Tokyo Ghoul: Split

by Blackhole_Called_Anime

Summary

“It’s always ghouls,” they muttered under their breath. “Why does it always have to be ghouls? Just because someone is messed up in the head doesn’t make them a ghoul.” The girl’s head swiveled towards the man that cowered before them, their red and black eye flashing at the terrified café worker. “Does it?”
"I can't say that I've ever seen something like this before," the doctor told both mother and child as he stared at the nineteen year old's chart. Riaru, the daughter, shifted uncomfortably in the hard, office chair, refusing to make eye contact with the older man. "So, Dr. Yamashita referred you to me correct?"

"Hm? Oh! Yes, he thought that you might be able to help us diagnose my daughter," Riaru's mother told him almost eagerly.

"Well, honestly I'm not a psychologist like Yamashita. I'm actually just a surgeon here," the man paused. "But, I am currently in the middle of a study that's related to what your daughter may be experiencing. Which is probably why Dr. Yamashita sent you here." The man looked up from the chart catching her mother's eyes.

Riaru glanced at her from the corner of her vision, noticing that the woman's eye had grown considerably larger.

"It says here that she was diagnosed with Schizophrenia. But, it also states that she doesn't display these symptoms 24/7, even when not on medication. Which is rather baffling since schizophrenia doesn’t have an on and off switch," the doctor explained.

As things began to become interesting a voice emerged from the back of Riaru's mind, "Do you think that they've figured it out already? I'm surprised," the voice said, light laughter tainting the words. "It's only taken them eight years."

"I'm not sure..." Riaru replied silently to the voice. "But, as you said it has been eight years. Someone was bound to figure it out eventually."

"I believe that there is a possibility that your daughter has a personality disorder known as dissociative identity disorder. Though you may have heard it called multiple personality disorder. And it's possible that one of these personalities is schizophrenic," the man said as he paused to give the two a moment to soak in the information.

"He's using technical terms, but I believe he hit the nail right on the head, or heads so to speak," the voice laughed as Riaru nodded her head in agreement.

The doctor gave her a glance of mild interest.

Had he noticed?

"It's a condition in which two or more personality states alternately take control of an individual," he began to explain, "At the moment it is unclear as to how many personality states Riaru has, but I believe at least one of these personalities she has is schizophrenic. Which would explain why the symptoms aren’t continuously displayed."

Riaru's mother was silent for a moment, "So what you're saying is that my daughter has several different people inside her head?"

"In a manner of speaking. One of these 'people' in her head is schizophrenic, and when that personality state takes over is when her hallucinations, and her other symptoms of schizophrenia come into play," the stated trying to clear things up for the mother. "This is one case where her dissociative identity disorder actually somewhat helps your daughter, it seems that one of her other
personalities is helping contain it for her. Which is most likely why she's able to function normally on a day to day basis."

"Your mother seems surprised," the voice quipped. "I mean she just found out that her precious little girl is a certified psycho." Laughter echoed through the girl's mind as she shifted uncomfortably in her seat.

Riaru's gaze shifted guiltily towards her dress as she began tracing one of the flowers on her dress.

The voice let out an annoyed sigh, "Are you seriously feeling guilty for something you have no control of?"

Riaru remained silent.

"Move over," the voice snapped. "I think it's time I talk to this doctor that you're too afraid to even look at."

"Now?!" The girl yelped. "But we're in the middle of a conversation with the doctor!" Riaru explained, not wanting to cause a scene.

"You have to be talking for it to be a conversation, which you're not. So move."

Not one to cause conflict, especially within her own mind, Riaru retreated back a bit to make room for the voice.

As soon as control was given was the voice slouched down in the uncomfortable seat and kicked off the painful heels that had adorned their feet.

"Riaru?" My mother asked, questioning their outrageous behavior.

But Riaru wasn't in control anymore, now it was Yū. "Sooo," Yū said drawing out the word, "Dissociative Identity Disorder huh? Sounds fancy."

There was a moment of silence as Riaru's mother stared at Yū in disbelief and as the doctor's interest visibly sparked back up at the girl's sudden change in behavior.

"Mrs. Genji, may I speak to your daughter alone for just a moment?" the doctor directed the question towards Riaru's mother.

"Finally things are getting interesting," Yū chuckled in their mind.

"Please, be nice to him," Riaru pleaded as Mrs. Genji exited the room.

"May I ask who I'm speaking to?" The doctor asked calmly, making direct eye contact with the girl's grey irises.

Even Yū was surprised by the doctor's bluntness, but the more aggressive personality state was quick to recover. "See Riaru, I told you he'd found us out," Yū spoke aloud for the benefit of the older man.

Completely embarrassed, Riaru forced Yū back just long enough to apologize to the doctor before being taken over once again, "No need to be so aggressive Riaru, your good friend Yū here is going to take care of everything," Yū spoke the line out loud. The man just sat in his chair watching with extreme interest as the two personalities argued with each other."I'll be honest Doc, we were surprised that you figured it out so quickly, I mean, you're the... What? Twelfth professional that
we've been to in the last eight years, and not even an hour into our session and you have us nailed! You should feel proud!” Yū said with a smile, slowly clapping in a mocking manner. They leaned in, hand cupping the edge of their mouth, whispering, “Everyone else has called my existence a mood swing.” She leaned back, hand dropping. “I mean really, I'm a mood swing?”

The doctor leaned his elbows on his desk and slowly settled his chin to rest in his hands, anyone could see the extreme interest that sparked up within the doctor's eyes. "So, Yū was it?" he questioned. "May I ask how many there are like you and Riaru?"

Yū sat in silence for a moment thinking over the question, "Well seeing as to how neither Riaru or myself are schizophrenic... That means that there is a high possibility of there being at least three of us. Though I couldn't exactly tell you if that's true or not, Riaru and I share many of the same experiences, and those times when we go psychotic... Well... Those memories tend to be hard to recover," Yū answered the curious doctor as she kicked up their bare feet onto his desk, only for them to be jerked off as Riaru gained back a bit of control over their lower body. "Geeze Riaru."

"You're lying," Riaru muttered.

There was silence for a moment as Kanou watched while Riaru fought to regain control back from Yū, after another minute Yū still had control and Riaru had grown weary. "So, Doc," Yū winced in pain, "Fine! Dr... ah," she paused, "What was your name again?"

The man kindly smiled at her. "Kanou, Kanou Akihiro. It's nice to meet you Yū."
"So, Doc," Yū winced in pain, "Fine! Dr.... ah," she paused, "What was your name again?

The man kindly smiled at her. "Kanou, Kanou Akihiro. It's nice to meet you Yū."

"Alright, so Dr. Kanou can you do anything about this?" A small moment of silence passed through the room, "Sorry, let me clarify that, the schizophrenia, not the Identity disorder or whatever. Since I actually value my existence," Yū explained to Kanou seriously, "We can live with the multiples of ourselves but the schizophrenia... Well... That's a different story. It wouldn't be fun if in the middle of running from some ghoul we end up switching to psycho," Yū leaned in to whisper to Dr. Kanou behind Riaru's hand, "Sure it's one heck of a way to go out, but I'd rather we didn't end up as ghoul shit."

Kanou looked at them seriously, "As I explained to both of you earlier, I'm not a psychologist. So I would have to send you to a professional and I explain the situation to them. I'm afraid I can help you no farther than this."

Both Kanou and Yū gazed at each other with solemn faces before Yū gave a brief nod and stood up from the plastic seat. "I guess I'm out of here then, I'll let you and Riaru's mom finish up here," Yū stated as she walked toward the door.

"Riaru's mom?"

"Yeah, I didn't show up till Riaru was eleven, if anything I consider Mrs. Genji to be my aunt," Yū answered as she pushed open the door. "See ya Doc!"

And with that the doctor watched as the second personality of Genji Riaru walked out of his office door and into the hallway beyond.

"Riaru?" The mother called out to her child as the supposed Riaru walked out of Dr. Kanou's office.

"Heeeey... Mom... We're going to go on out and leave you guys to talk about the rest of the details," Yū said as she slid by the mildly concerned Mrs. Genji.

"Wait!" The mother called out as her daughter went further and further down the hall, "You shouldn't be going alone! What if you have another episode?!

"We'll be fine mom! If I'm not home by six tonight then I'll probably either be in a hospital or a police station! So just check those if I don't turn up!" Yū called out to Riaru's mother as she continued to make her way towards the exit.

"Sweetheart! What's gotten into you?!" Mrs. Genji cried out from the same spot by Dr. Kanou's office.

"It's the mood swings mom! They come with the disorder!" Yū called out out our their shoulder as she reached the two glass doors and opened them. "We Loooove youuuuu, bye!" The door slammed firmly behind her.

Back in the hallway Mrs. Genji questioned herself on her daughter's frequent use of we in their recent conversations.

Yū let out a sigh of relief as a cool breeze ran through the streets. "Feels great doesn't it Riaru? But it
would feel even better if I wasn't wearing this awful dress, you didn't bring any extra clothes to change into did you?"

"No, I did bring a jacket and an extra pair of shoes though," Riaru answered as they made their way towards a nearby bench.

"Good, because I left your heels in the Doc's office," Yū said relieved while she pulled the small, striped backpack off her shoulders to hang in front of them. They sat down on the bench before slipping on tennis shoes and jacket. "Pack some pants next time won't you?" Yū complained as they began to walk once again.

"Where are we going?" Riaru asked from their shared mind.

"I don't know, preferably somewhere with coffee," Yū answered the nineteen year old as a yawn escaped her. "You woke us up way too early this morning."

"Well... You're not wrong," Riaru chuckled as they made their way down the street. "And coffee does sound delicious. A sweet one with sugar and milk, doesn't that sound good?" Riaru questioned her split.

Yū made a disgusted face. "No! You know I hate sweet things, especially when it comes to coffee. Coffee was made to be the way it is, and it should stay that way!" the split explained to her exasperated.

Riaru huffed in annoyance, "Black coffee is just like your personality, bitter."

"Your personality, my personality, is there really a difference? I mean we share the same head after all. If I'm bitter then you are as well little Riaru," Yū chuckled at the thought.

The two walking well into the next hour on their search for a coffee shop that would suit their needs. They had passed at least two shops that were both packed with the people from the 20th district, and they would have gone in had it not been for their mutual dislike for crowded places. After another fifteen minutes they finally stumbled across another coffee shop with a quiet atmosphere surrounding the building. Both Yū and Riaru let out thankful sighs as they pushed open the front door and walked up the entrance steps quietly, trying hard not to break the peace as the scent of coffee wrapped around them in a comforting embrace. It was a cozy place where even the air seemed to greet you with a "Welcome to Anteiku!"

The two took a seat a table near the door that was tucked into a cozy corner that gave them a view of most of the shop.

Just across from the two oblivious splits, the old manager of the shop by the name of Yoshimaru stood behind the bar with what seemed to be a permanent smile on his face, he wore the uniform for the shop, a nice white dress shirt layered with a buttoned up vest. He stood, calmly making a coffee for a customer who sat before him. And though he made the customer's brewing coffee with care, the old man also kept an eye on the never before seen customer who had just walked in.

The waitress there, Touka Kirishima, also kept an eye on this new customer, through new faces weren't a strange sight at Anteiku, it was always something to be wary of for the staff and most of the shop's regular customers.

But the new customer, or customers in Riaru and Yū's case, were quiet and peaceful. They sat at their table discussing many different topics with each other under the guise of reading a book that Riaru had also hoarded into their backpack. Before long though the duo's conversations were
interrupted by the waitress and her purple hair, "Hi welcome to Anteiku, what can I get for you today?"

"Ah! We were so wrapped up in our thoughts we forgot to even order," Yū chuckled lightly.

"There's only one body for everyone to see, it makes us look crazy if you 'we’ all the time," Riaru stated nervously.

"I'll take a black coffee please," Yū told the waitress as she copied down the simple order.

Touka smiled at the new customer, the gears in her mind whirring as she went to prepare their drink.

"And we are crazy," Yū replied, picked up the conversation from earlier, "You've got at least three different split personalities and one of them is diagnosed with schizophrenia," Yū replied to Riaru's earlier comment as she closed the unread book and stowed it back into their backpack to watch the small tv monitor that the shop had set up.

The headline for the local 20th ward news read this, Binge-Eater, binged out?

"You heard that right! Binge-Eater binged out! The ghoul that caused so many deaths just a few months before has now completely dropped off the CCG's radar. But seeing as there are still many violent ghoul related deaths, this is no cause for celebration," the news anchor stated as pictures of several victims crossed the screen.

