

壁井ユカコ

イラスト / テクノサマタ

鳥籠荘の眠
今日も眠たい
住人



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今日も眠たい
住人



電撃文庫

Torikagosou no Kyou mo Nemutai

Juunintachi - Volume 01 Chapter 00-02 Part 1

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(Local Source)

*The black & white novel illustrations not included to avoid spoiling (included in the translation).

壁井ユカコ

イラスト / テクノサマタ

鳥籠荘の
今日も眠たい
お供



電撃文庫

とりかたごころ きょう おむ しほひん
鳥籠荘の今日も眠たい住人たち①

“ホテル・ウィリアムズチャイルドボード”、通称（鳥籠荘）には、普通の社会になじめない一風変わった人々が棲みついている。妄想癖の美女、ゴスロリ小学生、ネコの着ぐるみ、不気味な双子の老人、そして響き続ける正体不明の金切り声。そんな（鳥籠荘）の住人の一人・衛藤キズナが、5階に住むひきこもり美大生・浅井有生と知りあったのは16歳の冬。そして、誘われたバイトは、絵のヌードモデル。やってみることにしたキズナは、油絵具の匂いこもる雑然としたアトリエで浅井と一緒に過ごすうち、その時間が自分にとって次第に大切な日常の一部になっていくのを感じて……。

（鳥籠荘）のちょっとおかしな住人たちの、ちょっとおかしな、けれどいろいろなフツの日常をつづる物語。



電撃文庫 10-11
鳥籠荘の今日も眠たい住人たち①
壁井ユカコ

電撃文庫
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壁井ユカコ

5月18日生まれウツ病日誌。沖縄出身の父と北海道出身の母を持つ福岡育ちの東京在住。出展精。でも都会の雑踏や雑音に耐れるのは好き。もう少し世の中のいろんなことに一生懸命になれる人間になりたいなあと思いつつ犬をいじりながらゆるめに生きています。

【電撃文庫作品】

キー1〜IX

カスタム・チャイルド

鳥籠荘の今日も眠たい住人たち①

【電撃の単行本】

NO CALL NO LIFE

イラスト：テクノサマダ

私人在住。漫画のイラストを画いて暮らしています。計画的に実行力の伴わない水瓶座のO型。

カバー：飯田明



鳥籠荘の眠たい
今日も眠たい
住人たち

壁井ユカコ

Yukako Kabei

イラスト / テクノサマタ

Samata Techno

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Room No. 445
Kizna Etoh

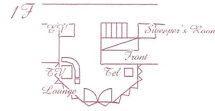


Room No. 412
Yuki Inoue



Room No. 213
Jonathan

HOTEL
WILLIAMS CHILD BIRD



Room No. 546
Yusei Asai



Room No. 312
Kanako Yamada & Papa



- [birdcage manor](#)
- [torikagoshou no kyou mo nemutai juunintachi](#)

<Untitled 1>

Welcome to



*Hotel
Williams Child Bird.*

...Oh.

Surprised me, I wonder how long were you looking at me from there?

Excuse me for realizing it late. I seem to have dozed off for a moment.

At any rate, today is indeed great weather. Long rain, moisture, and moldy smell. I can't think that this is a comfortably spent day at all.

A~nd, you are the new tenant moving in, right? I heard the story from the real estate agent.

What, whatever circumstances happened that needed you to be referred here, I don't know, but if it's here, even if you're a person with no guarantor, running away from home, a wanted person, and maybe also somewhat crazy in the head, I think you'll get on well.

Even if you subtract the fact that the building is fairly old, the rent is still cheap. To live alone, the room's spacious enough so there's no need to complain about it, moreover there's bathroom and gas kitchen. And above all, it's furnished.

First of all, let me guide you around on the inside. You can look at any room freely up to the fifth floor. The sixth and the seventh floor are owner's private floors and therefore the entry there is prohibited.

Are you asking why is whichever room vacant? What, you did not hear it from the real estate agent. That real estate agent as usual doesn't do adequate work..... Woopsie-oops, excuse me, the freedom of four limbs, no – eight limbs is taken away with age, right. They slip down from the thread at once. I beg you a little, my body, on the top of that thread.... aah, that helps a lot. Here we go..... Thank you. You are a kind, good fellow who isn't perturbed by things. The thing is, a lot of people don't want to touch me nor my companions.

What were we talking about? Ah, it was about whether there aren't other tenants here.

Let me see, well then, let's talk while guiding you around. Do we have time? Other real estate agents also want a turn so we don't have that much spare time? Please, don't say that. To me you're a visitor after a long time. Think of it as a social welfare and accompany the boring senile old fool while reminiscing

just for a while, won't you?

Eh, what, is a spider that speaks human speech that rare?

Certainly, it's as you can see, I am a spider, though, hanging from the ceiling on a lone thin thread like this. However, look, that is just your egoistical opinion, to me it's you who looks upside down and seems swaying dangle-dangle. It is possible that it's not me who hangs from the ceiling but maybe it's you who does so. In others' eyes you might also look like a spider. Have you tried thinking like that?

Can you declare that what you really see right now is <reality>?

.....Why, just now, it was only a joke. Don't think too deeply into it.

Well then, let me guide you around without delay then. Here is the elevator. On the opposite side are the stairs. Around there I have spread out a lot of webs so be careful. Anyway, I can't do anything else than vomit thread. See, I can't even finish saying it and you're caught.

Yes, yes, I'll be thankful if you could hear out my story while we're walking.

Of course, it's the matter from a little while ago.

It's the story from before this building became uninhabited, not like it is now, when the residents were still here.....

Whoops, before that. We still didn't have a welcome greeting.

Again, first of all.

Welcome to Hotel Williams Child Bird.

Chapter 1 – Farewell, Crybaby Postman



High School dropout. 17 years old. Your basic *hikikomori*. [1] Hobbies: none in particular. If forced to answer, she'll claim *reading*. Reading is something a hobby-less person can write on their resume without worry as it is as dull as they are, but if a person's hobby really is reading they'll suffer instant, rude rejection from any employer. Special skills: none to speak of. Favorite food: Yanlong Deli's Chinese salad and noodles broiled in salt. Occupation: unemployed. However, she has a job modeling for paintings from time to time.

Kizuna Etoh, owner of the above-mentioned traits, would seem to be nothing special at all, but her presence on canvas bears a mysterious atmosphere. Dark blue and black paints plaster the canvas, and there in its middle sits a scrawny, naked girl holding her knees. Dyed reddish-brown hair flows from her shoulder to her chest in long waves and against the secluded darkness of the background, her white skin lights up. Included in the overall delicate painting are her prominent, scowling eyes. Slightly upturned towards the front, they contain a strongly emphasizing light as if wanting to appeal something to the audience.

Although it seems to be almost complete, to the author there was something he was not pleased with and turning the painting knife from the canvas' left shoulder to the right-lower he cut off a great part. With her appearance that of wearing a man's shirt as only layer on her naked body, Kizuna Etoh stood up in front of the easel and was staring at the canvas on the ground that was pitifully chopped off along with her body, but she lost interest not so long after. Kizuna isn't infected with the particularly emotions of her self in the painting.

Unveiling that one room, where a characteristic scent of oil-paints was strongly soaked in, is an atelier that's in addition a residence. Over-loaded floor dirty with paints is flooding with miscellaneous painting materials and art magazines; even the kitchen sink that was originally meant for cooking is thickly stuck up with various colored paints.

