eventually.

"...However, in the end I was still worried. Whether you've returned safely to this country, whether you've entered high school... I wanted to know. Then going out of my way to visit you from afar... What the heck? Shacking up with a vampire, getting an artificial human stuck to you, getting beaten up by a dhampir, getting involved with a witch-like girl, finally even a werewolf around you. While I was gone, what on earth have you been doing?"

"...Yeah, what on earth is going on here?"

Having someone pointing it out suddenly, Hisui himself was utterly baffled too.

Although there was a vampire living in this home from a long time ago, hence resulting in his rich knowledge, Hisui almost never had actual contact with supernatural entities.

However, ever since going to high school, his experience suddenly jumped dramatically, far surpassing the level back when he was living with Miraluka.

"And I can't believe you're even getting your blood sucked by a vampire. I know your constitution best. That type of constitution

has its limits. Or perhaps... That's your fetish?"

"Of course not!"

Hearing that kind of embarrassing question, Hisui felt that he must deny firmly.

"...Then I decided to protect you secretly and observe the situation first and ended up picking up that strange drug."

"That's the drug for causing doppelgangers earlier, right? You used it on the class rep, right? Why..."

"I wanted to use it on you from the start."

"What--!?"

Ignoring the shocked Hisui, Miraluka continued indifferently.

"However... Using a drug I picked up on you directly didn't seem totally appropriate. So I tested it out on a child who happened to pass by."

"You really are bored out of your mind! Come on, could you stop acting so unrestrained, okay...?"

"If any problem arose, I would have handled it immediately myself. Do you really believe that I'm unable to take care of a mere doppelganger?"

"Is that the issue here!?"

"That is the issue. And that girl is always making eyes at you. Also, she is the most normal among all the girls surrounding you. Hence, I was a little curious regarding what her hidden side was like. Although I could use the mystic eyes to interrogate her, but in order to find out her true feelings, it is still best to draw out and separate the hidden component in her heart."

"Gimme a break..."

Hisui scratched his head and recalled the past of this unruly family.

Indeed... That's the kind of person she was to begin with.

Not treating humans as mere food, she was the type of vampire that inspired respect.

Nevertheless, there was a fundamental difference about her.

A kind of attitude that placed herself superior to humans... Refusing to be compared to them at all.

Ultimately, she and humans were different organisms, wholly incompatible. She neither took the position of overt hostility nor did she have any intention to be friends with humans. Non-aggression, non-involvement, refraining from relationships as much as possible. But when necessary, whether as adversaries or in using them, she had no scruples at all.

This gap arose from a different value system and being different species.

Hisui had almost forgotten.

Living together with Rushella had caused him to almost forget that this was a vampire's true nature.

"Then why did you want to use that kind of drug on me? When clearly you had no idea what kind of doppelganger will be born?"

"I only wanted to know whether your constitution was working normally or not. It would have been fine once I confirmed that your constitution remained even after the doppelganger was born. But constitutions with spiritual powers are apparently inconvenient to test. I never expected that your constitution would be taken by the clone. Looks like there is room for improvement."

Miraluka shook her head in a slightly solemn manner.

Her frowning face looked like that of a mother worried about her child. She was the type of mother who would never spoil their children with excessive love nor allow their children to be in danger, the kind of mother that existed in every common family.

"Don't go turning others into experiments so recklessly! Thanks to you, I almost stopped being human...!"

"That's not my fault, but that of the imposter, isn't it? Speaking of which, without me, you would have stopped being human long ago."

"Uh, well, umm..."

Of course, Hisui had never won an argument against her.

"Although the process was a little convoluted, in the end, you recovered and the imposter has apparently left, and I have finally recovered my state. I only returned because you can't be left alone in this home. Any problems with that?"

"Tons of problems! There's so many things wrong that I don't even know where to start!"

"Then don't say anything. Besides, what right do you have to question me in this or that?"

Miraluka lay down on the sofa and retorted conceitedly.

Although she was not lifting her head high or puffing her chest out in a haughty manner, those crimson eyes were the type that belonged to supreme rulers who looked down on the foolish commoners below.

And the way those eyes looked, she was undoubtedly the family that Hisui had been living all his life together with back in the past.

"By the way, now that I'm finally home, what's with your attitude?"

"This is 90% your fault, okay? Given how we parted ways, how do you expect me to believe you?"

"True... After all, I was reborn from almost turning into dust and ash completely. To be honest, whether I am the same me from the past, whether this is my true self, I would have a tough time answering these questions. Oh Hisui, am I truly fake or authentic?"

"How would I know? Don't ask me to confirm!"

"How should I put this? It feels like those sci-fi novels that humans write where humans are transferred using matter teleportation devices, completely dissociating the body into particles then reconstructing anew. Is the teleported person the same person as before? Although it's the same body, doesn't that count as dying once? The ego residing in the body, is there any continuity with the previous ego? Or perhaps I'm simply a replica that has inherited my memories!?"

"Stop making things so complicated! Don't throw this kind of problem with no answer to a high schooler like me!"

Hearing this highly philosophical topic, Hisui retorted in full strength.

Normally acting like a vaunted queen, Miraluka would also bring up this type of annoying topic on occasion.

After all, having lived for so long, she could easily put on profound airs simply with a bit of acting.

"You told me before, right... That a vampire's destruction means "nothingness", without anything left behind. Since your consciousness remained, well... Then it must be your real self. And since there's no dying in the first place, resurrection is out of the question... overcoming huge difficulties, you managed to survive."

Hisui's words were meant to convince himself and comfort Miraluka.

However, he still had not accepted things in his heart and there were many things he still wanted to say.

But the person before his eyes served as evidence for everything.

That's right, she can't possibly be dead.

An immortal True Ancestor... Dying for someone so small and insignificant as him, absolutely impossible.

Hence, Hisui chose to believe.

He was willing to believe.

"Looks like you've reached a conclusion. But Hisui, haven't you forgotten something important?"

"...What?"

Miraluka stared at him silently, causing Hisui to avert his gaze involuntarily.

But her crimson eyes cannot be deceived.

Hence, Hisui gave up resisting and looked at her once more.

Gazing at her face of flawless perfection, with a bit of sulking emotions, with a bit of a tired expression, with a bit of joy on his face... A matter-of-fact greeting escaped his lips.

"Welcome home."

Miraluka had been waiting a long time for this and she smiled seductively.

"I'm back."

Today, Seidou High was having open house where parents were invited to tour and observe classes.

Facing the blackboard, the students seemed more serious than usual.

The homeroom teacher feigned composure while writing on the blackboard, stroke by stroke.

The parents sitting at the back of the classroom could be said to be the real guests of today.

As "legal guardians", the visitors were not limited to mothers.

Fathers from single-parent families, older brothers or sisters or even grandparents visiting.

That said, in Hisui's class, all the observers were female. Judging from their face and appearance, there was probably no question that they were all moms.

With one exception.

She was sitting in the center of the seating area, arms crossed, listening to the lesson seriously.

Even without applying make up, her natural beauty was not something that any mother could match up to.

Yet today, she had specially dolled herself up, even putting on a formal dress.

Her face was already the youngest among the parents, yet she still put make up meticulously and definitely overdressed a bit.

Apparently, she had some awareness of her outstanding beauty and was wearing sunglasses to cover up as a result. But honestly, that was kind of meaningless.

The boys were clearly unable to ignore her. Even the girls kept glancing at the back from time to time, resulting in less of a learning atmosphere in the classroom than usual.

Sitting in the last row, Hisui finally reached the limits of his tolerance and turned to the woman behind him.

"...Why the heck are you here?"

Class had barely started a few minutes and Hisui was already haggard. However, Miraluka haughtily puffed her chest, emphasizing that massive bosom, and answered: "I have arrived."

"No one asked you to!!"

Hisui's scream reverberated in the classroom. Then lowering his volume, he asked Miraluka quietly.

"Why did you come!?"

"The open house notice was on the table. Isn't that something you

should show your parent?"

"...I should've thrown it away."

"What's the matter? I didn't get to attend the entrance ceremony, so I have to show up for open house at least."

"Not needed... I already said back when middle school started, you don't need to come to these kinds of events!"

"What, I remember in the first of middle school when I visited. Those male friends of yours said something like 'if I had a mom like that, it'd definitely be okay! By the way, is that your mom!? Are you sure she's not your sister!?' Did that cause you mental trauma?"

Miraluka cocked her head while digging up Hisui's dark memories.

Hisui's face went so red that it was trembling.

"I've heard that boys in puberty would always start recognizing family as members of the opposite sex. Does that refer to this? So I see it's my fault for being beautiful."

Miraluka shook her head pretentiously.

Had any other person said this, they would be undoubtedly a narcissist, but for her it was indisputable truth and difficult to refute.

A neighboring parent could not bear to watch Hisui pitifully unable to retort and interrupted: "Excuse me... My, you sure look young. May I ask... you are Kujou-kun's...?"

That parent was unsure how to address her. Miraluka smiled cordially and took off her sunglasses.

"I am his mother."

"N-N-N-N-N-No, that's totally not true!!"

Hisui denied loudly and firmly.

Without a doubt, she played the role of the mother but it would be

troubling to continue the subject.

"Hold on, Hisui, isn't a stepmother backstory acceptable?"

"Well... Hmm, I guess..."

"Eh, Kujou-kun, your parents have already passed away...?"

Hisui's neighbor, Reina, asked with worry.

This put Hisui in a dilemma.

Parents and classmates were all staring at Miraluka, trying to determine their relationship.

Miraluka openly accepted their stares and smiled seductively.

"I am his wife♥"

"OF COURSE NOT!!"

Hisui denied strongly.

Crap crap crap crap crap, super crap.

This kind of family was hopeless.

"Don't make shocking statements like that! Besides, I'm only sixteen! I can't marry yet!"

"...Then how about the fiancée or lover angle?"

"Could you find a different angle!? Also, I'm serious, could you go home!?"

"She's really an interesting person... I'm guessing that she's your relative, just like Draculea-san?"

Reina calmly observed the reactions of the surrounding people and offered her help.

Seeing her worried look, Hisui decided to run with her misconception.

"Yeah... Like that girl, because of living overseas, she's not very knowledgeable about common sense in Japan... Right?"

Hisui hastily motioned with his eyes, asking Miraluka to play along.

With an unaccepting look, Miraluka finally turned her face to the side and answered: "...I'm his older sister."

"Yeah... Well, let's leave it at that."

Her third answer finally turned out to be the most normal and relatively correct.

The classroom's abnormal atmosphere was finally dispelled. Homeroom teacher Horie Jyuri clapped her hands lightly to get everyone to pay attention.

"Okay, everyone please focus on the lesson. I know that you're all nervous because the moms are visiting but that's exactly why you need to pay attention to the lesson as usual. I also understand that Kujou-kun is very close with his pretty sister, but please turn your head this way."

"Yes..."

Treated and reminded as though he was an elementary schooler, Hisui had no choice but to leave Miraluka, return to his seat and face the blackboard.

"Yes, the teacher is very right. I can understand that you're nervous because I'm here, but you have to overcome yourself and try your best!"

"...Could you just leave already?"

Ignoring Hisui's pleading, Miraluka continued to stay and refused to leave.

When Jyuri asked questions to the class, she even pointed playfully at Hisui, saying "He wants to answer." Hisui ended up giving the wrong answer but she snickered in mockery.

Hence, throughout the lesson, Hisui felt like he was sitting on needles where every second was like eternity.

When the class finally ended, his suffering still continued.

Because it was open house for the first-year parents today, after school club activities were suspended. In theory, students were all supposed to go home after lessons were over. However, a certain club yet to be authorized by the school, not even eligible to be a hobby group, was under no such restrictions.

After school, Hisui went to the same old place--the empty classroom.

But unlike usual when he would sit about lazily, he was kneeling formally on the floor in seiza posture.

Standing before him were Mei and Eruru, arms crossed, staring down at him.

Catching Hisui after school just as he intended to go home immediately, they dragged him here.



"...What exactly is going on here, Hi-kun? I can't believe you're exchanging flirtatious looks with a female other than me. Who on earth is that woman!?"

"I could not care less about who you exchange flirtatious looks with, but why did she come here? And observing classes as your legal guardian, is she treating me as air?"

While reprimanding Hisui, the two girls' attitudes were completely different, like ice and fire.

Kirika and Touko, who had not seen Miraluka in school directly, observed from behind the two girls worriedly.

"Uh, umm, well... I understand how you feel, apart from what Sudou said about flirtatious looks. Anyway, can I sit down? Lately I've been getting treated this way a lot, so my mental trauma hasn't healed yet..."

"Hi-kun... Do you understand your position?"

"Do you have the kind of constitution where you have no idea how you should speak without a point-blank gun in your face?"

Mei was grabbing Hisui with a smile while Eruru expressionlessly pointed Argentum's muzzle towards him.

Turning pale in the face, Hisui nodded hastily and gave a rough explanation of Miraluka's return.

Throughout his explanation, Mei showed an unhappy face while Eruru pondered expressionlessly. Kirika and Touko exchanged glances.

After he was done, Hisui looked apprehensively at the girls but they remained silent.

"Umm, do you have any questions?"

"...Hi-kun, you believe her just because that woman said so?"

Mei was the first to speak, hesitantly.

This was probably the foremost question in everyone's mind. Naturally, Hisui expected it too.

"Well, of course I didn't believe her immediately. Although her appearance is perfect on the surface, I was originally thinking that she might slip up if we live together for a while. However..."

"However?"

"She is without a doubt... that woman. The real thing. I've asked her many things from the past, including stuff that only the two of us would know... She answered everything correctly. And after living with her for a few days, I already understand. She is her. Even if it was someone disguised... It's a disguise that I can't tell apart from the real thing."

Hisui shook his head lightly and sighed.

Seeing his calm and determined expression, Mei did not pursue the matter any further.

"--Vampires possess resilient life force. And the life force of True Ancestors far surpass the realm of our understanding. To go even further, if that vampire named Miraluka is speaking the truth, then her regenerative power is most likely the highest among all vampires... Resurrection is not entirely impossible."

Eruru added to supplement what Hisui said.

Mei and Kirika's faces seemed to carry some lingering doubt but Eruru ignored them and continued.

"Your relationship with that vampire is none of my business. I can even say that I could not care less whether she is fake or real. Although I have objections to the series of commotions earlier where she had played a secret hand in causing... Proving her guilt is no easy task. Also, the higher-ups dare not make a move against a True Ancestor recklessly."

"Reckless action would probably end up being worse off. Well, if it does turn into an all-out war against humans, she'll still lose. But

before that happens, losses will be hard to estimate. According to Miraluka, she has made an under-the-table agreement with a certain bigshot regarding non-interference and non-aggression..."

"I care not, either way. The only matter that concerns me right now is Rushella-san's whereabouts."

Hearing that, Hisui's face went grave.

Considerate of his feelings, Mei and the others did not interrupt.

"The appearance of the vampire Miraluka was accompanied by Rushella's disappearance. You cannot possibly think that there is no link between the two, do you?"

However, Eruru's lips were merciless.

Regarding the question that everyone wished to know, she went straight for Hisui's heart and pursued to the very bottom.

"I've asked her but she said she doesn't know Rushella and has never met before."

"You think we will believe her just like that?"

"...I don't think she's lying. And there's no need to lie. She's not the type that deceives or looks for excuses... Especially towards me. There's no need to exert that kind of effort for humans since she's a vampire after all."

Hisui said gravely.

Like Eruru, it wasn't like he hadn't been thinking about the problem of Rushella.

Back when Miraluka just returned, he had already asked.

However, he did not obtain a satisfactory answer.

"Even if she is not lying, I do not think that she will reveal the truth so easily. You heard her on that day. She called Rushella an imposter. What does this word mean? That is not the way one True Ancestor addresses another, right?"

Eruru asked pointed questions one after another.

Miraluka had acutely questioned Rushella's origin that even Rushella had no idea.

"If Rushella really were a True Ancestor, then she should have met your foster mother a number of times, right? Disregarding Rushella who had lost her memories, your parent should have recognized her."

Eruru pressed the issue, allowing no silence.

Hisui shifted his gaze away and answered dejectedly.

"...I asked this too. I asked a question about the True Ancestors, a question that I had no interest in finding out all along until now."

"How interesting. Pray tell me."

Eruru sounded very polite but her attitude was actually almost like issuing a command.

Hisui sighed lightly and detailed what Miraluka had told him about the truth of True Ancestors.

"True Ancestors... numbered twelve in total. In other words, the lineages of vampires can be divided into twelve main branches. However, my parent had neither blood kin nor servants. As for the other eleven lineages, they have lost much influence and their True Ancestors are apparently all destroyed."

"...From the way it looks, it would be a contradiction if Rushella-san really were a True Ancestor. Clearly apart from your foster mother, all the other True Ancestors are gone."

"So from her standpoint, Rushella became an 'imposter.' Miraluka also said that although she didn't personally witness the demise of the other True Ancestors, she was acquainted with all eleven of them. Rushella is not among them. Miraluka also feels that Rushella has no blood relation with the other eleven because there's no resemblance at all."

"In that case, who on earth exactly was Rushella-san?"

Eruru used past tense.

This was only natural.

Because Rushella was no longer here.

Eruru's deliberate choice of words made Hisui feel annoyed. He could not help but respond violently.

"Who the fuck knows. An insignificant vampire who deceived a True Ancestor... There, happy now?"

"I believe that you should be the one who knows her best, right? Was she that kind of vampire?"

Eruru's every word was rocking Hisui's heart.

Hisui remained silent. The others had no idea what to say.

Just as the heavy silence occupied the classroom, the door was suddenly pulled open.

"What, so you turn out to be in this kind of place. Took me so long to find you."

"Miraluka...!"

Miraluka had arrived.

Apparently, the parent teacher conferences had ended by this time.

"What a meaningful time I had. If possible, I'd like to try joining that parent teacher association."

"Stop fucking around, can you please stop fucking around!?"

"What are you worrying about? Relax, all I need to do is stare at them and everyone does everything I say."

"Yeah, you clearly used the mystic eyes again, didn't you? You obviously used the mystic eyes!?"

Hisui could not resist his retorting habit.

But Miraluka pretended not to hear and swept her gaze across everyone in the classroom.

"Looks like the werewolf is absent but there's an extra ghost this time. How much of a monster bait is my little one here?"

"Oh hello there, I'm Fuwa Touko."

Usually floating around in a carefree manner, Touko stood still for once and greeted.

Miraluka's commanding presence compelled her to do so involuntarily.

Nevertheless--The other three girls stared at her with complicated expressions.

Confronted with hostility and suspicions, Miraluka remained unfazed, smiling and turning towards the girls.

"May I conclude... that you girls are Hisui's friends? Thank you for taking care of him on a daily basis."

Despite her polite choice of words, her tone was still haughty as ever.

After all, she had already fought with everyone here except for Touko, even if only just a brief skirmish.

Hence, Eruru was the first to act.

Stepping forward as though to protect Hisui, she faced off against Miraluka.

"I have several things to ask you. I would greatly appreciate it if you could come with me."

"What if I say no?"

Eruru answered by placing her finger on Argentum's trigger.

She was determined to shoot if necessary, a conflict was about to erupt any moment--But just before she fired a bullet, Miraluka closed in.

Then with both hands pulling on Eruru's face, she stared at her.

"W-What are you doing!?"

The unexpected move greatly surprised Eruru.

But Miraluka ignored her and continued to examine Eruru's appearance.

Finally, she nodded as though understanding something.

"You must be John's daughter, aren't you!?"

"Wha..."

Eruru was petrified. Argentum fell to the ground.

Seeing Eruru's unusual reaction, Hisui and the rest found it quite unbelievable. But Miraluka did not care.

"I knew it... I see now. Even that guy became a father. I only knew he was a lecher but never expected him to bear a child with a human."

"S-Shut up! That kind of man, that kind of man is no father of mine...!"

"What are you talking about? Your eyes are identical to his. If you really didn't resemble him, how would I have recognized it?"

"R-Rubbish...! I have no father...!!"

"Don't say something so heart-breaking. Although your father's lower body is a little unrestrained, he's quite an honest man in other regards. Surely your father must have doted on you lovingly."

Miraluka smiled and picked up Eruru, easily lifting her by her underarms.

Then like playing with a child, she tossed Eruru into the air and caught her.

"S-Stop this now. Put me down now!"

"Don't act so distant. Your father and I could be considered old

friends. He used to be infatuated with me at one point too."

"What an utterly terrible relationship that cannot be more terrible..."

Noticing Eruru's feelings, Hisui shook his head in sorrow.

It looked like he was not the only victim who suffered at Miraluka's hands.

"I found him too annoying, so I gave him a sound pummeling and left. To think he survived, how resilient of him. I almost want to revise my opinion of him."

"Like I said, I do not know that kind of man! Put me down now...!!!"

"Don't act so distant. Come on, you're my old friend's child after all. Oh right, here's some change for you, or would candy be more suited to your liking?"

Miraluka finally put down Eruru, stroking her head while asking.

This was completely like the way one would treat an acquaintance's child.

Face gone all red, Eruru ran over to a corner in the classroom and crouched down on the floor.

"Hey Hi-kun... What's going on?"

"Eh, I'm not too sure either... But it looks like the father was the vampire parent. And their father-daughter relationship is terrible it seems. I never expected her secret to get exposed in this kind of situation..."

Hisui shrugged and explained with sympathy.

Eruru's identity as a dhampir was something she was the most unwilling to touch upon.

And right now, even Kirika and Touko found out.

"I've always felt that there was something special about Kariyas-san, but never expected her to be a dhampir..."

"Dhampirs are the hybrid offspring of vampires and humans, right? I get it now..."

Kirika and Touko were conversing quietly.

Hisui sighed and walked over to explain things to the two of them.

Siding with Eruru whose mind was one-shotted, Mei charged at Miraluka.

"Hey hey, why the heck did you expose her mental trauma?"

"What mental trauma? It's just the truth. Trying to escape from one's roots will only bring suffering. I'm sure you ought to understand that, Frankenstein's creature?"

Identity exposed, Mei frowned with displeasure.

Although this was already an open secret, she was of course displeased when the fact was pointed out to her face.

"So what? Let me clarify first, I can be considered human already, you know? It's already decided that I will definitely have babies with Hi-kun in the future♥♥"

"Sorry, I refuse."

A firm line must be drawn at this point. Hisui retorted calmly.

Of course, Mei ignored him and continued:

"Also, stop trying to suddenly act like a good mother when you've clearly ignored Hi-kun and neglected him for so long, okay? Hi-kun, you already have me, so it's totally fine to let go of your mother complex, right?"



Mei puffed out her chest and emphasized as though showing off.

However, Miraluka remained unshaken, puffing out her chest and holding her head high arrogantly, causing her massive bosom to wobble.

"...Miraluka wins."

Hisui sorrowfully announced the result of the contest.

Although Mei's breasts were quite substantial, but they were only in the range of "giant" and had not reached "exploding" yet.

"...What, Hi-kun, anything goes as long as it's big enough, so you only care about size!?"

"Hey, weren't you the one who picked this fight...?"

"It can't be helped. Men are ultimately drawn to here. Back when I first adopted Hisui, he couldn't sleep unless he buried his face here."

Miraluka reminisced with deep feeling, exposing the past that Hisui was mortified to bring up.

Like Eruru earlier, this time it was Hisui's turn to be petrified.

Mei and the other girls' gazes stung painfully.

"While he was sleeping, if I put a finger into his mouth, he would even suck. Then I tried moving a breast over to him from my open neckline..."

"Stop it, don't say anymore--!!"

Hisui yelled loudly to overwhelm the remainder of Miraluka's story. That was so close... But no, it was too late already. Mei was glaring at him in resentment while Kirika and Touko were whispering to each other.

"Ultimately, Kujou-kun is unable to escape a mother's curse..."

"No helping it, Kirika-chan. Men are all matrophiliacs. But once they get used to breasts of that level, they can't turn back anymore. Mei-chan and Kirika-chan still have a shred of hope, but I guess I'm

already out of the running, right?"

"No actually, shape is also very important... I've been doing these massages lately..."

"Eh, really? You're also picking your bras very selectively, right?"

"Well, a little..."

Despite the intimate girl talk going on behind him, Hisui was already utterly depressed and exhausted.

But Mei was still high in battle spirit and wanted to counterattack.

"It's nothing more than slightly larger breasts. Could you not get too full of yourself!?"

"I didn't do anything, you know?"

"Shut up!! Now is the time for an open battle for the throne of Hikun's legal wife, fair and square!!"

"Very well."

Miraluka readily accepted the challenge.

She looked even a little interested.

"Then... What is the contest?"

"Isn't it obvious? A lady's sport, arm wrestling!"

"How is that ladylike at all!? And it's totally catering to your own strengths!!"

Ignoring Hisui's snide remarks, Mei moved a desk and placed it in front of Miraluka. Putting her elbow on its surface, she got into a ready position.

"Okay... Bring it on!"

"I don't really mind, but are you serious? The sun has already set."

Just as Miraluka pointed out, it was already sundown.

The biological activity of vampires was beginning to liven up. Night belonged to her.

"Don't look down on others... Other areas aside, I won't lose in a pure contest of strength!!"

"I see now, then let's start. Hisui, you be the judge."

"Why me..."

Forced to be the prize and the judge without his consent, Hisui retorted unhappily.

But he also understood that resistance was futile, so he walked over to between the two of them whose hands were already firmly clasped together, then announced the beginning of the match.

"Ready... Start!"

"Watch this--!!"

Mei concentrated her entire body's power into her right arm and went all out in violent offensive at the start.

This vigor was no longer merely for pressing the back of the opponent's hand onto the desk but almost like wanting to break it-- Nevertheless, Mei's arm moved in the opposite direction as though resisting her own will.

"Eh?"

Instantly, the world was turned upside down.

The back of Mei's right hand struck the desk all at once, then broke the desk into two!

The violent impact caused Mei's body to fall on the floor, falling over tragically.

Probably due to bumping her head, Mei looked a little dizzy. Miraluka looked down at her as though looking at dirt.

"I won."

"You...!"

"What a weak arm. You're lucky it didn't snap. Your ancestor was a lot stronger. Even at night, I couldn't match him in strength."

Miraluka's eyes shone with the light of reminiscence.

Speaking of Mei's ancestor, possessing monstrous strength exceeding that of vampires, there was only one candidate.

The original version of Frankenstein's creature.

"You knew him!?"

"A very long time ago, I met him once when he traveled to the north pole. Although he was very bothered by his looks, the way I see it, he was quite a good man. After all, the inside is what matters for humans. Pity that his descendants are all obsessed with decorating appearances but are only empty shells."

Miraluka looked at Mei with pity.

Mei gnashed her teeth and took out her cellphone, calling someone.

"Hey, Doc!? It's me. I want to replace my upper arm with the power-type version, right now! What, you can't? Stop making excuses and get on with it!"

"What are you doing... What the heck's with your body structure?"

"Forget that loser. It's time to go home, Hisui. I'm hungry too."

Miraluka took Hisui's hand, intending to leave.

At this moment, she met eyes with Kirika.

Seeing Kirika look like she wanted to say something, Miraluka smiled lightly.

"How is Welfica?"

"You remember Grandma...?"

Kirika knew that this True Ancestor here had interacted with her grandmother in the past.

It was truly quite surprising for a long-lived vampire to remember a measly human.

"Of course I do. You look just like her when she was young. I knew it, not sucking her blood was the right decision."

"...?"

"Otherwise, she wouldn't have been able to meet you. Oh why can humans find happiness in such short time?"

Leaving these words behind, Miraluka led Hisui out of the classroom.

Although Hisui resisted, given the overwhelming difference in strength, he was finally dragged away.

Still in the classroom, Kirika looked around her and found Eruru standing up finally, about to open up her laptop.

"Kariya-san, are you okay...?"

"...I am fine. But please do not bring up the issue of my father."

"...Yes."

"That woman... How on earth can she be restrained?"

Holding her arm, Mei walked over to Kirika and the rest. Although she had fortunately avoided fracture or dislocation, her joints were still aching like hell.

"To be honest, a frontal battle is impossible to defeat her, so let us rule that option out. Whether or not she is a fake, her power is definitely True Ancestor-class."

"You believe what Hi-kun said, Eruru-chan?"

"Since we have no idea what the real vampire named Miraluka looked like, then naturally there is no way to distinguish. Since Kujou-kun failed to find any flaws, then there is no point in trying to discern if she is fake or not. Also--"

"Also?"

"Even if she is fake, perhaps it matters not to Kujou-san already."

"...Perhaps."

With some regret, Mei quietly looked up at the ceiling.

When together with Miraluka, Hisui seemed just as happy as with Rushella--or perhaps, even more.

"Then what are you doing opening your computer?"

"Work. I originally wanted to ask Kujou-san's opinion, but his current opinion is probably biased to some extent. It would be more appropriate for us to discuss without him."

Eruru showed the screen to Mei and the others.

On it was a police report.

"What's this? Document forgery...? Blood center... Illegal...?"

Kirika was perplexed by what she read. The same went for Mei and Touko.