After the twelfth victim appeared on the tv, Yū looked away from the photographs before speaking lowly as they stared out the window, "You would think people would stop being stupid enough to go out on their own like that. They act like nothing's changed and they think that that'll never happen to me. I'm different. But they're not, they're food the same as every other human out there. Even ghouls can be consumed." Though Yū's comment rang true her statement still managed to surprise several of the customers and staff that had picked up on the quiet comment. The split's words even caught the attention of Yoshimaru, who's back was turned to this strange new customer, as he gently cleaned a the coffee cup.

"Saying things like that might wake him up!" Riaru yelped from the back of their mind, "Are you trying to make us have a psychotic breakdown in the middle of the coffee shop?! We haven't even had your coffee yet Yū!"

"I'm just speaking the truth Riaru," Yū replied to the girl.

Touka suddenly appeared in front of her strange new customer, a steaming cup of black coffee resting in her palm. The waitress offered it to the stranger with their black, straight banged bob and their eerie grey eyes before smiling and walking back behind the bar counter to speak with the manager.

"What do you think of her?" Yoshimaru spoke first. There was silence between the two for a moment while the tv buzzed in the background.

"She's certainly strange I'll give her that. And she certainly doesn't look like someone who would drink their coffee black without good reason, especially dressed like that. She almost reminds me of Rize..." Touka answered Yoshimaru almost casually as she poured another cup of coffee.

"She's not a ghoul," the old man stated as he continued cleaning a coffee cup.

Touka's hand jerked a bit at Yoshimaru's bluntness causing some coffee to splash onto the counter. "How can you tell?"
The old man continued drying the cup he had as he spoke, "It's just a hunch, you can bring Hinami down to sniff her out if you wish. But, I'm certain she'll give you the same answer."

Touka grabbed a rag and began to clean up the spill she had made as she let out a deep sigh, "I believe you... But there's definitely something off about her."

The coffee burned slightly as it went down their throat. "See, it tastes fantastic Riaru. This is much better than what it was you wanted," Yū stated aloud, accidentally drawing a few curious looks their way.

"Will you stop speaking out loud when everyone can hear you!" Riaru pleaded from the two's shared mind.

"Chill Riaru, we're in the corner, no one can hear us," Yū stated as she took another sip of bitter coffee.

"Correction! No one can hear me, but you're getting weird side glances from the waitress and some of the other customers!"

Yū ignored the last comment and took another drink of the coffee that filled their cup. "Do you know time it is?" Yū asked instead. Their eyes slowly dragged themselves to the bottom of the tv screen looking for the current time.

The clock read 6:03.

The coffee seemed to grow cold in their grasp as they stared at the clock. "No," Riaru whispered in their mind.

6:04

"It took us an hour to get here, and it will take an hour for us to get back," Yū whispered in shock as both splits stared at the clock together.

"Mom... She's probably checking the police stations right now..." Riaru spoke quietly from the back of their mind.

"No, she'll give it another five minutes..." Yū replied.

6:05

"She'll visit all of the hospitals directly after," Riaru spoke.

"She'll file a missing person report."
"She'll wander the streets looking for our corpse."

6:06

Yū scrambled for the two's wallet, trying to desperately grab for any amount of money, the frantic split finally managed to grasp a wad before throwing it on the table and dashing for the exit. The two rushed out of the door and down the stairs racing to get home before Riaru's mother went ballistic.

The coins that had been thrown down upon the table continued to rattle as everyone within Anteiku stared in shock at the door as it shut after the crazed girl. Touka walked cautiously towards the now vacant table where a coffee cup sat still full with the coffee that the black haired girl had ordered only ten minutes beforehand. A wad of cash laid sprawled out across the table and coins still lazily danced like tops on its surface, the amount left obviously too much for a single black coffee.

Touka stared out the window of the shop and watched as the strange girl bolted down the street, her dress whipping to and fro as she cut through the air. "Definitely something wrong with her..."
Wind whipped past Yū and Riaru as they bolted as fast as they could towards home. Small houses blurred past the two's vision as they headed for the last house on the street. The split minded girl reached the grey house in record time as she slammed into the front door with a violent force. Seconds later the Yū controlled Riaru threw open the door, kicked off their boots and sprinted for the small kitchen.

"Mom! I'm home! I'm fine! Everything's okay!" Yū screamed as she ran through the house, "You can call off the search par..."

They froze.

A black haired man sat at the table directly across from Mrs. Genji. The man slowly turned to look at the intruding nineteen year old behind him, his grey eyes were serious and the bags under his eyes made him seem so much older than his twenty-three years. Genji Kohaku was the man's name, though to Mrs. Genji he was son and to Riaru he was brother.

"Oh! Riaru, you're early! I thought you weren't supposed to be home till six or so," Mrs. Genji said to her daughter with a slight smile on her face.

Yū glanced at the stove's clock.

6:47

"It's 6:47. Honestly we thought you'd be searching the streets for my corpse by now," Yū told her completely serious.

The mother flapped her hand at the daughter's split, "Oh sweetie, you know I wouldn't do such a thing."

"Whatever," Yū stated as she rolled her eyes and went to the fridge to get a bottle of water.

As Yū went to reach for a bottle Kohaku greeted his younger sister with a, "You should be more respectful to our mother Riru," both splits hated the nickname.

"Riaru," Yū began as she clenched her teeth, "It's your family, you can deal with them."

Riaru's body collapsed as Yū withdrew with hardly any warning leaving Riaru to desperately claw for their body's control.

Kohaku vaulted from his seat, Mrs. Genji screeched, and Riaru finally regained control over her body.

"Riaru! Are you okay?! Do I need to call an ambulance?!" Mrs. Genji screeched again as her daughter rested still slightly dazed in Kohaku's arms.

Shakily Kohaku helped his sister back to her feet. "No, no mother I'm fine, I've just been running for the last 45 minutes or so," Riaru responded to her mother quietly. But still Mrs. Genji twittered about how Riaru should go lay down, how they should call a doctor, how they should take her to the hospital, just to be safe of course.

And while their mother fussed on and on about the actions they should take Kohaku asked his sister
in whispery words, "Why have you been running for so long?"

Riaru answered in an equally quiet voice as to not disturb their mother's speech, "I told mother that I would be home by six. And as you can see, I was running a bit late."

"Understandable," Kohaku replied.

Kohaku guided Riaru towards a vacant chair and had her sit down before he handed her the bottle of water she had dropped. Riaru nodded to him her thanks.

"So Onii-chan, how's our rank 2 investigator doing?" Riaru smiled teasingly at her brother.

"Suck up," Yū muttered from the back of Riaru and Yū shared mind.

Kohaku smiled slightly at the question before sitting down in the chair next to his sister, "Everything's going well, but we've been piled up lately with a lot of new cases popping up all over the district. Today was my first day off in a long while, so I decided to come visit you two while I could."

"Three," Yū muttered, "four if you count our psychopath."

The bottom of Riaru's eye twitched at Yū's comment as she continued to smile."Well I'm pleased you came to visit us, we missed you."

"Are you two even listening to me?" Kohaku and Riaru's mother stated from behind them.

Kohaku was the first to respond, "Of course mother, though I'm sure Riaru will be fine once she's able to get some rest, no need to overreact so much."

Mrs. Genji squinted her eyes at the twenty-three year old, before a light sparked within her eyes as they always did when she remember something important, "Oh! Kohaku! It's such good news! We were finally able to meet with a doctor this afternoon that was able to diagnose Riaru!"

Kohaku's eyes slightly widened in surprise at this news, after eight years someone had finally been able to diagnose his sister? He found this slightly hard to believe after so long. He looked towards Riaru but she was busy taking a long drink of water from her bottle. So instead the man turned to look towards his mother again searching for answers.

"We went to go see a Dr. Kanou today, he works at Kanou General, he said that she more than likely has Multiple personality disorder. And he also said that her episodes..." Mrs. Genji whispered the last word as she tried to explain what Dr. Kanou had told them earlier.

"She's seems to think that just talking about our episodes will set another one off," Yū began from the back of Riaru's mind again as she set down the now have empty water bottle. "Honestly, they normally only happen in high stress situations, like say... Being abused by your father, or the gas station being robbed while we were in it, that last would've been a real joy to remember. I mean I kind of want to know how we managed to nearly murder the thief with that milk jug," Yū said only half jokingly.

"... And he recommended us to a specialist who treats people with multiple personality disorder and said he would even personally talk with him..." When Riaru checked back into her surroundings she found her mother still rambling on about the trio's doctors consultation.

"Mother," Riaru interrupted, "enough about me, Onii-chan has finally come home to visit, I'm sure he has some interesting stories to tell us."
Kohaku, noticing his sister's uncomfortableness went along with it, "Actually, we have a new investigator that switched over recently, he's a third rank by the name of Suzuya Juuzou. Personally I haven't met him yet, but everyone who has says he's crazy, I've heard he's got decorative stitches all over his body for no reason other than to have them. And rumor has it that he ate someone's ear bone just because they got on his nerves!"

"*Your brother sounds like a gossipy teenage girl at the moment Riaru, but if what he's saying is true then I kind of want to meet this kid,*" Yū spoke up completely serious on both points.

Riaru visibly shivered at the thought of eating the inside of someone's ear. "*I feel like we'd have a psychotic breakdown if we met him Yū,*" Riaru responded to her split's statement.

"If he's a third rank then that means he must be some sort of special case then correct?" Their mother asked.

The twenty-three year old nodded in agreement, "You know what, I actually think that he's the same age as you Riaru."

Riaru felt Yū's excitement increase, "*Don't even think about it Yū.*"

Yū let out a hearty chuckle that did nothing whatsoever to sooth Riaru's wariness of an accidental run in with this new investigator.
"It was good to see you again Kohaku! Make sure you come back to visit us soon!" Mrs. Genji called as her son walked out of the house and towards a taxi that was waiting for him.

"I'll come back as soon as I get another day off!" Kohaku shouted in farewell back towards his old home.

Riaru stuck her head out of the door frame to wave goodbye to her brother's retreating form. "Bye Onii-chan!"

"Bye Onii-chan!" Yū mocked in a high pitched voice.

Riaru gritted her teeth, Yū was the only one who was able seriously piss her off. The two turned back and headed into the house again, both personalities were exhausted from today's events.

Yū yawned in their mind, "Alright, I'm checking out, catch you later."

"Alright, goodnight," Riaru told her split in farewell.

But in the back of their shared mind Riaru could almost hear someone laugh, "That rhymed."

The next day dawned with the screeches of birds outside of Riaru's window and the curtains leaking in an ungodly amount of light. A moan of discontent escaped from the nineteen year old's lips as her body slowly sat up. Their body ached with every small movement. "Come to think of it now..." Riaru mumbled through a sleepy haze, "Why didn't we call for a taxi?"

Yū groaned out loud in response, "Because we were being stupid."

Yū stretched out their body before Riaru took over again. Birds continued to screech outside their window, a breeze coming with it. "Did you leave the window open last night?"

Slowly the girl's body stumbled towards the window. "I don't remember opening it," Riaru mumbled. She pushed her curtains the rest of the way to the side. Everything looked relatively normal at first, until you looked in their yard. Dead birds lay scattered across the lawn in small pools of their own blood, necks broken, feathers ripped out, wings torn clean off. Riaru's hand clamped over her mouth to keep from screaming and possibly throwing up.

Yū took sudden control and quickly turned their body away from the window. "Go back to sleep, I'll take care of everything," Yū said calmly to the frightened split. Riaru nodded mentally before retreating into the darkness of their mind.

Once Yū was sure Riaru wasn't watching she turned back to look at the devastation before them. Yū sighed before walking to their closet to change into old and ratty clothes with a pair of worn out tennis shoes that were getting too small for the girl's feet. Yū grabbed a scarf and wrapped it around their nose and mouth before setting off to find a pair of work gloves and a trash bag.

The process of picking up all the birds' remains and spraying down the lawn with a water hose to get rid of the blood stains before Riaru's mother woke up, and before any of the neighbors saw, was quiet a daunting task but somehow Yū managed to do so. Shirt and jeans stained with blood she walked back into their house.

She walked into the house barefoot, the shoes she had been wearing now sat splattered with blood in
the trash next to the 26 bird corpses. Tip toeing her way through the house she tried to make it to the bathroom without being seen. Yū was just about to open the bathroom door when Mrs. Genji opened her bedroom door yawning.

Yū eyes widened before quickly opening the door and slamming shut behind her. Riaru's mother let out a small scream. The split stood with her back to the door, their eyes closed tightly while she panted.

"Riaru?" Mrs. Genji asked from the other side of the door. "Are you alright sweetie?"

Yū let out a breath, "Yeah, just really had to use the bathroom."