Taking off the worn-out shirt, she took her own clothes that were hung on the edge of the bed. The slim jeans are the smallest size but they're still somewhat loose around the waist. While pulling a tank top with a big green logo printed on the white background over her head, she glances in the direction of bathroom. From a while ago, a muffled sound of shower can be heard from behind the long and narrow door.

"I'll bring breakfast. Asai-san, will you have something?"

She raised number of voices towards the door. As there was no answer even after waiting a bit, while stretching and wrenching her tank top's hem, she tries once more.

"Asai-san?"

The sound of the shower from a little while ago was without change striking

the room monotonously like a rain's sound.

“Asai-san, I'm opening,” compromising at the bathroom's door, she lightly knocked and without waiting for an answer she opened the door.

There, thickly stuck up with paints similarly to kitchen, was an antique-style bathtub on which brink was leaning the upper half of body of a young man with a tall and lean figure, but his appearance was in fell-prostrate-like state and his body was turning half-dead. The shower was left running, and was soaking the man from the back of his head to the back of his shirt, even his shoulder blade's skeleton was slightly visible.

Kizuna walked in to the bathroom sighing. She reaches her hand behind Asai's back to where is a form covered with a shroud and turns off the faucet made from oxidized gold, making the shower stop, then she peers into Asai's face and shakes her shoulders.

“Asai-san, really. You're sleeping in this kind of place again, I won't care if you drown.”

As she was shaking him more strongly while calling out to him, Asai, wrinkling his brows, lightly opened his eyes. That being said, still in that half asleep state, his cheek stuck to the bathtub's edge he glared in her direction with a side glance and after he did so for a while he seemed to have comprehended what place he was in, then rising his body, he shook his head like a dog. From his casually growing hair small drops of water were scattering around. They fell and made wet spots on the chest of Kizuna's tank top as well.

“Aa-..... When I thought to wash my face, before I knew...”

“Did you stay up all night?”

She asked as she threw the towel that was hung up on the wall at Asai's head. “I couldn't get to sleep. You occupied my bed and you were sleeping soundly while snoring.” Came the mumbled answer from below the towel. That reminds me, last night, before I knew it I fell asleep in the middle of my break and I must have stayed overnight just like that. Letting it be without asking, Kizuna casually changed the topic.

“That picture, was it no good?”

“I didn’t like it. “

“Where?”

“Entirely.”

He almost spit out that single word. Kizuna doesn’t get this so called artistic sense.

“I’m going to buy breakfast. Will you have something?”

“Don’t need it. I’ll sleep. Today I have some things to do so come to wake me up at two o’clock.”

He ordered her as if it was obvious and threw the room’s key he pulled from the pocket of the work pants at her.

“Who do you think you are?”

She talked back with her eyes half-closed while receiving the key. Then as Asai goes out of the bathroom Kizuna was being pushed aside with the door. With the towel still on his head he made some staggering steps towards the middle of the atelier and clicking his tongue he kicked over the three-legged easel. Kizuna unintentionally ducked her head as the canvas together with the easel fell with a loud noise. Asai lies down on the bed not caring anymore and without even drying his hair as well.

This is Kizuna’s employer An *ore-sama* [2], egocentric, with low tension and a lack of sleep causes him to have a bad mood, painter Yusei Asai.

The buzzer rang.

And rang again. Followed with several knocks.

She glanced in the bed’s direction and seeing that Asai wasn’t in the state to get up because either he fell asleep in the blink of an eye or was intentionally pretending to ignore it Kizuna reluctantly went to the front door.

Opening the door merely by five centimeters and looking from the gap she saw that a familiar visitor with conservative appearance was standing in the corridor. She let down her guard and opened the door fully. “Good morning, Jonathan.”

“Oh, Kizuna.”

Seeing Kizuna, Jonathan raised his voice in surprise and reddening up to his ears he looked down. His stature was little shorter than Kizuna's. Jonathan's head's scalp just reached the height of Kizuna's eyes. His hair was hard with an habit of curling and was entangled as usual not ever using a comb for it.

“D-D-Did you stay over? With... Asai... -san?”

He said, still looking down, in a slippery-like way of speaking.

“Well, yeah. I fell asleep. A package?”

Leaning at the side of the door was a cardboard box in the shape of a board as tall as Jonathan. Jonathan nodded. Judging by the size and shape it's an easel or something. “Asai-san, something has been delivered.” She looked over her shoulder to the room and called out but as expected there was no answer. The human nature fails after all in those artisans lots. She sighed.

“Just put it in around there where it fits. I'm leaving too.”

Then as she was returning to the room to take her jacket, “Ah, uhm, Kizuna,” Jonathan stopped to call out as he was carrying in the big cardboard in a way so that he won't run it into the door. “This, I can't read, uhm...” Identically with speaking, his movements calming down only with difficulty and always looking around restlessly his glance shifting left-right were Jonathan's habits. After he leant the package against the doorway, Jonathan pulled out one tea-colored envelope from the big leather bag he carries on his shoulder. As Kizuna stretched her neck to look at it he again became more red and his body was stirring around restlessly.

Only “Hotel Williams Child Bird Plum old priest” [3] was written as the address. The room number wasn't written.

“This is addressed to Lee-sensei.”

She pointed her index finger to a Chinese character in the address. Jonathan in uncertainty gazes at Kizuna's fingertip.

“This is “Lee”. “Laoshi” means sensei. You know Lee-sensei, no?”

“I-I know. “

“Do you remember his room number?”

Jonathan only inclined his head to the side in doubt, “511.” but when she taught him the answer, Jonathan’s face glowed in a moment.

“511 is on the 5th floor, the room No.11.”

“Yes. Bingo.”

“The room No.11 on the fifth floor!”

He repeats that in a bright voice as if he discovered the location of a treasure. “Th-Thank you, Kizuna,” he said as he changed the tea-colored envelope from one hand to other, “Wai-, Jonathan, the package,” and before Kizuna could even stop him he goes off running down the corridor, the bag on his shoulder swinging around.

Kizuna that was left behind by the door together with a huge package after an hour of standing there stock still sighed “well, well” and combed up her forelocks. “Asai-san, a packaaage!” Facing the room she called out second time but there was clearly no response. “Duh!” She kicked the cardboard’s corner and reluctantly started to drag it in the room using both hands.

This is a beginning of Kizuna Etoh’s typically average day.



Hotel Williams Child Bird.

It’s a building with a biting-the-tongue lengthy name, built as a villa in the pre-war days in the era of opening Japan to the world by an English baron named Williams Child. Indeed, it’s a building where the sound of Westernization can be almost heard and it’s charm can be seen everywhere. The floor is made from olive-colored and calming light brown-colored concrete tiles combined in a checkered pattern, the entrance lobby and each room as well are decorated with gaudy wallpapers fading in color and Western Europe’s antique-like furniture. Including the attic it’s seven storeys and there are approximately twenty-five rooms. In accordance with Williams Child Bird’s name, a decorative iron lattice with called thus Japanese Robin (songbird) motif that was designed by a Hungary ceramics maker is jutting out, towards the balcony from the first floor’s front entrance to the fifth floor, and is thrusting out violently like a birdcage.

In the past the said building that was set up massively in the center of a shopping district was prospering as baron's family and guests from foreign countries were staying over. But nowadays the shopping district shifted to the metropolis leaving behind squalid outskirts and it's being loaned, all-furnished, on a monthly-paying basis. Somewhere down the line, residents who weren't able to live in a normal society came to live here.