"According to various blood centers, a large volume of blood has been shipped out for unidentified uses recently. Whether for surgical operations or research, the volumes are too great. Although there are currently no incidents that are obviously linked, I have decided on my own for the Supernatural Investigations Section to take charge of this case."

"What's going on...? Someone selling blood? This seems to be illegal in Japan, right?"

Just as Mei pointed out, in Japan where a blood donation system was in place, extracting blood from human bodies for transactions was clearly prohibited.

However, the current situation was that the blood gathered from donors were disappearing for unknown reasons, which was different in nature from selling blood.

"What you mean is... Someone is trading blood on the black market?"

Kirika speculated, still puzzled.

Her idea seemed to hit the mark. Eruru nodded slightly.

"Half right. But it cannot be called the black market. More of a gray transaction... In the blood logistics of this country, there exists an irregular but acquiesced channels of distribution that is operated on a profit basis."

"What... It sounds so scary."

Despite being a ghost, Touko was so scared that she was shivering. If Hisui were present, insensitive as he was to maidenly hearts, he would surely make a snide remark, inviting public anger.

"What distribution channels are you talking about? It's not the one used by surgery or research, right?"

Hearing Mei's question, Eruru looked a bit reluctant to speak, frowning as she answered.

"...For vampire use."

Mei went ah and understood, covering her mouth and nodding.

After all, one of the users was right here, so it was unavoidably embarrassing.

"...Do not worry, it is the truth after all. For vampires and dhampirs, blood is essential. To obtain it via peaceful means, the only way is to extract it secretly from the transfusion blood supply. Mine is provided by the Supernatural Investigations Section but strictly speaking, this is against regulations and does not count as legitimate use. After all, the point of blood donations is not to provide food for vampires or dhampirs."

Eruru spoke in self-mockery.

As a member of the police in charge of upholding law and order, yet forced to sustain life through illegal means, it was truly ironic.

"Then that means other vampires are obtaining blood from this channel...?"

"Very likely so. Inside the country, there are many vampires that

the Supernatural Investigations Section has yet to identify and keep tabs on. Supposing they live peacefully, then there must exist some sort of stable supply channels. Kujou-san's foster mother probably should have her own methods of obtaining blood, different from the Supernatural Investigation Section's. And recently the volume of blood used in unidentified purposes is too great, hence the problem became prominent."

"I understand what you mean, but it's not like we are able to solve this problem, right? Isn't this the police's job? Or is there some other reason?"

Kirika's question made a lot of sense.

Assuming it was unrelated to the school, she had no obligation to help out.

"The missing blood all vanished in Seidou City before their trails were lost. In other words, all the blood has been transported here."

" " ".....!" " " "

Mei, Kirika and Touko exchanged glances.

Eruru continued to bring out the core matter gravely.

"After the blood vanished, Kujou-san's foster mother immediately returned. Are these two events truly coincidental?"

Eruru's sharp gaze sought the trio's opinion.

They did not speak.

None of them were able to answer.

"Actually, it is not some kind of serious crime. Vampires wanting blood is perfectly natural--There are some who hold this view but I cannot accept things as they stand. Also, there is one more matter that is worrying."

"What?"

Touko asked adorably but the next words spoken caused her

expression to freeze.

"Rushella has already gone missing for over a month. Judging from her blood intake frequency and personality, she should be reaching her limit soon."

Limit. Everyone present knew what this word meant.

It was the desire for blood, an impulse that no vampire could escape.

Once the impulse expanded beyond what self-control could suppress, vampires turned into beasts.

"But she's not retarded, right? She'll find some kind of way to get blood... Right?"

Mei asked the others, seeking agreement, but the response was not optimistic.

Actually, she already knew the answer.

In the end, was Rushella going to suck the blood of someone apart from Hisui?

"Using the mystic eyes to control someone then suck their blood, or using the mystic eyes on medical personnel to steal blood packs-- There are many ways and surely she would know of them. However, being so stubborn in her preferences, whether these methods can satisfy her is another matter. If she endures stubbornly, then the worst result might happen.

Everyone remained silent.

Every one of them worried for the safety of the missing Rushella.

At the same time, there was fear and unease in their hearts.

Since losing Hisui, this stable blood provider, how was she going to obtain fresh blood?

If she obtained blood and even killed people, or joined her kind in their underhanded ways--What should be done?

These unmentionable questions crossed everyone's mind but Eruru was the only one bold enough to speak them.

"Fortunately, no corpses with teeth marks on their necks have been discovered currently, nor vampire servants. However... Everyone should prepare ourselves. Of course, if the worst situation comes up, the Supernatural Investigations Section and I will handle it instead of letting you face a difficult choice."

Eruru closed the laptop and stood up.

"...Since Rushella is not here, it is time for me to leave the school. I shall be off now."

Eruru placed her computer into her bag and left the classroom.

Seeing her leave without looking back, the remaining trio shrugged helplessly.

"Eh... So what she means is if that vampire goes on rampage, she'll handle it without troubling us?"

"Still the same as always, despite clearly being a younger year, she keeps trying to shoulder everything herself..."

"That's so true, things should be left to a senior in life like me."

" "Forget about it if it's Touko-san." "

"WHY!?"

Touko yelled angrily. Unwilling to treat her seriously, Mei and Kirika went home on their separate ways.

After all, staying in this empty classroom was uncomfortable.

The absence of the club president weighed heavily on each club member's heart.

CHAPTER 2

CRIMSON CONFUSION

The night was filled with silence.

The full moon's radiance fell upon the water surface, reflecting quiet moonlight, almost seeming to dye the waves with a layer of serenity.

A retro-style western mansion was standing upright by the slightly protruding seashore while the refreshing sound of waves breaking could be heard in the distance.

This type of mansion would seem slightly comical in appearance, but it was fully-equipped hospice home.

Built intentionally by the sea, this luxurious hospice home evidently belonged to someone wealthy.

Nevertheless, its owner did not have much time left to enjoy it.

Because in her near and foreseeable future, she was fated to depart for heaven.

Presumably, the old lady understood this fact well. Sitting by the window, knitting, she watched the sea outside with a tender expression on her face.

Having lived to this day and age, she was totally at peace with the world without misgivings. No one was worth hating. Neither did she harbor any complaints towards fate. While listening to the quiet waves, she silently knitted.

A sudden visitor interrupted the quiet night.

The primitive sound of waves were playing an elegant serenade.

Seeing graceful footsteps approaching, the old lady--Welfica--smiled cordially and opened the window.

"It has been a while, vampire young lady."

Her gaze rested where the queen of the night was standing silently.

The snow-white complexion appearing in the darkness was astounding.

Crimson lips.

Crimson eyes.

Rushella Dahm Draculea.

"My granddaughter is worried about you. You disappeared suddenly, didn't you?"

Kirika's grandmother--and master in the arts of magic--had already heard about Rushella's disappearance.

Her granddaughter had asked her to relay any news back to her. Even so, Welfica had not expected Rushella to come visiting alone.

"I have something to ask you."

Keeping a certain distance from Welfica, Rushella spoke.

She seemed to have lost weight. The fatigue on her face was also quite deep.

"What is it?"

Welfica's hands continued with her task while she responded to Rushella.

Her leisurely attitude surprised Rushella a little.

"So you're willing to answer me. I was thinking you'd contact your granddaughter first."

"You would have left if I did that... Or even try to stop me, using force as well, wouldn't you?"

Realizing that Welfica had predicted her plan, Rushella had no choice but to conceal her right hand, holding her usual dagger

behind her back.

"Fighting a vampire in the night would be a bit too much for these old bones. So, what would you like to ask?"

"About myself."

Rushella pointed at herself.

With the full moon behind her, the delicate-looking girl asked sorrowfully.

"Who am I?"

This question was filled with heart-wrenching pain.

This was a sense of loss originating from never possessing a personality in the first place rather than losing it.

Without any evidence to bear witness to her sense of self, Rushella's existence was so transparent, almost disappearing in the darkness of the night.

Seeing this girl who was the same age as her granddaughter, Welfica shook her head apologetically.

"I have no answer. Who you are is a question that you and the boy by your side should know, shouldn't it?"

"That woman called me an imposter."

Naturally, Rushella did not accept the cursory answer and brought up the heart-wrenching truth.

"If what she says is true, then who am I? A nameless someone pretending to be a True Ancestor? Then how does that explain emblem of fresh blood? Why don't I have memories? Why did I slumber until recently? Why--"

"Why did you encounter him. That's what you wish to ask, isn't it?"

Welfica smiled lightly

Her delightful smiling face made Rushella feel at a loss on what to do, falling silent.

But soon, she shook her head to refute Welfica's suggestion.

"Shut up... I've already forgotten him."

"Then why did you come here? If you've already cut off communications with him, then it would be best if you didn't see me."

"...Because there's no one else I can ask. I've tried searching for my origin on my own. Those whatever occult researchers and historians, I used the mystic eyes to make them talk but never got any satisfactory response. No helping it, my only choice was to come to you."



"I see. But I guess I will be disappointing you. Last time, I've already told you everything I knew."

"The True Ancestors are no longer... The final True Ancestor was Miraluka, right? In that case, who am I!?"

"Why don't you ask her directly?"

"...!"

Rushella made a conflicted look.

Indeed.

That would surely be the fastest way.

The one she should find first was Miraluka.

"I've learned from Kirika's text that she has already returned. She is currently at Kujou-kun's home... Rather, she is currently at her own home."

"..."

Rushella's face went livid.

Clenching her fists desperately, she gritted her teeth.

"I used to think that the word 'death' was the furthest thing one would associate with her... As one would expect, she is still alive. Isn't this perfect? That also gives you a reason to go back."

"Like anyone would..."

Rushella was unable to reject the notion wholly.

Welfica continued, trying to persuade her.

"Suppose I or anyone else knew about the truth of your identity and told you--Even then, you still won't find salvation."

"How would you know?"

"Anyone would know after living for so long, even if I am just a short-lived human. You simply wish to find out about your past so as to fill the void in your heart. And no matter who you are, the

present will not change."

"What difference does it make if I go back?"

She murmured indifferently.

Because she had already made her decision in her heart.

If she was going to return shamelessly now that things had gotten to this point, she would not have decided to disappear in the first place.

"It'll just end up repeating the same old same old. It's better that I'm not there, especially with that woman there. We won't see each other again."

"My, how pessimistic you are. Last time I saw you, the brightness of day was exuding from all over your body, almost like you weren't a vampire."

"..."

"Follow your own choice, but do not regret it. However, you should pay a little more attention to taking care of your body, shouldn't you?"

"What are you talking about?"

Seeing Rushella play dumb, Welfica extended her left hand towards her.

There was a tiny droplet of blood on her left index finger.

This was a small wound pricked by the knitting needle she was holding under her arm.

The droplet of blood, seeping through the skin, caused a change in Rushella's eyes.

They became crimson.

Her nostrils quivered as she bared her sharp fangs.

Driven by instinct, Rushella felt compelled to approach Welfica. With great difficulty, she stopped herself, covered her nose and

mouth then backed away.

"Desiring blood from even someone as old and decrepit as I am... You must be quite thirsty, evidently. I've heard from Kirika that you did not take with you the backup supplies of Kujou-kun's blood. I can't believe you really refrained from drinking the slightest drop of blood all this time?"

"..."

Rushella did not answer. Hugging herself tightly, she clutched her arms desperately, her fingernails digging deeply into her flesh, trying her hardest to control her breathing.

"You should understand. No vampire can escape the destiny of blood. Opposing your instincts will only kill your mind. Why are you so stubborn?"

"...Who knows."

Rushella finally regained her sanity. Leaving Welfica, she stood somewhere even farther away.

"Sorry for disturbing you. If possible, please don't tell Hisui and the others about my visit."

"I can't promise you that. If her friend doesn't return, Kirika will feel sad."

"..."

Rushella did not say anything more.

Turning around, she took a leap, jumping over a building and ran down the hill.

As expected of a vampire at night, that speed was extraordinary.

There was no hope in chasing after her. Contacting Hisui's group now was pointless too.

With slight sadness, Welfica watched her leave then returned to her task at hand.

The surroundings returned to silence quickly as the black night grew even darker.

Dawn was still quite far away.

"Look at that troubled face of yours. What's the matter? Something made you unhappy?"

"Why don't you ask yourself honestly? Please don't come to school again."

At the dining table, two people were sitting face to face. Hisui grumbled with a scowl on his face.

Tonight's menu included meat and potato stew, with pickled vegetables and spinach as side dishes. It had been a while since Hisui had eaten this type of traditional Japanese cuisine.

With Miraluka as the chef, needless to say, the taste was excellent—rather, to Hisui, this counted as the nostalgic flavor of everyday home cooking. No matter how much his mouth complained, the chopsticks in his hand never stopped delivering food for an instant.

Having lived for so long, this vampire's cooking skills had reached the level of master chefs. Even Japanese cooking was a piece of cake for her.

Ever since Hisui reached middle school, she had seldom cooked personally, but today was a rare occasion when she showed off after so long.

"What's wrong with a parent going to see their child's learning? High school is not compulsory education and requires tuition to be paid. In other words, the person paying has the right to know what kind of learning attitude is shown by the one who is going to school, don't you agree?"

Unable to find counterarguments against her legitimate words, Hisui's face turned even worse.

Although he had experience living on his own, this was not total independence seeing as he was enjoying the inheritance left behind by Miraluka.

It was reasonable if she were actually dead, but now that she turned out to be alive... Hisui had no words to refute her at all.

"...It really pisses me off that your cooking is so delicious."

"What did you say?"

"Nothing."

Hisui shut up and continued eating.

This really was a taste that brought back memories.

Only the real Miraluka was capable of making this type of taste.

Pretending to help out in the kitchen, Hisui had observed her every movement earlier. Even her experienced techniques were identical to what he had seen in the past.

Hisui was not doubting the authenticity of the person before his eyes, but he simply could not believe in her return completely.

Quite shaken, his heart felt lacking in a sense of reality.

Bit by bit, this feeling was changing the ordinary daily life the two of them were sharing together.

However.

Something was missing in his heart.

"What's the matter? You're spacing out, staring at my face."

"...Nothing. I'm full. Let me clear up."

Avoiding Miraluka's gaze, Hisui took the utensils to be washed.

Although the queen-like Miraluka was capable of cooking, she left all the other chores to Hisui.

While washing the dishes, Hisui casually asked her.

"By the way, do you really not know where Rushella went?"

"No idea. I wanted to ask you, actually. It looks like she's quite stubborn about you. Why did she just leave?"

"Who knows."

Hisui feigned calmness and answered emotionlessly.

Instead of asking face to face directly, he asked the question while engaged in other tasks so as to hide the agitation in his heart.

"Did she feel fear towards me...? I doubt it. But it is a little troublesome that she disappeared."

"What do you mean?"

"Hoh."

"...You didn't know Rushella, right? Yesterday, you even asked me how I came to know her... Is it actually possible for you to have vampires you don't know?"

"Of course. To me, all vampires are strangers apart from myself. Other True Ancestors probably feel a sense of responsibility towards their servants and descendants, but I have no family apart from you. Hence, I need not care."

Having shifted their location to the living room, in front of the television, Miraluka explained nonchalantly.

Like Hisui, she was uninterested in these topics when occupied with other tasks.

"Then... What's Rushella's identity? A vampire who isn't a True Ancestor... But she possesses the characteristics of True Ancestors you told me about. Blood stains that automatically arranges themselves into emblems, mystic eyes that can control all creation. She... Who on earth is she?"

After finishing the dishes, Hisui took off his apron and returned to the living room.

But Miraluka did not look at him.

"You're really concerned about her. While I was away, did you start having feelings for her?"

"Answer my question. Why does she, an imposter as alleged by you, share the same characteristics as a True Ancestor like you?"

"Try thinking a little on your own."

".....Hey."

Hearing that, Hisui could not help but feel anger rising in his heart, but Miraluka remained unfazed.

Perhaps because there was nothing worth watching at the moment, Miraluka switched the television off in boredom. Her eyes still glued to the dark screen, she began to speak tirelessly as though reciting a poem.

"I've always been alone, but the other True Ancestors were different. Their own bloodlines, or rather, what one would call the prosperity of the vampire race--They would regard this matter as a crucial priority. I suppose True Ancestors like these have existed. In that case, they had to consider countermeasures: how could they maintain the rule of vampires after their destruction? Within their own blood kin, how could they nurture capable successors? They must have dedicated much thought into these issues. Otherwise, they would have sought my help then denounce me for refusing them."

"What the heck!? What did the other True Ancestors do? That vampire, Pure of the Pure, the one we fought previously, he said he wanted to ask you for a favor to revive his clan. Is this related!?"

"This is my first time hearing of it. To think you fought a Pure of the Pure and survived, as expected of my family... Rather, it was thanks to your constitution, right?"

"Either way, it's your credit, right? What now, you're starting to brag?"

Hisui retorted unhappily while Miraluka smiled faintly.

"Indeed, I'd like to brag a bit every now and then. I've raised you so well, to become such a great match for me."

Before he knew it, Miraluka was already before his eyes.

As a vampire, concealing her presence while moving was as natural as breathing. Without giving Hisui any time to react, she embraced Hisui.

"My prided son... Can I call you that? Or would it be better to call you my younger brother?"

"In terms of age, I don't even qualify as a great-grandson..."

"So noisy, shut up."

Hugging Hisui tightly, she buried his face into her excessively voluptuous bosom.

A concentrated and sweet fragrance filled his nostrils. An adult scent that other girls could not compare with at all.

Different from Rushella.

"Let go...!"

"Very well."

Unexpectedly, she released him readily... Then Miraluka brought her lips up close.

Hisui expected her to aim for his lips... But Miraluka kissed his forehead instead.

"I don't know what you're thinking, but I never did anything to that imposter. If you've got something to say, it'd be best if you voice your concerns and talk to me clearly."

"...It's not like what you think. Although I want to get to the bottom of things, if you don't know... Then forget about it."

"You believe me?"

"If I don't believe you, who would?"

Hisui answered gruffly, bringing a wry smile to Miraluka's face.

Seeing her calm and composed smile, Hisui suddenly felt the agitation in his heart rise dramatically, so he left the living room.

Arriving at his room on the second floor, he lay down on the bed and stared at the ceiling with nothing better to do.

Miraluka knew something.

She definitely knew something about Rushella's origins.

If he stubbornly questioned her, he would probably be able to get her to answer.

Nevertheless, Hisui could not do it.

Whether about Rushella's past or his suspicions against Miraluka, Hisui was unable to voice his doubts.

Even the cellphone beside him felt repulsive--He did not want to confide in Eruru and the other girls.

Why?

This series of self-questioning was making Hisui very agitated.

The fluorescent lighting overhead seemed to be annoying him on purpose. Hisui raised an arm to cover his eyes, plunging himself into darkness.

"Am I afraid?"

Muttering alone, no one answered him.

Despite the presence of the parent whom he had spent many years together and the room he had lived in for so many years, Hisui felt inexorably lonely.

In the dark basement, candle light flickered from the ancient candlesticks.

Scented candles burned quietly, filling the basement with the

color and fragrance of fantasy, turning the place into a vampire's stronghold.

The table of ebony finally welcomed its true master who had disappeared for so long--Miraluka.

Late at night, past midnight, she came to the basement.

A large collection of books, wine, as well as the sacred cross sword, Tzara Blade, which slept here. This was virtually like her castle.

She usually spent her nights sleeping in the room where Rushella had stayed, but apart from that, she would always come to this place.

Holding in her hand a glass that was like a piece of high-class artwork, Miraluka unsealed a bottle of red wine from her prized collection.

A rich aroma began to spread in the basement, stronger than the smell of the scented candles, yet neither fragrance mixed with the other.

Sight, smell and taste--She immersed herself in the pleasures of the senses brought about by the fine wine while examining her own arm.

If one was fortunate enough to discover the lost arm of Venus de Milo, surely it would be the arm before her eyes--that perfect and blemish-free arm of hers would inspire such fantasies in the viewer.

Clear skin that was so pale that it would seem slightly pathological.

Anyone would feel the desire to touch her, yet fearing that her beauty might become damaged, deciding in the end to simply stare silently from afar, admiring that perfect skin which only existed in fantasy.

This skin, belonging to the pinnacle of all vampires, forbade all

acts of encroachment.

There was a tiny crack in the palm of her hand.

Rather than the result of rough skin rupturing, this blemish seemed as natural as a crack in a mineral.

For a vampire who possessed absolute powers of regeneration, let alone Miraluka who stood as a True Ancestor, this type of wound was not supposed to exist in the first place.

Looking at her arm, Miraluka casually extended her hand into the white porcelain pot on the table.

Instantly, a new fragrance started spreading in the basement.

The fragrance of fresh blood.

The pot was filled with crimson blood.

Scattered in a mess around the pot were empty blood packs used for transfusions.

The volume was far too great if the blood's purpose was for slaking a vampire's thirst.

Rather than drinking it, Miraluka soaked her hand in the blood.

After a few brief seconds, she withdrew her hand.

Wiping the hand that had been covered in blood, she revealed the delicate hand of white.

Nevertheless, the wound remained.

Probably expecting this result, Miraluka did not show any gloom on her beautiful face.

Her philosophical voice simply resounded faintly in the basement.

"Just as I thought, old blood won't work eh?"

Miraluka licked the blood on her hand.

The tip of her crimson tongue, curled around her finger, looked very salacious.

Her eyes flashed with crimson light while the fangs protruding from the corners of her lips glinted coldly.

"What terrible flavor. I knew it, blood must be drunk directly."

Saying words that all vampires would agree with, Miraluka stood up.

Putting on the Inverness cape that was hanging on the wall, she departed with quick and lively footsteps.

Night was the time that belonged to her.

The queen's stroll began.

Late night--Reina was walking towards a convenience store.

Normally, this was not a time suitable for going out.

However, she happened to have trouble sleeping this night. Furthermore, drinks were out at home. In any case, due to various reasons, she had gone out tonight.

Since her parents were away from home because of work, Reina was free to go out at night.

The nearest convenience store to her home was only five minutes away on foot. There were still many pedestrians at night and there was little chance of running into crime.

Nevertheless, on this very night, the road was deserted.

The bone-chilling air stung her body, making Reina feel especially lonely.

Buying a drink at the convenience store, she quickly turned back to head home.

But along the way, a tall shadow passed her, brushing shoulder to shoulder.

"Oh my."

The other person noticed her first and stopped, turning around.

Hearing someone call out to her, Reina looked back as well.

She could still remember that beautiful face.

She had seen her just earlier today during the school's open house. Hisui's--most likely Hisui's distant relative.

But encountering her at night, she gave off a completely different impression compared to the daytime. Her seductiveness was a whole level higher.

The invisible pressure given off from all over her body was making Reina back away.

"..."

Tripping slightly, Reina almost fell over.

She reached out to support herself against the concrete wall on her right, thus managing to maintain balance. But unluckily, there happened to be a small crack on the wall. The sharp concrete sliced through the skin of her palm, causing bleeding.

"..."

Even a dog would have difficulty detecting it, perhaps this could not even be called the smell of blood at all.

Nevertheless, the woman before her eyes smelled it.

Crimson light flashing in her eyes, she walked over.

"Are you okay?"

Smiling, she extended her slender arm of porcelain. But instead of looking at Reina's hand, the woman's eyes were staring at the drop of fresh blood.

Licking her crimson lips openly, clearly with ulterior motives, she approached Reina.

"I can tell from just the smell... You are a virgin. Please give a little of your blood to me."

Despite the polite language, her tone of voice was akin to a command.

Reina's entire body froze, too scared to move an inch.

Gazed at by those crimson eyes, her body felt rooted to the spot.

However, Reina had some recollection of that gaze.

Those eyes were a little similar to Rushella's... No, it was before that. Missing in her memories, the scene that happened the night before the sports festival.

No, tracing back even earlier--It was the first day of school when she saw Hisui for the first time.

At the time, she was also in this kind of dark environment, looking back because someone called her, then--

The terrifying past surfaced faintly in her mind, then disappeared like the rupturing of a soap bubble.

The chaotic memories confused her consciousness, preventing her from noticing the woman in front of her who had wiped the droplet of blood from her finger and approached her wound.

Like a gentleman, this beauty picked up the young maiden's hand reverently, bringing her lips to it.

Before such a salacious scene could be actualized, it was interrupted by yet another adorable intruder.

"This ends here."

Miraluka turned around to see Eruru standing there with a solemn expression.

"Kariya... -san...?"

Reina mumbled in daze.

Still scowling, Eruru urged her to hurry home.

"Girls should not be going out alone at this hour. Hurry home now."

Although these words applied to herself just as well, Eruru's tone of voice did not allow for any talking back.

Still hesitating, Reina remained rooted to the spot.

She was totally lost about the situation, but the dark noise originating from past memories was sounding in her heart.

Unwilling to get Eruru caught up, this thought occurred to her.

"Umm..."

"Hurry!"

Eruru shouted forcefully, making Reina swallow the rest of her words.

The classmate and another classmate's parent--Reina looked worriedly at the two who were facing off, then bowed and quickly took her leave.

As soon as Reina was out of sight, Eruru aimed Argentum unerringly at Miraluka.

"Why have you taken out such a scary toy? Did I do something?"

"There is no mercy for vampires who are about to suck human blood."

"I was not thinking of drinking her blood."

Avoiding Eruru, Miraluka secretly brought the back of her hand which had wiped Reina's blood to where her skin was cracked.

Like parched earth absorbing moisture, the droplet of blood was rapidly sucked into the skin, seeping into the crack in her palm.

The skin instantly recovered its flawlessness, but this only lasted for a brief instant. Once the blood dried, the crack resurfaced once more.

"Even fresh blood from a virgin is not enough huh?"

"...What is the meaning of this? I knew it, you cannot go against your vampire nature and you are especially obsessed with a pure

virgin's blood, is that it?"

"If you're talking about preferences, I prefer male blood. Furthermore, it is the blood of a valorous hero or one who is about to die. Free of lingering attachments, the taste is very special."

"How filthy. Ultimately, you are nothing more than a vampire."

"That's not something I want to hear from you, John's daughter."

Murderous intent instantly burned in Eruru's eyes. She increased the pressure of her finger against the trigger.

"Please do not mention that name before me ever again...!"



"One cannot change one's nature, just like me. Speaking of which, encountering you here cannot be coincidence, could it..."

"I have come to question you about the situation because you have become increasingly suspicious. You have been collecting large volumes of blood, haven't you? The amount is far too large for a vampire's thirst. Since you like fresh blood so much, it is unlikely that you would store up so much all at once. What is your goal? Also, why did you return?"

Eruru carefully judged the distance between them while firing off her questions.

Even though the opponent was a True Ancestor, a shot through the head or heart by a silver bullet would still produce a critical wound.

But it would be useless if she dodged.

The threat of a silver bullet was enough to intimidate or pin down an average vampire, but given Miraluka as an opponent, Eruru could not possibly withdraw unscathed without a one-shot kill.

"Do I need a reason to return? What's wrong with coming home? And what's so strange about a vampire desiring fresh blood?"

"I am not so naive that I would accept everything you and Kujou-san say at face value. The return of a vampire who should have perished... I see, this is not rare at all. But for you to return even when that Kujou-san firmly believed in your destruction, that is impossible. Who on earth are you?"

"My, you really trust my little one, don't you?"

"...!"

Eruru went red in the face.

Miraluka smiled and continued.

"Hisui said I was destroyed and you believed him. But when I return, you suspect me. And now, you're pointing your gun at me.

Why is that, little girl? Even if I'm an imposter, what do you gain by shooting me with your gun? Who are you doing this for, little girl?"

"Shut up...!"

Eruru pulled the trigger.

The bullet's slightly deviating trajectory reflected her inner turmoil.

The high-speed bullet still shot towards Miraluka's brow between the eyes.

But did not hit.

Without dodging, Miraluka casually raised her right hand in front of her, effortlessly dissipating the bullet's power with a simple clench, easily catching the bullet.

"Good skills. Looks like there's some merit to the idea that dhampirs make the best vampire hunters."

"That is merely superstition. Making up plausible-sounding reasons to dump this filthy line of work naturally on those with filthy blood flowing in their veins...!"

"In that case, for whom do you fight? Even when scorned by the populace, will you stand on the side of humans? Or perhaps, right now... You are fighting for that boy?"

"Shut up!!"

Eruru lifted her right hand, trying to follow up with another attack but Miraluka reached out with her left hand and grabbed her as though trying to crush Eruru's hand together with the gun's grip.

Without showing any fear, Eruru pulled the trigger at the same time.

But the result was the same. Even firing at point-blank range, the bullet was still stopped by Miraluka's right hand.

"Splendid skills indeed. This time, you aimed at the heart without

hesitation. You have steeled your heart to destroy me, however--"

"You must be dreaming if you want to pit these third-rate abilities against a True Ancestor'... Is that what you want to say? That would really resemble an evil villain's lines."

"Evil, you say? Is it a crime for vampires to desire fresh blood?"

"What are you trying to do to Sera-san this time!?"

"Nothing. I just happened to encounter a young virgin and wanted to test the effectiveness of her blood. That's all."