"All right," Riaru's mother said still sounding slightly unsure but the sound of her footsteps leaving set Yū back into motion. She stripped-down out of Riaru's blood stained clothing before jumping in the shower. The second split watched in silence as blood tinted the water red.

When the water was back to being it's normal clear color Yū called upon Riaru. Yū ignored the bloody event from before hand and started on a safer topic, "Do you want to go back to that coffee shop today? We never did get to finish our drink. Plus it'll be your turn to pick out what we get."

"That sounds good," Riaru whispered.

Twenty minutes later Yū had gotten them dressed, this time in a plain black hooded jacket, jeans, and tennis shoes. "We're going to go grab some coffee! See you later mom!" Yū shouted as they headed out to meet the taxi that was waiting for them.

She closed the door before Riaru's mother could reply.

Yū felt Riaru's sudden change in mood as she turned around to face the yard, but there was nothing to be seen. Yū headed out to the taxi without a word. Entering the taxi she told the driver, "Anteiku Coffee shop please."

"You want to take over? I'm feeling a bit tired," Yū asked Riaru as she moved back a bit to let the girl take over.

"So what business do you have at Anteiku?" The taxi driver asked as he pulled off their street.

"We didn't get to finish our coffee yesterday, so we thought would come back today and finish it," Riaru's voice was softer than Yū's which seem to slightly confuse the driver.

"I can't say I've ever been there, how's the coffee?" The driver asked as he pulled down another street.

Riaru smiled slightly, "I can't really tell you to be honest we only had a few sips of ours before we had to rush home."

"Oh, were you with a friend?" The man asked.

"I've caught onto your bad habits," Riaru thought bitterly towards her split.

Yū chuckled in the background.

The two strangers went on talking about this and that as they approached their destination.

"Well it was nice meeting you Mr. Karao!" Riaru called out as she waved farewell to the man.
"It was my pleasure Mrs. Riaru!" He called back before driving off back down the street.

"That guy kind of gives me the creeps," Yū said shivering mentally.

"I think he was a rather nice man," Riaru answered with a soft smile as the headed for Anteiku's doors, "quite the talker though."

"She's back," the old manager called out to the staff, and the returning customers from yesterday. Yoshimaru couldn't help thinking that the girl seemed different somehow as she exited her taxi, she seemed lighter.

"Really?" Touka asked before rushing towards the window. And sure enough she watched the same strange girl from yesterday walk into the doors of Anteiku. "Hey, where's Kaneki? I wanna see what he thinks of this girl."

Yoshimaru smiled, this girl had become quite a big topic at Anteiku. "I think he's in the back teaching Hinami how to read again," the old manager replied. "I'll be right back!" Touka called over her shoulder as she ran for the back door.

Riaru walked up the steps of the coffee house, the smell of freshly brewed coffee once again wrapped around them. "Feels good to be back," Riaru said as she pushed open the door at the top of the stairs. The quiet atmosphere of Anteiku seemed to almost lull Riaru to sleep.

"Hey, don't be getting tired on me now," Yū said laughingly.

Riaru let out a light chuckle, "I just need some coffee." the two walked over to the table they sat at yesterday and took a seat. Riaru let out a sigh of content. Crashing was heard in the back.

Everyone jolted at the sound and stared confuse the door that led to the back.

"What are you doing?" Kaneki asked as Touka pulled him away from the room he had just been in with Hinami.

"There's this girl I want you to see she's really weird," Touka replied as she continued to drag the black haired boy down the hall.

"This is really unlike you," Kaneki said surprised by her response.

Touka frowned, "Just shut up and followed me..." there was a pause, "asshole."

"Never mind," Kaneki snickered. "So... What's so weird about this girl?"

Touka was silent for a few seconds, "I don't really know... She ordered a black coffee yesterday," she continued on quickly, "but Manager said she wasn't a ghoul. She talks to herself, and uses words like we when she's alone. It's like she has invisible person with her or something!" When they were almost at the door Touka stopped. "And do you know what she said yesterday? She started talking about how humans were just lumps of flesh that could be eaten, and that..." She paused, "and that even ghouls could be consumed..."

There was silence.

"Well.." Kaneki paused, "she's not wrong." With that he pushed past the purple haired waitress and into the coffee shop beyond.
Riaru yawned and stretched as Kaneki entered the room. "Why'd you have to wear so much black today?"

"Because it's black, and black is good. Especially at getting unwanted people to steer clear of you," Yū replied mockingly.

Riaru sighed, "We'll never be able to make any friends that way."

"If they really want to be our friends then they'll approach us no matter how we look," The split told the girl in all seriousness.

Kaneki watched from behind the bar next to Yoshimaru. All the faces in Anteiku that day were familiar to the eye patch wearing nineteen year old, all except for one. He assumed this was the girl Touka had found so weird. She didn't look all that weird, but he could see where Touka came from when she said how she talked to herself.

"Someone needs to take her order," Yoshimaru spoke quietly. "I assume either you or Touka will want to do it."

Kaneki nodded before walking over to the girls table. "Hi, what can I get for you?"

Riaru looked up surprised to see a black haired, eye patch wearing, young man in an Anteiku uniform. "Oh!" Riaru replied, "Hello, hmm... I think I'll have a coffee with..."

"Please say black. Please say black," Yū chanted from their mind.

Riaru scowled before letting out a sigh, "I guess I'll just take a black coffee please."

"You're going to have to switch with me when we drink it though," Riaru added silently.

"Woah! Really?!" Yū shouted from their mind, "Yes! Thank you!"

"One black coffee coming right up," Kaneki smiled before walking back to make the order.

"Well, I do owe you one from this morning," there was silence between the two, "thank you," Riaru told the split softly.

Yū only nodded mentally in understanding.
Kaneki had his back turned to the strange customer as he made the black coffee she had just ordered. “So what do you think?” It was Touka who spoke.

“You were right about her speech, but other than that she seems like a pretty nice girl, very soft spoken,” the black haired boy answered.

“Soft spoken?” Touka was astounded by this, “She certainly wasn’t softly spoken yesterday.”

Back at their usual table Riaru took a step back for Yū to take over before the waiter came back with their coffee. Yū stretched out their limbs and let out a large yawn before kicking up their feet on the chair across from them.

“Would it kill you to be polite in such a public place?” Riaru questioned from their mind.

“Yes, yes it would,” the split replied.

Kaneki watched on with interest as the girl seemed to suddenly fit her sense of style. Touka slowly walked up behind the eye-patched eighteen year old. “Now do you see what I mean?”

Kaneki nodded silently.

Loud buzzing suddenly echoed through the room, causing Yū to nearly jump out of their seat as the sound of their phone vibrating in their pocket. She moved to quickly answer it, stopping the loud noise from rattling her ears any longer. “Hello? Mom?”

Kaneki picked up the stranger’s coffee before quietly depositing it on their table. The girl made brief eye contact before nodding in thanks. “What do you mean it’s today?” The girl asked, confusion lacing her words. “Why didn’t you tell me that earlier?” There was a pause as Kaneki moved over to the next table before pretending to clean its surface. The black haired girl leaned further back in her seat. “Man, that doc sure works fast.” The girl quickly pulled the phone away from her ear as a muffled shouting came from the other end. “Okay, okay. Sorry, Doctor Kanou.”

“Kanou?” Kaneki thought as he continued to ‘clean’ the table.

“He sure does work fast though, I know he said he was going to talk to that specialist person for us, but we just saw him yesterday… No, no, we’re just surprised is all,” there was a pause, “So, when is the appointment? 7:00? Why so late?… Well I guess it was pretty short notice… Where was it again?… Alright, that’s not to far from where we are now.”

Kaneki listened on with interest, and he could see, from the corner of his uncovered eye, that everyone else in the cafe did so as well.

“I guess we’ll probably stick to this area until then… No we’ll be fine… Yes, I promise we won’t be murdered… Don’t talk to strangers, I know. Mom, chill… We’ll be fine….. No. I’m not with anyone else,” the grey eyed girl sighed, “Do you want me to send you a picture as proof?… What’d you mean yes? I was joking! Geesh,” the girl’s voice dropped to a low whisper, “No, we’re not going not going to have one of our episodes.” Silence fell over the cafe. “Yes, I promise. That only happens during extremely stressful situations, you know that. If Doctor Kanou recommended him then I’m sure we’ll be fine with this Mori guy… Yeah I’m sure, alright… Okay… You too, bye.” The strange girl hung up with a sigh as conversation picked back up among the customers and staff. Most had been eavesdropping on the phone call the nineteen year old had just had with her mother.
“So we’ve already have an appointment with the specialist?” Riaru asked Yū as she put up their phone.

“Seems so,” the split answered as she took the first sip of coffee. “Delicious.”

“I still think it’s as bitter as your attitude,” Riaru murmured.

This seemed to catch Yū off guard as she let out a loud snort. Riaru quickly tried to shush her as she herself found Yū’s laughter contagious.

Kaneki looked at the girl as she began laughing uncontrollably. Her straight banged bob doing nothing to conceal the joyful cringle of her eyes. He himself couldn’t help but smile as well. Everyone looked at the girl curiously as small smiles of their own formed at the corners of their mouths as she tried to stop laughing. Everyone had started to grow somewhat attached to this stranger, and yet they still did not even know her name. Perhaps it was because she seemed to innocent for this cruel world that they lived in.

Yū, who had finally calmed down took another sip of coffee. “I wonder what this Dr. Mori guy is like… Dr. Kanou wasn’t to bad of a guy, very perceptive. I wonder if this new person is going similar?”

“I’m sure he’ll be fine if it’s Dr. Kanou who referred him to us… I also noticed that mother seems very taken with that man,” Riaru answered after a time.

“Of course your mom would be, as you say, ‘taken with him’. He was finally able to diagnose her daughter after so many years. Plus she’s a single mother, if it wasn’t for our little ‘problem’ she would probably have settled down long ago. And we would be living alone somewhere going to a university or training at the CCG with Kohaku,” Yū replied quietly over her cup of coffee.

The two sat quietly in their seat as Yū silently nursed their black coffee, both of them staring into the abyss of their own creation. The tv had been muted at a customer’s request so the background noises came to life in its absence. All was silent in the cafe, the only sounds that broke through this quiet was the soft clinking of porcelain cups, the light breath of pages turning, and the exhaled air that sighed through the shop. The only evidence that this peaceful silence had not lasted an eternity was the hushed ticking of the clock that read twenty minutes later.

Once again a buzzing phone broke the silence, Yū and Riaru snapped out of their abyssal gaze to reach for their phone a second time that hour. A great sigh escaped their lips as they answered the call. “Mom, I told you we’ll be fi… Oh, Kohaku. What’s up?”

Kaneki and the rest of the cafe began listening again. “You left your briefcase at the house?” There were incomprehensible words being said through the speaker, the black haired girl nodded in understanding. “So Mom is going to drop it by me on her way to work?… Wait she’s on her way now?” The girl sounded extremely confused, before rolling her gunmetal grey eyes in what seemed to be understanding. “I didn’t tell her where I’m at so she’s probably tracking me.” The girl snorted in response to something said after a time, “Yes she would, she’s probably got one on your phone as well… If I had a job I’d get a new one.” The stranger leaned further back into her chair before pinching the bridge of her nose in slight irritation. “Don’t even bring up you and those birds, you and I both know that there will never be any possibility of me becoming one of them, ever. I probably wouldn’t even be able to make it past their physical. We read to books to be considered physically fit anymore,” she laughed.

Birds? This question echoed through most of Anteiku’s inhabitant’s heads as they tried to decipher the hidden code. Does she mean Doves? Kaneki wondered. If she’s human then she shouldn’t have
any problem becoming an investigator if she really wanted to.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever you say. Alright, so I just head over to the ward’s headquarters and drop it off there?” The nineteen year old slowly nodded her head in understanding, “Yeah, I gotcha. So… What’s in the briefcase?” There was silence. “What do you mean I can’t open it, why?... ‘Just don’t isn’t a good enough reason Kohaku,” there was a small pause as the other person spoke, “Fine, fine, whatever, forget it... Yeah, I’ll be there as fast as I can... Mom isn’t even...” The girl peeked out the window. “Nevermind, she’s here, I’ll be there soon. Yeah, you’re welcome... Okay... You too... Bye.” The girl hung up the phone before putting it back in their pocket.

Yū sat their head on top of the table for a moment, as she looked up again she spoke, “One day,” she began as the split shook her finger at the half-full cup, “I will finish this coffee without interruptions.” The split then got up, left the appropriate amount of money and walked out the door to meet her mother out front.

“Birds? Sounds a lot like an investigator doesn’t it?” Touka spoke lowly as she snuck up behind Kaneki.