Making one a little bit worried that at any time the wires might wear out, the elevator, making creaking voices, descends to the lower floor. Midway it loses on the speed and stops on the third floor for a moment. The iron lattice door slides like an accordion and there are the parent and child living on a third floor who were waiting for the elevator's arrival.

When Kizuna steps aside a bit, with the father bowing his head and the daughter turning up her nose "hmph" with a straight face, they get on holding their hands. A bell on a key-holder that was hanging on the side of the daughter's *randsell* [4] bag made a clear ringing sound. Just by this pair of a parent and a child getting on makes that square space for-four-persons-only full.

"Excuse us," said the father and slightly lowered his head again.

"No..."

As it was the usual happening, without minding Kizuna enjoyed the momentum and the fluffy feeling of having her face pressed on his beautifully brushed tortoise-shell back. The daughter was clinging to the fur on her father's pure-white belly and like that with her face buried in it she was fixedly staring in Kizuna's direction and when her eyes met Kizuna's she hid behind father's belly with a whoosh.

Frankly speaking, they were an odd parent-child combo.

Western Europe's doll-like jet-black one-piece dress arranged with fluttering laces plus white tights and round-toed true red shoes – the daughter was a grade school-er that wears garments in a style of a Gothic Lolita.

And then the father, while he was a shy gentle-mannered and polite person(?), the sole but most odd point about him was—.

The *kigurumi* [5]. A large chubby cat costume with flowing pure-white fur on

its stomach and white, black and tea colored spots on the back and the ears that make it a tortoise-shell mix. However, it seems that he's a properly working person. That's because he wears a necktie around his neck.

The elevator stops on the first floor with a light metallic impact and the iron lattice door opens. The father pushes his daughter's randsell bag with the fluffy white costume's hand and she gets out first, then moving slowly on his short legs he himself gets off the elevator too. Released from the pleasant pressure, Kizuna gets off the elevator too while sighing "pew".

Costume's white legs and round-toed small red shoes, and also Kizuna's sneakers are walking down the corridor with olive-green and light-brown checkered pattern. They pass by a nervous resident from third floor that gets on the elevator while talking out loud some sort of incomprehensible monologue. And from the moment the door had closed, cursing "Let me out! Let me out!" you could hear the clattering sound of iron lattice being jolted.

"Yo, kigurumi parent and delinquent girl. Are you cheerful today?"

"Yo, kigurumi parent and delinquent girl. Actually, today's mood is bad. It's the worst morning."

While saying different things with an exactly same face, the elderly twins residing on the first floor passed by, their shoulders lined up.

"O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?"

In the entrance lobby of the first floor, a young woman dressed in a lace negligee raising her voice, reaches out her hand towards the empty space in a play's sudden gesture. Somewhere there on the upper floor a nerve-racking-like high-pitched shriek is echoing intermittently.

This is, living apart from normal society – eccentric residents' and Hotel Williams Child Bird's ordinary day. Morning no different than usual.



Yanlong Deli is a delicatessen, about five minutes of walking distance towards the shopping district from Hotel Williams Child Bird, which has in proportion become the kitchen of many residents. With the exception of going shopping to

the Deli once a day either in the morning or the evening Kizuna is basically a hikikomori. Chinese salad with chicken and white radish and because Asai might eat them she packed noodles broiled in salt for two in a styrene resin container and carried it to the register.

On the way back with the shopping bag in her hand, she dropped a letter in an old-fashioned cylindrical mail-box by the roadside. An Airmail with red and blue lines was swallowed in the dark hole of the mail-box. Sending her heart out to a bit so that the letter would reach overseas, she parted ways from the mail box.

(Which reminds me, recently, there's been no answer, huh...)

Swinging the shopping bag on her wrist, her hands thrust in the Parker pocket of her tank top, she started to lazily walk back home.

She thought that she's been out for only about 20 minutes but by the time she returned the incident has already occurred.

The entrance lobby, that at the time she went out was quiet, only with the exception of the negligee woman, was now for some reason noisy. Five or six residents were gathered in front of the elevator and there, surrounded by them, was Jonathan with his back touching the elevator's lattice door. Becoming stiffened, his already small stature has shrunk even more, only his eyes were restlessly shifting from person to person trying to understand the situation from their expressions. The kigurumi father has gone out a long time ago so there wasn't any person to remonstrate the uproar. To begin with, it was basically a gathering of people with poor sociality and uncooperative personality.

The nervous man from the third floor, who talks to himself a lot, stood there in the lead and was drawing closer to Jonathan.

“Who else is there other than ya!”

He shouted and shook Jonathan's shoulders violently. Staggering Jonathan hit the lattice door on the rear with his back. Questioning the state of that situation from the gap between the people, Kizuna pushed her way through the mass and came out to the front.

“Hey. What's wrong?”

Lowering her tone of voice and pointing a sharp glance towards the man, she

stood up in the front as if protecting Jonathan. “Kizuna, I, that-,” soon, Jonathan, although being at a loss for words started to say something in an almost crying-like voice. In response to Kizuna’s attitude the third floor’s man seemed to falter for a while, but as his spirit returned, he turned the aim of the attack towards Kizuna.

“This fellow tried to steal in my room.”

“Steal?” She looked back once at Jonathan. Jonathan’s both eyes as well as his nose were red and as if he was clinging to her he turned his glance to Kizuna.

“He’s saying you’re wrong.”

“Ha-hn? This fellow didn’t say even a word of denial since a while ago.”

Kizuna scowled as she remembered feeling discomfort towards the counterattacking man who laughed scornfully. The residents here should know that Jonathan has no words in stock for defending himself.

Setting Jonathan up as a criminal and blaming him wasn’t only the third floor’s soliloquy guy. Another man said that he lost foreign coins collections, others said that it was a pocket watch, tea set, on top of that even door knobs and bathroom taps, landlord’s glasses, and several other residents claimed that various sparkling things made of metal were suddenly disappearing from their rooms. Everyone was saying that it happened exactly on the day when Jonathan came to do courier service to deliver postal items, that that day it was only Jonathan who visited the rooms. Even Kizuna’s objection, that ‘it wasn’t enough of an evidence’, had no effect on calming down the uproar.

Kizuna had no way to defend Jonathan who couldn’t claim his alibi anymore. The accusers said that they should investigate Jonathan’s room. Room number 213 was at the side of the elevator on the second floor. The mass moved to Jonathan’s room without his permission. They snatched the key from Jonathan’s hand and stepped in as they pleased. Standing in the door, Kizuna and Jonathan could only watch over the residents starting the investigation.

“Is that fine?”

Being asked that by her, Jonathan became red and only hung his head in shame.

The things that the accusers claimed stolen as valuable items weren't in Jonathan's room.

Alongside the wall on the display shelves were decorated animal origami, beautifully categorized commemoration stamps collection pasted on the reverse side of a calendar, and a faintly pink round stone that he'd happily talked about, which he received from an acquaintance who went to the beach (it seems like Jonathan has never seen the sea.)— Various articles which Jonathan carefully collected were being clumsily messed up without mercy.

When the calendar was ripped off and the pebble collection was roughly thrown out Jonathan moaned “Uwaaah” and sniffed in through his red nose. Although Kizuna felt pity for him, she did not dare to stop the accusers' assault. If no evidence turned up like this, then Jonathan's suspicion would be cleared up automatically. As long as Jonathan is unable to defend himself with his own words, there was no other way than to let them clear up the suspicion until they are satisfied.

Kizuna was underestimating it with ‘At any rate, there's no way that anything will turn up’. Kizuna knows well about Jonathan's genuineness. There's absolutely no way that he steals.