Miraluka answered nonchalantly.

Eruru frowned and re-appraised her behavior.

An inexplicably large volume of blood. It would be too much if used as a food source.

Then for what purpose?

Testing the effectiveness of blood?

For what?

Apart from drinking, what other purpose would a vampire have for blood?

From her standpoint as a dhampir, Eruru pondered Miraluka's purpose. Normally, she would never try to think in this manner.

But before she could reach a conclusion, it was Miraluka's turn to ask.

"Where is that vampire called Rushella?"

"Why are you asking that? I knew it, her disappearance has something to do with you!?"

"Are you worrying about a vampire?"

Miraluka fired her question, unable to suppress the mocking smile on her face.

Eruru did not expect herself to say something like that. Despite

feeling awkward, she still continued her questioning.

"Hurry and answer my question. Why are you curious about her...? And what exactly are her origins!?"

"I've said it before, she's an imposter. But right now, I'd like to locate her to test something. A backup candidate does count as an option."

"...!?"

Eruru reflexively exerted more pressure on the trigger under her finger.

Miraluka's left hand continued to keep a deathly grip on her.

This massive strength gave Eruru no choice but to grit her teeth in a grimace. Miraluka's force was reaching deep into her bones.

Even so, Eruru desperately tried to pull the trigger. At the same time, Miraluka sprang into action.

With her four fingers together, the thrust of her sharp nails flashed coldly.

The handgun and the sharp nails, the weapons for inflicting deadly wounds crossed and passed by each other.

Nevertheless, a lazy voice stopped this melee exchange.

"Stop it."

The two girls looked up at the sound.

Hisui was standing before them.

Dressed in pajamas, he had left the house with only a jacket thrown on top.

Exhaling white breath, Hisui was standing in the bone-chilling air under the night sky.

"I can't believe you're not embarrassed to be fighting in the streets despite your age. Stop making trouble for the neighbors."

Although his tone of voice was weak and lazy as usual, Hisui's face was serious.

Seeing his classmate in a fight against the foster parent who had raised him, he could not stand by and do nothing.

"Loitering out at night isn't something you should be doing. Watch out or you'll be arrested to be re-educated."

"Do you have any right to say that? Aren't you the one who kept taking me out on walks every day when I was young? Also, let go of her now. As a great True Ancestor, stop lowering yourself to the level of a dhampir child's, okay?"

Faced with Miraluka, Hisui did not back down at all.

Getting lectured by her was a daily occurrence for him so he could not leave Eruru alone.

Even when he had no chance of winning.

"Why did you come here? Isn't it perfectly common for me to go out at night? I can't believe you followed me on purpose. I still remember how you ran into the streets, crying, looking for me because you were too lonely at night when you were small. Ever since that, this must be the first time."

"...Don't just casually reveal my embarrassing past! Any child would get scared if they woke up to find themselves alone in the middle of the night! Come on, hurry and let go. Eruru, you too, stop pointing that scary thing at my family."

Eruru did not compromise even after hearing Hisui's advice.

"She was trying to drink Sera-san's blood. You are the one who should keep her on a tighter leash. Do not let your scary family roam outside."

"...Is what she said true?"

Hisui threw the question at Miraluka with partial skepticism.

Miraluka simply answered nonchalantly in leisure.

"I admit that I'm interested in the taste of blood, but I won't drink from the girl who sits next to you in class. I simply borrowed a bit of blood and she was already bleeding beforehand. You can check her wound if you don't believe me."

"...What she said. A bite is definitely a no-no, but there's no problem if she only sucked a bit of blood that flowed out, right? Although it looks a bit unsightly. By the way, bleeding will stop faster if the wound gets licked by a vampire. It's the same principle why bite wounds on the neck don't bleed."

"None of these facts are relevant! Whose side are you on, anyway!?"

Eruru frantically covered her mouth with her left hand after these words escaped her lips.

Such words were not meant to be said.

Choosing between her and his foster mother, she should not be forcing him to make such a decision.

Also, treating Hisui as a friend, treating Hisui as support--She had never considered any of that before.

However, Hisui ignored Eruru's accusations and lazily scratched his head, answering indifferently.

"If anything, I'm standing on the same side as you both. But it's really annoying that you're fighting in the street. As the saying goes, you can't clap with one hand. Both of you deserve to be punished."

Hisui sighed again and raised in front of him the object he had been carrying on his back.

With an absolute sense of weight, he stabbed its sharp tip into the ground.

The sacred cross sword, Tzara Blade.

To avoid attracting attention, he had wrapped it in a cloth. But Miraluka and Eruru instantly noticed the sacred sword's true

identity from its cross-shaped form.

Despite the massive differences between vampires and dhampirs, this was a sure-kill weapon that could neutralize their regenerative powers, even capable of causing instant death.

"You're both afraid of this, right? I don't even need to use it as a blade. If you want to gaze on its appearance or listen to its sound, feel free to continue."

Stroking the cloth covering the Tzara Blade's surface, Hisui formed a fist with his other hand.

Exposing the cross' full form would definitely stun the two of them. At least, it would make them stop fighting.

Even if they closed their eyes to avoid the sight, he could use the cross as a tuning fork by striking it with his fist to produce resonance. Its destructive power would be equivalent to a choir singing hymns in a vampire's ear.

No matter what, he was definitely able to stop the fight.

Assuming Hisui put his threats into action.

The two of them had bodies far surpassing humans. They could close the distance effortlessly to stop Hisui.

However, doing so would expose themselves to attacks from the other opponent.

The trio restrained one another, frozen and unmoving.

In this tense stalemate, the senior Miraluka was the first to compromise.

"What a skirt-chaser. Forget about the imposter, I can't believe you even fell for a dhampir. I don't recall teaching such a child."

"Stop making misleading statements. Besides, I wouldn't have gotten involved with vampires and dhampirs if I wasn't raised by you in the first place."

Miraluka scoffed unhappily in response and withdrew from Eruru's side.

"I'm not coming home for the next few days. No need to cook for me."

"..."

Without answer, Hisui walked towards Eruru. This was for protecting her, as well as to prevent her from giving unnecessary chase.

Miraluka turned and her outline melded into the darkness of the night with a flutter of her cape.

Eruru wanted to chase her but Hisui reached out and grabbed her.

"Don't follow. You can't win."

"My bullets work. You saw how her right hand was scorched."

"Yeah."

Hisui's face darkened.

Admittedly, before Miraluka left, he had noticed the unusual state of her palm.

Judging from the situation, Hisui instantly deduced that she had stopped a bullet with her hand.

Since she had used her hand to block a scorching bullet, suffering a certain level of burns was only natural. Furthermore, this was a silver bullet. Apart from the pure heat, it was also supposed to produce searing pain for vampires.

"...But she blocked it, right? What can you do to an opponent that can stop bullets with her bare hands? You're absolutely not winning in a fight like this."

Although a dhampir's physical abilities far surpassed that of humans, they were still a far cry from a pure vampire's.

If the vampire parent was of a much higher class than that of the

enemy vampire, there might be a chance if the dhampir went all-out. But against a True Ancestor at night, hopes for victory would be far too faint.

"Then you are able to defeat her? Using that sword of yours to pierce her heart or chop off her head, perhaps there is a chance for victory. But are you capable of doing that?"

"...Why do I have to do something so bloody?"

Hisui avoided answering and pondered Miraluka's actions tonight.

"By the way, why are you here? Did someone warn you in a dream?"

"I couldn't sleep so I went downstairs, then I smelled blood. Going into the basement for a look, I discovered that she was gone, leaving a pot filled with blood. The blood was too much to drink and besides, she doesn't drink blood like that either. Finding things weird, I came out to find her. Just to be safe, I brought the Tzara Blade so things turned out this way. What the heck happened?"

"I already told you. She simply wanted some virgin blood on a whim... That does not seem right either. Also..."

"Also?"

Also, she had asked for Rushella's whereabouts. But for some reason, Eruru could not bring herself to mention this.

Furthermore, the fact that she was investigating Miraluka about the matter of the large volumes of blood delivered to this town--She did not want to mention this to Hisui either.

"N-Nothing. In any case, if she tries to drink human blood again, I will shoot. Please do not interfere."

"..."

"You... Come and stand on the side of humans."

While Hisui remained silent with a solemn look, Eruru added without looking at him.

"So thirsty."

Alone in some ruins, she murmured emptily.

Her face was filled with deep fatigue.

This was hardly unexpected. After all, she had not drunk blood for over a month already.

Sitting on a decrepit chair, she bowed her head.

She looked like a lost lamb, praying in contrition for God's forgiveness.

A vampire repenting would be a joke, but considering the location, it might be appropriate after all.

Rushella's current hideout used to be a church where people prayed to God.

Although she had decided to leave Seidou City, she did not want to go too far.

Lingering attachments were perhaps part of the reason. Furthermore, she felt that the key to her mysterious origins definitely lay somewhere near the place where she awakened.

Hence, she decided to station herself at a neighboring town in the outskirts of Seidou City.

She had to avoid people as much as possible to prevent Hisui and the others from discovering her. A suitable hiding spot had to shelter her from direct sunlight during the day. In the end, Rushella chose to stay here.

No one would expect a vampire to hide in a church.

Sacred grounds would repel monsters in the first place.

In the beginning, Rushella felt repelled by this place too but after actually arriving, she found it to be a quiet and peaceful place.

This place had been abandoned for a long time. Sacred symbols

like crosses and Madonna statues had long been moved away. Added to the fact that people rarely frequented this place, it was an ideal hiding spot.

Dark during the day, this place even had a basement.

Hence, Rushella did not hesitate and hid her conspicuous coffin in the basement, using this place as her lair while starting to investigate her origins.

Nevertheless, she found nothing.

In fact, she had already done everything she could with Hisui.

After encountering Eruru, they had even borrowed the Supernatural Investigations Section's power.

Even then, they came up with nothing.

Furthermore, Rushella was not devoting her full effort.

She did not dare go out.

Rather than fearing sunlight, she feared meeting humans.

The irrepressible urge to drink blood was making her afraid.

A week after leaving Hisui, an intense "desire" had surged from within her body.

It was a desire that filled one with throat-tearing madness.

As a result, she almost spent the entire day hiding in her coffin, getting used to that desire. However, there also seemed to be something dark seething and turning inside her body.

Once she discovered this fact, she did not dare go outside.

Hiding all day in her coffin, she forced herself to sleep.

Actually, had she the intention, obtaining blood was nothing hard.

Just by using the mystic eyes, she could drink blood without biting personally.

But for some reason, she was unwilling.

Whenever the thought came to her, Hisui's face would always surface in her mind.

The Hisui in her mind did not show signs of reprimand in his expression, but sadness instead.

This hindered her from using the mystic eyes. Rushella had no choice but to give up on the idea.

In the end, all she managed to do was take a shower at a nearby net cafe.

Also, all she used the mystic eyes for was skipping over the registration. She still paid properly.

She did this because she could not help but recall Hisui's words--You must follow the rules and pay properly.

But this meant that the money she had brought was dwindling.

She had taken all the leftover cash from exchanging some of her gold coins, but the remainder of the coins were left at Hisui's home. She was almost penniless now.

Rushella knew what this meant in terms of survival in human society.

"...I guess I'll need to take a job."

She murmured to herself, but no one gave a witty retort.

If Hisui or Mei heard her, surely they would say: "That's not going to work for you" or "You'll end up causing more trouble than helping, don't."

"H-Hmph! Why must I do something so lowly!? I-I am the existence that humans ought to be making offerings to. This pittance of money, go earn it yourself with your blood and sweat!"

Even though there was no one making jabs at her, she spoke these words on her own.

"You"--Hisui was clearly not here.

Her view suddenly grew blurry.

In order to prevent the surging tears from falling, Rushella desperately wiped her eyes with the back of her hand.

Finally, she sighed, got up and went out, repeating her everyday aimless walk.

It was almost sundown so she need not fear sunlight.

Walking blankly in a circle, she reached a well-stocked shopping street.

This place was lively and prosperous. The Christmas decorations were exceptionally striking.

Although it was still some days away, Christmas sales had already begun.

"Christmas huh..."

This was a taboo day of danger for vampires. Hiding the whole day at home would be the wise choice.

But according to what Hisui had said, that only applied to European cities where devout faith was still present. In Japan, there was supposedly no danger as long as vampires stayed away from proper churches.

Hisui had said that the people walking in the streets on that day were like him, caring nothing about celebrating the birth of God's son. Christmas was nothing more than an excuse for couples to get intimate.

According to Hisui, his foster mother would receive this day solemnly, even urging Hisui to hurry and find a girlfriend to spend a passionate night together. When Hisui was bringing up this subject, Rushella had slapped him for some unknown reason.

"Hmph, show-offs."

Rushella cursed the couple from the past.

Their discussion on Christmas arrangements had made her very displeased.

Hisui... What were his plans?

This year, he was no longer alone. Was he going to spend a happy holiday as a couple?

Clenching her fist, Rushella continued to walk aimlessly in the street under the night sky.

She did not stop walking.

Searching for the place she belonged, whose location was unknown.

"Even the witch has nothing... Then there's only that person left."

Rushella pursed her lips and entrusted everything to a tiny hope.

The rare few who knew about the truth of the True Ancestors.

The Pure of the Pure vampire whose power was only second to the True Ancestors.

That guy was probably still imprisoned at the Supernatural Investigations Section.

Pure of the Pure--Fergus von Blitz.

Clenching her fist, Rushella decided to pay him a visit.

CHAPTER 3

CRIMSON RAMPAGE

"I don't recall authorizing your friends to take part in the interrogation?"

Oogami Rangetsu looked at Mei and Kirika who were following after Eruru and questioned with displeasure.

Kasumigaseki district--The Metropolitan Police Department.

At the Supernatural Investigations Section's headquarters, deep inside the MPD, Eruru and Rangetsu were facing off.

Saturday afternoon, Rangetsu found her generally uncooperative colleague taking the initiative to bow down to her and request permission to interrogate the suspect under custody.

Eruru had interrogated him before and the suspect was currently Rangetsu's responsibility.

Seeing Eruru's firm and pleading attitude, Rangetsu felt curious and approved the request, but did not expect her to bring unrelated personnel along.

"Sudou-san I can understand, but that high school student has nothing to do with this case, right? If you want work experience, go look somewhere else."

"Uno-san is here because I have a request for her afterwards. I will interrogate the vampire alone. That will be fine, yes?"

"Very well, don't get any funny ideas, okay?"

"I am having trouble understanding you. Is there any problem with my interrogating him?"

"...Right. By the way, is Kujou-kun okay?"

This was not only a greeting but also an attempt to get

information.

Rangetsu had already received news that Rushella had run away from home and a new vampire had appeared--rather, returned--by Hisui's side.

She wanted to see how Eruru would react to this.

Nevertheless, Eruru did not even twitch an eyebrow.

"Who knows, no one has bitten or drunk his blood recently. Probably lively as ever. How about you try going on a date with him?"

"W-What did you say!?"

Rangetsu denied verbally but her face went red.

Eruru smirked and continued.

"By the way, he mentioned earlier he would like to go for some barbecue. You ought to know a good place, right?"

This was precisely Rangetsu's area of expertise. She instantly brightened up with a smile.

"Eh... Really? T-Then allow me, the barbecue expert at the MPD, to personally take him out...!"

"Just kidding. What are you getting excited about? What an idiot."

"W-Who are you calling an idiot!?"

"I am talking about you, the kind of person who gets worked up over a high schooler. Is there any need to wave your arms around like that? What a waste of energy."

"O-On what basis do you assert this as a waste of energy!? Besides, what right do you have to criticize me!?"

Hearing Rangetsu say that, Eruru instantly frowned.

She really looked like she was angered.

"...Do not compare me with you. I feel nothing about that kind of

person."

"Oh really~? I never said explicitly it was Kujou-kun, you know~?"

"...I never said I was talking about Kujou-san either."

"Then who are you talking about?"

Invisible sparks erupted between the two of them.

However, the conflict died down instantly. After all, this was a police station. The two of them quickly stabilized their emotions. Rangetsu unhappily turned her face away.

"Hurry and do what you need to do. Just in case, I will be in the adjacent room. You two, just find somewhere to sit for now."

Rangetsu asked Mei and Kirika to sit down while motioning with her eyes for Eruru to hurry.

Eruru bowed and set off deeper underground.

Rangetsu accompanied her while Mei and Kirika stayed where they were, sitting on a sofa for visitors.

"So... Senpai, did you run into her after that?"

"No, but Grandma saw her once. Judging from what she said, Rushella-san probably will not visit again. In the end, no one knows anything about what she wants to find out..."

Kirika sighed with sympathy.

She had come to seek Eruru today because she wanted to discuss the matter of Rushella visiting her grandmother.

After Kirika's grandmother saw Rushella, she only told one person--Kirika.

You decide what should be done--Entrusted with this heavy responsibility, Kirika decided to tell only Eruru and Mei.

"But Senpai, why didn't you tell Hi-kun? Surely he's the one who's worrying the most about Rushella. Also, what Rushella wants to know... Hi-kun's foster mother should know something, right?"

"That is what I initially thought... But later on, I began to hesitate. Of course, this might perhaps be due to my own selfishness."



Kirika smiled with some level of self-mockery.

Hisui and Rushella parting ways was to her benefit in various ways.

Although it was after much thinking that she finally decided not to tell Hisui, undeniably, part of it came from her feelings as a girl.

"It's very normal, right? Seizing the opportunity to console a guy's broken heart, it's commonplace throughout history. Also, if you really wanted to steal Hi-kun's heart away, then you wouldn't have told us either, right? I think you're quite a great girl for trying to handle this matter discreetly without hurting Hi-kun, you know? Almost as good as me, but not quite."

Mei proudly puffed out her voluptuous chest and leaned back on the sofa.

Kirika smiled wryly while staring at the corridor where Eruru had left.

Currently, all hope was entrusted to that petite girl.

Naturally, she hoped that Hisui's mental scars could heal while at the same time, Rushella could find salvation.

Eruru and Rangetsu walked along the heavily guarded quarantine corridor.

One of the purposes of this underground facility was isolation from the external world. In the absolute worst case, it was possible to cut off all contact with outside, forming a completely sealed space.

Due to a certain incident, the defenses here were strengthened further. In addition, a substantial increase in manpower was devoted towards security.

After multiple layers of verification through ID card checking, fingerprint and retinal scans, Eruru arrived at the lowest level of

the MPD.

"Please enter on your own from this point onwards. I could accompany you, but you'd prefer to be alone, right?"

"...Thanks."

"The security camera is already turned off. Pull the alarm if anything happens... Well, I don't suppose you need more of my nagging, do you?"

"You are truly considerate in your preparations. You do know that I have nothing to repay your favor, don't you?"

"I never expected anything in the first place. Besides, Kujou-kun would be the one I'd want to be indebted to me, not you."

Eruru tensed her face in displeasure.

She never expected to conceal the purpose of her visit in the first place. After all, Rangetsu had inherited the blood of werewolves, she possessed an excellent sense of smell.

"In any case, you're here for Kujou-kun's sake, right? Coming all this way to interrogate a vampire, surely it must be related to that arrogant child, right? What a nice person you are."

"...This is only part of work."

Eruru bowed at Rangetsu then continued on her way.

Made from alloyed armor, the heavy walls of steel parted left and right, presenting the path towards the dark cell in front of her eyes.

The deepest part of the MPD served as a prison.

As an investigations agency, the MPD possessed facilities for detaining suspects to begin with and had no need to set up a specialized facility for detaining those who were already condemned.

However, the cases under the Supernatural Investigations Section

were exceptions.

Very often, the suspects here were not even human. Let alone sentencing them to jail, it was impossible to punish them with ordinary laws.

Hence, before cases were completely resolved, "people" who had yet to be dealt with were locked away in this maximum security prison at the deepest part of the MPD.

But once cases were resolved, these "people" who were not protected by laws in the first place could very well be disposed of any time.

Their life and death depended on the overall judgment of the higher-ups and the final results were only known to a fraction of the Supernatural Investigations Section. It was top secret.

Even Eruru had no idea what was the final fate of the majority of imprisoned monsters who were involved in cases.

Nevertheless, she believed with certainty that the criminal she was about to confront would be kept alive for the long term.

Although there was ironclad evidence for his crimes and he would undoubtedly face the death penalty were he human, he was precious specimen after all and would not be disposed of so easily.

Normally, Eruru would have petitioned her superiors for speedy execution, but this time was different.

There were still things to ask him.

"Long time no see, Fergus."

The young man was leaning his back against the wall lethargically when Eruru spoke to him.

No response.

Rather, perhaps he did not even have the energy to reply.

He had fought a battle against Hisui and lost utterly, ending up

with holy water fusing with his body on a particle level.

Due to metabolism, the holy water would be expelled from the body in the end, but the power of its holy properties, naturally antagonistic towards his body, caused scorching pain to every one of his cells, still tormenting him to this day.

In addition, imprisoned here to suffer harsh interrogation, this was undoubtedly hell for a vampire.

After a series of interrogations, he was tied up using silver chains with scripture carved on them, preventing his body from moving freely.

While he was leaning against the wall, chains secured to the wall had his wrists locked up, restraining him this moment by the power of the sacred.

"I have something to ask you. Can you speak?"

Eruru spoke indifferently without any expression on her face.

The blond young man still kept his head down, not moving.

His pale body was very skinny, clearly malnourished.

"If transfusion blood packs are good enough, I could prepare some for you? It would be a problem for me if your brain cannot work a little."

Eruru said reluctantly.

Using blood as temptation was the most taboo method from her standpoint. If Fergus took the bait, it would only further remind her of her own cursed bloodline.

But right now, every second mattered.

She had to get information out of this man, at any cost.

Fergus seemed to react to the word "blood" and looked up.

Originally a pale and handsome face, exemplifying vampire style, he now looked like he had aged twenty years.

The injuries suffered in the battle against Hisui combined with the hardship of prison had tormented his body and mind. Fergus' face was carved with the wrinkles called pain, all covered in scars.

"...It's you. Accursed taboo child. Never would I have expected myself to fall so low as to be looked down by a halfling like you..."

Fergus' words were full of self-deprecation.

Indeed, one side was the dhampir Eruru while the other side was Fergus the Pure of the Pure, a bloodline of pure vampires descended from the True Ancestor. Their difference in status was as disparate as heaven and earth.

In vampire society, Eruru was at the lowest level while Fergus would be a noble of the highest rank.

But these inane social classes had nothing to do with Eruru.

Pointing the sacred gun Argentum's muzzle at Fergus, Eruru coldly commanded.

"The difference in location between our heads is equivalent to our difference in position. If you do not want to eat a bullet, answer my questions obediently."

"Can you, do it...? Since, I am currently, still alive... That means, I still... have value alive. If orders for execution were issued, surely you'd... pierce my head with a bullet, without hesitation at all... Right?"

He was speaking in fragments but he was correct.

Eruru had the power of interrogation but not execution.

Nevertheless.

Eruru pulled the trigger.

With a bang, the bullet was fired suddenly from the muzzle with a puff of smoke, penetrating Fergus' body.

"...!!"

"It hurts so much that you cannot make a sound, right? Wonderful."

Eruru said mercilessly without the slightest shred of laughter on her face.

Her icy gaze focused on Fergus' right leg that had been pierced by the bullet.

"Indeed, I cannot destroy you, but I can do whatever I want apart from that. Every time you piss me off, I will pull the trigger for you, how about that? Please tell me if you get thirsty, because I will bring a cup of holy water for you."

Eruru's words and expression were completely merciless.

This guy was a vicious vampire who had killed many humans callously. Allowing him to live would be an affront to justice.

Eruru's eyes flickered with stern flames of wrath. Fergus' proper-looking face became grotesque from pain.

"That brat made me understand that the truly frightening are not vampires, but humans instead... You too.. as expected of one whose heritage comes halfly from humans..."

"My bullet seems to have improved the fluency of your speech. Now it is my turn to ask the questions. I will not beat around the bush. Who are the True Ancestors? Where did they come from?"

Without putting down the gun, Eruru interrogated Fergus.

This question must have crossed the mind of everyone who had ever dealt with vampires.

Currently, Eruru tried to open the door to this great mystery.

She continued:

"I know that there were twelve True Ancestors--All of them female. They each established their own bloodline by having children or taking in servants. So, who exactly were these True Ancestors? Monsters from another world? Or from outer space? Or

people who underwent some kind of dramatic change?"

"Why... ask about this? Are you curious about your own roots...?"

"I am the one asking the questions."

Eruru pressed the still-hot muzzle against Fergus' forehead.

Scorched, Fergus grimaced in pain but Eruru paid no heed.

"Answer me... Even if the other vampires do not know, a guy like you who is the closest to a True Ancestor, perhaps might know something, more or less? Have you never heard anything about how your own progenitor, the True Ancestor, established her family and rule?"

"...The birth of the True Ancestors is a secret among secrets within our clan. Furthermore, they never revealed much about themselves either. Hence, I know very little. What I know comes merely from fragments of oral tradition."

"Fine. Tell me. What exactly are the True Ancestors~?"

Hearing Eruru's pursuit of the matter, Fergus laughed powerlessly and paused for a while before speaking.

"Those ancestors were called 'those who drank.'"

"'Those who drank'...? Isn't it obvious that vampires drink? Or is it because they drank something that wasn't blood? Or maybe they drank some kind of special blood?"

"God's blood. So goes the rumor, I don't know if it's true."

"Vampires worshiping gods? Deities from where? Like elder gods of antiquity?"

Eruru could not help laughing but Fergus remained serious.

His crimson eyes silently stared at Eruru.

Seeing his eyes, Eruru realized.

What he meant by the word "God."

There were countless deities all over the world but for vampires born in Europe, there was only a single God who stood as a real threat.

"No way... They drank that person's blood... Impossible!?"

"So goes the story. At the last supper, he treated bread as his body and wine as blood to divide and share with his twelve disciples. But the twelve ladies who admired him received nothing. Even at his final moments, they did not get a chance for farewells. Hence, they could only seek to satisfy their desires from his dead body. Sucking the droplets of blood that seeped out, this was the contemptible and pitiful first blood-sucking. However, for my clan, this was the 'first kiss' worthy of commemoration."

The hand holding the gun's grip trembled.

The truth about the True Ancestors, which no expert had ever reached, to think she would hear it in the corner of this kind of jail cell.

And the truth weighed heavily on her.

Trembling slightly, she said:

"Vampires consume human blood to drain the soul and increase their servants. However, there are also rumors that sharing one's blood with others can also create additional servants. But from what I have heard, these attempts usually fail. Humans who obtained vampire blood became monstrosities, neither vampire nor human... Do these rumors originate from the story you are talking about? These twelve women had drunk God's blood once. Nevertheless, they were punished perhaps for defiling God's body, or maybe they were unable to withstand the power they had absorbed. They were meted with eternal punishment. So they are the... True Ancestors!?"

"Perhaps. That's all the rumors say. I have no way of knowing any more than that. But there's one thing you're right about. A vampire sharing one's own blood with someone else, that is taboo to begin

with. Very likely, it was a law decided by the True Ancestors themselves."

The mystery that had occupied Eruru's heart for many years was finally elucidated.

Why most vampires had a unique preference for red wine and why they feared the cross.

This all stemmed from reverence towards Him.

"...Then what? This is all you wanted to ask about? I doubt you'd come all the way here just to listen to unverifiable rumors, right?"

"Naturally, next comes the real topic. After the True Ancestors perished, you were afraid that the purity of the vampire bloodline would be compromised, hence ten years ago, you decided to seek Kujou-san's foster mother's help."

"So what?"

"...But after you revived from under the sea, you insisted on Rushella. Since Miraluka was no longer around, changing your target was only logical. But you apparently said to Rushella that the Miraluka was the last True Ancestors ten years ago. Then why did you choose Rushella? If what you said was true, then she is not a True Ancestor. And for you who are so insistent on bloodlines, only True Ancestors or other Pure of the Pure should be the ones who could catch your eye. What is going on?"

Eruru approach the core issue, her tone of voice getting forceful.

In contrast, Fergus' dry lips cracked a grin in delight.

"I was born as one of the Pure of the Pure precisely because of an insistence on bloodlines. There should be many others from other bloodlines who agree with me."

"So? Vampires' inane notions of blood purity have nothing to do with me."

"Aren't humans the same? Ever since antiquity, how many

dynasties have sought purity of blood in creating successor candidates to maintain bloodlines? If mortals can think of solutions, why couldn't we vampires?"

"Successor candidates... No way!?"

"The original True Ancestors numbered twelve. But when the surviving True Ancestors were down to half, proponents of purebloodedness in the clan began to take action. If destruction was possible, so was creation. True Ancestors shall be created once again! Created to fill candidates for blood purity!"

Sparkling red light erupted from Fergus' eyes.

But Eruru ignored it. Her attention was focused on organizing the information she had gathered so far.

"Unlike the original True Ancestors, unusual candidates... How to create them? God's blood... No, if that were the case, Rushella ought to be more... Hey, what are you doing!?"

Eruru regained her senses and pointed the muzzle straight at Fergus.