“Yeah, I guessed as much, whoever she was on the phone was probably an investigator. And from what I could tell he wants her to be one, but something is obviously stopping her. It doesn’t seem like morals or anything like that so I’d assume its something physically or mentally wrong with her. Which might explain her more... abstract behavior,” the black haired waiter answered just as quietly.

Touka let out a soft snort, “Abstract behavior. I say she’s just crazy, Nishiki would agree.”

Kaneki looked over his shoulder at the purple haired waitress, his face tainted with confusion. “Nishiki doesn’t agree with anyone. He’d probably come up with a completely off the wall reason, that or he would try and diagnoze her with something himself.”

Touka rolled her eyes. “Well, you’re not wrong, but still, he’d think that something was off with her.” The Anteiku waitress walked slowly over to the windows to look down upon the strange girl as she leaned in the door of a car to converse with someone inside. Suddenly she heaved something shiny out of the van. It was a brief case, a heavy looking, metal briefcase. “Manager...” Touka called the old man towards the window so that he could watch the scene play out below them with her. “Is that...,” she trailed off.

The Manager looked on with squinted eyes and his usual soft smile adorning his face. “Yes, I do believe it is.”

“Why is this so damn heavy,” Yū groaned as she tightly gripped the briefcase with both hands as she held it out in front of her.

Riaru could feel the strain as well. “It’s not the heaviest thing we’ve ever had to carry.”

“That may be true, but we’re still sore from that run the other day,” Yū replied, she also thought of the incident from this morning but decided not to mention it for both of their sakes. Finally getting the briefcase situated in a more comfortable position they started on their way towards the CCG’s 20th ward headquarters. After a fifteen minute silence Yū spoke up again, curiosity finally getting the best of her, “I say we should open it.”

“No!” Riaru stated out loud, as she surged forward to take control, before quickly whipping their head side to side to check that no one was around or listening. Someone rode their bike on the opposite side of the street but thankfully hadn’t seemed to listening over his headphones. “No,” the black haired girl said more quietly this time, “Onii-chan told us not to look so we’re not going to
“Fine, fine, whatever,” Yū sighed as the split minded girl had to slow to a stop at an intersection as cars zoomed by in front of them. They set down the briefcase to wait. “If he hadn't forgotten this stupid case I could still be enjoying that coffee,” Yū sighed in their mind.

Car horns blared to the right of them. The man on the bike from earlier came barreling over the pavement from the other side of the street. He looked behind him as he guided the bike with one hand while apologizing to the drivers behind him. The blonde haired boy was headed directly for them. Yū quickly jumped out of the way as his front wheel hopped the low curb and onto the sidewalk. Yū hadn’t had enough time to move Kohaku’s briefcase out of the boy’s trajectory. The teen ran straight into it. When his wheel jerked to the side at the sudden collision the boy whipped his body back around and gripped the handlebars tight with both hands.

Hide’s veins pumped with adrenaline as he tried desperately to turn his bike away from whatever he had hit. Please don’t let it have been that girl, he thought, slightly scared that he had injured her. He swerved right… directly into the black haired girl he’d seen earlier.

The bike rammed straight into Riaru and Yū’s abdomen. Their breath slammed from their lungs as Yū attempted to brace themselves by grappling for the handlebars to prevent the momentum of the bike from pushing them back further. Yū gulped in air as the bike came to a halt as the shocked Hide finally planted his feet on the pavement. The oxygen that Yū took in only served to fuel the fire that had lit in her eyes as she stared down the boy in front of her.

Riaru quickly took over again before Yū’s temper could flare further. “Are you alright?” She asked softly, genuinely worried for the boy, who upon closer inspection looked to be around university age.

Hide locked eyes with the girl for a few seconds before he quickly clambered off his bike. Holding it off to the side, with both hands still clutching their respective handles, he dropped into an awkward bow of apology. “I’m very sorry, I hope you’re alright.” Hide stood back up. “I guess I should pay more attention to where I’m going huh?” He scratched sheepishly as the back of his dyed hair, his eyes crinkling with a light smile.

“Yes, you should,” Yū’s voice slipped through, the coldness in her tone contrasting greatly from that of Riaru’s.

Riaru quickly covered up the incident with a ‘it’s okay though’ and an ‘accidents happen’ that was tailed by a shy smile. Then without another word she lightly bowed in farewell, stepped around the boy, picked up the briefcase, and continued on her way. Thankfully the light was green and she was able to smoothly get away.

Hide watched in wonder as the strange girl walked across the street before shaking his head in disbelief at the weird mood swing.
The building sparkled as the sun’s rays bounced off its many windows. The structure towered over Riaru and her split as they drew closer to the 20th ward’s CCG headquarters. Riaru pushed open the front doors before heading over towards reception desk with Kohaku’s briefcase in hand.

“Why is this thing so heavy?” Yū complained again from the back of the two’s shared mind.

“I don’t know, we will have to ask brother that question when we see him, now if you’ll please stop asking me.” Riaru replied as she lugged the heavy case across the tiled room.

“Orrrrr,” Yū dragged out the word. “We could just check for ourselves.”

“No! Absolutely not! He told us specifically not to open it, so we will respect his wishes and not open it! Now quit asking the same questions,” Riaru stated within their mind.

“Fine, fine, I guess I can wait… But if he refuses to tell us I’m looking myself,” Yū stated sourly as she retreated a little ways into the back of their mind.

Riaru had reached the front desk. “Hello ma’am, I’m here to see rank 2 Investigator Genji Kohaku,” the grey eyed girl told the receptionist.

The middle-aged blonde woman looked up at the nineteen year old, her judgement was obvious over her thickly framed glasses. “And just what business do you have with Investigator Genji?” The woman asked in a snide voice.

Yū quickly took over the situation when Riaru’s hands began to sweat in her nervousness. Silently Yū got a better grip on the briefcase. “Well, you see, Investigator,” the emphasized the last word, “Genji left this over at my place last night.” Yū flashed the receptionist a fake smile. “I was just returning it to him.”

The blonde haired woman narrowed her eyes at the split minded girl. “Well I’m sorry Miss, but he has already left for the day,” the woman told Yū, a bitter sweetness tarnishing her words.

Yū heaved the heavy case up onto the counter, the loud noise drawing many curious stares from the lobby and even a few from the balcony above. “See, now you’re just lying to me. Because I just received a message from Investigator Genji saying that, yes he was still here, and to yes, bring it to him personally. So if you don’t mind, ma’am, can you tell me where to find him, before I get really pissed off.” Yū started the lady down, their gunmetal grey eyes freezing her in her seat.

Silence resonated through the lobby as people watched the scene unfold before them.

Footsteps echoed behind the nineteen year old, causing her muscles to lightly tense. “I can take you to him,” the voice belonged to a man.

“Investigator Amon, n-n-nice to see you today,” the middle-aged receptionist stuttered to the man as she tucked a strand of hair behind her ear.

Amon coldly ignored the lady, continuing to speak instead to Yū, “If you’ll follow me I’ll take you to him. He should be with the others right about now.”

Yū turned around after picking the briefcase back up off the counter. “Wow, someone who knows how to correctly treat a fellow human being,” the split’s voice dripped with sarcasm before quickly
changing to a more serious tone, “Thank you.” With a small nod they headed off to wherever Kohaku resided within the giant building.

A few minutes of silence passed between the two strangers as they entered the elevator. “So,” there was a pause as Amon spoke first, “may I ask what your relationship with Investigator Genji is?” There was a brief awkward silence. “Are you his girlfriend?”

Yū let out a slight snort, “Girlfriend? That man isn’t ever going to have a girlfriend again at this rate. Sorry, I guess I should have introduced myself, I’m Genji Y...,” Yū coughed slightly as she caught herself, “Riaru, Genji Riaru.”

Amon seemed to suddenly choke on something, Yū glanced at him in mild confusion. After a moment the man seemed to regain his ability to speak, “So you’re his...” He let out a slight cough, “wife?”

Yū suddenly burst into a loud fit of laughter, forcing the two to pause as they stepped out of the elevator. “Wife?!” Yu laughed again, “Wife? Seriously, do I look old enough to be that fool’s wife?” Yū paused in her laughter, “I guess we do actually... but no. I’m his sister, Kohaku isn’t seeing anyone as far I know.” I small chuckle escaped their lips.

Amon spoke up again, slightly confused, “Wait, so you’re the one that...,” he seemed to think better of his words.

But, Yū decided to finish the thought for him, “The one who had a psychotic break down and was reported as a ghoul after almost murdering a robber with a milk jug a few months ago? Yes, that’s me. Nice to know that Kohaku doesn’t completely ignore my existence, he did that a lot during high school, you know?”

The black haired investigator remained silent as he realized they had already reached the room where Kohaku was located. Yū let out a mental sigh when she realized this as well, “You can deal with your brother.” Without another word Riaru took control once again.

“Riaru?!” Kohaku called from somewhere near by, “Is that you?”

Another loud shout was heard in the same direction, “Investigator Amon already got onto you yesterday for wearing that outfit! And yet you’re still wearing it!” The sounds of a light scuffle were heard. “No! Keep your filthy fingers away from my nose Suzuya!”

“Does it look like I honestly care Seidou?” This voice echoed from the same area. A few moments later a strangely dressed boy came skipping through the door frame, his white hair and the sucker in his mouth bouncing with each step. “Oh.” He paused in his journey. “Hello there,” he mumbled around the candy.

“Juuzou, get away from my sister.” This time it was Kohaku who peeked through the open door. “Hey, Riaru, sorry for dragging you all the way out here for this.”

“It was no problem at all Onii-chan, I was already out this way, and Mother dropped it off at the coffee shop I was at. It’s really her you should be thanking,” Riaru replied, her voice light and cheery compared to that of Yu’s.

Amon looked down at the girl beside him. Had her attitude changed because of her brother? He wondered.

“Juuzou!” It was the other voice from earlier, “I’m not done speaking with you!” A long, brown haired boy around Riaru’s age, strode through the doorway, almost running into Riaru’s brother.
Amon glared at his subordinates. “If you’ll please, we have a visitor. Behave yourselves,” he tone returned to the cold one from earlier.

Seidou mumbled an apology as he gave a slight bow, Juuzou simply shrugged beside him. Kohaku cleared his throat, “I guess I should introduce you to my colleagues, this,” he motioned towards the brown haired boy before continuing, “is Rank 2 Investigator Takizawa Seidou. And this.” He pointed at the white haired boy. “Is Rank 3 Investigator Suzuya Juuzou.”

Yū slammed forward, her attention rapt as she took control. “What on earth are you doing?” Riaru asked bewildered.

“Rank 3 Investigator Suzuya Juuzou, aka boy who ate the ear bone,” Yū replied mentally as she studied the boy with a new found curiosity.

“Don’t you dare.”

“Don’t I dare what?” Yū asked with a chuckle, grey eyes glinting with mischief. Juuzou smirked at her as he caught her looking.

“Guys,” Kohaku said, as he scratched the back of his neck in mild embarrassment. “This is Genji Riaru, my sister.”

“Don’t let out looks deceive you,” Yū stated seriously, “I’m actually older than him.” Juuzou seemed to pick up on her shift in character as his red eyes sparked with a bored interest at her sudden change.

“You are not! I’m four years older than you!” Kohaku exclaimed whilst laughing.

Yū let out a chuckle of her own, “Whatever you say.”

“Anyway, thanks for bringing me my briefcase. You.. didn’t open it did you?” Kohaku’s hand gave a small twitch as he stared at the case still in her possession.

“No,” Yū sighed, “she convinced me not to, you should be grateful.”

“She?”

Yū froze as she grasped the words that had slipped from her lips. “Mom…” It was an obvious lie. Silence fell among the group as a nervous sweat began beading at the top of their hairline. “So… What’s in the briefcase?”

Amon’s steel eyes swiveled towards the younger investigator. “Yes, what is in the briefcase Investigator Genji?”

Kohaku’s adam’s apple bobbed as he swallowed. “It’s not what you’re thinking. It’s actually a… birthday present for Mother.”

As Yū’s excitement deflated Riaru’s face radiated the words that bounced inside of Yū’s mind, are you serious? The split rolled their eyes, already bored with the topic. Suddenly she turned to Juuzou. “So, I heard you ate an ear bone.”

Kohaku’s gunmetal eyes widened as horror wrote its way across his face, to shocked to do anything but stare at his younger sister.

Juuzou gave the girl a bright smile.