When about 15 minutes had passed, the room was completely messed up, but conversely to that the irritated atmosphere between the residents went beyond and a feeling of resignation has drifted. Downhearted Jonathan just hung down his head, not even being able to look straight at the disastrous scene in the room.

“If you're satisfied, apologize and put everything back to its original state.”

Unable to find any words to return back at the coldly-sounding Kizuna, the residents who damaged the room faltered and reluctantly started to distance themselves from the walls and shelves. Even if everyone seemed unsatisfied, Jonathan's suspicion had been almost cleared. Only the soliloquy neurotic man from third floor and the foreign coin collector didn't seem to give up and were persistently peeking into the space under the shelves. And that fact urged the other residents to take action.

“Hm?”

The man abruptly raised his voice, clung to the floor and peeped into the crevice under the bed.

Jonathan who had been looking down suddenly raised his head..

“Ah, th-, there is-“

“Jonathan?”

He left from Kizuna’s side and his legs tangling, he rushed into the room, “No, not there!” “Haahn~ What’s, shut up,” trying to stop the man who crawled under the bed, he clung to his trousers to pull him out but was kicked violently and fell on his butt.

“What’s this? A pile of letters.....?”

The man crawled out from under the bed holding on to something. A hopeless heavy breath leaks from the mouth of prat-fallen Jonathan. As the other residents suspiciously watched, the man dropped his gaze to the stuff that seemed like a pile of paper that he pulled out and turned over the both sides of the paper several times, “Oh.....” and as if he made an interesting discovery, raising his mouth edges the man laughed.

“Kizuna Etoh.”

Called by her full name, Kizuna, who was standing in the door, reflexively put herself on guard. Floating a triumphant smile, the man thrust out the pile of letters towards her.

“So, still gonna protect the curly head~?”

Frowning, Kizuna stepped in the room.

Almost not having a place to step on, she weaved her way through the scattered baggage in the room and the other residents. She stepped up in the man’s direction and took the presented pile of papers in silence.

It was a bunch of mail tied together with a dusty string.

The address was ‘Kizuna Etoh’—.

With a frozen expression she unfastened the string and briefly confirmed them one per one. Ten letters with a domestic flights and an Airmail postmarks

stamped on, any of those mails addressed to Kizuna was supposed to reach her. Why did they, and from Jonathan's room.....?

Her questioning glance was turned to Jonathan. As he has never been glared at by her, still sitting Jonathan drew back his butt rubbing the floor. From the third floor's man escaped a laughter 'As I thought,' and the other residents were slightly noisy.

"What does this mean?"

Her inquiring voice became dry and turned a bit hoarse.

"Uuh, auh... this is, this is, this is..."

Jonathan was only repeating the same word like a broken toy. Tears overflowed from his red eyes. However, there is not a single human who will take sides with him actively anymore. Isolated in the center of the staring people, the sobs escaped while sniffing in through his nose.

From the nose and heading towards the lips, a red stripe dribblingly dangling down was sucked up.

"Uuh..."

Covering his nose with both hands, Jonathan faced down. Drip-drop, the red drops dripped on the room's checker-patterned floor. "Geh, getting a nosebleed," the man from the third floor spit out with disgust and stepped back. If it was as usual, she would have nursed him, but only this time Kizuna did not move.

In the center of his own devastated and messed up room Jonathan continued to weep with his face soggy from tears and nosebleed, surrounded by the cold glances from the residents.



Jonathan seems to be a nickname he used at his previous workplace. She doesn't know the details, but it seemed to be an insult. Jonathan whose development of intelligence stops at the degree of a 5 year old, can't even write the Chinese characters of his own name.

It was about half a year ago when Jonathan moved to the room No.213 at the Hotel Williams Child Bird. He was doing a subordinate work at a cannery before, but it seems like he was fired.

His height lower than Kizuna's and he tends to hunch his back, his forehead wide and his naturally curling and spinning curly hair, his usual clothing are worn out sweat's top and bottom, and his shoelaces were hardening in their tied form. Constantly shrugging himself in shyness, his glance restlessly wandering about on his surroundings and his behavior was awkwardly forlorn as well.

At that time she didn't particularly interact with Jonathan, it was only to the extent of passing by each other in the first floor's entrance lobby from time to time. The resident from the neighbor room was one way or another taking care of him, so she often saw them together.

One certain morning at the end of the winter, Kizuna was returning to the Hotel with a Yanglong Deli's bag as usual and she saw Jonathan's figure coming tottering from the opposite side's pavement. Kizuna lightly raised her eyebrows when she met Jonathan in front of the main doors with a Japanese robin carved in the iron. In the cold weather and the dry wind blowing, Jonathan was dripping wet from head to toes, in one hand he was dragging the sweat top he worn and with his meager upper-body exposed he was shivering.

A laughter descended from the second floor's window. When she raised her head she saw, adjacent to Jonathan's usual room, the room No.212's inhabitant smirking as he withdrew his head back to his room.

Returning her glance to the Jonathan before her eyes, "A training of something?" Kizuna declared, emphasizing it in an uninterested voice. Jonathan's upturned eyes looked up her way, the clatter of his teeth ringing around. Catching only one glimpse, Kizuna abruptly took off her eyes from him, opened the doors and went in first. Several residents were sitting on the sofa in the lobby watching the television.

After barely entering the lobby, "It's cold. Close it," one of the residents who was watching the TV looked over his shoulder to say a complaint, and there with the doors flung open as they were, Jonathan was still standing outside frozen still and trembling. Kizuna reluctantly returned to the entrance while thinking how

bothersome it was.

“Not going to enter?”

“I-I- I’ll en.....ter.”

Answering in a way so that his teeth won’t touch, Jonathan sniffled, his slender shoulders quivering, the tears started to spill unbecomingly from both of his eyes. Kizuna sighed heavily ‘It’s not like I tried to do something, right?’

“Why are you crying?”

“S-S- Sor...ry.”

“Why are you apologizing?”

“Uuh, sor.....y.....”

It turns up like this no matter what she says. He tried to keep from crying by biting on his lip, but his overflowing tears mixed with mucus and followed to the edge of his lips.

In contrast with his upper-body’s complexion drained of blood, from neck to higher he was turning red like an octopus. Kizuna was gradually getting irritated and grabbed Jonathan’s arm a bit roughly. He got rigid from fear. Jonathan’s naked arm was surprisingly cold as it had been exposed to the freezing water and morning’s chilliness.

“Anyway, enter. Look!”

Her voice that intently said that forcefully has become softer a little.

Jonathan is clumsy with his words.

He can’t read and write.

He can’t calculate.

He has a bad memory.

His movements are slow.

He falls behind in a various places compared to others, and if Kizuna had to say, then more than that, it is his timidness and his thickheadedness for people’s ill will that are his biggest problems.

At times getting irritated, she still patiently lent an ear to Jonathan explanation. According to what she heard, apparently, the neighbor resident (who Jonathan called a “friend”) is in love with a clerk girl from Cafe Miranda, and yesterday that “friend” begged him that at any cost Jonathan is to deliver a letter to that girl. And today, when he was sent out by his “friend” to visit Cafe Miranda again to receive a reply, the girl got awfully angry and splashed the water used for cleaning at Jonathan. He doesn’t understand why the girl was angry at all.

“You were made fun of by your “friend.” He could have written something indecent in the letter, no?”