The vampire in front of her was struggling, trying to break free of the chains.

"Futile. In your weakened state, your body cannot break the chains. Even if you struggle free, I will not let you go. Even if you manage to get past me, do you think you can escape this place alive!?"

"True... Yes... I can no longer... do it..."

His tone of voice showed his resignation to his fate.

However, this made Eruru even more suspicious.

Will this vampire bow down to other so easily, given what an authoritarianist to the core he was?

No, this was fishy from the beginning.

Although he was imprisoned here to begin with, deprived of his freedom, would he easily disclose information on the true nature of vampires so easily?

Besides, the person questioning him was a despised dhampir whom he would not deign to bother with in the first place.

Too odd.

Something was definitely wrong to the core.

"What are you scheming!? Do not attempt futile resistance!"

"This is not futile... At the very least, it will catch you people unprepared. Achieveing that is enough. I desire nothing more. Apart from that, I am powerless..."

His emaciated body was giving off an extraordinary aura of violence.

Originally skinny as sticks, his arms suddenly grew muscular, pulling the chains on his arms taut.

His fangs grew long and his claws became sharp.

His crimson eyes were shining ever brighter.

"Where is this power coming from... Drank blood? No, impossible..."

"Indeed... You people never gave me any blood. A high-level vampire like me can endure the thirst, this is what you people judged. A correct judgment. Hence, I seized opportunities to make myself bleed."

"...!?"

"...None of you cared about my self-mutilation. Seeing me make myself bleed, becoming more and more thirsty, you people only treated it as fatigue from being imprisoned here... You have no one to blame but your misfortune...!"

Eruru finally understood Fergus' intent.

A vampire's power would gradually weaken if continuously deprived of blood.

Finally falling to human level in strength or even lower.

But when the thirst reached a limit, their strength would increase dramatically.

Just like the final brightness before a candle burns out, a vampire casts reason aside to become a beast, their consciousness consumed only by the thought of satisfying their thirst.

Talking earlier was Fergus' attempt to stall for time.

Before Eruru reached this cell, his thirst was already approaching its limit.

After Eruru arrived, all he needed to do was wait a little longer.

He only chose to answer Eruru's questions to avoid rousing her suspicions.

"Stop... A last ditch struggle before you die is useless. And for a high-level vampire like you, is this not the greatest humiliation!?"

"Humiliation? I have had enough...!! To think I would be defeated by a bunch of lowly humans and locked away in this kind of place, this is absolutely the greatest irredeemable humiliation... In that case, I will at least take you all down to accompany my journey to hell!"

Eruru reacted just as he finished talking. Without any hesitation, she raised the gun and fired at Fergus between the eyes, but he dodged.

Seeing him dodge a shot fired at almost point-blank range, Eruru could not help but tense up.

Then the chains shattered.

Before her was an uncaged beast, licking his lips, his breath reeking intensely of blood.

"I will abandon my vampire self!!"

Instantly howls resounded through the prison.

This was the fall of a vampire and the birth of a ferocious beast.

Eruru wanted to pursue but a violent claw slashing swung at her abdomen.

The five spread-out fingers sank into her body, tearing her skin open.

Unable to resist in time, Eruru's petite body was knocked away, striking the jail's door.

She barely managed to cross her arms in a defensive stance to soften the impact but it was not very meaningful.

The difference in power was overwhelming.

The massive impact on the back of her head hit her with a wave of dizziness.

In her hazy consciousness, Eruru saw the beast before her.

A beast clad in a strong and muscular body.

Its fangs and claws were long and sharp. The messy blond hair and beard. The long tongue was hanging outside its mouth, licking its lips from time to time.

Unconcerned about the drool dripping from the corner of his mouth, Fergus' bloodshot eyes stared at Eruru.

Even the whites of his eyeballs were blood-red. Not the slightest shred of sanity could be found in his eyes.

Eruru had no power to resist at all.

At this critical moment, the door suddenly opened behind her.

"What happened!?"

Noticing the unusual situation, Rangetsu burst through the door.

Picking up Eruru in her arms, she instantly understood the

current situation from the bestial stench filling the interior of the jail cell.

At the same time, she noticed Fergus approaching.

Rangetsu reflexively entered a stance, trying to subdue the prisoner.

However, she suffered a violent kick to the belly.

The impact almost bent her body in an L-shape while an urge to vomit rose up her throat.

In the end, she endured it and counterattacked with her elbow but an impact to her brainstem paralyzed her.

Although this did not make her lose consciousness, Rangetsu could no longer stand and collapsed on the floor.

After fainting briefly, Eruru woke up first and struggled to get up.

"Are you okay...?"

"Well enough. But forget about power, I can't believe I even lost in speed, unacceptable... This concerns my honor. By the way, what is that thing... Are vampires such absurd monsters?"

"He has already abandon his rationality. By deliberately letting himself reach the limit of thirst, he abandoned everything for a final burst of massive power. He is one of the Pure of the Pure, after all. This is totally terrible."

"I see. But why didn't he try to kill us? To be honest, I can't take another direct hit."

Holding the back of her head painfully, Rangetsu groaned.

Although she belonged to the werewolf race whose immortality was on par with vampires, she was unable to parry the attack just now.

Furthermore, it was currently daytime. Without the moon, her body could not bring out its true power.

"That guy has no sanity remaining. All that remains in his body is the base desire for drinking blood. And we were ruled out."

"Monsters and hybrids are worthless to him. He wants to drink blood from pure humans... And a virgin's blood is the top choice, isn't it?"

Rangetsu understood the situation and immediately issued orders by radio.

The facility had to be isolated as quickly as possible so that the rampaging vampire could be exterminated.

"Please evacuate all unarmed personnel, especially women. Right now, they will be bitten in the throat immediately and killed as soon as they face him."

"I understand! We have to hurry too!"

Eruru nodded in agreement and sprang into action with Rangetsu.

The tragedy that had befallen this underground prison at the MPD headquarters must not be allowed to repeat again.

In order to keep up with the swift werewolf, Eruru ran as hard as she could.

"I've always felt that this place is really too dark and gloomy. What are they thinking, leaving girls in this kind of place?"

"Isn't the lighting installed properly? Aren't you overthinking things?"

Mei and Kirika were chatting in the visitor's lounge to kill time.

Due to expecting no outsiders to visit, the Supernatural Investigations Section's "interior decoration" was quite a mood-killer--Only bare concrete walls.

Although someone served them tea, no one else came to attend to them after that.

"I really hope Eruru-chan is able to get some useful information. Seriously, why do I have to waste so much time on that child?"

Mei sounded extremely displeased. Kirika stared at her as though thinking of something.

"...What?"

"Nothing. You look quite happy to me, actually. Not just Kujou-kun recently, but you have been looking down too."

"Of course not! Could you not make random guesses here, okay!?"

Mei denied unhappily but Kirika remained unfazed. Mei continued:

"...It really pisses me off to hear that from you. I'll be clear with you. That girl is a rival, an enemy. What else could she be? Who knows when Hi-kun might get turned into a vampire any time? In fact, wasn't last time really dangerous?"

"True. But... That child, is she a real vampire?"

Hearing this question that overturned the root issue, Mei felt perplexed.

Rushella was definitely a strange one among vampires, but no matter how you looked, she was undoubtedly a vampire.

"What are you talking about after things have come to this? Oh well, perhaps it's just as you said before, Senpai, on first glance, she is just a willful high school girl who is suffering from an extreme case of princess delusions."

"Yes... Indeed, she is quite far from the image of a True Ancestor who has lived for ages. Completely different from Grandma's descriptions. That is why I felt that something was not right from the start."

Based on her own knowledge, Kirika had also pondered Rushella's origins from a different perspective from Eruru's.

What she was particularly concerned about was Rushella's daily

life--especially how she fought and bickered with Mei every day.

"Say, you frequently fight with Draculea-san... Do you go all-out?"

"Huh!? Well, sometimes... I think I still keep pretty good restraint."

"If you were locked in death struggle, will you be able to destroy her?"

"Wow, this 'if' is very scary... Senpai, you're acting more and more like Eruru-chan."

"I am asking you seriously. Not whether you will do it, but whether you are capable of doing it."

Seeing Kirika's solemn expression, Mei settled down and did not joke around anymore.

After thinking for a while, she spoke gravely.

"I believe... I can do it. But it'll take a life-and-death situation for me to bring out my true power. Of course, in that kind of situation, I would prepare myself to be killed as well. Who knows if we might end up in a draw, but for sure, it will be a close fight, right?"

"I see... By the way, your power is much lower than the original Frankenstein's creature, right?"

"Yes, what about it? My focus is more on appearance and techniques!"

"That is the issue. That Miraluka vampire said that it would take the original creature to have a chance against a True Ancestor. At the very least, Frankenstein's creature was superior in strength. After all, he was not affected by blood or sunlight and was more stable as a result. But you can match Rushella despite being made with lower specs than the original creature. Isn't that odd? Does a True Ancestor only have this little power?"

This sharp viewpoint made Mei speechless.

It was indeed as Kirika pointed out.

Precisely because Mei fought with Rushella almost every other day, these words struck truly close to home.

Rushella was definitely a high-level vampire, but she was nowhere near True Ancestor level.

Hence, Mei had always been skeptical of Rushella's identity, often poking fun at her on that issue.

"Then that child really is a fake True Ancestor...?"

"Perhaps. But in that case, Kujou-kun would have pointed it out from the start. That would have made it much easier to investigate her past. In other words, there is definitely more to her than just being a fake. Things are not that simple. Do you have any other clues?"

"Why are you asking me? Shouldn't you ask Hi-kun or Eruru-chan?"

"Apart from Kujou-kun, you and I have interacted the most, right? Tell me if you think of anything."

Hearing Kirika ask so forcefully, Mei recalled how Rushella and her had started their bickering relationship ever since the second day of school.

However... She could not think of anything special.

Rushella was arrogant, noisy, competitive, always getting into arguments... *etc.* Mei recalled it all.

Throughout each of their bickering days, was there anything amiss?

Her body could still remember that feeling.

After spending so much time with Rushella, that feeling was getting stronger and stronger.

"That child... Isn't she getting weaker and weaker?"

"Huh?"

"She should've been sucking Hi-kun's blood all along, so malnourishment is definitely not an issue, but I feel that... The beginning was actually when her power was at its peak and I couldn't be careless with her. Of course, that's not to say that she's gone through an extreme change, the difference is very small... That's what I want to point out."

"Sucking blood all along but weakening in strength...? What might be the reason...!?"

Kirika crossed her arms and pondered. Mei also frowned in puzzlement.

There was a noise.

With keen senses surpassing ordinary people, she captured the roars of a beast behind walls.

At the same time, a stench invaded her nostrils.

There was also the pungent smell of blood.

"Hey... Is there an emergency!?"

"Eh...?"

Kirika did not understand why.

At this moment, a crack appeared in the concrete wall in front of the two girls.

Meanwhile, at the entrance to the MPD headquarters...

Having visited before, Rushella walked towards the underground without hesitation.

Using her crimson eyes to catch a certain police officer, she ordered him to lead the way.

She questioned everyone using the keywords of "Supernatural Investigations Section" or asking where people who knew of this term could be found. This she did repeatedly.

Finally, with increasing information density, she reached the Supernatural Investigations Section's headquarters.

Taking her time, eschewing impatience, thinking before acting--She changed from her usual way of doing things, trespassing using well thought out methods.

Her efforts were rewarded as she finally infiltrated the headquarter facilities.

But next up was the real problem.

Her current location was nothing more than the outer layer of the Supernatural Investigations Section. External personnel were still active in this area.

Apart from its unusual, underground location, this place was no different from what was usually seen in police drama with people carrying out ordinary business like in a normal police organization.

Using an invisibility spell, a vampire's expertise, to pass through here was nothing hard.

The problem was what came next--How to reach the jail cell in the depths.

In the past, Eruru had told her, partially as a warning and partially as advice: Monsters that had committed serious crimes were imprisoned in the depths of the Supernatural Investigations Section, suffering what would be equivalent to hellish torment to vampires.

If she was not lying, that guy must be there.

Out of all the vampires she had encountered, of all the monsters she had encountered, he was the only one who knew a little about her origins--That Pure of the Pure.

Suppose he was already executed or there were other monsters being imprisoned there, it was possible that she could find someone else who knew about her origins.

For the sake of this final lead, Rushella hid herself and bided her time.

Naturally, she had thought of infiltrating the interior by covering her tracks completely, but it was very difficult to pull off in fact.

As an anti-monster facility, there were naturally many countermeasures. The police personnel active here were presumably resistant to the mystic eyes.

Just as Rushella was out of ideas, the shrill sound of an alarm was heard.

Then emergency announcements were broadcasted.

"Prison break. Repeat, prison break. Noncombat personnel, please hurry and act according to procedure and await further instructions. Repeat--"

The Section began to get noisy.

But the staff was well-trained after all. Very quickly, they terminated their tasks at hand and took measures according to procedure.

Some of them rushed to the emergency exits and left the scene.

Some of them went inside, put on various equipment and ran downstairs.

Everyone was taking precautions against a certain underground threat, taking clear measures according to their role.

Precisely because of the emergency, confronted with an unknown threat coming from underground, they relaxed their guard against the surface.

Rushella suppressed her breathing and waited for a chance.

Some people evacuated while others rushed towards the scene. After determining each person's destination, Rushella locked onto one of the people who was walking towards the depths of the Supernatural Investigations Section.

Just as Rushella confirmed the last person in a final group of people, she took action.

Hiding her presence, eliminating the sound of her footsteps, walking in perfect unison, she followed after the anti-vampire equipped policemen who were wearing neck protection.

The dark passage was filled with an unpleasant smell.

It was a unique smell different from normal bleeding.

It was the smell produced by reckless blood sucking.

"My kindred is engaged in depraved behavior, I see?"

With a certain level of self-contempt, Rushella clenched her fists.

The scene was utterly chaotic.

As a police organization after all, they were well-prepared against criminals and terrorists.

And as the Supernatural Investigations Section, they also had countermeasures against monsters and humans who conspired with monsters.

However, they were facing an unprecedented formidable foe today.

Simply stated--Impossible to understand.

When they expected him to rush to the ground surface, he lingered underground. All who encountered him met terrible fates.

When they expected to hold his ground and fight, he would move instantaneously, breaking through encirclement with unpredictable speed, concealing himself.

Precisely because the policemen of the Supernatural Investigations Section were well-prepared against traditional vampires, the unpredictable enemy was throwing them in disarray.

For a monster that was supposed to think similar to a human to

make unexpected movements again and again...

This alone would not be too bad.

But the problem was that the enemy was excessively powerful.

Bullets shot by the police were effortlessly dodged. Faced with spraying holy water, he was completely unafraid.

These attacks only served to fuel his ferocity while he roared like a beast and attacked.

Switching from bullets to melee weaponry, some people tried traditional methods--hammering a stake into the heart. But as soon as they approached, their heads were torn off, dying right on the spot.

The alloyed armor used to isolate the floor was shattered by his sheer brute force, then he escaped.

An irrational monster was unstoppable.

This clear and massive threat steamrolled all opposition, finally arriving at the top floor of the underground complex.

Smashing through the wall, he found new prey before him. The monster licked its lips with its crimson tongue.

"Oh dear... Isn't this the vampire from last time? What a waste of that handsome face, right?"

Facing off against Fergus, Mei commented with levity.

However, her face was not relaxed the slightest.

The air was filled with a choking stench of blood. The monster's skin was covered with dried blood. Presumably, he must have experienced a feast of carnage before arriving here.

Those bloodshot eyes also indicated that there was no sanity left in his brain.

He had turned into a beast completely, turning into a demonic beast that only sought fresh blood.

There was no point in capturing him alive. Mei decided to prioritize shooting him to death and began to attack.

However, Fergus did not pay attention to Mei at all.

He was only interested in Kirika whom Mei had shielded behind her.

"Rawr--!!"

Fergus gave an ear-splitting howl and kicked the ground hard.

He was focused on his target--Kirika's neck.

At the last moment, Mei rushed in between, using both hands to stop Fergus' claws, the two of them locked in a contest of strength on the spot.

"Target is... a young virgin's blood? That's right, the only one who fits is Senpai here...!?"

Mei calmly analyzed the situation while harsh reality was making her gnash her teeth.

She was using full strength, intending to crush the enemy's hands and break his arms.

Even so--she was still losing.

The monster's claws clenched her hands. Even her bones were screaming.

"Not even sundown yet... Such strength...!? Even for a Pure of the Pure, this is too much...!?"

Mei could not help but feel anxious.

The enemy before her eyes had a confident and violent smile hanging on his face while he cornered his insignificant prey.

Mei staggered backwards, her hands creaking from the pressure.

Unable to match the opponent's strength, Mei yelled out to Kirika behind her.

"Senpai, hurry and run!"

At the same time, a dazzling flash of light erupted from Mei's eyes.

The solar beams shot out from her eyes. This was originally prepared for using against Rushella, a destructive weapon concentrating the power of the sun to counter vampires.

Seeing the beams strike the enemy's face, Mei looked delighted.

Even if it failed to destroy him, it should inflict heavy injuries.

However...

"...Huh!?"

The sound of bone being crushed came from her hands.

Accompanied by a pang of intense pain, she saw her hands crushed and deformed.

Mei went pale as she looked at her opponent, an angry beast.

The solar beams had struck their target for sure.

His hair was burnt while his pale and handsome face was completely incinerated. A tragic sight.

However, his eyes were completely unharmed.

Even greater murderous intent was seething in his eyes as he glared at Mei.

"--!!"

She had never feared any monster before.

That was because she was a monster herself, but more importantly, even against powerful monsters as enemies, she could still defeat them with ease.

But this tradition was overturned.

With both hands crushed, Mei could no longer stop Fergus. The beast grabbed her by the chest and casually lifted her up, throwing her to the side.

This motion was as casual as throwing a scrap of paper into a trash can, but the massive strength turned it into a finishing move.

Mei's body crashed hard against the wall. Unfortunately, she happened to hit the back of her head.

Her clothing and underwear was shredded by the sharp claws, producing red marks on the skin of her chest, exposing her voluptuous bosom to the air.

Having lost consciousness completely, Mei naturally could not hide her exposed chest, collapsed against the wall.

Then Fergus paid no more attention to Mei.

He was uninterested in an artificial human to begin with.

Currently, all that remained inside him was the pinnacle of one desire--the thirst for blood.

The one element causing his desire to expand further was right in front of him--an excellent virgin.

Fergus' eyes flashed with dangerous red light as he approached.

Kirika was unable to move, trembling, rooted to the spot.

Although she knew how to fight against monsters, her enemy was too frightening.

More importantly, the monster's mystic eyes... No, the killing aura exuded from all over the monster had pinned Kirika down.

Like a frog caught in a snake's sights, a virgin intimidated by a vampire.

Immobilizing Kirika, Fergus grabbed her arm.

The beast exhaled large breaths of nauseating stench as he brought his mouth to Kirika's neck.

His blood-red eyes were filled with lust and gluttony, burning with terrifying thirst that surpassed primal desires.

"No..."

Kirika tearfully shook her head.

Her behavior only served to provoke the beast's sadistic heart. Fergus licked his lips while drooling.

Like a carnivorous beast's, his long tongue slid across Kirika's pale neck.

"--!"

Shuddering intensely, she struggled with disgust.

Fergus ignored her resistance and opened his jaws.

This method of eating was no longer about sucking blood. Most likely, he would bite off an entire chunk of flesh from her neck.



Then before the sharp fangs could make contact with the skin, a gust of wind swept towards the beast's belly.

"Unhand her!!"

With vigor as though trying to gouge his belly, the new arrival unleashed a fierce spinning mid-level kick.

The impact sounded like kicking a heavy tire. Fergus was separated from Kirika.

"...Oogami-san?"

Surrounded by fear, Kirika noticed her savior.

Rangetsu looked like she had sprinted all the way here, panting nonstop with her mouth open.

She was probably trying to tell Kirika to escape but before she could speak, Fergus attacked.

"Rawr!"

"Tsk..!"

Rangetsu clicked her tongue and had no choice but to engage Fergus in close quarters combat.

Fergus did not care about tactics at all, simply using his powerful arms, trying to tear his prey's flesh. Rangetsu kept her distance and opposed him using magnificent kicking skills.

Kicking the ground with one foot, Rangetsu used a skillful mixture of power and subtlety to deliver a series of kicks to Fergus' head, belly and ankles.

Given a werewolf's powerful legs, even a vampire could not escape unscathed if struck directly.

However, Fergus was currently a monster that had surpassed vampires.

Every time she kicked her target, Rangetsu only felt the dull pain in her leg increasing.

While Rangetsu was gradually depleting her energy, if she were to be struck by his swinging arms, surely her flesh would be shaved off together with bones beneath.

In contrast, Fergus was not pushed at all. Rubbing the parts that were kicked, it seemed like Rangetsu's attacks only managed to tickle him.

Then the battle reached a critical point.

Originally using astounding speed to keep the battle even, Rangetsu suddenly halted in her leg movements.

Her handsome face was filled with pain and fatigue.

Seeing his contemptible enemy stop attacking, Fergus laughed.

This was the laughing face of a carnivore about to emerge victorious.

Roaring, he raised his mighty arms, swinging them down on Rangetsu's head--

Instantly, Rangetsu vanished.

Fergus' sharp claws slashed through empty space, only catching her jacket.

Just as he felt surprised, a sigh came from behind.

"I knew it... Only this method would work."

Before he could turn around, Rangetsu reached out and grabbed his arms from below his armpits, sealing his movements.

Hand to hand combat was unfavorable for Rangetsu to begin with. Even holding a slight advantage in speed, she was going to lose from exhaustion sooner or later.

Hence, she could only do this to defeat him completely.

"Kariya-san, hurry!!"

Rangetsu yelled urgently. Only then did Kirika notice Eruru's presence.

Arriving slightly after Rangetsu, Eruru raised her arm weakly, aiming the sacred gun Argentum at Fergus.

All she needed to do was aim for the heart.

For silver bullets to produce the greatest effect against vampires, one must shoot the heart.

However, even an amateur like Kirika could easily see that the current shot was full of risks.

Eruru's forearms were swollen and bruised, clearly a recent injury.

But what Kirika did not know was that Eruru had gotten injured when Fergus broke out of prison. Luckily, her arms were not broken but even lifting them was taking her full effort.

Let alone with Rangetsu standing right behind the target.

Considering the sturdiness of Fergus' current enhanced musculature, there was probably no need to worry about the bullet penetrating his body.

But in the event she shot Rangetsu, the silver bullet could very well take her life.

And this was probably the only chance. If she failed to strike the heart and produce a critical hit, he would surely kill her in return.

Pain and pressure was making Eruru hesitate. Argentum's muzzle also trembled from the wavering in her heart.

"Don't hesitate, hurry and shoot!"

Rangetsu desperately restrained the struggling Fergus and yelled at Eruru.

At the same time, Eruru widened her eyes and pulled the trigger.

The gun's recoil caused immense pain to her injured arms.

Then--The bullet strayed from its target.

Although it struck Fergus' body, the bullet penetrated the center of

his chest.

Everyone present gnashed their teeth as despair invaded their heart.

Eruru wanted to shoot again but could not endure the pain in her arm. Before she knew it, the gun slid and fell on the ground.

Rangetsu also could not restrain Fergus any longer and he escaped.

The beast regained his freedom.

Having suffered a hit from a silver bullet after all, his movements also lagged during the moment of release.

This brief moment was all that was necessary.

"It's been a while."

These words were probably meant for everyone present.

The first to react was Mei who had finally regained consciousness.

"It's you...!"

Rushella was standing before their eyes.

Understanding the situation with a sweep of her gaze across the scene, she immediately charged at Fergus.

The two vampires passed by each other. Rushella was wielding her usual dagger in her hand.

The blade pierced Fergus' left chest without hesitation.

"Gah..."

Accompanied by a painful groan, blood spewed from Fergus' mouth.

Rushella remained unshaken, using her other hand to push the dagger's hilt, burying the blade deep into his chest.

Blood spurted from the wound, dyeing Rushella's face red.

This was apparently Fergus' silent opposition. Rushella looked up

at him with a grim expression.

Bald with a decaying face, his former visage existed no longer.

Nevertheless, his bloodshot eyes recovered his sanity as a former Pure of the Pure.

Gazing down upon the enemy, he laughed in mockery at the True Ancestor who was supposed to outrank him.

"...!?"

Rushella did not understand his intentions but Fergus laughed with even less restraint.

"Next, it's your turn."

"What do you mean...!?"

"You will become like this too."

Fergus laughed while answering.

His laughter was giving every listener the creeps. The ear-splitting laughter did not show any signs of stopping.

While laughing, he slowly turned into ash.

His body collapsed amidst the laughter, the ashes scattering in the air along with his shaking body.

His legs had already eroded while his arms scattered into dust.

But only his laughter lingered in the air.

His body collapsed, his chest decayed, his face broke apart, finally his entire body returned to nothingness. Only his laughter remained resounding in their ears, repeating nonstop.

The surroundings returned to silence but everyone was shrouded under a heavy atmosphere.

After a long while, Rushella picked up her dagger and quickly prepared to leave.

Eruru swiftly rushed over to block her.

"Wait, you came here for a purpose, right?"

"...There's none now."

"Most likely, you wanted to question that destroyed vampire, right? Or perhaps you wanted to go through the Supernatural Investigations Section's information, right? Unfortunately, the Pure of the Pure was destroyed before you could question him. I have already asked him what you wanted to ask. Stay here if you want to know the answer."

"..."

Hearing Eruru's suggestion, Rushella seemed to be indecisive.

Rubbing the back of her head that was still throbbing with pain, Mei said:

"I could keep this a secret if you don't want Hi-kun to know. You'll owe me this favor for the rest of your life."

Then Rangetsu also tried to persuade Rushella to stay. Leaning her exhausted body against the wall, she crossed her arms and said: "I can prepare a room for you immediately. Oh well, perhaps a True Ancestor might not take well to staying at this kind of rundown place."

"..."

Rushella looked down.

Finally, Kirika ran over and patted her shoulder.

"In any case... Let's have a good talk together, shall we? Have you been eating properly? Kujou-kun is also worried sick about you..."

Kirika stared at Rushella's face as she asked her.

But Rushella's face remained gloomy.

Just as Kirika tried to convince her further, Rushella suddenly held her own throat and knelt down.

"Hey, what is wrong!?"

Kirika leaned in to ask her.

But Rushella held up a hand to stop her.

"Don't come over... Get away!"

"What are you talking about!? What's happening!?"

Kirika bent down in worry but she immediately understood what Rushella meant.

Rushella's eyes were shining with dazzling red light.

White fangs--growing sharper and longer.

More importantly, her beautiful face was being invaded by thirst.

The way she was panting, Kirika had just witnessed it a while ago.

Almost bitten by those vicious fangs just now--A vampire's kiss.

Before she knew it, Rushella stood up, bringing her lips near Kirika's neck.

"Stop, get away"--Someone was shouting not far away.

But Rushella quickly regained her senses herself.

Fearfully, she embraced herself and withdrew from Kirika's side.

Everyone's gaze was making her uncomfortable. Rushella kept shaking her head as though trying to deny herself.

Then she ran outside.

"Wait...!"

Kirika wanted to chase her but a painful and sorrowful voice stopped her.

"Get away... Don't come over!!"

Rushella disappeared into the depths of the passage.

No one chased after her.

For some reason, none of them were willing to give chase.

The four of them silently exchanged glances. Shortly after,

Rangetsu spoke up first: "That child... Isn't the situation very bad!? She looks awfully thirsty, we have to take countermeasures quickly."

No one could object.

Only Kirika seemed to have something to say, but in the end, she did not speak.

Even if she tried to argue, she was currently completely unconvincing, given that she had almost turned into a victim just now.

"She's not actually stupid, she's just confused right now. Well... She should be able to make it outside. But what about after that? Once she calms down, I will personally lead a team to capture her... How's that?"

Rangetsu asked Eruru.

Eruru hesitated for a moment then nodded in agreement.

"Do you think that child will catch and bite people? Well, she is not far from her limit..."

Mei analyzed the situation and asked Eruru and Rangetsu.

With a grave expression, Eruru explained the horrifying truth about vampires.

"Normally, a vampire's strength is proportional to the quality and quantity of blood they have sucked. Hence, a vampire who has not drunk blood for a long time will gradually weaken, finally becoming even weaker than a human. However, once the thirst reaches a limit, their strength will rise dramatically instead. This turns them into beasts that only know to suck blood, abandoning all rational thought."

"I already know this from the tragic sight just now. So it's like a final burst of strength before starving to death, is that what you mean?"

"Vampires do not have the concept of starving to death. Before reaching the absolute limit of thirst, they will lose their sanity first. Then destruction is their only salvation."

"Impossible... to turn back?"

Hearing Eruru's cold declaration, Kirika asked with pity.

"...This depends on the situation and timing. If they obtain blood soon after losing their minds, they generally can recover their sense of self. However, there are many vampires who are unable to face the shame and humiliation of how they behaved. Especially high-ranking vampires, this is mortifying humiliation to them."