In Riaru’s mind a war waged as the nineteen year old fought to take back control of herself. “How
could you say that?!” Riaru roared in absolute mortification. Yū could do nothing but laugh as she gave up control and the infuriated girl slammed to the forefront. “I apologize,” the black haired girl gasped out, “That was uncalled for and extremely inappropriate of us,” the girl’s voice was once again the soft and quiet one from before. She bowed low in apology. “If you’ll excuse us,” she said breathily, “I’m afraid we have an important appointment to be at soon.” She straightened from her bow, handed Kohaku his briefcase, and headed back down the hall from where she had come.

Finally, breaking out of his stupor, Kohaku turned and offered Juuzou an apologetic bow as well. “I also apologize on behalf of my sister, she must not have slept well last night.”

The white haired investigator popped the sucker out of his mouth before replying to the twenty-three year old, “I like her.” And with that he walked down the opposite hall, away from the intriguing girl.

The remaining three stared in silence after them. Kohaku was the first to speak, “What does he mean ‘he likes her’?”


Dr. Mori

Riaru scurried past the RC gate, through the lobby, and then out the front doors of the CCG. Her cheeks flamed with rage and embarrassment from the situation that Yū had just put them. "How could you do that?!!" Riaru raged once they had made it into open air again. "You're a complete embarrassment, that was so rude and inappropriate in so many ways!"

Several people cast wary glances at the 5.6 girl as they went to walk into the building behind her. Riaru blushed furiously as she realized it looked like she was scolding herself.

Yū chuckled.

"Stop it!" Riaru shouted again. Angry, Riaru shoved the split into the darkest recesses of her mind. All was finally quiet...

And Riaru felt utterly alone.

She quickly glanced around her, suddenly paranoid that someone would sneak up on her. She gripped the end of the jacket Yū had dressed them in that morning and looked around again. She drew out their phone to check the time, 1:02. She had six hours till her appointment and with nothing to do she felt a slight anxiety well up within her, especially with Yū quiet. "What do you think we should do?" Riaru asked Yū.

There was no response.

"Yū?"

Again there was silence.

Riaru nervously drew up her thumb to naw on the nail. She gave it another attempt to try and draw Yū back from the corner of her mind but nothing happened. For the first time since her first split showed up Riaru's mind was eerily silent, the sensation made her extremely nervous and paranoid. No one was there to take over if things got bad and the ever looming threat of her schizophrenic split breaking loose seemed more imminent than ever before.

"We can go get another black coffee?" Riaru suggested.

Still there was silence.

The black haired girl took a deep, steadying breath before setting off down the sidewalk. She shoved both of her hands into the jacket pockets and slouched a bit trying to become invisible to all the people that seemed to stare at her. Even though no one glanced her way as they made the commute back to work from their lunch breaks. She hummed lightly to try and fill the silence in her mind as she made her way down the street, her destination remained unclear.

Riaru continued to walk, and walk, and walk, until the sun had sagged much lower in the sky. At least an hour had passed, but Riaru paid it no mind. She had checked out of reality as she continued to desperately hum an off key tune from a vague childhood memory.

The owners, whose shop she had passed at least three times already, doubted that the youth even knew she walked in a large circle around several blocks of shops. They would have called her a shark closing in on its prey, had she not looked to be completely out of it. They couldn't help but wonder why so many teens these days thought that drugs would solve all their problems. The owners
had thought about trying to converse with the teen, but had decided against it when they found her mumbling lowly to unseen people around her.

Riaru was in the middle of her fourth round-a-bout when she suddenly stopped. She looked around as if she'd just woken up to find herself sleep walking, and under the circumstances perhaps she had. Riaru looked around confused, where was she? She looked to her right, a line of shops bordered the street, her left looked the same. *The shopping district?* She checked the time again. *How has it been one and a half hours?!* Riaru thought wildly.

Several school kids on early dismissal milled around the shopping district, but gave a wide berth to darkly dressed girl who stood still in the middle of the moving crowd. Most cast wary glances her way, she threw nervous gazes towards them. A few hushed questioned popped out from the crowd as they passed, "Do you think she could be a ghoul?" and "Should we report her for suspicious activity?" were among them. Her head snapped to try and look at all the people who had made the comments.

Riaru slouched further before retreating into the nearest store. She looked up to see towering bookshelves on both sides. She moved forward cautiously, seeing a gap within the selves up ahead she moved towards it. She peeked around the corner. The view of the shop pans out beyond the book case to reveal a counter with the cashier standing behind it. A window that expanded across nearly the entire wall sat opposite of him. Further into the store sat many more shelves bursting with books like the two she stood between now.

Riaru tiptoed her way across the store's open parlor trying not to draw the attention of the cashier as he sat reading a book behind his counter. She managed to avoid drawing his eye, and instead nearly ran into the small girl in front of her that she had failed to notice. She tried not to let out a yelp of fright at the small girl before her. Riaru stared terrified and wide eyed at the young girl, and she merely looked back slightly confused by her scared expression.

Riaru mumbled an apology before bowing slightly to the girl then proceeded to scurry off further into the maze of books beyond the thirteen-year-old girl. She chose a random isle and ducked down it. She walked until the book selves on either side of her met the wall before she crouched down onto the floor and wrapped her arms around her knees.

"*Yū?*" Riaru tried again to call her split forth.

And again no response was received.

Riaru turned her head to study the books and their titles. Names such as *A Samurai's Death Song*, *Crumbling Tunnels*, and *The Black Goat's Egg* drew her eyes. She picked up the one closest to her it was a book by the name of someone called Sen Takatsuki. The name sounded familiar for some reason. Riaru opened the book carefully, it's pages rustled as she drew apart the two covers.

Riaru couldn't stop reading. Someway, somehow, this book was about her. A sadistic parent raising a child who feared to become what their parent was. She continued on late into the day, her eyes flying past the words, flowing over the pages, soaking in the sentences. Riaru remained captivated by the novel.

'Like mortar in a mixer  
Three heads, melted thickly  
Miracles have been used up long ago  
and lie cold on the concrete  
Killed  
I killed  
Have I killed?
I was losing my grasp on reality,  
when the eyes of the heads  
opened wetly like genitals, to say hello.  

This book was about her, to who else could this book be directed at. She continued reading for hours upon hours, her position changed almost every sixty minutes as different parts of her body became numb or uncomfortable.

On Riaru's fourth change of position she checked her phone, she had a missed message from 1:54 that Kohaku had sent asking if she was okay. She ignored it. She was about to set her phone on the floor next to her so she could continue reading when she noticed the time.

6:34

Her meeting with Dr. Mori was scheduled for 7.

Riaru jumped up from her spot on the uncomfortable hardwood floor, with The Black Goat's Egg in hand she rushed towards the cash register. The nineteen-year-old shoved the book at the young man who worked at the store. He looked at her a bit shocked before slowly welcoming the black haired girl to the store still slightly confused as to where she had come from before ringing up the book for 600 something yen. She basically threw the money at the clerk before running out the door without waiting for her change.

Wings seemed to sprout from her back as she flew down the concrete towards the medical district. 'Miracles have been used up long ago  
and lie cold on the concrete'

I would be a miracle if Riaru made it on time. She ran faster looking for Mori's building.

There. Mori Medical sat on the corner of the block, only a few lights remained on in the large building as many people had already left for home. Riaru slowed down to a trot as she approached the door into the building. She pushed open the glass panel to a rush of cool air that chilled her flushed skin. She passed over towards the reception desk.

"Hello ma'am, I'm here for my seven O' clock appointment with Dr. Mori," Riaru spoke quietly as she drew up the receptionist's gaze. The lady who sat behind the desk was an obvious foreigner as far as looks went, she wondered if she had understood what she had said.

"You're Ms. Genji?" The woman asked politely. Riaru nodded curtly. "Great, Dr. Mori is on the fourth floor, I'll message him that you're here so he should be waiting for you."

"Thank you," Riaru replied as she slightly bowed before heading towards the elevator. She was about to hit the up button when the doors slid open and out walked Dr. Kanou. Riaru froze slightly in confusion, what was he doing here?

"Ah, Riaru! Or is it Yū? I assume you're here for your first appointment?" Kanou asked the black haired girl.

"It's Riaru, and yes I am, it was good to see you Dr. Kanou." she glanced down at her phone's clock. "If you'll excuse me I'm afraid I'm running a bit late," Riaru bowed in a slight apology.

"Of corse, of corse! Goodnight," Kanou said as he exited the elevator.

"Goodnight sir," Riaru responded as she entered the lift, she hit the button for the fourth floor. The box began its ascent with a small groan that set Riaru's nerves further on edge. Yū had yet to return
and she was about to step into a stressful and unknown environment. Her mind remained silent, her thoughts echoing and bouncing around in the dark cavity. There was too much empty space with Yū gone.

The lift doors opened to reveal a man waiting for her, just as the receptionist had said. Riaru assumed this to be Dr. Mori who stood in front of her, the man had a broader nose and thin lips with a mop of full brown hair adorning his crown. He was younger than she had imagined, though he still had the signs of crowfeet beginning to form at the corners of his eyes. He to, like the lady downstairs, looked to have more Western features compared to the majority of Tokyo's inhabitants. His teeth glistened in the bright fluorescent lighting as he smiled at her.

"Ah, Ms. Genji I presume? I'm Dr. Mori, it's a pleasure to meet you," the doctor said as he confirmed her suspicion.

Riaru reached out for a hand shake in which Dr. Mori gladly accepted. "The pleasure is all mine. Thank you for seeing me under such short notice," Riaru responded.

Dr. Mori nodded as he led her to his office. Mori pushed open the door to expose the interior of the room. Bookshelves lined most of the four walls minus the giant window that expanded behind his desk. Dr. Mori asked her to sit in one of the two chairs that day in front of his expansive desk that he himself went behind so that he might take a seat. Riaru chose the padded chair to her right.

"Do you like to read?" Mori asked the girl. At first Riaru was confused, until she remembered the book she had clutched in her lap. She felt the sudden urge to open it again, to turn its pages, to finish reading, and then to start over again. But, she smothered the longing so that she could answer the doctor.

"Yes," whispered Riaru as she gripped the literary masterpiece closer to her waist. Riaru became slightly nervous at the strange and unfamiliar territory as well as her lack of backup in this situation.

Dr. Mori seemed to read her mood. "No need to be nervous. So Dr. Kanou explained to me the situation that you've been placed in and told me about your friend Yū. Is it alright if I speak to her?"

Riaru slightly twitched at his mention of Yū, how was she going to explain that she couldn't? "She's," Riaru cleared her throat slightly, "she's not available at the moment."

Mori lifted him eyebrow as if to question the lame excuse. The nineteen-year-old cleared her throat again, "She disappeared around 1 this afternoon, and um... hasn't returned since. We had gotten into a bit of an argument before hand..."

Dr. Mori nodded his head as if he understood the situation perfectly. "I see," was all he responded with. Mori studied the girl for a moment as Riaru's eyes were drawn back to the book in her hands, she fingered a page before beginning to peel the covers away from each other. She paused thinking better of it. "Is that why you're nervous?" Mori paused to let her answer, but when no reply was received he continued on, "Because she's not there to help you if something goes wrong?"

Riaru responded with a short nod.

Dr. Mori smiled in understanding. "Well if that's the case then there's nothing for you to fear. We're just talking tonight."
Riaru woke late the next morning with a drum beat playing right behind her eyes. The reason behind the thumping was not only her first session with Dr. Mori having run over several hours, but she had also slept terribly. Her anxiety and paranoia that her third split would try and take over while Yū was gone had been in over drive most of the night.

Riaru rolled over onto her side to look at her alarm clock, it lazily blinked 1:32pm at her in neon numbers. She sighed before covering her head with the blankets that lay sprawled across her bed.

Riaru thought back to the events of the previous night. Dr. Mori had kept his promise and they had simply talked the three hours she had been there. But many of the questions had been hard to respond to as the answers to those questions had her dipping into the past horrors she had experienced as a child, and not having Yū there had made the experience worse. The 19-year-old had feared that her third split would come out the entire night, somehow Dr. Mori seemed to have picked up on this as well. At one point during their session Dr. Mori had asked to talk to this third split. This was the only thing that Riaru had downright refused to do. After her silence Mori had asked her why she seemed so afraid of it. Riaru had not responded to the question, but it was not because she couldn't answer. It was more so that she did not like the response that would spill from her lips if she did so. Dr. Mori had dropped the topic after that. She had another appointment with him today at five this evening, sadly he hadn't promised to simply talk during this session.

The silence in her room and within her mind surrounded her, the noiselessness was deafening. It was the staticky silence that only occurred when no one dared to breathe. Riaru let out a tired sigh as she broke its spell and threw off her covers to sit up. Yū had still not returned from wherever Riaru had shoved her off to, she could only hope that her split hadn't been taken ahold of by their schizophrenic self. The nineteen-year-old threw her feet over the edge of her mattress to touch the floor.