She took him to her own room and listened to his story while he was wiping himself dry, and when he finished, Kizuna pointed out the argument, but Jonathan was stubbornly repeating to her that his “friend” is a good person, that he treats Jonathan kindly. From the time when Jonathan just moved here his “friend” was favorable to Jonathan, and when Jonathan still couldn’t tell right from left he looked after him one way or another. Telling Jonathan where the nearest coin laundry is (30 minutes by foot), when the light bulb broke and Jonathan was troubled he taught him what to buy (when he was installing the taught light bulb, the room’s breaker tripped), or he often invited Jonathan to a meal (that “friend” up to go to the toilet and went back first, leaving Jonathan behind in the shop, having to pay the bill for both of their meals).

Jonathan settled all of those incidents as his “friend’s” kindness. Kizuna was so amazed that she didn’t even have the motivation to correct him.

A little while after that water-splashing incident, that “friend” moved away without telling anything to Jonathan. At the same time, merely a modest amount of money that Jonathan saved up from his previous job had disappeared.

Kizuna was unable to just watch Jonathan who was bad at having a gist of something and she has begun to lend a hand to him little by little. At any rate, there were a lot of times when she’d become impatient with Jonathan’s irritating behavior, but to connect with Jonathan she waited patiently for the words to come out. Because to successfully guide him she must absolutely draw out the words and sooner or later she learned how to.

In fact, Jonathan's speech and conduct are clumsy and his memory is bad, but if only he had tried to socialize without rushing, he would be a very ordinary young man. At that time, he would surely be more at ease and calmer than other people, like a streamlet flowing down from a lenient slope. It was only that.

For example, Jonathan likes doing laundry. Throwing the clothes to be washed into the laundromat and leaving it on, he skims through the comic magazine (Because he doesn't understand the words, he has fun by looking only at the pictures and imagining the story in his own way. That is a rather beautiful talent.) and in the blink of an eye the washing is done.

Jonathan doesn't feel boredom. To those eyes of his the world surrounding him flows by extremely fast so he doesn't even have the spare time for boredom. To him the world's happenings were somehow all fresh.

It was only in modest, but once she happened upon Jonathan's talk about work.

The postal items and express home delivery parcels that reached to the Hotel were bundled together and his job was to distribute them to each room, and thereupon he received 600 yen per day. To Jonathan it was by no means a small sum, so he undertook it with pleasure.

Though having said that, Jonathan can't read the recipient's name and address. So for the first few days' period he devoted himself to a special training.

"The room number 445 is the fourth floor's room No.45. Do you get it? Fourth floor's room No.45."

Because it looked like he could barely understand the numbers, she patiently taught him a specific method of reaching the destination not by the name but rather by the room number. Jonathan can't easily remember things just by having them explained once. But even so, Jonathan repeats Kizuna's explanation in his mouth with all his might.

"The room No.445 is... the fourth floor's room No.45."

"Right. Then, the room No.311 is?"

“Three, one, floor’s.....”

“There is no floor three-one. Again. The room No.311 is?”

“Third... floor’s..... room No.11?”

“Correct.”

When he managed to give a good answer, Jonathan’s face lit up like a child’s.

After that, the two of them walked all over inside the Hotel and drove into his head all the locations of the rooms, so Jonathan started to be able to do the delivery.

The first salary he received was three days worth, from the first Thursday to Saturday, and with it he bought seven pieces of Chou a la Creme for Kizuna from Cafe Miranda. While Kizuna was saying that she can’t eat seven of them, he handed his whole salary to the clerk person, pointing at the Chou a la Creme in the showcase and only the amount he bought was packed into a box.

The two of them ate three pieces each and when she could eat anymore, she offered the last piece to Jonathan. With reservation he held out his hand and stuffed his cheeks.

“Is Kizuna a “friend”?” with custard cream stuck to his cheek, Jonathan asked.

“Yup, a friend. So, don’t cry anymore. Okay?” said Kizuna, to what Jonathan blushed and nodded greatly, and while he scratched his curling unruly hair with his finger, “Friend, a friend,” he repeated that word like an off-key song.



She threw herself on the bed and one by one confirmed the ten pieces of mail that were discovered in Jonathan’s room. They were air-mail from England she recently thought wouldn’t reach her. Even a paperback she ordered was mixed in as well.

It became dark while she was scanning through them and before she knew it, the inside of the room had become considerably dim.

Tossing the mail onto the top of a pile of magazines at her bedside, she turned over and stared at the ceiling. The olive green of the ceiling matched the floor’s

checkered pattern and color tone. Hanging down from the ceiling was a lamp decorated with a blue umbrella cover; the bed cover was a somewhat dark blue tartan. A crimson oval sofa was placed by the window, the furniture was initially installed from the beginning. Baron Williams Child hired a designer who possessed a retro sense, and the room was thickly painted with a primary color of a submerging tint, but even while looking cramped, it mysteriously held an overall sense of harmony. Kizuna's room, a room number 445, was integrated with an open-counter styled kitchen, and the one room was almost square.

For a moment, some thoughts absentmindedly floated about in her mind, saying ".....All right," she arose from the bed with vigor.

Ding-dong. The other side of the door was filled with the sound of the buzzer. After she heard something like clattering and flurried noises, the door that had "213" engraved on its metal plate was softly opened from inside after a little while.

"Ah."

Jonathan peeking out from inside his room let out a sound once he saw Kizuna standing in the corridor.

In the end, the other residents' lost belongings were still not found after the morning theft uproar, and Jonathan who was no longer trusted was fired from his postman job, after that he stayed cooped up in his room.

"Jonathan, I want to talk a little, may I come in?"

"N-Now, is..."

"You know, about those letters, do you have some reason maybe....."

Kizuna tried to step into the room, whereupon Jonathan becoming flustered, blocked Kizuna's way and prevented her from trespassing, "Now, uhm, I'm busy, so later!" and before her eyes the door was shut with a *thud*.

Dumbfounded because of Jonathan's unexpected reaction, Kizuna stood frozen in front of the door. The thought that she'd be refused entrance never even occurred to her so her mind couldn't catch up right away to comprehend the situation.

Maybe Jonathan had his reasons for concealing the letters. There's no way that Jonathan would do something like that without a reason. She had come with the intention to patiently listening to his reasoning, but.....

“What was that just now...?”

Busy? What kind of business could he have that's more important than talking with me?

After staring at the door in astonishment, she held back the desire of wanting to kick the door with full power and left.

Turning back, she rapidly strode down the corridor and violently pushed the button for the elevator. Exactly then the elevator came to a halt, crossing the threshold of the opened door without properly looking ahead, “Oof,” she ran right into someone's handbag who had boarded earlier and hit her nose.

She started to apologize but when she looked up at the other party's face, Kizuna cut herself off. It was the resident from the fifth floor, Yuusei Asai.

“Ah, it's you, Etoh.”

As soon as he saw her face an exhortation came from Asai.

“I said to wake me up at two. When I woke up it was seven o'clock, *seven o'clock*. Thanks to you I missed my chance to go buy art supplies.”

“Ahh. I forgot. Because a lot of things have happened.”

Saying that because I didn't wake you up you overslept for five hours is just reaping what you sow. Gracefully, Kizuna coldly turned away. There was one more person who had boarded the elevator together with Asai, thus she switched her glance to that person. With a smile floating on their face, *a beauty* with short yet moderately long light brown hair with slight waves was standing next to Asai.

Yuki Inoue. Also a Hotel Williams Child Bird's resident.

“What's up, Kizuna? You're in a bad mood.”

“Nothing really. Are you two going somewhere?”