"Then... What happens if more time goes by?"

"Then there is no turning back. No matter how much blood they drink, their desire cannot be satisfied. Only attacking humans nonstop, drinking blood without pause. Although victims will be many, this type of vampire will usually perish after one night, which counts as the only good news among bad news."

"What do you mean? That kind of rampaging vampire will settle down after one night? But isn't it impossible to recover their sanity?"

Mei asked naturally. Rangetsu answered on Eruru's behalf.

"It's precisely because they've lost their minds. These monsters only suck blood, thinking of nothing else, even failing to notice when the sun comes up."

"Oh... I get it now?"

"Yes. They no longer know to avoid sunlight. Hence, no matter how violent, they perish in the end. Even if they were indoors, as long as there's no prey, they will go outside eventually. Like in this incident, ignoring the matter of victims, leaving him alone is the easiest method. Also, the final fate of critical thirst applies to dhampirs as well. Don't you go trying to test your limits either."

The final sentence was spoken towards Eruru.

Eruru avoided eye contact but could not evade the comment.

"I know. About Rushella... Just do as you like. Anyway, we are leaving."

Eruru left the devastated visitor's lounge.

Mei and Kirika followed and quietly asked here.

"Hey hey... That's it?"

"Shouldn't we tell Kujou-kun...?"

"He is currently useless. We can only depend on ourselves to resolve this matter."

Eruru's answer made Mei and Kirika exchange glances.

However, Eruru continued expressionlessly:

"Capturing Rushella was not impossible earlier, but that would surely mean giving her up to the Supernatural Investigations Section. Since that kind of tragedy just happened, she might end up getting executed on the spot. For her sake, I had to let her escape outside first, even though it is very troublesome."

"Eruru-chan... Well played."

"You should have told us honestly from the start. What you mean is that we have to find her before the police does, right?"

"I will not force any of you. Join in only if you wish."

The two girls tugged at the cheeks of Eruru's poker face from opposite directions.

"Seriously, you're such a tsundere♥"

"You should have your elders dote on you from time to time."

"...Stop it. Also, stop pulling at my face."

"So adorable. Good girl♥"

"You keep silent all the time, but I never knew you were so

considerate for Kujou-kun~~ Maybe you're actually my greatest rival."

"Stop it right now, stop pulling my face this way and that!"

The trio departed amidst jokes and laughter.

Rangetsu watched them helplessly.

"...I heard all that, you know? Don't you know about a werewolf's hearing? Or rather... You did it on purpose?"

Rangetsu muttered wryly. Naturally, no one answered her questions.

CHAPTER 4

CRIMSON REUNION

On Saturday, Hisui was taking a walk aimlessly.

With nowhere he wanted to go and nothing he wanted to do, he was simply going out to kill time.

Back when Rushella was around, he was constantly being hassled by her to do this and that, never obtaining a moment's peace and quiet.

Despite being only sixteen years of age, he seemed to have already experienced how it would feel to be a father who still had to labor for his family on holidays in addition to working day and night.

Ever since Rushella went missing, Hisui spent time every Saturday to look for her.

Visiting places where she might be staying, with Mei or Eruru accompanying him on occasion.

After all, Rushella had a peerlessly beautiful face and an outstanding figure. Hisui also tried to collect information on the internet about otherworldly beauties.

Then what about now?

To be honest, he did not know what else he could do. Walking in the streets, he was unable to improve his mood.

Rushella still could not be found.

Even if he found her, what then?

Ask her to come back?

Since she had most likely left on her own will, such words were not going to work.

It was possible that she left because she regained her memories.

Perhaps she had simply gone back to how a vampire should act.

"...Maybe she's already forgotten me, sucking other people's blood like a normal vampire, living in a castle somewhere."

Hisui could not help but let these words leak from his mouth. The way he kept pining for her was truly disgusting.

The sun had long set and the surroundings were all dark.

He had already eaten dinner. If he stayed outside any longer, he would most likely get dragged off to remedial counseling.

Staring into the starry sky, Hisui sighed and turned back home.

No lights were on at home and it looked like Miraluka still had not returned.

Ever since that altercation with Eruru, she had not returned home at all.

Hisui tactfully asked Eruru but she did not know either.

Eruru had expressed that "I shall let you know if she did anything that requires punishment." This joke was totally not funny and Hisui did not know whether he ought to believe her or not.

Furthermore, Hisui had texted her in a casual chatting tone of voice.

In the past, Eruru would always reply in her plain style devoid of emoticons or textual expressions.

However, she did not respond this time.

Hisui was at a loss right now, so he tried to text Mei and Kirika too. But the result was the same: these two girls normally replied for sure, but ignored him today.

"Am I being ostracized by them? What are those three girls doing?"

Finding his few friendships had grown distant as well, Hisui sighed and made his way to the bathroom.

Filling the tub with hot water felt too much of a pain, so he decided to just take a shower.

I'll take a hot shower to clear up my mind.

Sitting on a stool in the bathroom, he started with washing his hair.

Just as he was about to turn the tap, a familiar voice greeted him.

"Hey there, welcome home."

--What?

Hisui turned around, only to see the bathtub filled with hot water and a pale nude body soaking inside.

Or rather, it was Miraluka enjoying a bath.

"Ehhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

"Stop screeching, it's noisy."

Frowning with displeasure, Miraluka scooped a handful of hot water and splashed Hisui's face.

Eating a handful of hot water in the face, Hisui's mental circuits finally went back on track.

"Eh... W-Why are you here!?"

"What's wrong with taking a bath in my own home?"

"I'm asking why are you home!?"

"You didn't notice my shoes at the entrance? I did take off my shoes when entering the house, you know."

"Uh, but no lights were on at home and the bathroom was all dark too..."

Hisui only realized after saying these words.

The woman before his eyes was--

"Do know that I am a vampire. Although that's not to say that night vision is superior, lighting is nothing more than an indulgence rather than a necessity. I wanted to think over things, so I switched off the bathroom lights. My thoughts are keener in the dark, you already knew this a long time ago, don't you?"

"...Yeah."

Finally understanding the situation, Hisui calmed down as well.

He had already grabbed a wash basin to cover up his lower body securely.

"Umm, how should I put this? It's not good to disturb a lady in her bath, I'll be taking my leave now..."

"Why are you speaking as if you were a matchmaker excusing himself from the table? Don't be shy, it's a good opportunity for me to give you a good back scrubbing every now and then."

Saying that, Miraluka stood up.

Her naked body was completely open to view.

Before Hisui had a chance to avert his gaze, Miraluka's body had already arrived before his eyes.

Her snow-white skin, pristine and clear, was pure white and dazzling without any reddening despite having soaked in hot water for so long.

Her beautiful skin did not have the slightest freckle or mole and was like flawless white jade. Only the palm of her hand still had the unhealed wound from Eruru's silver bullet.

The wound seemed to have recovered mostly since that night, but the skin surface was still a little heartwrenching to behold.

Nevertheless, this bit of injury could not hide the perfect beauty of her naked body, breathtaking as it was.



Because apart from her hand, the rest of her body was too beautiful, so beautiful that it made one overlook the minor flaws.

As she stepped out of the tub, her massive bosom also shook up and down.

The watery fruits maintained their perfect shape no matter what angle one admired them from. Exiting the bath, they looked even more tender and fresh than usual.

Dew was dripping down from those slightly protruding and adorable flower buds, flowing past her lower abdomen, disappearing in the bush--finally flowing to her feet.

Even the natural phenomenon of water droplets dripping from the action of gravity turned into seductive beauty before his eyes.

The femininity she embodied was something possessed by none of the girls Hisui had gotten to know so far.

Ever since meeting Rushella, he had witness the naked female body many times in unavoidable situations. But this time, it was definitely the woman's fault without a doubt.

Actually, there was no need for him to feel embarrassed.

Since early childhood, this body that remained unchanged over the long years had appeared before his eyes who knew how many times.

Narrow waist, long legs, slightly wet black hair--Everything was the same as back then.

By the time he regained his senses, Miraluka had already circled around to Hisui's back.

"Hey, hold on!"

"What's the matter? Don't move. There has never been a man in history who could make me scrub his back."

"But men who agreed to kneel down and lick your feet are as

numerous as the stars in the sky."

"Want me to tell you the details?"

"No thanks, I don't want the world in my mind to get overturned."

Hisui gave up on resistance and ceded control of his back over to Miraluka.

Miraluka used the bath sponge to squeeze out soap suds then scrubbed Hisui's back in an experienced manner.

Well... It was quite comfortable after all.

There was also a kind of... nostalgic feeling.

Back when he was too young to wash his hair on his own, the two of them would enter the bath together like this.

Perhaps... This was not bad once in a while.

But no more than back scrubbing.

"...Eh?"

Then he felt a soft and seductive feeling on his back.

Not only did it carry Rushella and Mei's level of elasticity, it was even superior in terms of volume.

Precisely because of that, the tactile sensation was making him enter ecstasy.

Furthermore, the remaining soap made the twin peaks on Hisui's back even more lubricated.

"M-Miraluka-san, what are you doing?"

"What? I am washing your body for you. I'm totally fine if you want to turn around too, okay?"

"No no... No way!"

"Then that's all I can do. Or how about using my breasts? I've never tried it but I've heard that men like to do it that way."

Saying that, Miraluka lifted her breasts up from below,

deliberately emphasizing their volume.

Pushing those protruding flower buds against Hisui's back, she urged him to answer.

For only an instant, Hisui almost wanted to ask her to do it. But by sheer force of will, he just barely managed to keep his mouth shut.

Be calm.

I've encountered this kind of thing before.

Apart from Mei's assault in the bathroom, he had experienced numerous similar crises.

He had survived many trials and tribulations.

In front of his eyes was nothing more than the type of body possessed by those girls, but the person in front of him was not those girls.

Indeed, this body belonged to his family. Thinking that would be fine.

Hence, he would not get into thoughts of desire.

He had no mother or sisters to begin with.

He just happened to have this one and only person as family.

Replaying the bodies of the beautiful maidens in his mind, Hisui frantically chanted a mantra to steady his thoughts.

"This is a family member's body... This is a family member's body... This is a family member's body..."

"What on earth are you muttering about? Oh well, whatever, if you don't like breasts, then I'll wash you the normal way."

Ignoring Hisui who was in total panic, Miraluka carefully scrubbed his back.

She was performing the task seriously but her breasts would still touch him frequently, touching him again and again all the time.

But if he ran away, she would surely beat him half dead, so he was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

"Your body is still so delicate. You need to grow up stronger."

"Shut up, I consider it a defeat if I ever become bulked up in muscle."

"What are you talking about?"

Miraluka continued the conversation but her hand slid from his flank to his thigh then between his legs--

"...Stop. I'll do this place myself."

"Don't be shy, it's already a familiar sight to me ever since you were this small."

"Shut the fuck up and stop using your finger to gesture the size. No thank you, think about it, you wouldn't want it either if our roles were reversed, would you!?"

"I wouldn't. Oh right, it's not quite right if it's only me servicing you. I've already washed you clean today, so next time it's your turn to..."

"I'll say this first, absolutely no way!"

Hisui desperately used a towel to guard his sacred territory and asserted.

Unlike him, she would surely sit face to face generously to allow him to scrub her without feeling such embarrassment.

What kind of bathroom play was this?

"You always say no to everything. What now, you're not satisfied with me washing you? If you don't like the sponge, then I'll use my hands to wash you? Or how about the breasts... Like this."

Saying that, Miraluka squeezed her bountiful breasts, groping them up and down before Hisui's eyes.

To think she even clamped the body wash bottle in her cleavage,

what a detailed performance.

"Hmm, something terrible will happen if you keep doing this, so please give me a break!"

Hisui began to wail so Miraluka had no choice but to stop invading his sacred territory.

This was an unprecedented crisis that the sacred territory had never met since its founding. Just as Hisui breathed a sigh of relief for surviving the crisis, he suddenly felt his earlobe bitten by a pair of lips.

"Then I'll do this."

Miraluka inserted her tongue directly into his ear canal, toying with him as she pleased.

Hisui felt intense sensations run through his entire body as though his spine was getting electrocuted.

Without giving him any chance to rest, Miraluka swept her slender fingers across his chest and violated his nipples.

Rub rub--

"Hyauh!"

Hisui screamed in high pitch like a girl, leaning his body forward.

The unknown sense of pleasure made his entire body twitch as Miraluka looked down at him with delight. Scooping hot water from the tub with a wash basin, she poured water over Hisui and her body.

Washing the suds away, their bodies were finally done with bathing.

"Don't underestimate me. Even without exposing my naked body, I can still make countless heroes submit just by moving this finger."

"T-Technician..."

Uttering his last words, Hisui collapsed forward on the floor.

The last scene he saw was that of Miraluka's naked body.

Furthermore, because he was looking up from the floor, her entire lower body, including the garden at the root of her beautiful legs was also completely in view.

Perhaps dying like this was a kind of happiness.

"Then I'm going out. Enjoy a good soak here. Oh right, come to my room after you're done."

Miraluka waved lightly then casually left the bathroom.

It took Hisui quite a long time before he was able to stand up again.

"...Then why do I have to use the hair dryer to blow dry your hair?"

"No helping it, my hair is long. This goes the same for humans and vampires regardless. I've been waiting for you to finish your bath and even now, it's still all wet."

Just as Miraluka asked, Hisui went to her room as soon as he got out of the bathroom.

Hisui had sort of guessed this result beforehand. As soon as he entered the room, Miraluka tossed the hair dryer at him, asking him to dry her hair.

Holding a comb in his right while using the hair dryer with his left, he combed and dried Miraluka's hair like a professional hairstylist.

Thinking back, Hisui had started doing this job from a very young age.

Before he had learned to wash dishes and do laundry, Miraluka had already ordered him to hold the comb and the hair dryer to fix up her hair.

The two of them would always do it in Miraluka's bedroom, on this extra large bed.

Perhaps normally speaking, sitting in front of the dressing table mirror would be more appropriate but unfortunately, mirrors did not show the reflections of vampires.

Hence, Miraluka always sat casually at the head of the bed, calling Hisui over to her.

"Your skills haven't gone rusty. I'm so glad I taught you personally."

"Don't say it so weird. Even while you were gone, my hands have never had an idle moment."

That's right--Hisui had been thinking about this all along.

During summer, after the incident with Fergus and Touko, for some reason, Rushella started demanding Hisui to dry her hair whenever she got out of the bath.

"Too much of a hassle." "Can't be bothered." Hisui rejected her with a total lack of motivation, then Rushella gave him a sound beating. In the end, it became his daily task.

"What kind of unfair world is this? Does an entire race of female vampires have something against me?"

"I don't know about others and I have no interest to know either. But you must remember this: talking about other women in front of a woman is taboo no matter what race you're dealing with."

Seeing Miraluka's piercing stare, Hisui frantically shifted his gaze away.

He knew he was in the wrong.

This sort of thing had happened countless times with Rushella too.

Whenever he mentioned Miraluka in front of Rushella, she would lose her temper. So the reverse was the same--This was not hard to predict.

"...It's done."

Having dried her hair, Hisui left Miraluka's side.

Her lustrous and beautiful hair was shining radiantly, standing testament to Hisui's accomplishments.

His skills were impeccable.

Hisui returned the comb and hair dryer to their original place and prepared to leave the room. At this moment, Miraluka grabbed his arm.

"Hey, service me on occasion. It's not like you'll get punished for massaging my shoulders and back."

"I already did a bit for you just now."

"Then I demand more. A full body massage."

Miraluka laid herself flat on the bed, dragging Hisui's arm without releasing him.

But Hisui did not agree.

"No, I'm not in the mood today."

"Then how about I give you one?"

Miraluka spoke mischievously, pulling Hisui's arm.

It was a light motion no matter how you looked at it, but because it was a vampire--a True Ancestor--'s power at night, Hisui was pulled into the air like a feather before falling on the bed.

The two of them swapped positions with Hisui lying face up and Miraluka climbing over him.

"...Hey."

"What?"

Miraluka rested her chin on her hand with her elbow on Hisui's chest as though asking "what's the problem?"

Her adorable action was very sexy.

Both of them were wearing their usual sleep wear.

Hisui was casually wearing a t-shirt and sweats while Miraluka was dressed in a negligee of black lace.

Due to the flimsy fabric, he could clearly see the outlines of her lingerie while her body warmth was within arm's reach.

However, a vampire's body temperature was much lower than a human's.

Sometimes people might describe vampires as bone-chilling cold but Miraluka could be considered the relatively warmer type.

Their heart rates gradually sped up in rhythm, body heat flowing between each other, their heart beats gradually synchronized.

"...Get off."

"Why? Why have you been so gloomy ever since I came back? Tell me if anything's bothering you."

"Nothing. If I had to say what's bothering me, it's the current situation. Also that crap you pulled in the bathroom just now!"

"What's there to be shy of between you and me?"

"I'm already... not a child."

Hisui turned his face away and reminisced.

Indeed, the two of them had frequently taken baths together in the past.

But once he reached the upper years of elementary school, Hisui started insisting on taking baths alone.

Miraluka did not care and would nonchalantly barge in while Hisui was taking baths. But once Hisui started middle school, she started showing more restraint.

Nevertheless, blatantly parading in the living room clad in nothing but a bath towel was everyday behavior for Miraluka. As a result, her so-called restraint probably amounted to little.

"I don't understand, what is troubling you so much?"

"It's only natural that an immortal vampire doesn't understand a young man's heart. Okay, hurry and get off me."

"You're leaving me more and more confused. What's troubling you? It's perfectly natural for men to lust after beauty. But given our relationship, do you still need to be shy? It's the law of nature for your age to advance with time. Since you've reached this age, pursuing me is only inevitable."

"...I don't get you. Come again?"

Without answering, Miraluka simply untied her negligee's shoulder strap.

The fabric over her chest slid down, revealing the bountiful bosom clad in her bra.

The bra and the negligee were both black but extremely skimpy in fabric.

This salacious underwear only barely managed to cover her nipples, existing only to seduce men.

Miraluka was a woman who loved wearing revealing underwear to begin with, but Hisui had never seen her dressed in such a provocative manner.

"Uh..."

"I used to have my neckline open like this all the time to play the mother's role."

"...Don't bring up those annoying memories."

"Like I said, there's nothing to be shy about. Or rather... I am precisely the one who deprived you of your mother."

"..."

Indeed.

The woman before his eyes, in intimate physical contact, was

precisely the one who had murdered his parents.

While his parents were forcing him to commit suicide, she was the one who had rescued and raised him.

"My lifespan is limitless but I've never been a mother. Watching other people's mothers so much, it seems like I've learnt how to do it. Seeing you cry for mother, I became your mother... Not good enough for you?"

"...Like anyone knows. I don't have any good impressions of my birth mother anyway, even if I did, I don't remember it. I'm not so deprived of human values to think things are better just because you killed my parents... Neither will I hate you indiscriminately for it."

"It's the first time for me to hear you talk about this."

Miraluka smiled.

Indeed, Hisui was bringing this up to her for the first time.

He had never been able to speak about it.

Something so simple, he still could not bring himself to say it even till the day she died once.

"I'm no longer a kid who needs to stick to his mother all day... I don't need a second mother. You're just an elder sister at most, right...? Oh well, except much older."

"I see, you're right. But you were able to live independently while I was gone, so you don't even need an elder sister, right?"

"It's not like that... I don't want to depend on you all the time. I have the ability to live independently but I don't have the financial means."

Hisui was indeed used to living alone.

No matter what feelings he had in his heart, even if this mother and sister was not by his side, he was still able to make ends meet and live on.

"Then you don't need me?"

"No, that's not what I mean..."

"True. If I can't be family, there are still other uses for me."

Saying that, Miraluka picked up Hisui's right hand and moved it towards her chest.

"Hey..."

"You think I didn't notice? Ever since middle school, you deliberately avoided looking at me here. Why?"

"W-Well...!"

"Since I'm your mother or sister, you don't have to be self-conscious even if you looked at me there. There's no problem. On the other hand, I can't."

Miraluka pressed her breasts against Hisui and reached out to hold his hand.

Then pulling Hisui's hand, she unfastened her bra.

The fabric that almost failed to serve as underwear slid down, exposing the breasts to the air.

Like heavy fruit quivering on a branch, the soft flesh came spilling out with overwhelming volume.

Despite seeing them up close earlier, Hisui found that the white mammary flesh before his eyes was giving off a different kind of color.

The warmth coming from the breasts to his hand was no different from a human's.

The fruit on the tips of her breasts was already ripe, its stiffness something that Hisui could feel concretely.

Miraluka released Hisui's hand.

Right now, Hisui was touching her body using his own hand.

"Be my guest, do as you please."

"..."

"Over here as well."

Miraluka whispered in Hisui's ear, pulling his unoccupied left hand towards her buttocks.

Hisui's five fingers sank into her beautiful flesh that resembled a plain of snow.

Near his finger tips was the knot for her panties--The fabric there was as skimpy as the bra's.

Miraluka probably had made her mind up already when she called Hisui to her room.

"Miralu..."

Before he could call out, Hisui's lips were sealed.

She was already guilty of being a kissing demon in the past so this was not her first time doing this.

Nevertheless, today's kiss was different from all previous ones.

This kiss was unlike those meant to express amity, not coming from a mother or a sister, different from a kiss from family.

This was probably a kiss between a man and a woman.

Those lips, which should have drunk countless fresh blood, did not carry any of the stench of blood.

Instead, they were richly sweet.

This was a fragrance familiar to Hisui.

This fragrance had filled the entire room. Even the bed was giving off this seductive scent.

There was no longer any of Rushella's scent here.

That type soap fragrance, filled with luxury yet secretly containing a sense of modesty had already disappeared.

After the long kiss, Miraluka released their lips.

She allowed Hisui's hands to stay pressed against her breasts and buttocks, then reached out with both hands to cradle his head.

"What would you like to do? You may do anything you wish, okay?"

"..."

"Or perhaps... You'd like me to show off my seniority and guide you instead?"

Miraluka smiled gently and separated herself from Hisui for now.

Taking off her negligee, she began to slowly remove her panties in a teasing manner.

Miraluka then pressed her weight on Hisui and quietly lifted his t-shirt's hem.

Pushing her breasts tightly against Hisui's skinny chest, their body temperatures merged together again.

Lips and lips approached again.

A blood-red tongue extended out from similarly colored lips.

This kiss was different from the previous one, richer, sweeter, a point of no return as soon as the kiss began.

Breathing into each other's face, they touched their lips lightly together.

Miraluka closed her eyes.

But Hisui opened his eyes wide.

"Stop...!"

Hisui pushed Miraluka as she leaned over.

Of course, Hisui's strength was completely powerless against a vampire at night.

But Miraluka silently got off the bed. Still completely naked, she

asked expressionlessly: "...Are you unsatisfied with me in any way?"

"..."

"In the end... Am I nothing more than family? Or I should know my place and be happy that a mere vampire was able to get this intimate with you?"

Still maintaining that expressionless look, her words were filled with bitterness.

A man capable of making her, a True Ancestor, speak in such a voice, could there exist another apart from him?

Under the heavy silence, Hisui spoke with resolve.

"Who on earth... are you?"

Miraluka frowned with displeasure.

This question had already been asked during their reunion.

And she had responded with a perfect answer.

This answer was not going to change even now.

"I am Miraluka, who else could I be? You should recognize my body too."

Miraluka spread her arms, displaying her nude body completely before Hisui's eyes.

He knew.

Eternal beauty was being carved into his eyes.

This body of porcelain, not off by the slightest, was definitely no replica.

His eyes could not be mistaken.

This was the body of the woman who stood as his mother, his elder sister and the one he loved.

However...

"Why?"

"What are you asking?"

"Your hand... Why isn't it fully healed?"

Sitting on the bed, Hisui stared grimly at Miraluka's right hand.

It was the hand with the burn.

Although her regeneration powers had taken some effect, the hand that had blocked the silver bullet was still marred by traces of severe burns.

"...I don't understand what you are asking. That was a silver bullet after all, healing takes time."

"You simply blocked the bullet. It did not enter your body so damage should be limited. And given your power, this level of injury can't be irrecoverable."

"I am a vampire, did you forget that? A wound from an ordinary bullet would heal instantly. But wounds caused by holy damage will leave permanent scars in the worst case scenario."

"Just like the 'kisses' of your kind, even if the wound is gouged out together with the flesh, the wound will reappear again when the spot regenerates... Like that?"

This was what Miraluka had told him before.

The "kiss mark" piercing the victims of vampires--This was a curse. Unless the vampire was destroyed, the wound would never disappear.

Even using surgery to remove the flesh at the wound's location, the "kiss mark" would still regenerate.

This served precisely as the explanation that a vampire's "kiss" was no simple wound or infection but a magical curse.

The same phenomena occurred on vampires themselves.

When attacked by weapons with holy properties, permanent wounds were left on vampires in spite of their eternal life and

youth.

This phenomenon depended on the interaction of various conditions including a vampire's rank, the depth of the wound, the power of the weapon, the user's strength and there was no simple answer but it really did exist.

"...How exaggerated. First of all, no one can verify permanent wounds. Supposing that kind of wound remained unclosed, perhaps it might grow shallower after a hundred years and even disappear after a thousand. For we vampires, waiting that long isn't a problem. After all, this isn't any severe injury to me, it'll be gone without a trace after a week."

"Perhaps, what you say ought to be true. That's why I found it strange."

"Why? It's a wound produced by a weapon meant to counter my kind. I can't help that."

"No. Perhaps it's true for other vampires, but you're different."

"..."

Miraluka fell silent.

She guessed what Hisui did not say aloud.

"Of course, this is also related to the fact that you're a True Ancestor. This level of minor injury not healing instantly feels abnormal. But before that, you probably possess the most potent regeneration powers of all vampires. You even survived after getting incinerated by sunlight. Will someone that powerful get burnt by blocking just a single silver bullet? And leave a scar behind?"

Miraluka wanted to say something but Hisui continued attacking verbally without relenting.

"Also... You have ample medical and nourishment supplies and more blood than you could ever finish using. You've stockpiled a

large amount of blood in the basement, right? Although the blood for transfusion doesn't taste good, with so much blood, recovering to full health shouldn't be a problem at all. But your hand didn't recover."

"..."

"At least the Miraluka I knew would be able to heal this kind of minor wound instantly. So..."

"So I'm a fake? This doesn't even count as decisive evidence. Ultimately, the most crucial thing is whether you believe me or not."

Miraluka shook her head lightly.

There was sadness on her face.

"Since you suspect me, then you really ought to confirm with your body, right? I can't deceive you in that area."

Miraluka got on the bed again.

But while she was climbing onto the bed, Hisui jumped off.

Then he burst out of the door while Miraluka's shrill voice called out to him from behind.

It was the voice of his only family, the same as always in the past.

"I haven't changed, nowhere from head to foot. You're the one who changed, right?"

"What do you mean by that?"

Hisui feigned calmness but his voice was trembling.

"I live as evidence of my own existence, that's all. But that seems to be different for you."

"..."

"Come back any time you want me."

Hisui did not reply, he did not even look back.

Because he was unable to do anything, he could only choose to

escape in this manner.

That morning, he fled the house.

"...So you came running to my home? Have you no shame?"

Early Sunday morning, Eruru was mocking him unhappily in the living room of her own apartment.

Eruru was sitting on the sofa. Hisui was sitting on the floor with embarrassment all over his face, in stark contrast to her.

"By the way, why did you run over to my home just because you are feeling uncomfortable in your home? If you go to Sudou-san's or Uno-san's, they will gladly receive you."

"Sudou's home... I feel like she'll surely make all sorts of demands for me to repay her. As for Senpai... I don't want to trouble her family."

"You came to me because I live alone? Then I shall be frank, you are very annoying."

"...I am in the wrong."

Hisui could not find any rebuttal.

Afraid of being alone with Miraluka in the same room, he had no choice but to escape.

He was even thoughtful enough to bring his usual school uniform, how lame.

But Hisui had an excuse to come here.

"About Miraluka... Do you have any news on your side?"

"..."

"None of you three answered my texts yesterday, I was worried... Did something happen?"

Hisui carefully chose his words to pursue the matter.

Eruru told him the truth with a scowl.

"Noting much. Right now, the possibility of uncovering a crime seems very difficult. But I believe she is the type of gray that is very close to black."

"I see..."

"Also, we were too busy with other things yesterday to respond."

"What, did something happen?"

"We encountered Rushella."

Hisui's face changed with alarm then settled down.

Eruru continued mercilessly.

"I shall be brief with the details of what transpired. She ran all the way to the Supernatural Investigations Section to investigate her origins but failed to find any clues. Then she left."

"Really...? Then where is she now!?"

Hisui looked up and asked emotionally.

But seeing Eruru's ice-cold gaze, he shut up again.

"What would you do if you knew?"

"What do you mean, what..."

"She left you most likely out of her own accord. Judging from yesterday's situation, no one was forcing or and she did not have any companions with her either. Since she is determined to leave, what can you do?"

"Well..."

"I shall ask again. Is she irreplaceable to you?"