When she tried to stand up she noticed something had been lodged under her foot. It was her book from yesterday. Riaru bent over to pick it up, she opened it to a random page, the sheet was one she had yet to read.

_The handrails I touched_

_all turned black and rusted._

_(I knew I was made of poison!)_

_(No, it was that woman who was poison itself)_

Realizing this, the black haired teenager snapped the covers together again to prevent further spoilers. She then guided the book over to her nightstand, Riaru's movements were gentle as she handled Sen Takatsuki's masterpiece. Sighing again, Riaru finally stood up to get ready for the day.

The water droplets that fell upon Riaru's flesh could no longer be considered a simple drizzle. What spiraled down towards Tokyo's soil was a light rain that merely previewed what was to come. For soon the clouds above would cry out their pain and flood the streets of the 20th ward. The light droplets that kissed the black haired girl's skin felt like a blessing in the hot and humid environment of Tokyo, Riaru sighed in content. She had decided to walk to Dr. Mori's office today, mainly because her paranoia had prevented her from calling a taxi.
The nineteen-year-old paused at a red light to stare up at the monochrome sky with its many shades of grey. A droplet of water that splashed into her eye brought her back to reality, looking across the street she saw that the light now glowed green in the darkness of the day. Quickly she stepped out onto the asphalt, her rain boot clad feet splashing into a small puddle. The clouds' bellies roared above.

A fat drop of liquid rolled onto Riaru's upper lip, she quickly swiped it away as she continued to scurry down the sidewalk. She carried on like this as the droplets of water began to fall more often and in larger forms, she increased her pace until she finally came to a familiar place where she could take shelter from the storm. At first she simply lingered on the covered steps outside, her paranoia holding her in place.

She could practically hear Yū saying how much of a coward she was for being afraid to enter the small coffee shop. But honestly, Riaru could care less. So she took a seat on one of the steps and once again took out *The Black Goat's Egg* to work on until the rain lightened up.

"She's been sitting in the stairwell for over an hour now," Touka whispered as she and Kaneki peeked their heads outside the door. "She's just been sitting there, staring nonstop at that book and muttering about dead bodies."

"What book?" Kaneki whispered back.

Touka huffed in slight annoyance, her shoulders rose and fell with the effort, "Of course the first question you had would be about the book."

Kaneki flushed in embarrassment but did not respond as he attempted to hear what she was muttering.

"With each pull I reach the peak," the girl's murmur echoed somewhat in the stairwell, her eyes no doubt following the words as she spoke them aloud. "...and the height increases. I cannot see the ground anymore. The tower starts to shake widely, whispering in Mother's voice. "automatic failure at happiness, shapeless spawn"." 

Kaneki recognized the words. "*The Black Goat's Egg?*" he whispered, his tone sounding confused before reality caught up with him.

He no longer saw a black haired girl, instead a woman with shimmering violet hair sat in her place. She turned her head, as if she'd known he was there all along. Her eyes glowed red as black bled into her sclera. "Won't you walk me home?" She hissed, her words dripping with honey. Kaneki shook the image away as his heart began pounding.

" "My dear lost one"...," the girl whispered quietly as she became totally engrossed with the book.

Kaneki, without realizing it, had drawn closer to the girl, he towered above her while he studied her features. The girl had her head tilted slightly to the side which made it easier for the half-ghoul to get a good look at her. She had a small nose and grey, hooded eyes. Her hair, unlike Touka's, did not threaten to consume her features, though most of her forehead was shaded by the straight cut bangs that curled in towards her face. Her lips pugged out a little as she mumbled some of the same words again, Kaneki assumed she was re-reading part of the book.
Kaneki turned his gaze to the part she was on, this time he spoke in unison with her. Together they breathed the words once written by Sen Takatsuki.

"My dear lost one..."

"Your parents failed in raising you".

"And I died."

The girl quickly realized that she had not been the only one speaking and whipped her head around to stare wide eyed at the boy standing slightly to her right on the step just behind her. Adrenaline pumped through her veins as her paranoia kicked into overdrive.

Kaneki quickly realized the creepiness of his last action and blushed furiously as he stared down at the girl. Quickly he attempted an apologetic bow in the awkward confines of the stairwell, "I'm sorry, I guess that was a little creepy." Kaneki rose from his bow to see the girl still stared at him with a scared expression painted on her features. Kaneki scratched the back of neck in embarrassment as she continued to gape at him silently. "It's just that when I noticed that you were reading The Black Goat's Egg... I guess I kind of got carried away."

"It's..." there was a pause. "Alright... Um... You work here right?" The girl asked him her voice was slightly shaky, wether in fear or nervousness the half-ghoul couldn't tell.

"Hm? Oh! Umm... Y-yes. I started working here a few months ago. I'm Kaneki Ken, it's nice to meet you," the boy replied before holding out his hand. He felt his blush deepen as he realized he still loomed over her at an unusual angle. She had yet to move anything besides her head.

"Genji Riaru," the girl replied quietly as she stood to shake the waiter's hand, her movements seemed somewhat restrained. She glanced down the stairwell to see that the rain was merely a drizzle now. "Um... I-I should... Um... I should go now..."

Kaneki instantly nodded in understanding. "Of course, again... Um, sorry if I scared you. I-I wasn't trying to," Kaneki offered a bow of apology as he spoke.

"N-no apology needed, really... Um... Well then... Ah... Goodbye." Riaru offered Kaneki bow of farewell before heading back down the stairwell. A blush tainted the girl's face as she clutched her book to her chest as then stepped out into the light 4pm drizzle. She stared at the street as she walked and bumped into someone on her way, Riaru offered an apologetic bow without looking at the stranger before continuing on her path to Mori Medical.

As the girl, now know to Kaneki as Riaru, exited the stairwell he realized just how embarrassing the situation he had put himself in had been. The half-ghoul clapped his hands over his face as his cheeks flamed. "Bonjour monsieur," a voice called from the bottom of the stairwell in an accent that on occasion haunted Kaneki's nightmares after his... 'Prank'.

"T-Tsukiyama..."

The purple haired ghoul took care to climb each step slowly as he drew closer to Kaneki, who had become Shuu's newest obsession. As he approached the boy he made sure to deeply inhale the intoxicating scent of the half-ghoul as he passed. "Such a pleasant aroma mon ami."

Riaru hurried down the sidewalk, her pace fast as she did not wish to be late once again for her appointment with Dr. Mori. When her destination was finally in view she slowed her pace down as
she attempted to catch her breath before heading in to see her newest doctor. Slowly the nineteen-year-old eased open the front door to look in upon the lobby for the second time. The last time Riaru had entered the building there had not been many people considering the later hours, but now many more workers roamed around the building and she realized just how big the (what she considered to be a small hospital) really was. She gazed wide eyed around the lobby, really taking it in for the first time. The ceiling towered above her and the white tile gleamed beneath her feet. She would have continued looking, but remembering her appointment Riaru walked over to the reception desk, the same lady as yesterday still sat behind it. "Nice to see you again Miss Genji, Dr. Mori is already waiting for you up on the fourth floor."

Riaru looked a bit surprised at the woman's memory of her, but none the less thanked her and continued on to the fourth floor and knocked on the door of the office she had entered yesterday. There was a muffled "come in!" from the other side. Cautiously Riaru opened the door to peek in, Dr. Mori sat at his desk waiting for her. Looking to her left on the way in she noticed a chaise lounge near some of the bookshelves that she hadn't seen the day before.

Mori got up to greet her. "It's good to see you again Riaru, has Yū returned yet?"

The black haired girl swallowed nervously as she clenched the book tighter into her palms. "No," her voice was barely audible.

Mori's eyes seemed to narrow. "I see, well, anyway I guess we should get down to business, yes?" Riaru gave a sluggish nod. "Alright, well I want to try something today, but I'll need your cooperation to do so... Is that alright?" Again Riaru only nodded. "Okay well then I'll have you lay down on the chair over there and we'll get started."

Riaru shuffled over towards the new seat she had noticed today as Dr. Mori dragged one of the chairs from in front of his desk over towards where she now lay. He sat down with a sigh before pulling something small out of his pocket.

"It seems cliché, I realize this. But the fact is that this practice is more common than you realize." He was holding a pocket watch in his hand, Mori held onto the chain and watched the watch drop before it jerked to a stop.

*Like a dead man who's been hanged*, Riaru thought. Her eyes widened in slight horror before she shook the idea away.

Mori began attaching a few wires to her chest, he explained that they were to monitor her heart beat. She didn't put to much thought into it for once. But remained slightly uncomfortable as he leaned over her. "What I'm about to do is hypnotize you. This is going to help me determine a few things as far as the... beginnings of your disorder goes." Mori swung the clock above Riaru's face. "Now," the doctor began, "I want you to focus on the clock my dear, let your eyes follow its momentum." There was a pause. "You're eyes getting heavy, I can tell. You're tired yes? Just close your eyes."

At this point Rirau could not discern what was happening anymore. "Now Riaru, yesterday you did not want me to talk to your third personality, why is that?"

The girl let out a soft whimper as her eyes shifted beneath their lids. "He's scary," she whispered.

"And why is he scary?" Mori asked pushing further. Riaru pinched her lips inwards and shook her head as she refused to answer. "Alright, that's okay, you don't have to reply. Now Riaru, we're going to do something a bit different now. We're going to go back in time a bit, back to when you first met your other personality. Can you do that for me?"
Riaru gave a faint nod, reluctance was clear in her sluggish movements. Mori's words were slow as he spoke them, "We're going to start out slowly... go back to yesterday... then a week ago... a month... a year... five years... Now you're going to start slowing down, you're approaching that day, it's coming back to you now isn't it? What do you see Riaru?... What's happening?"

"No..." Riaru whimpered, a tear trailed down her cheek. "It's hurts. It always hurts!" Her voice began to rise. "Stop it! Stop it!"

"Riaru, I need you to calm down," Mori said as he attempted to soothe the girl, "You're fine, this is all in the past, no one can hurt you. Now tell me what do you see?"

"It's..." She sniffled, "it's daddy." Her feet twitch as she clutched her book closer still to her abdomen. "No! It burns! My feet! Don't burn my feet! Please Daddy! Why?!!" More tears fell down her face.

Mori glanced down at his patient's feet, if he looked their bottoms would more than likely be scared with small circular burn marks, sadly the psychologist had seen more than enough scars like them before. "Where are you Riaru?" Dr. Mori pressed the nineteen-year-old again.

"We-we're in the shed, it was always the shed," her voice shook and another tear leaked down her cheek as her feet twitched again. "No one can hear you scream in the shed."

"It's alright," what seemed to be a little boy's voice emanated from Riaru's mouth. "I'll take over from here. I'll protect you," the voice giggled.

Mori looked down at the girl, a small smile graced his lips, they were getting somewhere.

"Wh-who are you? W-why are you in my head? Get out! Get out!" It was once again Riaru's voice who seemed to choke on these words. Mori took a glance toward Riaru's heart monitor as it spiked, sweat began to grace his upper lip.

"Out! OUT! LEAVE! I WANT TO BE ALONE! LEAVE ME ALONE!" Riaru screeched as her heart rate continued to rise.

"Riaru it's Dr. Mori, we're going to skip ahead a bit alright? You're leaving the scary voice behind, you're going to go to another day, a few weeks ahead, what do you see?" Mori kept an even tone.

A scream suddenly ripped through Riaru's lips which caused Mori to jump slightly. "Riaru!" He shouted as his own heart rate spiked with hers. Riaru withered in past pain, she clutched her stomach, her book, long forgotten, lay discarded in a heap on the floor.

"I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT I'M NOT!

Mori stared in shocked awe at his newest patient.

"I'M NOT A GHOUL! WHY?! WHY DO YOU?! WHY DO YOU THINK I'M A GHOUL?! YOU'RE NOT IN COCHLEA! THIS ISN'T COCHLEA! I'M NOT A GHOUL! THIS ISN'T COCHLEA!" With the rising of her voice came the rising of her heart rate. Riaru let out a choked sob.

Mori opened his mouth to bring her out of the trance but paused as her sobs turned to garbled
laughter. “My toes won’t grow back you know!” A little boy’s laughter broke through the girl’s choked sobbing. “That’ll show him! When they don’t grow back then he’ll have to listen!”

Mori stared on in horror, too shocked to do anything but watch the tortured soul. Never in all of his years had he seen something as terrible.

Another scream ripped through their laughter and Mori watched as the girl’s heart rate spiked higher.

For a moment afterwards all remained silent until a small, boyish chuckle escaped the girl’s lips. “Don’t lose focus now Daddy dearest,” the voice whispered. “You should never lose sight of your prey, otherwise you give them the opportunity to become your opponent. Isn’t that always what you told us?”