“I want to go for a drinking outing once in a while, so I forcibly changed

sensei's clothes," said Yuki and to show that off pulled Asai, who had an annoyed face, closer. Now that she looked, Asai's usually irresponsibly ruffled hair was somewhat flattened-out, and instead of his polo-shirt stained with paints, he had changed into a neat cotton shirt and cargo pants. Thus the hikikomori artist, stinking of oil paints, looked like any other university student. Although, it's vexing, because he is tall and seems fragile, he looks quite charming, and with Yuki next to him, who is on the tall side as well, at first glance they look like a couple that would get picked up to be models in a magazine.

Although, in reality those two are a pair of *male* cousins, and also being a Hotel Williams Child Bird's resident, Yuki has an indecent disposition as well. It might take a while to explain..... or not, maybe it wouldn't take that long.

"Just right on time. Kizuna will you come as well? You *can* drink?"

"This fellow's undera-....." Asai interjected but without minding him at all Yuki invited her beckoningly. Kizuna considered it for a moment, "I'll go," she said and then as if pushing their two butts she boarded the elevator.

The four person capacity space was still reasonably small, even when there were only three people without the kigurumi. When she pulled her sneaker's toe back, since it was about to get caught in the closing door, she staggered slightly and with a *plop* fell into the arms of Asai who was behind her. She was gently enveloped by the scent of oil paints that wouldn't disappear anytime soon even when he changed his clothes, because it was indelibly ingrained in his body.

From above her head Asai looked down at her, "Did something happen, Etoh?"

"It's nothing."

Kizuna averted her eyes with a sulky face, it felt somehow creepy that he worried about people even though he's just Asai.

Even so, during the short time until the elevator arrived at the first floor, she obediently stayed wrapped up in the sensation of his arms and the oil paints' scent. That she was being worried about was a mistake, but still, for a little while her heart grew weaker.

.....I let myself rely on Jonathan. That I was taking care of Jonathan, might have been just an act of a worthless ego and conceit on my end. When she

thought of how she may not be a friend to Jonathan, even though until now she'd never been conscious of that, she became awfully sad.

Kizuna didn't drink heavily in the bar on the outskirts where Asai and Yuki said they go from time to time, but in her drunken frenzy, saying that she didn't drink enough, Kizuna dragged those two along. In Yanglong Deli, she chose suitable snacks and then in her room they continued by opening canned beer. She heavily drank, ate and threw up once, and together with that the depressed feeling from facing Jonathan left her body as well.

She felt that surely when tomorrow comes, anything and everything will turn back as it was before. That the theft uproar and concealment of the letters was all just a lie and as it should be, Jonathan, like always would be happily carrying the mail that came for everyone while sweating from going up and down the stairs because he didn't use the elevator. Because, when he became able to do his work he was so delighted so he did his job with pride.

At that time, she didn't even think that the day when Jonathan would leave Hotel Williams Child Bird would ever come.



Ding-dong....., ding-dong. Somewhere in her clouded consciousness a buzzer was ringing. Her absentminded consciousness was being called back to reality. From behind the curtains the late rays of sunlight shined on the egg shaped sofa by the window and the checker-patterned floor.

Ding-dong. The buzzer rang again.

Still half immersed in slumber, Kizuna raised a slow voice to the unkept black haired head of a person sleeping next to her.

“Asai-san, they’re caaalling.”

“Ah-..... Go.....” Crawled under the bed cover he mumbled that answer. “Really, it’s your room so go take it yourself...” while complaining, she sluggishly got up and just then the center of her head rang like a bell and pounded with dizziness. “Ouchie.....” She tightly pressed her temples with her fist. Before

getting down from the bed on all fours she kneed Asai's abdomen, who was sleeping beside her, and with a groaning voice almost as if he would spit out an alien egg or something, Asai's torso slipped down from the bed.

"Ugh....., y-, you....."

"Sorry."

She apathetically apologized while pressing her temples. She got up in that state and stepped down onto the floor straddling Asai who fell asleep again without even crawling back onto the bed.

Ding-dong.

The sound of the buzzer that is never loud, reverberated like a diffuse reflection in her head due to her hangover. She irresponsibly kicked the empty containers from Deli and the cans of beer that were scattered on the floor to make way, "Yees," when she opened the door, scratching her hair, she saw a youth of short build and with curly hair waiting scared. Her mind still clouded, Kizuna thought for a bit and then looking over her shoulder into the room, "Asai-san, it's Jonathan. Some deli...ve..r-....." in the middle of saying that her blurred mind cleared up.

The room she looked back at was not Asai's atelier but Kizuna's own room. She put her brain to work and dug up the memories from last night. Asai, Yuki and Kizuna, after the three of them drank in Kizuna's room. Around the time when the date changed saying he had work tomorrow, Yuki retreated to his own room, and while Asai tried to retreat as well but Kizuna in her drunkenness grabbed him by the nape of his neck and detained him from going.

And after that.....

She doesn't remember.

Sleeping collapsed in an unnatural state with his torso on the floor, Asai finally woke up, frowning he pressed his temples just like Kizuna had. With the front open, his shirt slid down to his shoulders, his appearance becoming somehow immodest. She overlooked her own appearance which was only one thin tank-top and shorts. When she turned her eyes to Jonathan standing in the doorway, he was looking downward, his face dyed bright red from the tips of his ears to

the summit of his forehead.

“Ehh-, sorry.”

For some reason or another, it was Kizuna who apologized. Even though she was saying that, she had nothing else to wear at that moment.

“So, what... is it?”

Because she woke up completely she understood that Jonathan wouldn't bring a delivery because yesterday he was fired from his delivery job. She remembered the previous evening when she was shut out in front of his room and began to ask about that with her voice stiffened.

Jonathan gazed at Kizuna's appearance and again became flustered, he took his eyes off her, and after taking a fleeting glance inside the room at Asai who was squirming trying to get up he said: “Uhm, I'm sorry, for intr-intruding.”

“You're not really intruding...” she replied, but whether something happened last night with Asai or not (What would that *something* be anyway?) she really doesn't remember.

“Whaaat. Is that... a letter?”

Noticing that Jonathan was grasping an envelope-like object in his hand, she tried to accept it thinking *that absolutely must be mail* but, “This is, different, it's nothing!” said Jonathan and crushing the envelope with a *crumble* he hid his hands behind his back.



“Jonathan?”

“I’m sorry. As I thought, it’s nothing!” still looking down he said it as if he was

squeezing it out, "Wait a-" then without even listening to Kizuna's call for him to stop, he turned and ran away down the corridor. She wanted to chase after him but clad in clothes similar to underwear Kizuna couldn't do anything other than to stand stock still in the doorway.

"What was that? Just now..."

She heard a cursing voice come from the room. Sitting cross-legged on the floor, Asai was still pressing and rubbing at his temples, seeing Kizuna's face who turned around he said startled: "Wh-What is it, I didn't do anything. Probably."

Because of that subtly faltering-like Asai's reaction, Kizuna noticed for the first time that tears had been piling up in her eyes. She, who never cries in front of people, cried. No doubt her tear glands are acting up because last night's alcohol still remained in her body.

"Asai-san, what should I do... looks like Jonathan misunderstood something." The tears she wanted to stop, weren't stopping, she powerfully wiped them with her palms and then she heaving with sobs: "He was acting a little weird since yesterday, maybe he started to hate me....."

"Wai-, you're still drunk."

"I'm *not* drunk."

The tears were falling on her tank-top's chest making her skin visible. Asai averted his eyes from Kizuna with a bitter face and kicked away an empty can that was rolling nearby. He's composed seeing her naked when he paints her, yet now he seemed troubled at how to treat her.