A cruel question.

Why find Rushella? Hisui had been trying to answer this question himself all along.

Had it been earlier, Hisui would surely have answered in a half

joking manner, "don't ask the obvious, this doesn't need a reason."

But now...

"She feels that you do not need her anymore, that is why she left. Surely you must have reached this conclusion, right?"

This question made Hisui felt like his heart was being stabbed by knives. Eruru knew that.

Precisely because of that, she brought this up without emotion.

"To you two... No, to Rushella-san, do you not feel that this is a painful matter?"

Eruru's every word was merciless.

Standing in the intermediate territory between humans and vampires, she knew very well how difficult it was for the two races to coexist.

Let alone the fact that there was Miraluka by Hisui's side.

Hisui did not answer and kept his head down.

Clenching his fist, gnashing his teeth, he felt like his heart was running amok with all sorts of emotions.

The silence persisted and still Hisui did not answer.

"She is currently very dangerous seeing as she has not drunk any blood apparently. I feel that she does not have the body type that can endure well, so the situation is quite bad. If she continues to abstain from blood, she will go mad sooner or later."

Eruru stood up and spoke.

"If that happens... Will the Supernatural Investigations Section handle it?"

"I will not deny it. But just as you know, destroying a rampaging vampire is quite tricky. To be honest, it would be better to find her first and make her drink blood no matter what. Oh well, it would be pointless if she refuses and spits the blood out. Hence if you want

my opinion, it would be best to have a source of blood by her side that she prefers."

"You..."

Hearing the true message in Eruru's words, Hisui stared blankly at her.

"Her whereabouts are not known exactly, but I have already narrowed down the approximate area. Since she visited the Supernatural Investigations Section once, then it would be best to trace things from the MPD as a start. If she took some kind of transportation, there will be records left behind. If she escaped on foot, there will be eye witnesses. After all, her appearance is so striking that questioning witness for clues will not be heard. In any case, I already have an idea where she could be hiding."

"Where is... that place!?"

"Apparently in a neighboring town. I never expected it to be so near."

Eruru's tone of voice was grave and her expression did not relax.

"Hmm, well... Okay, why did she pick this strange place? It's neither hiding in plain sight nor totally impossible to guess... This distance is totally easy to catch up."

"Wanting to avoid going far as much as possible yet not wanting to be found by you... I believe that is what she is thinking."

"...Can I give my honest opinion?"

"Go ahead."

"What a pain."

"I agree."

The two of them nodded.

Hisui seemed to be pulling himself together.

"Then... I shall be going out to investigate. If you have nothing to

do, then please feel free to relax here as much you like."

"...I'll go too. Why are you asking the obvious?"

"I do not read minds."

Then the two of them left together.

Still on Hisui's face was gloom that could not be washed away.

Meeting up with Mei and Kirika who were waiting in front of the station, the team returned to their usual lineup.

"By the way, are you girls doing something behind my back? Sudou looks injured. If it's about finding Rushella, isn't it totally mean to keep me in the dark?"

"Who knows, what about you, Senpai?"

"I am simply accompanying Kariya-san, right, Kariya-san?"

"I do not have any time or energy to waste on a useless person who wallows in his own troubles. Do not count him. The three of us must do our best."

"What kind of treatment is this...?"

Eruru seemed like she got off the wrong side of the bed today.

Feeling highly indignant, Hisui followed the group to the crowded main road in front of the station.

"Umm... We're going to start searching from here? But there's the problem of where to go, do you have any clues to the specific location?"

"She definitely passed by this station yesterday, but the trail broke off afterwards. If she has not left this place, she should be within walking distance still."

Eruru herself did not seem to have definitive clues either, entering deep thought.

The four of them handed out missing person notices while asking in the subway, but these efforts were hardly rewarded.

Suppose Rushella saw them from a distance, she would surely hide immediately.

"But investigating in secret is very limiting in all aspects..."

Mei began to think.

Kirika also tried to help think of a solution.

At this time, Hisui discovered an uninvited participant.

"Oh."

"What is the matter?"

Hearing his voice, Eruru followed his gaze.

Then she saw as well.

Standing in the street smugly with her arms akimbo--Rangetsu.

"Hmph, looks like you lot are in quite a bind, aren't you?"

" " " "No, not at all." " " " "

The four of them denied simultaneously then started to leave.

"Anyway, let us set a meeting time then split up to gather information. I will check out the net cafe."

"I guess I'll go to abandoned houses and empty shops."

"Then I'll check out restaurants and convenience stores. Maybe she went to buy things a few times."

"Then I will go to other public places where she might have turned up. Perhaps she went to a community center that is open to the public for free..."

The four of them made specific plans.

Just as they confirmed one another's division of roles and prepared to disperse, Rangetsu grabbed all their collars at once from the back.

"Hey, why are you ignoring me!? To think I came all the way out here to help...!!"

"It's not like we asked you."

"Say, why are you here?"

"Are you acting as a representative of the Supernatural Investigations Section? A spy?"

"Umm, we're acting privately here."

The four of them rejected her.

All of them were giving vibes of sending her off.

"What is the meaning of this!? And how do you intend to search!? With just the few of you, even though the Supernatural Investigations Section was unable to spare any manpower due to yesterday's incident, but without using mass tactics, you still won't find anything even by dusk, you know!?"

"No, we've already reached a conclusion. We know it's difficult but if we don't take action then we'll never find her."

Hisui rebutted with reason.

Rangetsu was clearly displeased that her plan was foiled.

"Umm, then if you're goin to search, the more helpers the better... Right?"

Rangetsu twisted awkwardly, looking with pleading eyes and leaning over.

To be frank, this type of approach did not suit her image at all, totally not cute.

Hisui distanced himself from her in an exaggerated manner while the other three retreated as well.

"Hey, why are you evading!?"

"Uh, you're too conspicuous and your voice is loud."

"We're just a group of students, what are you thinking, trying to butt into our center?"

"...May I ask if you are trying to get us to recruit you into our team?"

"Stop acting pretentiously."

In the end, Kirika murmured with pity.

Scorned by this group of youngsters, Rangetsu roared with her face red.

"L-Let's see who's going to succeed! Since you've said this much, I'll go search on my own, I'll show you when I find her, just you wait and see! Remember that!"

"Then go search. Let's just do our best, separately."

"Just don't get into our way, okay?"

"Good luck."

Hisui and Mei saw her off with blank expressions.

Kirika waved behind them.

Unable to go back on her words, Rangetsu asked them in a small voice:

"...You're not going to ask me to stay?"

"Huh? Aren't you the one saying you're gonna leave?"

"Competition drives motivation."

"We never called you here in the first place."

The three of them rejected her without holding back.

Their eyes looked like they were trying to drive her off.

Stuck in an awkward position, Rangetsu stood there frozen, at a loss what to do. At this moment, Eruru extended a helping hand.

"Well, everyone please wait first. Regrettably, she does have strengths that we lack, so we should ask for her help right now.

How about it, Rangetsu, will you make use of your talent?"

Eruru suddenly changed attitudes dramatically and became polite in tone.

Rangetsu also seemed to get happy, puffing out her chest and nodding.

"Fine, fine. I can see that you're facing a tough situation too. What do you want me to do? What is my specialty anyway?"

Instead of answering, Eruru took out a piece of clothing in a plastic bag from her hand carry bag.

No matter how Hisui looked at it, the garment was a uniform from Hisui's school--And a female one at that.

"What is this...?"

"Just as you can see, a uniform."

"No, of course I know that, but what do you want me to do? And whose is this?"

"Rushella-san left it behind. She apparently departed in her own clothing without taking this or her gym clothes, probably because she felt that she no longer needed them."

Eruru spoke aloofly.

Rangetsu and Hisui gradually figured out Eruru's intentions.

"Then... What are you doing with it?"

"Sniff it then find Rushella-san's whereabouts according to the scent."

"What!? You're ordering me around like I'm a police dog!?"

Rangetsu grabbed the uniform and threw it on the floor.

Her dignity had been denied by others in various ways.

"Hey, what are you doing? Don't let it get contaminated by other odors, that'll waste all earlier efforts, right!?"

Hisui frantically picked up the clothing.

Luckily, it did not touch the ground directly, being isolated by a plastic bag.

"Shut up! Although my sense of smell is indeed as keen as a dog's, to find a person... No, to find a vampire is as easy as pie, but why do I have to do a dog's job!?"

"Hmm? I think it's using talent appropriately."

"So true. And didn't you just agree to help?"

"A police officer is going back on her word?"

Hisui, Mei and Kirika stared at her.

Eruru simply watched coldly from the sidelines, pretending like it had nothing to do with her.

Rangetsu was about to cry, with only herself to blame for saying things without forethought.

But she was a police officer after all. Of course she knew very well that this was their best course of action given the current circumstances.

With only a moment's hesitation, Rangetsu buried her face into the uniform.

She sniffed hard then looked around with a displeased face.

Sniffing, Rangetsu finally locked her gaze on a certain point.

"...This way, no mistake about it! Hurry and go!"

She ran at full speed as though venting her frustrations.

Hisui and the others knew they could not match her speed and could only hurry in pursuit as fast as they could.

The crowd opened up a path for Rangetsu, serving as a sign that prevented Hisui's group from losing her.

While chasing her, Hisui asked Eruru helplessly.

"...You must have calculated this from the start, right? You kept your mouth shut all along, is this the strategy of good cop, bad cop?"

"Using a harsh and intimidating interrogator to scare the suspect then sending a benevolent colleague to apply restraint, then the suspect will cooperate and spill the beans. This is a trick frequently seen in crime dramas. But I never thought it would work so thoroughly on a police officer in service."

"After Rushella disappeared, you took away the things she left behind, that was for this?"

"Since she is a vampire after all, I do not want to use ordinary police hounds. Apart from that, she is the best choice since she can pinpoint Rushella-san's location to a certain extent, able to use a dog's sense of smell should the opportunity arise, stronger than a dog yet it does not matter if she dies in an accident."

"Are you truly a demon?"

Hisui absolutely did not want to be her enemy.

Chatting like this, they ran after Rangetsu's trail.

Keeping her high speed, she soon reached an area with few people.

There were very few pedestrians in this place that was in the shadows in between the gaps of tall buildings.

Seeing this scene, it was very easy for someone to conclude this was vampire territory out of preconceived notions.

After a moment's hesitation, Rangetsu stopped in front of some ruins.

Although the ruins themselves were unrecognizable, judging from the building's decorations it was still possible to guess its original look.

This place... was most likely the ruins of a church.

"...The smell here is very chaotic. But at least, she must have spent

a long period of time here recently. But probably not inside the church, let's go check nearby net cafes first..."

"No, start here. Japan has very few churches that can actually repel vampires."

"Judging from her personality, she'd probably try to be contrary and deliberately chose to treat the most dangerous place as the safest spot."

"As a dhampir, I can feel that there is no problem with this building, almost completely harmless."

"Then let's go."

The group ignored the embarrassed Rangetsu and entered the interior of the building.

There were nothing holy inside and all the articles with the church's symbols had all been moved away already.

The light inside was very dim and even in the daytime, sunlight did not reach inside.

It would not be surprising for demonic entities to lurk in this place.

Judging from the exterior of the building, it looked more like a hidden lair for supernatural entities.

But the place was empty, devoid of other presences.

However, the five of them did not lower their guard. Checking their surroundings, they searched in different directions.

Especially examining the floor, Eruru narrowed her eyes.

"There are clear and distinct footprints in the dust. Since it has not been covered by new dust..."

"That means someone visited recently..."

In charge of searching the forward direction, Hisui heightened his vigilance.

At this moment, the sound of floorboards being pulled apart could be heard ahead.

Then there was the sound of footsteps on stairs.

Someone was coming up from underground.

There was movement in the space several meters ahead.

Shrouded deeply in shadows, there was definitely something up ahead.

The five of them readied their positions, made a gesture for silence and bided their time.

Then Eruru took out a small flashlight she was carrying and shone the light forward.

At the same time, the sound of rustling clothing came from the front.

Looking at the ground, there was a familiar garment--especially to Hisui.

This was a part of the school's prescribed uniform--His shirt as well as Rushella's pajamas.

Hisui recalled that Rushella had definitely taken it when she disappeared.

Thanks to that, Hisui had to spend money again--Sigh, whatever, that no longer mattered.

Since the pajamas was taken off, it meant that someone was in the process of changing.

In fact, next to her was a formal dress and underwear folded neatly.

In other words... She was currently nude.

Illuminated by the flashlight's dazzling radiance, Rushella's pale nude body was exposed completely before the entire group.

Standing in front was Hisui.

This reunion was quite unsightly, to say the least.

Voluptuous bosom, narrow waist, tight and elastic buttocks, slender and beautiful legs--Everything was in clear view of Hisui.

Just as everyone was petrified, Hisui timidly... said in a loud voice.

"Hello again..."

"DON'T LOOOOOOOOOK!!"

A shrill scream echoed indoors as Rushella picked up the shirt on the ground and threw it at him.

Not only Hisui but everyone else's vision was blocked.

Rushella seized this instant to rapidly put on her clothes.

Without caring about fixing up her disheveled appearance, she escaped outside like a puff of smoke.

"Hey, wait up!"

Hisui chased after her.

Speedy Rangetsu and Mei also followed but were blocked by Eruru.

"Do not follow, just leave it to him here. If we are to chase them, we should take detours to cut off her escape in a pincer formation. Most likely, her coffin is still here so she will eventually return. Just leave one person to standby here. Uno-senpai, can I rely on you for that?"

"Yes, sure..."

Receiving the orders, Kirika moved a folding chair that was leaning against a wall over and sat down.

"Then we should set off and start the game of hide and seek."

"...Even if you say that, you actually hope for Hi-kun to catch her, right? Even if I can't catch up, Oogami's speed can surely catch up to her."

"You are overthinking things. Let us go."

Eruru ignored Mei's remarks and walked out of the building.

The two of them set off in directions different from where Rushella had run off. At this moment, someone who did not understand finally could not tolerate any further.

"Hey what's the big idea here? Why won't you let me, a werewolf, chase her? A vampire during daytime is totally no match for my speed..."

"...You are very annoying."

"What do you mean!? It's all thanks to me that you were able to search to this place..."

"Yes yes, good job. Oogami, you really don't understand a man's heart~"

"What did you say!?"

Hearing Mei's taunt, Rangetsu turned her antagonism towards her.

"You girls, what are you doing blocking a competent adult like me here for--"

"Oogami."

Mei suddenly stared at her with serious eyes.

Rangetsu tilted her head in puzzlement while Mei patted her shoulder.

"You're a virgin, right?"

"HUHHHHH!?"

"...Rather, you've never gotten along with men much, have you?"

Mei dropped the bomb.

She was totally looking down on this senior from a high position.

Although their actual experience were on the same level, Mei held

an overwhelming advantage in her stored knowledge and honed skills.

"W-What rubbish are you talking about? Back in the day..."

"Back in the day?"

"...Back in the day when I was in the werewolve's hidden settlement, I was quite the popular one... I guess."

"May I ask what the gender ratio was? I've heard that among werewolves, men make up the vast majority?"

Eruru mercilessly exposed her.

She was truly cold-blooded during times like these.

"Wanting to find a mate, you left your homeland and finally arrived at the MPD, right? Then have you found a mate?"

Mei struck the final blow.

".....Not yet."

Rangetsu looked up sadly into the sky.

Today's sky was truly blue and clear.

But as luck would have at, several clouds blocked her view.

These obstructing dark clouded perhaps reflected her inner feelings right now.

Mei and Eruru left the demoralized Rangetsu behind and quickly departed.

"How pitiful... Disregarding whether she's a monster, looks like it's hopeless for her. A Christmas cake. Eruru-chan, you'd better be careful too♥"

"Do not compare me with her...!"

Eruru seemed really mad as she rushed out in a huff.

"Hey wait!"

Hisui yelled as he ran.

But running in front, Rushella had no intention of stopping.

She ran as hard as she could, neither making use of small alleys nor buildings to evade Hisui, simply trying to shake him off through sheer stamina and speed.

Running aimlessly, her path was naturally hindered by pedestrians and cars but she did not care.

As luck would have it, because Rushella was opening a path ahead, Hisui did not have any trouble following the space opened by the pedestrians to let her pass. Furthermore, Rushella was holding a parasol and the air resistance was limiting her speed like a natural set of brakes.

In spite of all that, the distance between the two of them did not shrink.

Although the sun had yet to set, this was only expected seeing as his opponent was a vampire.

A question soon appeared in Hisui's mind after he chased for a while.

Her speed was definitely fast.

But he still managed to barely keep up.

She did not look like she was deliberately going easy on him but this was surely not her true level of power.

Very likely, she had not drunk any blood ever since she left him.

Apart from that reason, something inside her seemed to be weakening on a fundamental level.

Hisui had this feeling.

Currently, Rushella was nothing more than an ordinary girl who could run fast.

Perhaps her level would make her one-in-a-hundred among high

school students, capable of matching a track and field athlete from a renowned school.

However...

"My sides are starting to hurt..."

The key point was that the pursuer sucked too much.

A loser in sprinting matches to begin with, he was not good at long distance running either, plus his sides were hurting more and more.

In fact, in the entire Rushella search team, he had the shortest legs.

The sight of Rushella's back was getting increasingly distant, soon about to disappear.

"Hold on and wait!"

Hisui yelled with the last strength he could squeeze out but most likely she did not hear it.

Even if she heard, surely she would not stop either.

Just as Hisui was at a loss, he felt a cold feeling on his face.

He could not help but stop and look up into the sky.

Raindrops instantly fell on his face.

Not long ago, there were only a few scattered clouds in the sky but now it was covered with dark clouds.

Then the raindrops turned into a downpour.

The torrent of raindrops smashed against Hisui's entire body.

This was an unexpected disaster. The pedestrians in the surroundings all used their bags or luggage to cover their heads or ran under the shelter of eaves.

But for Hisui, this rain came with perfect timing.

Catching his breath, he started running again.

The wind and rain struck him in the face.

Even with an umbrella, walking would be difficult in this kind of raging wind.

But for Hisui, this opportunity was a gift from heaven.

Because if it was merely rain, Rushella was not going to stop running.

A slowed down metabolism would make her decelerate somewhat but her parasol also doubled as an ordinary umbrella. Rainwater alone was not going to halt her footsteps.

Stopping to find shelter from the rain would risk getting found.

Hence, she could only continue to run.

All she could do was run nonstop, running until she had shaken Hisui off her trail completely.

However.

With wind, it was a totally different ballgame.

Blown horizontally, the rainwater evaded the parasol surface, striking her body.

Living water of natural origins was a taboo for vampires.

Even without causing critical injuries, it would slow down her entire body's biological activity. In the worst case, it would turn her into something like a corpse.

The sudden rainstorm could be considered a gift for Hisui.

Hence, he did not stop either.

Ignoring the slippage underfoot, the drenched outer clothing, he simply raced across the streets.

Then he finally found her.

"This has happened before too."

Before his eyes was Rushella collapsed in the streets.

Although she was holding a parasol, the rainwater attacking from

the side battered her body all over.

She still tried to distance herself from Hisui, thus ending up in this state.

"You really know how to make trouble for others."

Hisui smiled wryly as he cradled Rushella in his arms.

However, Rushella weakly pushed his arm away.

"...What?"

"So noisy, get away from me...!"

"Don't put on a tough front, you're clearly so weak already. Have you been drinking blood properly? But no, you can't drink irresponsibly."

"Shut up, I don't need your help..."

Rushella shut her mouth in protest, her voice so weak it was barely audible.

Crawling on the ground, she managed with great difficulty to move herself under a building's shade to avoid the corrosion of rainwater. However, all this only served to indicate how weak and vulnerable she was right now.

"Oh my, I told you to stop putting up a tough front. Especially when you're clearly a vampire."

"Hmph... B-By this point, what business do you have that you need to find me!?"

"...Well, it's not business exactly... You must let me know before going out."

Finally a reunion with her after much difficulty but face to face, he did not know what to say.

Why did he have to find her? What next after he found her? Hisui never considered these questions at all.

"M-Money, I already left it for you! That's the rent for everything

up to now! Or you find it too little? What a greedy miser!"

"Considering all the trouble you've caused me, perhaps it might really not be enough, but ignoring the question of money first, you should at least say something before leaving! Why on earth... did you leave?"

This was actually quite difficult for Hisui to ask.

Hisui had guessed the reason vaguely... But in the end, he still wanted to hear the answer straight from her mouth.

"...I-It's because, I've grown tired of living with you! I-I wanted to live... a-a more exciting and eventful life!"

"Are you a new bride weary of married life? Leaving home in search of thrills?"

"You're being noisy, shut up! E-Even if I stayed with you, I totally can't find my memories or any clues at all, so...!"

"Are you an office lady going on a trip on a search for self-discovery? Then come on, go take a flight overseas, like to Europe for example. Going to the neighboring town, what the heck! Somewhere so close by, what's the difference compared to the area where you searched for your memories previously!?"

Hisui yelled loudly, pouring out these things that should not be said.

Rushella grew tearful and began to beat on him.

"You're noisy, shut up!! You clearly didn't come to find me!"

"What the heck!? Since you hid yourself, even if it was just the empty house next door, I'm not going to be able to find you, right!?"

"Shut up, shut up!! After all, you surely never searched seriously for me, right!?"

"But I searched through hell and high water! And you hid yourself so well, doesn't that mean you didn't want to be found!? Also, you kept running until just now!"

"Shut up, you're not allowed to blame me if you didn't try your best!"

Rushella sent a splendid right straight into Hisui's face.

The rainwater drenched Rushella's fist so it was not particularly painful... But this still made Hisui's temper explode.

"...That's enough from you! You'd better start thinking in other people's shoes! Do you know how worried I was...!"

Mid sentence, Hisui stopped

Biting her lip, Rushella looked at him.

Her shoulders were trembling.

Her eyes were filled with tears.

"Liar..."

Her angry voice sounded like vengeful noises from underground. Hisui did not know how to answer.

Wiping her tears on the back of her hand, Rushella began to hammer her fists on Hisui's face again.

"In any case, you surely have no need for me! You're surely getting intimate with that woman!"

"..."

"You should search more seriously! You should chase harder! You should... You should..."

By the time he realized it, Rushella had stopped moving her hands.

Striking a final punch on Hisui's chest, she bowed her head and did not say a word.

Looking at her, Hisui turned to look towards the side and muttered a word.

"Annoying..."

Hearing him, Rushella suddenly looked up with a vicious visage.

"What did you say!?"

"Do you know how much your stupid matter troubled me for so long, totally annoying!"

"...Well I'm so sorry! Very well, this counts as my farewell to you! I'll investigate my own affairs. This time... This time it really is goodbye for good!"

No sooner had Rushella yelled out these words, Hisui hugged her tightly.

He pressed her mouth against his chest, causing Rushella's thoughts to stall.

But immediately, she began yelling again.

"W-What are you doing!? After all, I'm making trouble for you right now, aren't I!?"

"Yeah, it's trouble, super troublesome. This particular moment is really very troublesome."

"...Then unhand me! After all, I'm just trouble, right!?"

Hisui gave in to her demand and released Rushella.

Their faces were right next to each other.

Hisui was showing his usual unmotivated face as he said indifferently:

"Don't go running off so casually."

Rushella was stunned.

By the time they noticed, the rain had stopped already.

"...You running off is actually the most troublesome of all."

Sighing, Hisui hugged Rushella again.

This time was different, a very warm embrace.

Rushella finally broke down.



Large teardrops were pouring out like water from a ruptured dam. Her entire face was distorted from her crying.

Then--She began to hammer her fists on Hisui's face and chest.

Like a child, she only knew how to use her fists to vent the myriad feelings in her heart.

"Hey, it hurts, show some mercy, Rushella-san, it really hurts a lot! Cry or hit, pick one, okay!? No wait, I'd rather you not pick either!"

"So noisy, shut up...!"

Rushella said lightly then reached out with her arms around Hisui's back to embrace him.

Then she squeezed his body hard, clamping him half dead as though not letting him escape.

"Hey, it really hurts! Stop it, get away! Release me now!"

"No."

"Umm, this is out in the open streets!"

"NO!"

Sigh, this vampire is so annoying.

But Hisui gave up after some thought, wearing a wry smile while allowing her to embrace him.

Luckily, there was no one nearby.

There was even a road for motorized vehicles and this main road was supposed to have many pedestrians but for some reason, no one came at all.

This isn't bad at all--Just as Hisui thought that, a voice filled with exasperation was heard from behind.

"What are you two doing?"

Hisui looked back in surprise, only to see someone dressed in a black invernness(!) dress, walking elegantly towards them, her skirt

hem fluttering in the wind.

Miraluka.

Her snow-white skin was glittering brightly, clearly wearing a light-blocking agent.

The sky was already sunny with sunlight passing through the clouds, scattering all over. Completely unfazed, she was walking under the sun.

Rushella and Miraluka stared at each other with Hisui standing in the middle.

The blood-red light of lightning shook the atmosphere as two True Ancestors encountered each other here.

CHAPTER 5

TRUE ANCESTOR VERSUS TRUE ANCESTOR

"You...!"

Holding a parasol, Rushella took a step forward, her eyes filled with hostility.

"Hugging publicly out on the streets, my, you've surely grown up."

It was impossible to tell from Miraluka's tone whether it was praise or exasperation.

Perhaps it was both.

Embarrassed, Hisui looked back and forth between the two vampires.

"Why did you come here...?"

"I was taking a walk nearby then heard a commotion so I came to check it out. Then... I saw you two."

"Surely you can come up with a better excuse? You must have followed me, right? If you used the mystic eyes, it'd be easy as pie."

Ignoring Hisui's accusations, Miraluka took a step forward as well.

Rushella glared at her with displeasure.

"You came at the right time. I've got things I need to make clear to you!"

"What?"

"This guy is mine!!"

Pointing at Hisui, Rushella announced proudly.

"No no, I'm free and independent."

Hisui calmly refuted but Rushella ignored him.

Finally, she managed to return to her former state.

"So noisy, so shut up! Know that you are my servant and you'll dedicate yourself to me fully from now on!!"

"I can't believe you can say that so shamelessly after causing me so much trouble! Also..."

Hisui could not bring himself to say "also in front of Miraluka" out loud.

Timidly, he looked at Miraluka but she remained unfazed.

She did not seem to mind.

Not only that, she was extending her right hand with a smile.

"W-What are you doing!?"

Unable to understand her intent, Rushella asked warily.

"Since sunlight is such a pain to both of us and standing out here to talk isn't convenient, how about we go home to talk? In any case, let's find a cool and shady spot."

"Well... Sure. But you're surprisingly calm. What, you don't mind Hisui being my servant?"

Rushella asked proudly.

She was completely unaware of the danger.

But Hisui was scared shitless.

The right hand Miraluka extended was the one whose skin had been burnt.

Spreading her fingers, her action looked like she was about to pierce Rushella's left chest.

"Run for it!"

Hearing Hisui's warning, Rushella reflexively retreated.

Miraluka's right hand passed through empty space.

Luckily, her hand only managed to graze the clothing on Rushella's chest. What she ripped out was only fragments of

Rushella's brassiere and did not harm any flesh.

"...!?"

Rushella looked down in shock.

With her clothing ripped at the chest, her left breast had popped out.

Before feeling embarrassment, she first experienced fear.

On that pale and voluptuous, supple flesh, a faint scratch mark appeared.

Then the scratch mark slowly thickened, turning into a thin red line.

Had she evaded a beat slower, Rushella's left breast would surely have been struck.

A fist-sized hollow would probably be hollowed out from her chest.

"What's the meaning of this!?"

Faced with Hisui's questioning, Miraluka followed up with an attack to substitute for an answer.

Her attack was identical to just now.

Rushella was covering her chest, unable to fight back at all. Seeing that she was unable to evade or defend against the next strike no matter what, her face displayed fear.

At the last moment, a figure rushed over to block Miraluka.

"What are you doing? Exposing a breast to seduce Hi-kun?"

"You...!"

Mei had hurried over. Stepping up to shield Rushella, she had protected her.

"Hey, my dear mother, although this brat doesn't know her manners, aren't you going a bit too far? Or is this a woman's

jealousy?"

"Step aside."

Miraluka said emotionlessly, ignoring Hisui.

A battle between a vampire and an artificial human was about to start--However, it was not one against one.

"This ends here."

Eruru appeared standing behind Miraluka.

The sacred gun Argentum was already aimed at Miraluka. If she continued to take action, Eruru would surely fire--That was what her eyes conveyed resolutely.

"While chasing Rushella-san, I noticed that the crowd was thinning out in this area. By the time I reached this place, there were no other people. You used the mystic eyes to drive all bystanders away, what are your intentions?"

Miraluka shrugged at Eruru's question.

Without turning her head back, she answered tirelessly.

"What am I doing? Since this is a matter between vampires, whatever I do is my freedom, yes? So long as it does not involve humans, conflict between monsters should not be interfered with. Isn't that your organization's policy? So what does this have to do with you?"

Poked in a vulnerable spot, Eruru made a displeased expression.

Miraluka was very correct.