Gaining some control over his voice Mori spoke up, “Riaru what’s happening? Can you tell me what’s happening?”

A smile split the nineteen year old’s face. “He let his prey, become his opponent. He really shouldn’t have left the hammer where I could reach it!” The laughter continued for what seemed like an eternity as invisible blood splattered across the girl’s face and the past replayed inside her mind. Over and over again she drove the hammer into the flesh of her father, over and over again insane laughter cascaded from her lips, over and over again, a never ending cycle.

Mori chanced a glance towards the heart monitor, its neon numbers reading a dangerous 193 bpm, he need to put a stop to this quickly. “Riaru! Riaru! Listen to me! You’re leaving that place, you’re moving forward again. You’re approaching the pres—”

But, Riaru couldn’t hear him, her laughter echoed through the office as she remembered the past horrors her split has caused. “No!” The boy began screaming again, “Let me go!” Riaru started struggling as she fought against an unseen person.

Her father?

“Lemme at him! Lemme at him!” More laughter tainted her speech as she continued struggling. Abandoning the girl, Mori ran for the door, cursing the too thick walls on his way. He threw open the office door, the psychotic laughter echoing down the halls. Seeing a male nurse nearby he shouted at the man to bring sedatives and back up.

Riaru’s words continued to bounce through the fourth floor. Even the people all the way on the other side of the level turned their heads towards the faint, insane laughter that came from Mori’s office.

“I wanna play some more! Let me play! Let go Kohaku!”

The office was now filled with three other people as two male nurses held the girl down and a female nurse readied the sedatives.

Insane laughter bounded off the walls as Riaru struggled against the two young men. Ripping both arms away from the men she reached up to grab one of the men’s uniform. She pulled them down to face her, her gunmetal eyes flashing open, unseeing. “I said let go,” she hissed.

“Hurry and put her under!” Mori shouted as the woman pierced the nineteen year old with her needle. Slowly the girl’s grip loosened from the man’s collar, her eyes drifting closed once again as the benzodiazepines flowed through her bloodstream. Soon the Genji girl was ignorant of the world and her heart rate had returned to a steady pace. Mori slumped into a nearby seat, a sigh escaping his lips as he let his muscles relax. “Take her into room 321, and tell no one what just happened.”
Blue Lights

Riaru awoke to blindingly white hospital lights shining at her from above. The split minded girl groaned in protest.

"So you're finally awake, huh?" Yū’s voice filtered in through their mind.

Riaru stared at the ceiling groggily, studying the pockmarked ceiling tiles. "Yū?"

"Yes?"

"Yū?!" Riaru’s body shot up at the split’s voice. Though as multicolored stars danced across their vision the nineteen year old was forced to flop back into the bed. Both splits lay there dazed for a few moments as the black at the corners of their vision faded.

“What happened to us?” Yū asked with a tired sigh.

Riaru rubbed their eyes tiredly. "Our second session with Dr. Mori..."

"Second?" Yū questioned, combination of confusion and exhaustion tainting the word.

The black haired girl could do nothing but nod as their vision finally returned to normal and their were once again left staring at the ceiling tiles. "You've been gone for about two days," Riaru whispered to her split.

"Can I get a summary?"

“After you disappeared… I freaked out, I’d never felt so alone in my life. So, I bought a book…” Riaru explained most of the events leading up to the two’s current and unexplained hospitalization, which spanned until Mori had pulled out the pocket watch, anything after was an abyssal gap of nothingness.

"Where were you?” Riaru whispered, her tone accused the split of nothing, only displayed the girl’s fear.

"Somewhere in the abyss of our mind," Yū sighed. For the split no apology was needed on account of her host's slip up. It was obvious through her story that Riaru had suffered enough from her mistake, hopefully it was enough to prevent a second occurrence.

For somet ime after the two sat in silence, resting their minds at inspected the ceiling for patterns, simply connection dots, and creating images from their linked lines.

“Ah!” The room’s silence was broken as the door slid open to reveal a tired looking Dr. Mori. He clapped his large hands together as he approached their bed. "It's good to have you back with us Riaru." Newly acquired dark circles ringed the bottoms of his green eyes.

Yū took over to push them up into a sitting position. “Actually, it's Yū, nice to meet ya Doc,” the split stated as she offered him a tired smile that rivaled his own.

Dr. Mori let out a hearty laugh, "Pleased to make your acquaintance. Though it is unfortunate that we must meet in such an unfortunate circumstance.” He gave her a meek smile. “I'm afraid our hypnotism did not go quite as planned. Putting you under went well, but bringing you out was a completely different story. There were some... Complications... Which forced us to put you and
Riaru under with sedatives. We moved you down to one of the empty hospital beds on the second floor after you passed out."

"Complications?" Yū asked as she arched an eyebrow, "sounds sketchy."

“It was nothing to complicated really. Your heart rate simply reached an unhealthy level and there were a few unforeseen difficulties that arose when I attempted to pull you out of the hypnosis,” the doctor replied, he had a small smile on his face despite the circumstances. "But, as an apology I've had some steak delivered."

“Mmm… Sounds delicious,” Yū stated as a nurse brought in the food, their nostrils flared. “Smells delicious as well,” she laughed. "Thank you for the meal!" The split smiled before digging in. One of the most delicious flavors exploded into their mouth and Yū almost moaned in taste bud ecstasy as she took another bite. “It’s so tender,” Yu stated as she grinned up at the doctor who sat with rapt attention waiting for her to finish. A small smile graced the man’s features as crows feet crinkled at the corners of his eyes.

Yū wiped any remaining food from the corners of her mouth before graciously thanking the doctor and exclaiming that it was the best meal that they’d had in an extremely long time. “By the way doc, how long have we been out for?”

Mori shook out his wrist before he glanced down at his watch. "I'm afraid the nurse overdosed you a bit, so you were out for around five hours, which makes it almost 10pm."

They choked on the water a nurse had offered them. "Mom." Both splits thought at the same time. Hurriedly they jumped off the bed, scrambling to pull on their shoes and jacket that sat in a nearby chair. They had just grabbed their bag and book and began darting towards the door when Mori stopped them.

“Before you leave.” He handed the nineteen year old an orange prescription bottle. "This is a new medication that I'm going to start putting you on for some of your schizophrenia symptoms, I drew the conclusion that some of them had begun to leak through the barrier that you're third split had put up to curb most of your schizophrenic tendencies. I believe Kanou said that he had explained that part to you."

They snagged the pill bottle before running out the door.

"Oh! And just a warning my dear! The side effects may alter your tastebuds for the time that you're on them! Hopefully we'll be able to take you off them soon!" Mori’s voice echoed down the corridor as the split minded girl pounded down the hall, their footsteps rattling the ears of those they passed. They comprehended Mori's echoey words, but did not respond as they thundered towards where they assumed the elevators were. They had bigger things to worry about... Such as Riaru's mother and her overprotective nature for her mentally unstable daughter.

The splits waited impatiently for the elevator to arrive, their foot tapping a restless beat as the doors finally opened and they rushed in. Once the cart had reached the first floor the receptionist and the grey-haired doctor she spoke to could do nothing but watch as the young girl burst through the barely opened elevator door, through the lobby, and out the front doors. The glass vibrating violently at the nineteen year old’s departure.

As much as they were determined to get home as quickly as possible, their rush of adrenaline was only able to carry them a few blocks before their previous exhaustion caught up with them. Riaru’s stomach churned with Yū’s partially digested meal as they slowed to a stop. Their heart beat wildly in their chest and their harsh breath rung in their ears as their side ached every time they inhaled.
“I don’t think,” Yū gasped out as she clutched their side, “that we’re fully recovered from that event earlier today.”

“I agree,” Riaru panted. After a few minutes they began plodding down the sidewalk, their panting breaths continuing to resonate through their head. They continued with this slow pace for another forty-five minutes until they had finally reached the end of their street. The blue, flashing lights ahead of them painting the neighborhood in their eerie color.

“I don’t care if I’m suppose to wait twenty-four hours! My daughter is mentally ill, something may have happened to her!” There was a pause as Mrs. Genji listened to the operator on the other end of the line. “No! I will not call back tomorrow morning!” The call clicked dead leaving nothing but the dial tone to buzz in the ears of the frustrated woman. “Hello? Hello?!?”

Riaru’s mother scowled before redialing the emergency number. She lowered her voice to a mere whisper. “Hello?” Mrs. Genji choked out, “I think that there’s someone in my house…”

The grey eyed girl’s feet pounded over the concrete, her breath harsh, and their earlier exhaustion forgotten at the sight of the police lights near their home. Riaru took over in their panic. “Mother!” She yelled, “Mom!” She could only pray that no one was dead. Her front door was hanging partially open, she burst through it, the handle banging into the wall behind it. The loud cracking sound resonating through the house as she scrambled over the threshold.

“Mother!” Riaru screamed again, her own voice hurting her ears as she ran for the living room, tripping on the single stair down. She crashed to her knees, wincing in pain as she attempted to stand up on the hardwood as exhaustion held them to the floor.

“Riaru?” Came her mother’s familiar voice before something plowed into her side, taking all of her remaining oxygen with it.

The girl’s eyes burned as her mother clutched her tightly to her chest. The last two days had been both physically and mentally draining, and Riaru body and mind were finally catching up with this fact. She could have stayed in her mother’s embrace and slept all of her troubles away. Unfortunately, forever was a long time, and time was never on the nineteen year old’s side. Their reunion was cut short by an annoyed cough from one of the two police officers who stood in her living room. An unknown anger flared at their intrusion, though she was quick to shake herself of the feeling. She pushed herself up from her kneeling to greet the two men.

The girl glanced at her mother from the corner of her eyes. “I’m assuming this has something to do with us,” she let out a sudden cough, “me.” The officers gave the girl a cautious glance.

“Good job, you creeped out the cops,” Yu let out a tired laugh from their mind.

“Well it’s not my fault, you’re the reason I starting talking like that,” Riaru sighed as she closed her eyes for a moment, resting them.

“You’re her daughter correct?” The officer to the right asked, annoyance lacing his words a motioned to her mother who was in the process of standing up. Riaru nodded meekly. “Well, your mother called us to report you as a missing person. And when the operator told her to wait twenty-four hours and ended the conversation. Mrs. Genji called back to report that she thought someone had broken in.” He sent a pointed glare her mother’s way as she dusted herself off.

Riaru looked incredulously at Mrs. Genji, and Yū let out a hearty laugh after hearing this small story. “I think she’s crazier than us!” Riaru could do nothing but gape at the woman.
Riaru led the two officers out as the clock cried out the 22nd hour of the day had come. “I apologize again for the inconvenience. I hope you both have a wonderful night.” Riaru offered the men a short bow as Yū shut the door on their heels.

“Finally!” The split rejoiced, “They’re gone!”

“Finally indeed.”

A tired sigh escaped through their partially parted lips as they trudged away from the door. “I don’t believe I’ve ever been this exhausted before,” Riaru yawned as she told her mother goodnight.

Yū hummed in agreement as they made their way down the hall. “Let’s just take these meds and sleep.”

Another yawn split their face as the nineteen year old nodded, pulling out the small, orange bottle. She squinted her eyes to read the small print as they pushed open the door to their room, switching on the light. “One pill, twice a day, every twelve hours…”

“That’s not too bad compared to what they use to stuff us with.”

“This should be easy, no problem at all,” Riaru stated quietly as she perched them on the edge of their bed. A nervous energy wound through her veins as she studied the circular pills that rattled around the inside of the small container.

“Nervous?” Yū asked the girl as she pushed down on the top and twisted. She shook out one of the pale red pills.

“You would think that after all these years I wouldn’t be.”

Yū merely shrugged. “Unfortunately there’s no getting around it.”

“I know.” Without another thought Riaru threw the pill in their mouth before downing half of a nearby water bottle to wash it down, she rubbed at their throat. An unpleasant look making its way onto their face. “It feels like it’s stuck in my throat.”

An exhausted laugh escaped Yu as they lay down on the bed.

“Goodnight.”

“Night.”

Riaru refused to move as she shielded their eyes from the sun. “Mooooovvvee!” Yū groaned as the split pushed the drowsy nineteen year old out of the way. “I wanna do something, I’ve been couped away in your brain for too long.”

A sigh escaped Riaru’s lips as she fell back to let Yu take the reigns. “Well what would you suggest? It’s not like we have any friends.”