"He's an idiot, so in any case he'll forget about it soon and will come to play as if nothing happened."

"Don't say he's an idiot, Jonathan isn't an idiot."

Facing Asai she kicked the empty can back at him. As if she hurt his feelings Asai clicked his tongue, "I can't keep up with you. I'm going home. Back to bed." He got up while stretching his disheveled shirt by the collar, slipping past a dissatisfied Kizuna, he left through the wide open door. Even though she knew he was that kind of person, but he was still heartless enough to leave a tear-strained Kizuna without even trying to calm her down. Within this place's

residents he is probably the one most lacking cooperativeness and social sense.

After Asai left the room leaving her all alone, the tears became futile and quickly dried up. She sniffled one last time and slowly taking a breath her gloomy mood cooled down, unconsciously her tear glands loosened up and she regretted her stupidity. As she thought, it was the alcohol's fault, absolutely.

Opposed to Asai, she didn't feel like going back to sleep so somehow or another she started to clean up, all the while bearing a grudge at the two who hurriedly went home leaving a mess (Sure, I dragged them here myself, but...). Squatting she tossed the empty cans and containers into a Deli's bag. Still wearing the tank-top and shorts, she was somehow in a mood for miserable manual labor.

The scene from when she was in this room with Jonathan and they stuffed themselves full with Chou a la Creme rose to the surface of her memory. *Jonathan who stuffs his cheeks with the third Chou a la Creme, his mouth white from powdered sugar. Kizuna who has had enough of the sweetness when she's on the third piece.*

They will surely be back to that soon. Jonathan is slow, but in proportion, one of his points is that he sometimes jumps to the wrong conclusions. Forgetting soon and then coming back as if nothing happened— it's just like Asai said, this uncomfortable situation can't last forever. Eventually, Jonathan will come to talk to her. Even just now, he probably visited her with that intention in mind. The timid crybaby Jonathan can't be without Kizuna, even saying it to herself that she's being arrogant she still thought that.

However, that morning became the last time she saw Jonathan so full of energy.



A morning as usual. However, a morning different than usual.

Shrugging her body from the early morning's cold air, she was going back with a Yanglong Deli's shopping bag in hand. At the Hotel's entrance she bumped into

the kigurumi father and goth-lolita daughter pair. As they passed by her, the father bowed his head and the daughter concluded it with *hmph*. Kizuna slightly looked over her shoulder to see off the retreating figures of the short and stout tortoise-shell kigurumi who joined hands with the girl carrying a red randsell bag on her back as they went out to the streets.

The entrance lobby was uninhabited. Late morning sun was shining through the draughty tall windows in the lobby and the dull light interweaving through the curtains was reflecting the dust hanging in the air. On one side was a talk corner furnished with a sofa, a TV and an ashtray and on the opposite side was a front desk equipped with a pink public telephone. In the meanwhile, the mails which reached the residents were piled up at the front desk without being sorted out since two weeks ago.

Since his job has come to an end, Jonathan's figure as he every morning visited each room with a worn-out leather shoulder bag stuffed full with mails was nowhere to be seen. Not even his out-of-breath figure because he dashed up the stairs up to the fifth floor without even using the elevator. Not even the *clip-clop* sound of his swaying bag. And not even that figure of his as he with a smile and all his might, shyly responded the "*Thank you,*" and "*You've worked hard,*" words of gratitude they sometimes added. He cannot be seen in Hotel Williams Child Bird anymore.

When he disappeared, she realized for the first time.

In the morning, exchanging the words "Good morning" with someone, only that much, a trifle thing that takes place naturally in daily life, just like drinking one glass of cold water after waking up, how pleasant a thing it is!

Not only not seeing him as he does mail delivery, but it's become to not even being able to see Jonathan's lively walking figure ever again.

—Two weeks ago. In response to the aftermath of the theft uproar Jonathan was fired from his delivery job, and the next day—

Jonathan was hospitalized.

On that day, the direct cause of that was his nosebleed that continued two days in a row without stopping. However, according to the examination, they found out that Jonathan's brain, which had originally slow development, that its

function was deteriorating, and they said that the symptoms such as motion function impairment and paralysis, which are affected by that, are beginning to show. He has showed the signs from childhood and it seems like he was told that it's unknown whether he'll live to adulthood or not. According to manager, Jonathan had informed Kizuna and the other residents about that fact for the first time ever.

It turned out the way that she was unable to ask about Jonathan's true motive for concealing the letters, but it didn't matter to her anymore. If only Jonathan felt better, that would be enough. She would never again let the Williams Child Bird's residents or anyone else to criticize and tease him. *Therefore, I want you to become healthy and come back.*

Kizuna was praying only that for two weeks.

At Jonathan's request she was called to the hospital, which was on the day after two weeks and one day had passed.

She couldn't think of any other acquaintance with *a decent head* who had time, so she woke up Asai who was sleeping soundly after pulling an allnighter and begged him to accompany her, then, in the afternoon they arrived at the general hospital in which Jonathan was hospitalized.

The white walls and the white floors. The white scent of disinfectant. Everything was engulfed in inorganic white. And contrasting with Hotel Williams Child Bird's scenery painted in behind-the-times primary color was a corridor with no sense of life to speak of and on its other side was Jonathan's hospital room. There they were told to wait and then, leaving behind Asai who bent down his head and started to doze off as soon as he sat down on a bench in the corridor, Kizuna entered the hospital room on her own.

Similarly to the corridor, the private room was wrapped in white and inside was a bed on which lying down with his upper body slightly raised was Jonathan who in mere two weeks became thin beyond recognition. By his bedside was an IV drip stand from which, *drip-drop*, was dripping a transparent fluid that was sucked in a slim pipe connected to his thin arm. He turned his sunk-in eyes, that were as always a bit restlessly shifting left and right, to Kizuna who was

approaching the bedside.

He opened his mouth trying to say something but his voice didn't come out, so instead of that Jonathan wearily lifted his IV-pipe-connected-to left arm. His wrist snapped and his fingers bent in a having-a-cramp-like unnatural angle.

Kneeling by the bedside, Kizuna took that hand with both of her hands. Maybe because he had a slight fever it felt hot a bit. As he carefully loosened up his solid stiff fingers and took hold of Kizuna's hands, Jonathan's idly loitering glance settled down and his eyes narrowed in relief. Kizuna brought her ear near his mouth, as he again moved his lips trying to say something, and listened carefully to his thin voice which with difficulty increased in volume than before.

"Mail delivery, can't do it anymore, for causing trouble, I'm sorry..."

Even though Jonathan only said that much, it seemed to consume a lot of his strength. Kizuna pressed his hand she was clasping on against her cheek.

"You'll be able to do it again, once you're discharged."

Her own voice has like a water drop soaked into the white atmosphere of an unnaturally quiet hospital room.

"No one's angry at you anymore, Jonathan. So get better and carry the letters to everyone's place every morning again. From a family, from a lover, from a friend... You'll put the letters from precious people to your shoulder bag and just like before you'll carefully carry it every day, Jonathan. The receivers will thank you with a smile, saying *"Good job,"* or *"Thank you"*. Everyone's waiting for Jonathan's return. And with the received salary, you'll buy Chou a la Creme again and..."

Midway, her voice stuck in her throat. Once biting her lips, she pressed her forehead against the back of Jonathan's hand. The heat on her forehead was Jonathan's temperature, but imprisoned in her eyes were her own tears.

"Let's stuff ourselves full with Chou a la Creme..."