It was a conflict between vampires. Just let them kill each other and get killed on their own.

If they ended up with mutual destruction, it would save her the task and also reduce the number of people with tragic experiences like her.

However...

Eruru glanced at Rushella and Hisui then said calmly.

"This is friendship between classmates... You are overthinking things."

"Who do you think I am doing this for? For this imposter... Or for Hisui?"

Eruru frowned unhappily and signaled to Mei with her eyes.

"Okay!"

Instantly, bright light erupted from Mei's eyes.

Two scorching beams of light shot at Miraluka's face.

However, Miraluka turned to one side and dodged.

While facing Mei's lasers, it was even more important to stay vigilant of Eruru behind her.

In fact, when Miraluka was taking evasive action, Eruru had pulled the trigger at the same time.

Mei and Eruru had discussed tactics beforehand, deciding on this pincer attack conducted in quick succession.

"How naive."

Miraluka blocked the bullet completely effortlessly. Closing in instantaneously, she blocked Argentum's muzzle.

With that, the gun was neutralized.

Eruru would lose as long as the gun was damaged before she fired her second shot.

Just as everyone present thought Eruru was going to lose, she laughed fearlessly.

"Who says that I only have one gun?"

Only then did Miraluka notice that Eruru was holding another gun in her left hand.

This gun's design was almost identical to Argentum's but slightly

smaller with a narrower caliber.

A weapon prepared for emergencies in advance, prioritizing ease of concealment over power.

Eruru never intended to defeat her enemy using Argentum alone.

All was for this occasion.

Eruru pulled the trigger. The second bullet shot out from the gun in her left.

She had never dual wielded before, but this time, her tactic was correct.

The bullet was shot at the left of Miraluka's chest--Then it penetrated her body!

"Miraluka!"

Hisui wanted to run over.

But Miraluka did not collapse.

She staggered then stabilized herself immediately, using karate chops to strike down Eruru's dual guns. Then kicking away the guns that had fallen on the ground, she forced Eruru to withdraw.

Confirming that Eruru had no other backup guns, Miraluka casually walked over to Rushella.

There was a clear bullet hole on the left breast but she did not seem injured.

"Looks like there's no choice but to fight. But why is she unharmed?"

Mei was surprised but had no time to figure it out.

This was not arm wrestling but a battle with their lives on the line. One side was definitely going to lose and die. Mei's face was solemn as though facing a great enemy.

"Get out of the way quickly."

Hisui suddenly rushed over and shoved her aside.

Because it happened so suddenly, Mei was knocked down by the weak and skinny Hisui, falling over completely.

"Hey, what are you doing!?"

Ignoring Mei's protest, Hisui stepped up to take her place.

Hugging tightly Rushella who was standing rooted to the spot, he faced off against Miraluka.

This action caused even Miraluka to get angry.

Knocking Hisui unconscious and pulling him away from Rushella would be very easy, but he was surely going to resist and possibly get hurt.

"Step aside, Hisui."

"No."

"...When did you gain the guts to oppose me?"

Miraluka was questioning Hisui as his family, his mother and older sister.

Hearing that, hesitation flashed in Hisui's eyes. But as soon as he looked at Rushella who was still trembling after getting drenched in the rain, he steeled his determination.

"And when did you start getting serious with the young ones? That's even worse than acting childish. I really wanna ask... Who the heck are you? Does she really rub you the wrong way? Because I brought a girl home to live with while you were gone... Do you see her as an eyesore?"

It pained Hisui to say these things.

Hisui knew that Miraluka was not going to react well to this.

In her shoes, he would surely get angry too.

Coming home to find another woman sleeping in her bed.

It might be possible to tolerate as a mother or a sister.

But Miraluka, she was...

Hisui recalled what happened last night in the bedroom.

That supple body, the sensation of her breasts, her crimson lips, none of that could be dispelled from his mind.

"Although it's really embarrassing, I have to say this."

Hisui sounded like he was trying to convince himself as well.

"After you died... I was living in a daze like I had lost my soul."

He came to understand all this after that occasion when he got to have a dialogue with himself.

After conversing with his other self, his doppelganger, only then did he realize.

"I originally planned to pull myself together after entering high school... But nothing really changed, fundamentally. Until I met this girl."

Pointing at Rushella, Hisui smiled wryly.

In the beginning, when Rushella was drenched by rainwater, Hisui had extended a helping hand and taken her in to live in his home... But truly, the one who was saved was actually himself.

"This girl made a ton of trouble, giving me such a hard time. But with my life revolved around her all the time, I didn't have any time to think about unnecessary things. The busy days helped me to get my act together again."

Hisui narrowed his eyes as he finished.

"So what?"--If Miraluka answered like that, Hisui would have nothing to say in return.

After all, Miraluka was already back.

However, Hisui still felt compelled to continue talking.

"So, could you not touch what's precious to me, okay?"

These words stung himself as well.

To be honest, he was afraid to look at Miraluka.

But he still gathered his courage and looked up to face her.

Miraluka was still expressionless.

Without saying a word, she stood there silently.

Her complexion was so pale as always, almost transparent. Even at this moment, there was no shade of red--No emotional turmoil.

She simply took a step forward.

Everyone felt nervous.

Just as a new round of conflict was about to break out, a certain person interrupted, failing to read the mood.

"Okay, that's enough. Should I call the police? Oh right, I am the police."

Rangetsu appeared and flashed her police notebook proudly.

Despite her casual tone, her expression was very grim.

Holding a cellphone in her other hand, she was ready to all for reinforcements any time.

"The mystic eyes' effects will be over soon and people will be here shortly. Let's add a few more police to that. So, what are you going to do?"

This was not bluffing, but the situation was not improving enough to call it a reversal.

Faced against a True Ancestor-class vampire, the Supernatural Investigations Section's notebook was not going to have an effect.

Although Eruru got her revenge, Miraluka was still standing there without any problems.

This was reality.

Amidst the complicate battle of psychology, Miraluka smiled and said: "Looks like you're greatly loved by the non-humans, although my wish is for you to avoid contact with these monsters as much as possible."

"Who do you think raised me? This is 90% your fault, you know?"

"Perhaps..."

Then she pointed at the left side of Rushella's chest.

"I shall spare your life for now."

Then she turned around and left.

No one chased after her.

Because even if they did, they could not win.

Only Rushella screamed as hard as she could:

"...Why must you take my life?"

"..."

"Who exactly am I!?"

Rushella screamed her lungs out but Miraluka did not answer. Without looking back, she issued a declaration of war.

"I definitely won't let you off next time."

Her stern voice sounded pleasing to the ear, its tone filled with the solemn dignity of an ancient vampire.

At the same time, there was undeniable seductive charm to it.

Until the image of her back disappeared into the busy streets, no one said anything.

"...Hurry and drink."

"Not drinking."

This exchange had already repeated dozens of times.

Hisui already expected this answer but he still had to say it.

"Hurry and drink my blood! You're so weak now, you haven't drank blood for a long time, right!?"

"Not~ drinking!!"

Rushella struggled, refusing him.

Watching from the side, Eruru and the rest of the girls were either sighing or making wry looks.

After Miraluka left, Hisui's group had gone to Eruru's home. Kirika also met up with them and found out what happened.

Rangetsu had work and returned to the Supernatural Investigations Section first. Apart from Touko, the entire Supernatural Investigations Club were finally gathered together.

Once everyone settled down, Hisui urged Rushella to hurry and drink his blood. But she acted stubborn and refused no matter what.

"What the heck's with you? You used to drink while pinning me down under you no matter how much I struggled!?"

"Shut up, I'm on 'diet' right now."

"What dieting? It's not like you got fat, your figure still looks..."

Saying that, Hisui checked out Rushella's body, earning himself a punch from her.

"What are you doing!?"

"Stop looking at me with indecent eyes! Oh right, inside the church, you saw my n-naked body..."

"Oh yeah, that did happen. Yes, nothing's changed at all, there's no need to go on a diet."

"Stop recalling!"

Then Rushella straddled him and hammered her fists.

Her attack was like it was trying to drive the embarrassing memories out of Hisui's mind, raining punches nonstop. Hisui could not resist at all.

Kirika could not bear watching on the sidelines and ran over to pull Rushlla away. Mei also interrupted impatiently.

"What are you doing here, flirting with each other? Do it somewhere else."

"...It really hurts, okay? Thank you, Senpai."

"Let go, I'm not done with him yet!"

"Come on, show some restraint. Besides... Why aren't you drinking blood?"

This was everyone's shared question that Kirika was raising on their behalf.

Hearing that, Rushella pouted and acted awkward.

"Because... it doesn't look like it feels good, right?"

"Why are you trying to act coy at this point? It hurts, it's scary and there's the smell of blood. None of it is good."

As soon as Hisui finished, Mei and Kirika poked him.

"...What?"

"This time, you're in the wrong, Hi-kun."

"This time, it's your fault, Kujou-kun."

Both girls responded at the same time.

But Hisui was totally clueless.

"I watched a video in a net cafe... A vampire movie..."

"A vampire watching a vampire movie? Come on, those are all fake, 'kay?"

"But... It's not like they're totally wrong... Right? People who get bitten by vampires, it looks like it hurts a lot, those painful

expressions on their faces, finally losing their humanity... Vampires are also so ugly... Like monsters..."

Rushella sat there uncomfortably, stammering.

Actually everything she said was true. She had finally gained some objective insight to herself, apparently.

She must have thought over many things in her days away from Hisui.

"Well... They're vampires after all, right? That's the way it is, right? When humans are hungry, don't they look like ravenous demons while they eat?"

His skills in following up on the conversation were terrible. Mei and Kirika poked him again.

"What the heck!? Did I say something wrong!?"

"I can't believe I'm sympathizing with this child. Hi-kun is so bad at delicacy."

"Shouldn't you be reflecting on why she left in the first place?"

"...Yeah."

Attacked by two heroines, Hisui could only surrender.

But he still could not figure out Rushella's thoughts.

"Aren't you the same!? You used to be so reluctant, but what happened now? After getting sucked for so long, has your 'fetish' finally awakened!?"

"No, not at all. To be honest, it hurts like hell. Your blood drinking technique sucks so badly, you haven't improved even a tiny bit all this time. It's such a pain."

"Shut up!!"

This time, Rushella's full-powered right straight struck Hisui, knocking him out.

Glaring unhappily at the unconscious Hisui, she sat down on the

floor with knees drawn to her chest.

Mei and Kirika hastily discussed how to handle things. Observing silently all this time, Eruru finally spoke up.

"Looks like you finally understand that you are a contemptible monster that preys on human blood. Since you have become self-aware, it can be considered a good thing, but nothing has changed fundamentally."

Hearing her speak so bluntly, Mei and Kirika frantically warned with their eyes but Eruru ignored them. She continued: "According to what that Pure of the Pure said, vampires originated from the act of blood drinking. This behavior probably cannot be changed. Since I, too, have inherited that contemptible blood of monsters, I have no right to look down on you... Since this is all inborn, you do not have to blame yourself totally."

"...But."

"At least, if you really were a contemptible monster, I believe that Kujou-san would not let you drink his blood. Oh well, I suppose it is possible that he is charmed by your appearance."

Eruru's words were merciless.

Most people probably could not tell if she was trying to comfort or denigrate her.

"You also saw how that Pure of the Pure ended up, right? If you do not drink blood and end up like him, then that would be really making trouble for us. I don't suppose you want to lose rationality, right?"

"..."

Deep nervousness appeared on Rushella's face.

She recalled the death of the beast that had lost its sanity.

The thought alone was enough to make her shiver in terror.

She did not want to turn into that.

She did not want to end up in that pitiful state.

She wanted to maintain her sense of self.

However, in order to retain her sense of self, to retain a vampire's rational mind... Drinking blood was necessary.

"No way... Are you starting to want to become human?"

Eruru pointed out coldly.

Rushella did not answer.

No matter how trivial the situation, she used to bring up her title of True Ancestor all the time, taking pride in it and viewing humans as ants.

In the past, she would definitely have denied Eruru's observation.

But now, she did not say anything.

Neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

"If I were human, Hisui wouldn't have such a rough time... This has crossed my mind."

"Of course. Although Kujou-san is a weird case, he is human after all. Hence, the act of blood drinking is definitely accompanied by risk to some extent. Death from blood loss, damage to blood vessels or turning vampire like during the sports festival. All of that are implied when a vampire stays close to a human."

Eruru's words seem to be reminding herself as well.

After all, she had inherited the blood of vampires too.

Saying all this to Rushella also applied partially to herself, apart from the vampirization portion.

"...I know, that's why..."

"That's why you chose to leave. But that does not mean that trouble leaves with you. Suppose both sides of the decision cause trouble no matter what, why don't you follow Kujou-san's wishes?"

"..."

"If you are not willing to drink Kujou-san's blood, there are transfusion blood packs in the fridge, you know? The taste is probably worse than muddy water for you, but a slight drink should get you through the current crisis."

"Not needed..."

Rushella shook her head.

Eruru narrowed her eyes with displeasure. Kirika and Mei also motioned with their chins to tell her to get a blood pack from the kitchen.

But Rushella did not move.

She was not simply making a show of her tsundere willfulness. Instead, it was self-awareness about her body's condition.

"I'm not lying when I say I'm not thirsty, but... It does surprise me too that I haven't reached that extent yet. I used to drink blood every single day, but now, it's unbelievable that I'm currently fine..."

"Considering this blank period, it could be considered a safe zone for now, but no one can tell how long it will last. To prevent the worst case scenario from happening, please manage your bodily condition properly."

"...I know. By the way, you've changed."

"Huh?"

Eruru made a face of puzzlement but her eyes betrayed her. Even Mei and Kirika stared at her suggestively.

"W-What?"

"Nothing much, I'm starting to think you're an obstacle along my path to have a child with Hi-kun."

"Considering it's Kujou-kun, a dhampir is fine too, how

troublesome..."

The two girls nodded with understanding.

"What do you two mean by that? That look on your faces is so annoying! Spit it out clearly if you have something to say!"

"Nope, I've got nothing to say. Right, Senpai?"

"What is there to say by this point? Okay... What are we doing next?"

Hearing Kirika's question, Eruru recovered her usual state and expressed her opinion.

"Why does True Ancestor Miraluka want to take Rushella's life? Although it is just a conflict between vampires, considering that innocents might get caught up, it cannot be ignored. I believe the most important thing right now is to send her to a safe place for quarantine for now."

"If anything happened to either of those two, Hi-kun will be sad. You forgot to mention this."

"You shut up. Rushella-san, will you listen to our arrangements?"

Eruru ignored the mischievous Mei and turned to Rushella."

"...I know. I don't want to cause Hisui trouble."

To think she accepted so simply, how unlike her style in the past.

But the girls seemed to have forgotten a boy.

After Rushella and the girls left, Hisui was still lying knock out on the wooden floor.

At last, someone kicked him in the side of the head. A wave of pain finally woke Hisui up.

"Hey, what are you doing? My head is not a football!"

"Shut up, watch your tone of voice when you are a guest at my house."

Eruru was drying her hair with a towel as she looked down at him.

Seeing her just out of a bath, Hisui realized he had fainted for quite a long time.

Crawling to his feet, he looked around. Only Eruru and himself were here.

"Where's Rushella?"

"Already taken to a safe place for quarantine. It is better not to say where, just in case."

"If you say so... Okay, I admit you're right."

"So why does your foster mother see her as an enemy? Just because you two were flirting openly? Surely that cannot be everything."

"Don't be so harsh. I-I don't know either. I can't figure out the reason. If anything... Umm, Mei should be her primary target instead. Especially if Miraluka encountered one of those times when Mei pushes me down... After all, it happens all the time."

"I agree. Myself excluded. If it is for this reason, then all the girls around you will be targeted... Perhaps she has already made a move on a number of people."

Hisui wanted to avoid confronting the topic but Eruru brought it up openly.

Precisely because of that, Hisui faced her sincerely with objective analysis.

"I'm still not sure of the reason, but..."

"But?"

"I think she's getting a bit impatient. If not for that, when Rushella was together with me... She wouldn't have made a move."

"You mean she would avoid fighting Rushella for your sake? My,

you do trust her so much."

Although Eruru was highly sarcastic, there was sadness in her words.

Or perhaps jealousy.

"What... should I do?"

"Why ask me? Think over it yourself. In any case, you may sleep here tonight. You cannot go home after all, right? Even if your foster mother is not home."

Hisui nodded.

He had a feeling that Miraluka would definitely be at home if he returned like this. Also, she would open the door in her usual attitude, even dragging him off to bed...

Hence, Hisui was afraid.

He dared not return.

"If the living room sofa works, just bear with it. But if you dare enter my room, even just a millimeter, I will blow your brains out."

"Like hell I'd go in there! Then just let me stay for one night. Since I'm already imposing on you, you don't mind if I ask for one more favor, do you?"

"What is it?"

"I want a medical check."

Hisui's face was serious.

Eruru was very surprised.

"Why?"

Pointing at himself, Hisui said:

"I want a proper check up from the ground up. About my constitution."

CHAPTER 6

BLOOD'S TRUTH

"This is a safe place, right?"

Seeing her environment, Rushella laughed in self-mockery.

Indeed, it was safe, very safe.

This kind of place, not even sunlight could enter. It was also protected heavily by alloyed armor.

Alarms will be triggered in the event of an invasion. The security guards were also experienced experts in dealing with the supernatural. Naturally, that included vampires.

Indeed, this was underground of the MPD at Kasumigaseki--The Supernatural Investigations Section headquarters.

Furthermore, Rushella was currently at the deepest part of the headquarters, the prison where Fergus used to be incarcerated.

Although she was not handcuffed and she had come here voluntarily, it still felt no different from being an inmate.

"Don't complain. Your coffin has been transported here from that church so get some proper rest."

Standing behind her, Rangetsu said reluctantly.

Last night, she had gone to pick up Rushella.

In any case, Rushella was first brought to the relevant part of the MPD to undergo questioning like "have you drunk human blood during the time you were missing" as a matter of formality.

Then under Rangetsu's supervision, she was treated to a meal and a bath--At least she was treated with courtesy.

In the end, after all sorts of procedures and the underground facility was prepared properly, the day had gone by and it was

daytime during the following day.

"This place is so dark, there's no concept of time. What time is it now?"

"What are you complaining about dark as a vampire? Okay, just keep still and don't make a fuss. If you don't behave, you'll have to stay here forever, you know?"

"Hmph, this place has been broken into before, is it really safe? I can see repairs in process all over the place."

"Now that is a hard one to refute... However, this is at least the safest place in Japan. Just stay here obediently, for Kujou-kun's sake as well."

"I know."

"We can still provide blood. Tell us immediately if you feel thirsty."

Saying that, Rangetsu left. Rushella did not respond to this final word of advice.

Naturally, she could not forget the taste of blood.

Hisui's sweet, very sweet blood.

With just one sip, whether the dryness in her throat or the thirst in her heart, everything was satisfied.

However, she had refused resolutely.

With a grim face, Rushella was crouching in a corner of the square cell.

There was no lighting in the room. Total darkness.

A human would surely be plunged into fear of the dark and try desperately to escape. But Rushella felt calm instead.

No, the place where her heart felt truly calm and at ease was the home where she had lived together with Hisui.

However, that place was no longer her home.

It was not where she belonged to in the first place, just temporary shelter.

Perhaps... Staying here would be more comfortable.

Wiping the tears from the corner of her eye, Rushella looked around the room.

This place had no view and was undecorated.

Even in the darkness, Rushella's vision functioned as normal. Her eyes soon captured the entire room's environment--Then she was shocked.

"...Who is it!?"

Someone was here.

Opposite her gaze, in the other corner, someone was sitting in a chair.

"A shared room? Why wasn't I told about it?"

The other party did not answer.

The sound of a match being struck. A moment later, faint light appeared.

An old-fashioned candlestick was placed at the person's foot. The candlelight illuminated the entire room.

It was apparently a scented candle, filling the room with a sweet fragrance of imaginative fantasy.

"It's you...!"

Rushella was rendered speechless.

Impossible.

How could she possibly come here?

Rushella could not believe her own eyes--Miraluka was sitting right before her.

But it was reality.

Miraluka was sitting elegantly with legs crossed, having changed out of her invernness dress, leaning back on the chair in leisure.

"How are you here!?"

"I was here from the start."

She replied nonchalantly.

Rushella was rooted to the spot in shock while Miraluka talked nonstop.

"I guess that you might be brought here to be isolated. Running away from my grasp is impossible, but to achieve a certain measure of defense, this place is the best choice. Hence, after that brief fight, I came here first to wait for you."

Clearly it was not as simple as her coming here first.

This woman was fundamentally different from the vampires or other supernatural entities Rushella had faced off against in the past.

"This police security of the Supernatural Investigations Section is really full of holes... I can't believe they let you invade this place."

"You're blaming the wrong people if you blame them. Although they are currently shorthanded, invisibility is the expertise of vampires, let alone a True Ancestor like me. Infiltrating this place is no difficult task if I'm serious. By the way, one of the True Ancestors was even more talented at invisibility than me, but she's no longer around."

Sadness filled Miraluka's eyes when she brought up her peer's death.

But Rushella could not empathize.

She could only respond with genuine feelings.

"You came to kill me...?"

"Half correct, half wrong. I am not interested in your life or death,

but it's just incidental to what will happen."

"Incomprehensible... If you find me an eyesore, say it clearly! Because... I find you very much of an eyesore too."

"Hmph, is that so?"

Miraluka nodded with deep feeling.

Seeing her so arrogant, Rushella could not help but spit out all the thoughts she had kept hidden in her heart.

"It's you every time...! When I'm together with Hisui, you always appear! If only you didn't exist... If only you didn't exist...!!"

"If I didn't exist, then Hisui would not have lived to this day."

Miraluka answered indifferently. Rushella could not talk back.

Victory was decided from the start.

Denying her meant denying Hisui.

"A young little life that almost died from inane reasons. I used to believe, for a very long time, that humans were foolish creatures. Taking in a human on a whim to raise, I never knew it would be so interesting. I now understand a little how my perished peers felt."

"You said it was on a whim...? Hisui, he... has always felt... towards you...!"

Rushella clenched her fists and glared viciously at Miraluka.

A million thoughts converged, forming invisible pressure imposed upon Miraluka.

The negative emotions in the underground prison finally turned into killing intent, coalescing in Rushella's hands.

Holding her usual dagger in a reverse grip, she closed in on the enemy.

"Is that so...? He loved me, I see."

"What...!?"

"In that case, my return was worth it. Now there is meaning for me to kill you."

"What are you talking about!?"

Rushella had already rushed up to her but Miraluka remained unfazed. Instead, she pointed at the door.

"Would you like a change of location? This place really kills the mood."

"You mean changing to a location more suitable to killing me?"

"That I won't deny. But I could at least offer you a gift to take with you to hell, how's that? About your origins."

"...!? You know about it?"

"Merely indirect hearsay, but I have investigated your identity. Follow me if you wish to know."

Miraluka walked out the door.

After some hesitation, Rushella followed.

Even though this was path to hell, her intense desire to figure out her past still prevailed over all else.

This time, the prison break was calm and elegant, unlike the two previous incidents with severe casualties.

Zero casualties, no loss or damage.

The number of people who discovered the escapees were also zero.

Minutes later, when the setting sun's lingering glow was dyeing the sky, the two vampires arrived at the ground's surface in each other's company.

"Kujou-kun... Did something happen today?"

"Nothing."

After school, Hisui was packing his things when his neighbor, Reina, asked with worry..

After all, Hisui only came to school in the afternoon, so it was natural for her to worry.

No, even if that was not the case, she would still worry for Hisui.

Ever since Rushella left, that was how she had been acting.

"I didn't feel well earlier and visited the hospital. The doctor said I'm just tired so there's nothing major."

This did not count as a lie.

He had gone to the hospital and there was nothing unusual with his health.

"Really...? I'm glad to hear that."

"Oh right, I forgot to tell you. Rushella came back."

"Eh, really?"

Reina instantly smiled radiantly.

Hisui also found her smile contagious.

"Should we celebrate? After all, it's almost Christmas!"

"Christmas huh..."

Only after saying that word did Hisui realize how incompatible it was with vampires. He could not help but smile wryly.

In terms of average Japanese people's faith, there should not be any detrimental effect on Rushella. But considering Reina's family situation, she might even invite them to attend mass at a church.

Spending Christmas at a church was probably hell for a vampire... No, calling it heaven might be more apt?

"It's okay, you don't have to. If we organize some kind of event, she might regret coming back."

"Okay, I guess you have a point... Christmas should be spent with

family after all. Are you going to spend it with that lady who visited last time?"

These words caused Hisui's chest to tighten.

Indeed, he had spent Christmas every year with her in the past.

Hisui already knew a long time ago that Santa Claus did not exist, but there was Miraluka.

Every year, he would receive a present, eat turkey and cake.

A Christmas spent with a vampire--This kind of exotic event had stopped since last year.

The winter of his third year in middle school, he had spent a lonely Christmas, a silent night without Miraluka.

So, what about this year?

"Who are you going to spend Christmas with?"

Reina asked again without any ill intent.

I'm fine with spending it alone if there's no one--Perhaps Hisui could say that.

"...I dunno."

But he evaded the question and chose escapism.

Reina wanted to say more but Hisui left her behind and got out of the classroom.

Mei watched him leave.

Then as though thinking of something, she walked over to Eruru who was packing her schoolbag.

"Umm... Could you stay a while? I'm guessing Senpai has things to ask you."

"Got it. Then the usual place...? Never mind, how about the student council office?"

"No problem. Let's go."

It was currently dusk.

The red evening glow covered the entire sky. Shortly after, it was going to be devoured by the dark canopy of night.

Who knew how much time had passed. Miraluka and Rushella had arrived at the park near Hisui's house.

There were few pedestrians here. Plus the thick foliage blocked the street lights, this place was particularly dark even in the daytime, let alone night.

"I used to take Hisui here often. There are no kids in the area and other parks are packed with people, so I could only bring him here. What a shame that we couldn't experience what people call family outings."

"Hmph, showing off much? Let me tell you, I have memories too, right here in this park! After all, over there is the place Hisui and I met!"

Rushella puffed out her chest proudly and pointed at the alley where she had met Hisui for the first time.

Indeed, that night, she had encountered Hisui here--then sucked his blood.

Everything started here.

"Oh my, how unfortunate for that brat."

Hisui would probably agree if he heard that.

Miraluka walked over to the pavilion in the center of the park. Rushella followed with a scowl.

The two of them sat down on the wooden bench and looked at each other.

Miraluka took out two wine glasses and placed them on a small table. She had picked them up from home on the way. Then she

took out a bottle of vintage fine wine and poured into the glasses.

"I don't drink."

"I didn't poison it. Poisoning would be meaningless for both of us. Don't you like this color and fragrance? We cannot resist. This is a taste shared by all vampires."

"...Hisui will get mad. He said that minors cannot drink this. He is clearly a minor himself."

"Oh really? By the way, in my collection is a bottle of wine whose vintage is the year Hisui was born. Do you know where it went?"

"...No idea."

She did not admit she was the one who broke it.

This incident still pained Rushella in her heart.

She really hated this woman.

"Okay... About me, if you know something then answer me quickly! I don't have the mood to drink and chat with you!"

Rushella asked fiercely while Miraluka picked up a glass of wine elegantly.

Savoring the fragrant and complicated wine, she looked at Rushella.

"There are a total of twelve True Ancestors and you are not one of them."

"So what? Then who am I!?"

"Twelve women... Some of them have barely spoken to me while others have never liked me. But we would all gather once a year to meet up. A kind of year end report, I suppose. Drinking red wine, eating bread, chatting casually. It was very lively."

"A 'reunion' for True Ancestors huh? That's so human of you and them. When did you gather every year?"

"Christmas."

Miraluka answered with full seriousness but Rushella could not help but suspect her of joking.

Impossible.

This was absolutely absolutely absolutely impossible.

"Are you really a vampire!?"

"What's wrong with celebrating his birthday? Everything of ours started with him, from the very day when we embraced his remains and drank his blood."

Rushella hid her laughter after hearing that. She gradually understood that what was up next was related to her true identity.

"We would gather every year, but starting at some point, someone became absent. Although those of us attending did not decrease every year, it was at least decreasing every century. Some were destroyed by humans, other sought destruction on their own, others had accidents. By the time we were down to half, someone spoke up. She said that things would be bad at this rate and vampires will go extinct one day, so something must be done."

"Why did they think that? As long as we want, we can create servants easily..."

"When a True Ancestor perishes, so does all her servants."

"Then have offspring and descendants..."

"A vampire's reproductive ability is much lower than a human's. Even with an immortal body, one cannot bear too many children in the end. And among them are some who are like me, childless our entire lives with no intention of procreating. Then what? To sustain the prosperity of the race, ultimately, the base number of True Ancestors needs to be expanded."

"Expanded...!? Is that possible?"

Rushella smacked the table and stood up.

As planned by that Fergus, as long as the direct bloodline of a True

Ancestor was maintained, the existence of pureblooded vampires infinitely close to True Ancestors could be maintained.

But how could a True Ancestor herself be recreated?

Staring into the wine in her glass, Miraluka continued nonstop. Recalling back then, this was the liquid that man had called "my blood."

"The blood of God that we drank no longer exists. According to legend, there are a few holy relics that were stained with that blood, but the veracity is difficult to determine for all of them. Even if they were real, freshness has been lost. So another method must be found in search of substitutes."

"Substitutes...?"

This word made Rushella go pale.

She could already guess.

But she dared not speak out.

"Indeed. The closest substitute to God... That is rather taboo to say. Rather, the substitute with the most concentrated curse in the blood, punished by God, namely, the blood of the True Ancestors."

"...!"

"Giving a vampire's blood to another vampire has no effect. But giving it to a human is different. Whether ingested orally or injected directly into a blood vessel, it always result in irregular vampirization, giving birth to a vicious monster. The same goes for a True Ancestor's blood, of course. However, there were exceptions among them."

"Exceptions...?"

Rushella's face turned more and more pale.

Stop talking.

Don't say anymore.

A voice was screaming that in her mind.

"I don't know the precise details either. They asked me, so I provided my blood but I was not interested in how it was going to be used. Neither did I know who it was used on. However, at the very least, you were born. I have heard of rare cases of success. Fakes who had drunk the blood of True Ancestors. Former humans. During childhood or puberty, perhaps even in the womb--A certain True Ancestor conferred her blood to you. This resulted in turning you into a vampire infinitely close to a True Ancestor. If you're asking what is your identity, you are one of our subspecies, what one might call a Pseudo True Ancestor, perhaps?"

"Pseudo True Ancestor..."

Rushella understood this term.

In other words, a so-called imposter.

An artificial creation created by the True Ancestors' need.

She was a fake existence from the start.

Rushella slid down from the bench and fell on the ground.

Shaken regarding her own origin, she was unable to support her body.

"Who... am I...?"

Looking at Miraluka, she searched for answers.

But Miraluka did not care about her at all, all she saw was wine.

"How would I know? Perhaps an ordinary character you could find anywhere, but I suspect you have undergone modification. You have no memories probably because you never experienced life in human society to begin with. Just find a suitable garden, implant a bit of basic knowledge, then you were born. Since you woke up as though you had hibernated, your actual age is probably similar to your appearance. But your heart is like a newborn baby's, a pure and untainted True Ancestor. The reason you love Hisui is merely

an imprinting process similar to a hatchling's. That being said, his special constitution, allowing you to drink from him as you wish in a semi-perpetual manner, is probably one of the reasons."

Rushella remained collapsed, sitting on the ground.

Everything was futile.

The past she hoped to find did not exist in the first place.

She regretted searching for her roots.

Her only measure of identity--a True Ancestor vampire--also collapsed totally.

"They placed you in a coffin after birth, preserved appropriately then kept securely in different locations--That's all I heard. I never expected to find one of them sleeping in my surroundings."

"Why put me on that kind of mountain...? The True Ancestors created me then abandoned me...?"

"You'll have to ask the True Ancestor who created you. That said, she no longer exists. She created you and others just in case, but she perished first. On the other hand, someone like me who cared nothing for the proliferation of the race ended up surviving. What a twist of fate."

Miraluka downed her glass of wine, stood up and walked over to Rushella.

Supporting herself with her arms, Rushella kept backing away.

"...I understand about me now. But why do you have to kill me... Is it just because the sight of me offends you...? In your eyes, I am an imposter, so you cannot bear the sight...!?"

"No, I feel grateful to you instead. Your existence is truly excellent insurance."

The sun was about to set.

The crimson gaze pierced Rushella.

Normally speaking, the mystic eyes had no effect on vampires themselves.

But the light from Miraluka's eyes was immeasurably commanding. Rushella could not help but sprawl on the ground.

"What is your goal...!?"

Miraluka smiled mercilessly and pointed at the left of Rushella's chest.

That was where she had targeted yesterday.

This was her ultimate goal all along.

"I want your heart."

"Is there anything you've figured out? Not just Hi-kun, even Eruru-chan is making such a solemn look?"

The group was gathered around the long table in the student council office. Mei was the first to speak.

Right now, the only people present were her and Eruru, as well as Kirika who had provided the student council office.

The president and the other student council members were not around, making this the perfect spot for a confidential conversation.

"Kujou-san had a thorough checkup this morning."

"Oh my, you two have progressed to that point already? Should I cook red beans and rice to celebrate?"

"...Sudou-san."

Kirika scolded Mei for her messing around and urged Eruru to continue with her gaze.

"The object of the tests was about Kujou-san's constitution."

"Oh you've checked it before, right? But nothing came out in the end, didn't it?"

"Indeed. No particular conclusion was reached this time either. However, more time was spent on the physiological analysis, hence some of that Miraluka vampire's intent could be deduced as a result."

"What's going on? Why does she want to kill Rushella?"

Eruru did not answer Kirika. Instead, she asked her and Mei another question.

"Let me ask you two. How would you destroy a vampire?"

Why ask this now? Mei and Kirika exchanged glances in puzzlement.

"Hmm, expose them to sunlight... Stake them through the heart?"

"Decapitation then crush the head... Although it's so bloody that I don't really want to actually do it."

Eruru nodded quietly, seemingly satisfied with these cliched answers.

"Correct indeed. Conversely, attacks to the head and heart will cause fatal injuries to vampires. These locations cannot regenerate."

"I know that kind of stuff but what does it have to do with the current incident?"

"Are you implying that Miraluka is actually a fake... The real one is already dead?"

Eruru shook her head and refuted Kirika's question.

"No, she is most likely the real one, which is why Kujou-san feels so troubled. Just as he told us, Miraluka possesses the greatest powers of regeneration among all vampires. Surviving on willpower alone was most likely true. But she is currently very weak. She has no more time."

"Incomplete regeneration? I don't think I saw her in pain or discomfort?"

Mei tried hard to recall what had happened but could not identify anything unusual.

Since she had lost that badly in a contest of strength, she ought to conclude that Miraluka was very strong, not weak.

"She is flawed but not in pain. That is why our attacks failed. I found it strange at the time and Kujou-san probably noticed it. He probably did not tell us because he refused to admit it. This time, the wool was pulled over his eyes as well."

"What do you mean? She looks very normal in appearance, right? What is she lacking?"

Seeing Kirika baffled, Eruru pointed at the left of her own chest.

"She is lacking a heart."

" "HUH!?" "

Mei and Kirika were stunned speechless while Eruru continued:

"Yesterday, my silver bullet shot through her heart. The bullet definitely pierced the chest. Supposing the bullet was blocked by a rib, or stayed in the heart, she should have suffered severe injury, but she still managed to live. But the bullet definitely pierced her body with the same effect as a wooden stake piercing the heart, yet she did not perish. Why?"

Incomprehensible.

How would one know?

Mei and Kirika could only shake their heads with pale faces.

"The answer is simple. She has no heart to begin with. Since it is not there, it cannot be destroyed. Hence the bullet shot through easily because there was no obstacle, because there was no heart there at all."

"Umm... Hold on, hold on right there, how does she live without a heart!?"

"Was her heart damaged and did not regenerate for some reason!? But if that's the case, she should be destroyed, right?"

Neither of them could accept it. Eruru indifferently explained the results of Hisui's tests.

"Her heart still exists. Even right now, it is currently beating. However, it is outside her body."

Mei and Kirika looked at each other.

Judging from the earlier conversation, the answer was right in front of them.

"Could it be... her heart..."

"Inside Kujou-kun's body..."

"Indeed. Her heart has been transplanted into Kujou-san. Kujou-san suffered a heavy injury overseas with severe damage to his heart. There was no other way to save him. The operation was probably performed without even using anesthetics but at the time, Kujou-san was in no condition to care what exactly she was doing to him. However, he seems to remember hazily. The scar left on his chest, the special constitution rendering vampirization ineffective, as well as his memories of her performing chest compressions desperately. Judging from the surgical scars and the ECG, he definitely went through an operation. Unlike dhampirs like me, he is a human with vampire powers residing in his body."

This explanation brought upon a long silence.

Miraluka barely managed to survive with her heart beating outside her body.

This miraculous sustenance of life was only made possible by an immortal vampire.

However, this could not possibly be sustained indefinitely.

"Right now, her body is an empty shell without a core. Precisely because she is a True Ancestor, she is barely hanging on to life. Even

with her heart outside her body, as long as the heart remains fine, she remains immortal--That is precisely a vampire."

"How long can she last like this?"

Mei asked seriously.

Whether or not her heart was inside her body, it was fine as long as she lived.

At least Hisui would be satisfied.

But if her resurrection was only temporary, if she was no longer eternal... She must definitely be planning something as a result.

"Since her heart is absent from her body, she might perish any time. At least, she is currently so weak that she cannot even heal the injury from blocking a bullet with her hand. She probably cannot last much longer. The reason she gathered huge quantities of blood was most likely to find a solution. But she discovered that it was futile whether she sought quality or quantity. Hence, she now regards Rushella as her last resort for salvation."

"Using her... as a backup heart?"

Kirika concluded.

Her original heart was sustaining Hisui's life and could not be taken out, of course.

Hence, she could only search for a substitute.

Using a vampire's regenerative abilities, transplanting another person's organs or limbs were not a problem at all.

"Indeed. But this is a heart after all, so it cannot be replaced so easily. A human heart is definitely not going to work while ordinary vampires will not necessarily satisfy her. Hence, she chose the heart closest to her own, one closest to a True Ancestor's heart. The answer is... Rushella."

Eruru concluded.

After a moment's silence, Mei said:

"Will this... succeed? It's a heart after all? If taking it out and installing it would work, she wouldn't have to go through so much trouble."

Kirika also agreed. This action could lead to futility.

"Even if the transplant succeeds, there is no guarantee how long she will live. Then wouldn't Rushella-san have died for nothing? If her heart is taken out of her body, Rushella-san would surely perish instantly."

"Indeed, perhaps you two are right. Miraluka surviving is a miracle. Kujou-san sustaining the heart is also a miracle. The two of them meeting again is yet another miracle. However, she is still gambling everything on this. Most likely, she must have tried all sorts of solutions after returning but none worked. Still, she clings to life, refusing to give up."

"It must be for Hi-kun."

"Women are the weaker sex, yet they are powerful as mothers... No, rather, it is a woman's dedication."

The girls smiled wryly.

We really can't win against her--Their smiles carried such a realization.

The True Ancestor who had chosen destruction for the sake of a boy. Now, she was seeking life for the same boy.

The trio fell silent. Eruru looked at her cellphone.

A text from Rangetsu.

"She says Rushella-san has gone missing. Presumably, she would not leave on her own... Miraluka probably visited."

"Oh my, what a pain! Vampires really can't give us a break!"

"No helping it... She is doing it for Kujou-kun after all."

Mei and Kirika stood up and left the student council office.

Eruru was about to follow them when they asked her at the same time.

"You're not going to tell Hi-kun?"

"Keeping him out... Isn't that not good?"

Eruru was struggling internally too.

Not wanting to get him involved, these was Eruru's benevolent intent--As long as the few of them could handle this matter, it would be for the best.

However, Eruru chose something else.

"Please go ahead first, you two. Oogami-san already memorized her smell so it should be easy to track her. You two meet up with Oogami-san first."

"Okay, I'm leaving Hi-kun to you♥"

"We will be waiting for you."

Eruru saw them off then ran through the corridor to that empty classroom.

"Hisui-kun, you look like it's the end of the world."

Hisui was sprawled over a desk. Touko was hovering leisurely by his side.

She was actually quite annoying but today, Hisui found her presence calming.

Seeing things getting complicated, perhaps she was the only one who could remain uninvolved.

"Touko-san, you're in such good spirits even though you're dead."

After saying that, he realized he was being way too sarcastic.

But Touko did not mind. Raising her arms, she curled her

forearms and made an energetic pose.

"Yes♥ You've gotta enjoy life to the max!"

"Well, your life has already ended, Touko-san..."

"Of course not. Earth-bound spirits still need love!"

"You'd better pray for love in your next life. By the way, don't you want to move on to the afterlife?"

"Feelings are very important for things like that. When the time comes, I might disappear without even the chance to finish saying 'I am so happy...'"

Touko laughed sadly.

On further thought, Hisui realized her presence was the weakest. After all, the vast majority of people could not sense her existence.

By the time people were able to see her, they were perhaps already dead.

"...Touko-san, what about your family? Whether or not you want to move on, since you never got the chance to say goodbye to them, how about find them... and meet them or something?"

"Hmm, my family situation wasn't too good. I think they've moved away already so I don't have to visit on purpose. Getting too attached to things from my life won't help. I have to live by looking to the future!"

"Yeah, well, you're already dead..."

It was no joking matter for a dead person to be advising a living person on how to live.

"By the way... What's troubling you, Hisui-kun? Is it that pretty lady?"

"Yeah, pretty much. She's currently alive probably because of me. It feels like she crawled out of the grave because she was too worried about me. Clearly it's something to be happy about but I

can't feel happy, so lame of me. I don't wish for her to be better off dead, but..."

"But?"

--Could he stand aside and ignore Rushella's death?

Indeed, he had been asking himself.

He ought to talk to her and ask if there existed some other solution.

However, Miraluka must have thought over this type of question already.

Before revealing herself, she must have tried many solutions.

However, finding nothing, her limit was approaching.

Hence--

"Actually, don't make things out to be too complicated, okay?"

Touko the optimist spoke while going in a circle in the air.

Seeing her so optimistic, Hisui could not help but retort harshly.

"What do you mean? I'm facing a war between the mother-in-law and the bride. How do you expect me to get out of this kind of hopeless situation?"

"Hmm, choosing between the two of them, who is the most important, but do you really need to agonize over this kind of thing?"

Touko was still drifting back and forth on the side.

Looking detached from the mundane world, she was simply speaking as an observer and elder.

"Because you're all alive. Unlike me, you're all living. Important people, important things, these will all increase as time goes by. If you have to rank everything and pick out what's the most important, doesn't that mean giving up on so many things?"

"..."

"Isn't it better to live life more greedily, embracing everyone in your bosom?"

Touko smiled tenderly.

Hisui could not help but smile too.

Oh I see now.

Actually, he already knew a long time ago.

"Elders are different after all."

"Despite how I look, I am like an older sister! Do you know why I am so great?"

"Now I know. But don't move on until I leave this school, okay?"

"Yes, I will stay here for ten more years!"

That's way too long--Hisui could not help but remark in his heart.

Then he left the empty classroom and ended up running into Eruru in the hallway.

"Kariya..."

"Rushella-san has gone missing. She is most likely with your foster mother. Are you coming?"

"Yeah."

"Perhaps one of them might end up dead. Rather, I might be firing my gun."

"No problem. I will try my best to stop them."

"What a fool. Why don't you stop interfering in conflicts between vampires?"

"Don't say that. If you get into a fight with someone, I will try to stop it too."

"..."

Eruru went silent.

Gazing at Hisui, her expression was inscrutable.

"...What? Shouldn't we hurry?"

Hisui urged.

Hence, Eruru finally resolved herself to speak.

"I have something I wanted to say to you. Starting a long time ago, I have wanted to tell you this."

"What?"

"I... I..."

Taking a deep breath, she stared into Hisui's eyes and said, one word at a time: "I ABSOLUTELY HATE YOU!!"

"Huh?"

Hisui was baffled.

He completely failed to understand.

"Uh, I never got the feeling you liked me... But I never expected to hear something so harsh from you directly."

"I have always wanted to tell you those words."

"Hmm, fine, can't be helped... On the other hand, I like you quite a lot."

Instantly, Eruru's entire face went bright red.

Hisui did not notice and continued.

"You're a person with a heart, you helped me so much... Anyway, thank you."

"..."

"So... Let's continue to get along."

As soon as he said that, Hisui felt himself getting kicked in the shin. That force felt like it was enough to break a wooden bat.

"Ouch, what the heck!?"

"Shut up, that is what I hate about you! How can you be considerate for others all the time, how can you be so handsome and gallant, how can you be born with such smarts, everything about you pisses me off!"

"Y-You don't have to go so far..."

Rejected by her totally, Hisui could not help feeling a little sad.

Seeing Hisui make that kind of face, Eruru seemed to get angry. As for why she was angry, Hisui totally could not understand.

"In any case, keep yourself the same, the way I hate you! Don't carelessly change yourself, that will be even more annoying! So... So.. Stay the same as always!"

"...Hmm, okay... I will."

Hisui answered and got kicked again.

Just as he was about to protest, Eruru grabbed his hand.

"Okay, hurry!"

"I know! Sigh, what pissed you off so much..."

While running through the corridor, Hisui muttered in puzzlement.

Behind them, Touko was happily watching them leave.

"My heart...?"

Rushella covered her left breast.

Indeed, that was where Miraluka aimed last time.

But why?

"Are you saying you want to destroy me completely because I am in your way..!?"

"If I wanted to destroy you, I would have done it a long time ago. I

simply want your heart, that is all."

"I am asking you your goal...!"

"Have you heard of heart transplants? Because... I don't have one..."

Miraluka took off her inverness dress then unclasped a strap to reveal her left breast.

On the white and pale breast, surpassing Rushella's in volume, a clear bullet hole was visible.

It was an empty hole left on the chest after being pierced by a bullet.



"You...!"

"Who knows when this wound will heal up. But rather, whether I can survive until the day it heals is also unknown. Right now, I don't even have half the power from my prime."

"Why...? Unlike me, you are a real True Ancestor, right!?"

"Indeed, precisely because of that, I managed to survive, barely. But I already gave my heart to Hisui. I lived because my heart is still beating, but this is the limit. Like a wound clock that will stop turning eventually. So... I can only get a new replacement, a substitute infinitely close to me. Even if the result is a gamble... I can only take the gamble."

Rushella finally understood Miraluka's intent.

She wanted her body, her heart.

This body, created as a True Ancestor's backup, was now carrying out its duty, how ironic.

"You chose death once... to save Hisui. Now, you have returned for Hisui and you will live on for him. Is that what's going on?"

"...Living on is precisely my lot in life as a vampire. I will do so even at the cost of destroying you."

"Is that so...? Very well, take it. I don't care."

Like Miraluka, Rushella exposed her left breast.

After sunset, the evening wind blew across her white chest.

"May I? I am rather special, while you will immediately perish once your heart is gouged out?"

"Sure. This is the only thing I can do... for that guy."

Miraluka's face went dark.

Her beautiful face had been as serene as a lake until now. Faint signs of laughter were surfacing.

But she still stepped forward.

Reaching out, her right hand turned into a killing weapon.

Rushella closed her eyes tightly in resignation, puffing out her chest, offering everything.

At the last moment, footsteps were heard from behind.

Miraluka looked back. The arrivals were related to Hisui.

They were Mei, Kirika and Rangetsu.

"Trying to stop me?"

The trio nodded at the same time.

"Why? She is the rival of you three. And it's a conflict between vampires. Why interfere?"

"To earn affection points!"

Mei replied instantly.

"That's right, if anything happened to this child, if we watched without doing anything, he will surely hate us. I don't want that."

Kirika smiled sadly.

"Also, if you were to succeed... I will be excluded by them even more. I don't have much presence already."

Rangetsu declared with an elder's dignity.

Everyone was in agreement.

"When did he learn to capture women's hearts so well? I don't know if I should be happy or sad about that."

Miraluka sighed in exasperation and smiled.

At this time, new intruders arrived, deepening Miraluka's smile.

Hisui and Eruru arrived one after another.

Hisui was carrying the sacred cross sword from home, the Tzara Blade.

On the sword's blade, gemstones were giving off crimson light dyeing the surroundings red.

"You brought the talisman I left you? What are you intending? To destroy me with it?"

"...No."

"Fighting using your constitution? Your body carries the potential for a human to oppose vampires. If humans could stand on equal ground with vampires, then there will no longer be conflict between them. Perhaps coexistence could be actualized. Are you thinking of using this power to fight me?"

"No."

Then what are you going to do?"

Hisui pointed the Tzara Blade at himself.

"This heart, I'm returning it to you."

Closing his eyes, Hisui pierced his own chest with the blade.

Blood splashed everywhere.

Kirika screamed while Mei and Rangetsu were stunned.

Eruru had apparently predicted this scene. Turning her face away, she endured the smell of blood, desperately trying to maintain her sanity.

"What are you doing...!?"

Miraluka finally showed surprise on her face.

She had not given Hisui this sword for this kind of task.

"Are you trying to waste everything I've done!?"

"...You're the one who's wasting everything. I don't want to lose you again. Neither do I want to lose Rushella!"

Hisui pressed against his left chest that was bleeding like a spring.

The bleeding was making his originally pale skin even more

pallid. The crest of thorns appeared on his neck.

Anti-Drac mode.

But this transformation was just a necessary result. It was not his goal.

"This was originally yours... I'm returning it to you now. This is enough. Don't do anything to Rushella."

"..."

"What about me? Aren't there artificial hearts? There are many solutions so I'll live, somehow... Otherwise, use your vampire powers to make me hibernate or seal me away, whatever you want. I'll wait for you, whether it takes a decade or a century, to make me live on. So stop, it's already enough..."

Hisui desperately used the sacred cross sword to support his collapsing body.

Rushella ran over to hug him.

"Hang in there, don't die!!"

"Don't write me off as dead so easily. You said it before, right...? So don't die either. Also, you too."

The last three words were directed at Miraluka.

He was not mature enough to send everyone he cherished to a perfect ending.

He was not cool enough to abandon everything for one cherished person.

So he had no choice.

And Miraluka--She smiled, smiling faintly with a satisfaction.

"Wonderful."

"Huh...?"

"Looks like you don't need me anymore. This time will be true

farewell."

Everyone present tensed up.

Rather than destroying her, they only wanted to protect him.

The girls were trying to save Hisui's life.

And Hisui, to avoid losing her again...

But time was merciless.

The outline of Miraluka's face was collapsing bit by bit.

Starting from the edges, her body was gradually turning into ash.

"Why...!?! Hey!"

Hisui ran over.

He wanted to hug Miraluka, but the collapsing limbs were scattered in the wind, leaving only her torso in his arms.

"Why... Why!?! Why do this...!?! Hey, hurry and drink blood, as much as you need, drink my blood! If you die a second time, I absolutely won't forgive you!"

"I am already dead to begin with. Also, I don't need your blood. Who do you take me for?"

"No time for jokes... Hey!"

"Your blood... Save it for her."

Miraluka's eyes met with Hisui's gaze.

Staying where she was, the last True Ancestor smiled tenderly.

Like a mother handing over her son, like sister handing over her younger brother, like a woman handing over her lover...

She said to Rushella:

"Continue to drink Hisui's blood. The true value of Anti-Drac mode is in his blood--The weakening of a vampire. His blood tastes excellent and is addictive. Then the vampire becomes progressively weak. One day, you will become completely human."

"You..."

Rushella wanted to step forward but she halted.

This final instant, this farewell moment, should be left for those two alone.

"Farewell forever."

"Hey, hold on, I still haven't--"

Before he could say anything.

Thank you, goodbye, I love you.

None of this could be said to her.

Still the same, nothing changed.

He could only watch helplessly, exactly the same as that day in the past.

Hence, he could only kiss the air. It was the only thing he could do.

Only the mark of her lips remained in the present world, not disappearing for a very long time.

But while their lips separated, the beauty in his arms had already vanished.

The exquisite remains of ash retained the smiling face of Miraluka's final moments, finally scattering in the night, disappearing into the wind.

Hisui embraced the ashes tightly in his arms, sobbing uncontrollably.

Ever since Miraluka died, this was his first time crying.

His cries echoed between heaven and earth, persisting for a long time.

Staying by Hisui's side, Rushella accompanied him. Even when the others had left, she still remained. Forever and ever...

FINAL CHAPTER

WHITE ENDING

It was snowing.

Christmas Eve was welcomed by snow, dyeing the streets white.

"Wow, snow is really pretty!"

Rushella was apparently seeing snow for the first time. On the way home from shopping, she exclaimed happily.

A Christmas party was to be held at Hisui's home today--All members of the Supernatural Investigations Club were planning to attend.

Going out with his friends to shop, Hisui was then going home together as a group.

All the others were immersed in the holiday atmosphere, chatting happily, but only Hisui did not seem quite happy.

Miraluka's passing was only a few days ago so he could hardly be blamed.

"What is the matter?"

Eruru asked with care.

This was her being caring. Hisui could tell from her face.

"Nothing... I was wondering whether this was her gift. A gift she deliberately sent in advance for Christmas."

"A vampire giving a Christmas gift? What a lame joke."

"In the past, I really needed her... I've always imagined, wondering if she might return one day. And that she was surely in the surroundings. So... seeing me troubled over this for so long, she appeared."

Hisui touched his left chest.

Indeed.

She had always been there.

However, did she reappear in her former appearance because of his wish?

"But... perhaps because I didn't choose her, I was unable to choose her between the two, she vanished."

"I believe not. She surely passed on, smiling."

"Eh?"

Without looking at Hisui, Eruru continued calmly.

"A vampire seeks blood in an attempt to fill the void of the life they had lost. To replenish the warmth they have lost from their hearts--That is what I have heard. But she already had no regrets. Because even in her absence, you are able to live on well. So... She is satisfied and chose to disappear, finally returning to inside your body. That is all."

"In the end, I'm still relying on her. That's so lame of me."

Hisui shook his head with a wry smile. Then Mei embraced his arm.

"What are you chatting so happily about? Hi-kun, tonight is the great Christmas Eve, let's... with me tonight..."

"Umm sorry, I absolutely won't let you stay over."

"Then Kujou-kun, with me... My parents won't be home tomorrow, come to my house..."

Before he knew it, Kirika had hugged his other arm.

A lady on each arm. One was an artificial human while the other was a witch.

No matter which side he refused, his life was in danger.

"Well..."

Just as he was caught in a dilemma, Rushella attacked from the front.

"Hey, what are you doing!? You are my servant!"

Saying that, she bared her fangs and bit.

Although the frequency was decreasing, she still thirsted for fresh blood.

"Hey stop it, this is outside!"

Rushella's lips approached.

But she did not use her teeth.

Sucking deeply on Hisui's neck, she only released him after she had sucked enough.

The mark of a vampire's kiss was not left on his neck... It was just the mark of an ordinary kiss.

"Ah, what are you doing? Now how am I supposed to show myself out in public?"

"Shut up, I should have done it a long time ago! Now everyone will know you belong to me!"

"Crap... How do I erase this?"

"Oh my oh my, Hi-kun, why don't I cover it up for you?"

"Or allow me..."

Lips approached again.

The sound of scolding came as a result.

"You are better off dead."

"Are you for real this time...?"

"What are you dallying for? Hurry, time to buy the cake next!"

"Okay okay."

The Supernatural Investigations Club members walked under the

persisting snowfall.

The lively and unusual days had become the norm.

Kujou Hisui's life of hardship would continue here on.

Probably, it was going to continue forever.



AFTERWORDS

Finally, it's the last volume.

First confronted with the danger of almost losing his humanity, then a miraculous survival and apparently frequent crises with his virginity at stake and of course, getting his blood sucked every volume. This protagonist really has life rough.

I think that a vampire's act of blood drinking is a hidden metaphor for many things. In this story, I've thought over it quite a bit and I hope readers can imagine for themselves the unmentionable side of blood drinking.

I've been familiar with vampire stories since I was a child but I never thought I'd write one myself.

Mainly it's because there are so many famous works in this genre so it's almost impossible to find a place to start.

After all, orthodox settings like "getting bitten by a vampire turns you into a vampire" or "superior entities known as True Ancestors exist" are totally unavoidable. Adding my own understanding and blending things thoroughly, in the end, I wrote this series.

Also, the story also selected many well-known monsters as the sub-theme.

Hmm, speaking of orthodox routes, by having the Rushella the useless vampire and the child conception-obsessed Mei, I think I already broke this story.

By the way, here's my personal ranking. Among the monsters, I like Mei the most, followed by Kirika with her amazing feminine charms and girl power, Eruru whom I'd like to bring home as a younger sister, Reina whom I'd like as a friend and finally Touko whom I'd like to encounter in a paranormal adventure.

As for Rushella, well, what should I say? She's like an idol whom I

can view from a distance but not defile with touch.

The selling point(?) of this work is ultimately based on the heroine. On this point, I am truly grateful for illustrator Yasaka-san's assistance, whose drawing skills exceed the quality of my writing.

I should also thank the editor in charge who managed to elevate my ideas to this level.

Anyway, I blame myself for writing too slow and causing a lot of trouble for various people. At the same time, I really learned a lot through my experience in writing this series.

I dedicate my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to this series and all the readers who are holding this book in their hands. Thank you, everyone.

May we meet again soon in my next work.

Totsuka Yuu



こんにちは、ハ坂です。

この『銀の十字架とドラキュリア V』で、シリーズ完結との事で、
一読者としてとても寂しく思います…。

十月先生、編集のS様、デザイナー様、
そして最後まで応援してくださった読者の皆様
今まで本当にありがとうございました。

それでは、またいつかどこかで…

M
Minato