An hoarse voice squeezed out from her throat.

With his stiff fingers he timidly grasped back Kizuna's hand and with his other hand Jonathan awkwardly touched Kizuna's cheek. Separating her forehead from

his hand, she raised her head and saw that Jonathan, lying down on the bed, was looking up at her with a kind smile that spread to his eyes.

“Don’t cry, Kizuna..... Thank you. Crying... for my... sake... thank y-.....”

Using up all the air in his lungs, he mustered his all to say that. One word at a time he moved his lips painfully and with his bent fingers’ second joints he wiped the tears flowing down on Kizuna’s cheeks. A transparent drop of water slipped down his finger and made a stain on the white bedsheet.

On that very same day, Jonathan was transferred to another hospital which was said to be in their district. She saw him off with Asai at the hospital’s entrance as his grown thinner, too light body laid on a stretcher was carried away in a white wagon.

—So get better and carry the letters to everyone’s place every morning again.

Kizuna’s words were something that most likely will never come true in reality. As it is, eventually he won’t be able to talk or move his body using his own strength and they don’t even know how longer he’ll live, that’s the explanation she heard from the doctor.

Kizuna couldn’t do anything else than to pray that at least, his remaining time should be quiet, without anyone speaking ill of him or splashing water on him, with nothing there to scare him, so that he can go to heaven with beautiful memories and pure heart. Because his pure eyes don’t need to reflect any of the filth of this world.

And thus one of the Williams Child Bird’s residents passed away like that.



“Kizuna-san, your mails, they’ve piled up.”

That day, unusually, she saw the manager behind the front desk. Punctually and formally dressed in a gold-rimmed dark-gray lengthy uniform that was a relic from a doorman’s attire from Hotel’s past era. He was wearing white gloves and a regulation cap with a short visor was pulled low over his eyes, he was a person

with a short and stout body build. It was said that no resident clearly saw his face behind the cap, he is also one of the strange Hotel Williams Child Bird's residents.

"Please wait a moment. I don't have a helper who would sort them out since Jonathan passed away..."

From the inner office she heard the sounds of him scratching around in a box while grumbling and before long he came out with a bundle of letters tied together with a string.

"Thanks."

Receiving the letters, she left from the front desk while roughly confirming them after untying the string. One big envelope got in a novel magazine ordered from Great Britain – a direct mail that's bound to go to the trash would often..... while viewing it she walked the dim corridor towards the elevator.

Mixed inside the direct mail was one plain envelope. It had traces of it being crumpled once and then being thoroughly smoothed out.

F, +, on, Kizuna, zama... 'Etoh Kizuna-sama'?

The address was written in a super crappy handwriting and there was no stamp.

(This..., Jonathan...?)

Her walking feet spontaneously came to a halt. Standing still she opened the seal right there. She tried to carefully cut the edge, but her hand shook and she tore into the writing paper a bit. She cut open the envelope up to about two thirds and pulled out the writing paper, taking care not to tear it more than that, she timidly opened it. The rustling sound of dry paper was absorbed in the uninhabited corridor.

She started to read from the top while deciphering his clumsy handwriting letter by letter with difficulty. It seemed to be a letter that was most likely mixed up with other mails before Jonathan was hospitalized. One sheet of writing paper was packed full with characters written with utmost care, but the strokes were unrefined and strong pressure was applied.

(Jonathan. The kanji...)

She squeezed on her heart tightly. Jonathan didn't write the kanji characters. He was not supposed to have any acquaintance other than Kizuna who would teach him that, so he must have practiced with her unaware... His awkward alphabet was only at the level of a kindergartener but it was surely worth the effort.

She boarded the elevator and tried to push the button to the fourth floor, but she promptly changed her mind and pushed the button to the second floor. Soon, the elevator stopped on the second floor and because of the long time it took for the door to open she basically jumped out on the corridor. Beside the elevator, she opened the door to the room number 213 that wasn't locked henceforth its resident passed away. Because Jonathan was hospitalized next day after the theft uproar, his room was left in its devastated state and mostly wasn't cleaned up.

Stepping on the baggage scattered on the floor, she trod inside the room. There was a wooden antique desk by the window. *Something like a desk is unnecessary to a guy who can't even write the kanji*, like that he had been made fun of by the residents.

When she pulled out a bunch of paper from under the desk, that was roughly dragged out before and scattered around in pieces, it fell down fluttering.

She bent down and picked up one sheet – the whole surface was filled with clumsy letters.

a a a a a

i i i i i

u u u u u

e e e e e

o o o o o...

Closely packed together on the rear sides of leaflets and calendars were traces of hiragana practice.

And in addition to hiragana there were some different characters.

E E E E E

toh toh toh toh toh

Ki Ki Ki Ki Ki

zu zu zu zu zu

na na na na na...

It's a wonder how many blisters he had made on his fingers until he became able to write this much that the paper got worn out because of his unskillful strong pressure.

Sitting in the middle of the scattered around paper, she opened the crumpled letter she was grasping on tightly and dropped her gaze. In poor characters and writing, a composition has been spelled out that conveyed apology and courtesy to Kizuna.

(You wrote this...?)

The evening when the theft uproar had happened, that time when Kizuna dropped by and he shut her out of his room, Jonathan was surely trying to finish writing this letter. She pictured him curling his back and sticking to the desk, grasping the pencil tightly, as he was writing with earnestness while remembering the letters he practiced one by one. He brought back the mails for Kizuna to his room for the sake of writing the recipient's name and address on the letter...?

He did nothing for what he would need to receive punishment. He was just purely trying his hardest, only living while doing what he was able to do.

I wanted to be able to write Kizuna's name, so I hid the letter, I practiced a lot of letters to practice the letter, I am very sorry

I wanted to thank Kizuna, Kizuna didn't make fun of me and was kind to me, I was very happy that Kizuna was with me

But, my body is becoming worse and worse, I don't know and don't remember what I remember, that is why I wanted to write a letter when I still can remember the character, I surely soon will not know about Kizuna, I can not speak well, so I wanted to say this to Kizuna in a letter

Please throw away everything from my room, I will give the stamp collection to any one who wants it, please throw away the original and notes because I

think no one would want them

I'm sorry Kizuna, thank you and goodbye

Also everyone goodbye

Thank you very much for being so kind to we

JONATAN

Part 1

Chapter 2 Street • Brave • Girl



She thrust her feet into her boots, grabbed her jacket and the man's wallet and ran out at the very last second. Right then, the man got out of shower with one towel coiled around his waist and came leaping out of the room shouting harsh words. She looked back once from the corridor, with the meanings of goodbye she stuck out her tongue, and ran away. In the corridor of a tawdry hotel in a wilting-away outskirts resounded a heavily kicking footsteps of the slipping-off boots.

The man heaped at her back abusive jeers how dead she'll be. With just a small amount of fear and a bit of tension, but mostly with sensation of exaltation her heart leapt rapidly. There was that nutrient-like pleasant numbness clinging to her back, permeating to her body from the nape of her neck.

She dashed down the stairs. Her mind was being controlled by her boundless self-confidence that no one can catch her. She descended about eighty percent of blinds and ran in front of the reception, she stopped once in front of the exit that was divided with a wall so that it couldn't be seen from the outside. Slightly out of breath she looked over her shoulder:

I win.

Saying her innermost thoughts she chuckled.

Pulling her arms through the sleeves of a fake fur jacket, she turned back and started to run again.

Under the neon lights glittering in the night streets a figure in a black jacket was swallowed into the blue-gray scenery.



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