“Wow, I don’t guess I realized that lil’ Riaru could be so negative,” Yū laughed. “Plus we could always make friends with that investigator Suzuya.” Yū stated as she wiggled their eyebrows. “You can’t deny that he’s one interesting character.”
Riaru was wide awake now. “You really want to try that again?” the nineteen year old growled at her split.

Yū raised their hands up in mock defense as laughter bubbled past her lips, “Don’t worry, I learned my lesson.”

After a shower Riaru was finally awake enough to take over again, and unfortunately she was also awake enough to get them dressed. The black haired girl was kind enough to bypass the dresses and pull on jeans and a cream sweater for Yū’s sake. But the split still grumbled at the lack of black in the girl’s outfit of choice.

“Black is the color of mourning; we are not in mourning. While I will not disagree with wearing black from time to time, everyday is a bit of a stretch,” Riaru sighed as she was forced to swallow another dose of her new medication. She coughed a bit as some of the water went down wrong, she took another sip of the almost empty water bottle.

“Yeah, yeah, let’s just leave already.”

Riaru stood nervously on the sidewalk, her grey eyes peering up at the familiar building before her. The nineteen year old couldn’t help but recall the embarrassing situation that had occurred here just the day before.

“Are you planning on loitering here for the next hour or are we actual going to go inside?” Yū asked impatiently.

“You weren’t there… You can’t possibly understand the uncomfortable situation I’ll be put in once we walk up those stairs.” Riaru shivered at all of the unpleasant possibilities that could take place the moment they set foot across Anteiku’s threshold.

“You’re right, I don’t understand. And yet, even if I could fathom the predicament that you somehow always end up putting yourself in… us in… I wouldn’t care. Now move,” Yū stated with a nonchalant attitude that was polar Riaru’s current emotional state.

Riaru drew in a nervous breath before taking her first step towards Anteiku’s entrance. Nothing had yet to happen, but pink already dusted the girl’s cheeks. Though no one seemed to take notice of the phenomenon as the grey eyed girl walked through the door. There was the usual greeting from the host working behind the bar, but his face was one she did not recognize. Their gunmetal eyes glanced around the cafe looking for the familiar shock of black hair, but upon not seeing it the girl's heart rate slowed to a more sensible pace.

“See? Nothing to be afraid of,” Yū stated much more confident than Riaru had even felt in her life.

"That's very easy for you to say as, may I remind you, you were not there," Riaru breathed out as they took a seat. Riaru shifted uncomfortably in their seat as her eyes continued to comb Anteiku’s inhabitants. Looking around the two splits noticed that Anteiku had quite a few customers this afternoon, was it the weekend already?

"Hi, what can I get for you today?" someone asked to their right. Riaru jumped slightly at the question as her eyes snapped towards purple haired waitress from the other day who had spoken.

"Ah, yes, um... Just a cappuccino please," the girl answered as she fiddled with her fingers, refusing to make eye contact as their order was jotted down.

The female ghoul stood staring at the nineteen-year-old from behind the bar as she began making the new order. Touka had honestly felt surprised at her return, surely she would have left at least a few
days in between visits considering the situation Kaneki had put the poor girl in. Thankfully the halfbreed wasn't scheduled to work this afternoon, otherwise Anteiku's atmosphere was sure to be uncomfortable.

Once again, on the other side of the cafe, Riaru and Yū conversed within their head. "So another visit with Mori today?" Yū sighed as she took over to kick their legs up on the chair opposite of them. "That man just can't get enough of us, you'd think he'd take a small break after what you told me about yesterday."

"Medically speaking, we are an interesting case, the fact that we can still function normally day to day must be a miracle to a lot of psychiatrists."

"No, what's a miracle is the fact that you actually swallowed that pill this morning without that much fuss," Yū said with a low chuckle.

"Don't make fun of my difficulties, now move over before my coffee gets here." Riaru scowled at her split as she emerged from their mind to take over. The two sat in silence like that for a few moments as they both broke away to their own thoughts.

Touka stared at the black haired girl as she finished making the cappuccino she had ordered. There was something different about her today, her outfit? Attitude perhaps? No, it was nothing as obvious as those, the change was a subtle one, one so subtle that she couldn't pick out exactly what had changed. The waitress sighed, perhaps nothing had. Touka picked up the cup of coffee cautiously before carrying it over to the strange girl and setting it down.

The nineteen-year-old didn't seem to process the cup before her as she debated on what to say next. "I'm sorry."

"What?" Yū asked confused as she came back from her own thoughts.

Riaru cleared her throat as she repeated her earlier statement in a mere whisper, "I'm sorry... for acting out the way I did after we left the CCG... It was unacceptable and I sincerely apologize for making you go through what you did."

Yū took a moment to process the apology before letting out a heavy sigh. "As long as it doesn't happen again; I mean... I guess I did overstep my boundaries a bit with that one."

Riaru let out a relieved chuckle as she finally noticed the coffee before them. "Trust me I never want to have to go through that ever again. You should have seen me, I was paranoid all the time and I couldn't get my mind off the thought that he could come out at anytime. And for a while..." The nineteen-year-old picked up the warm mug and brought it to her lips, she paused. "I thought you were never coming back." Riaru took a sip to prevent herself from talking any further. Right before spewing it right back into the mug and across the table.

The two splits gagged on the taste of rot in their mouth, both ignorant of the stares of the entire cafe.

Yū had the audacity to laugh after a few seconds as they struggled to wipe the coffee from their mouth with their sleeve. "Mori wasn't lying when he said it would mess with our tastebuds."

Riaru gagged again. "How does this have anything to do with Dr. Mori?"

"He said that new medication would mess with our tastebuds, remember?" the split chuckled.

The purple haired waitress rushed over with a rag in hand. "Are you alright ma'am?" she asked worriedly.
Riaru held out her hand where she could see, her fingers shook faintly from adrenaline. "Yes, I apologize, my... medication, I just forgot that it... Oh dear." The black haired girl smothered another dose of rot as it attempted to come back up from their throat. "It's new, I just forgot... I apologize, the doctor warned me... I guess I just didn't give his words much thought." Riaru attempted to pull out their wallet with trembling hands. "I should probably go."

"Don't-don't worry about it," Touka spoke carefully as she looked down upon Riaru who sat panting as she tried to pull out several yen. "It's... on the house, please don't worry about it."

Riaru's movements seemed sluggish as she carefully put her wallet back into her lap and laid her head onto the table. "I'm terribly sorry," the girl whispered, to Yū she added. "I really hope that it isn't this bad with everything else."

Then, standing up on trembling legs the girl walked out Anteiku's door.

Shock donned Touka's face as the purple haired waitress stared at her one of her strangest customers. What the hell just happened? She walked back behind the counter after cleaning up the mess the girl had made and looked towards the milk that she had gotten out a while ago. Cautiously she leaned over to smell it, the girl scrunched her nose up, it didn't smell any worse than usual.

Riaru threw up the remains of the coffee in a potted plant outside.
“We’ve got ‘em in sight boss… black hair, grey eyes, just like you described ‘em. They don’t seem to have that briefcase with ‘em today so it should be easy,” the ghoul said, speaking lowly into the dwarfed flip phone.

“Do not underestimate investigators, doing that will get you killed, or worse, captured,” came the reply from the phone’s small speaker. “I wasn’t planning on it boss, a’ight here ‘e comes. I’ll bring ‘em to the designated spot.”

“Goro, know this. If you get captured I’m killing your family.” Goro’s boss clicked off leaving the dial tone in its place. The ghoul swallowed his nerves as stepped out of the alley way to intercept his target.

He wouldn’t get this wrong.
Forbidden Fruit

People disappear all the time in this city. Whether they ran away, were kidnapped, or eaten by ghouls, they all seem to fit under one of two categories: the ones who return, and the one’s who don’t. And right now Riaru considered herself to be part of the latter.

Lights blinded them from above. Where were they? The nineteen year old stood up shakily, her legs like that of a newborn deer. The girl and her split blinked several times in attempt to focus their surroundings. After they had accomplished this small feat, they wished they hadn’t. Riaru stood frozen, and her mind began shutting down as they took in the arena like setting that encompassed them.

“Don’t freak out,” Yū stated in a hard voice, “you know what happens when you freak out.” But, the girl’s mind was already slipping, her heart racing, her limbs freezing with fear. Everywhere she looked faces would stare down upon her.

Where the hell were they?

“Welcome to our main event!” The voice bounded off of the arena’s walls, amplifying the already loud noise. “We’ve had the most beautiful ladies and the most handsome gentlemen, we’ve had journalists and reporters, we’ve had stars and athletes, we’ve even feasted upon scrapers! But, here today we have the most forbidden fruit!” The man paused, “A ghoul investigator!” Cheers and gasps of surprise engulfed the surrounding area as Riaru clasped her hands over their ears, it was much too loud.

“What do they mean an investigator?!” Riaru tried shouting within their mind as the noise threatened to drag her own thoughts away.

“Please, give a round of applause for Investigator Genji!”

Riaru’s head snapped around. Kohaku is here?!

There was no one else, she stood alone in the arena, and everyone’s eyes rested on her.

“Where is he?!” Riaru shouted at her split.

“Kohaku is not here,” Yū merely whispered. Despite this, her quiet tone drowned out all other sounds. “They're talking about you.”

An image appeared before her, it was a man. Pain and fear had melted themselves into his eyes. Blood spilled from his gut, some sort of blade had made its way into his abdomen. Her blade. Somehow she knew that she was smiling.

“But I'm not an investigator!” The nineteen year old shouted. “I'm not! No! Not! Not an investigator! I’m not a ghoul. I'm not! Stop it!” She screamed.

Riaru clutched her head in agony. He was beating at the entrance, he was breaking down the door, he was peeling away the barrier they had tried so hard to put up.

He was on his way.

“Snap out of it Riaru, we’ve got bigger things to deal with right now,” Yū shouted.
And she was right, they did have bigger problems, much bigger problems. One of them being the 260 cm tall man that charged towards them. The ground rumbled with each step he took as the fat that encased his body seemed to roll. Another one of their bigger problems also involved the large bloodstained axe that the beast dragged behind him.

The masked people that surround the arena cheered for the two opponents, if you could call them that. This match had been set up as a slaughter, not a competition. The beast raised his axe and sent it flying towards the nineteen-year-old. Riaru could do nothing as the bloodstained blade barely missed them and ricocheted off the tiled floor, leaving a deadly dent in its wake.

“Move!” Yū screamed at her host as she took over. The moment she was finally in control she turned tail and attempted to gain some distance from the hulking beast of a man.

Tsukiyama stood in amusement near the rail as he watched the slaughter commence.

“Riaru! Snap out of it you little shit! If you keep this up he’s gunna get out!” The split screeched as they managed to dodge another swing from the axe. “Personally I don’t feel like spending my last moments with him in control!”

The masked men and women who surrounded the arena in the high stands watched with curiosity, “Who is she talking to?” A masked figure leaned over to whisper into their date’s ear.

Tsukiyama’s interest spiked.

“Riaru! The barrier is almost gone! You’ve gotta help me rebuild it!” Yū screamed again as the axe finally managed to catch one of their shoulders with its blade. The split reached back to seize the wound, everything was getting fuzzy. Why weren’t their legs moving very fast?

“Come on Kyojin! Mama believes in you!” Someone screeched from the stands.

Riaru’s body stumbled as their third personality state attempted to grab hold of the reigns. “Riaru,” the split slurred as she desperately tried to hold on. But, Riaru stayed silent, ignorant to her cries.

Tsukiyama, or Mr. MM as he was called within the restaurant, watched as Kyojin—who had been one of his replacements for Madam A’s Taro—sent his axe into a horizontal sweep across the back of the girl’s legs. Blood spiked through the air, but not a sound came from the black haired investigator as she collapsed to the ground. The crescent mooned ghoul sighed, “I was hoping for a bit more, she had looked so interesting for a human. Tant pis.”

Cheers went through the stands at the sight of red painting the arena’s floor. The nineteen-year-old lay sprawled across the right hand side of the arena as the beastly man, Kyojin, pranced around the arena in joy. “Mommy! Mommy! I did it! I did it mommy!” His axe lay forgotten.

The crowd cheered.

Riaru’s body lay motionless and in a daze, as its new inhabitant tried to become accustomed to the feeling again. It had been a while since he had forced his two companions to give up control. They were injured, true, but pain had never bothered him, not since Gōmasa’s last stand. The split let out a light chuckle, his last stand against a bland daughter from a man whose job it was to sand away at the minds of others. To torture, to kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill! Killing is such a thrilling adventure! Slowly he pulled their arms beneath Riaru’s body.

Silence went through the arena.

The split got up on wobbly legs, Riaru’s prior injury causing him to hobble slightly as he finally
managed to stand. “Why'd you stop cheering?” Riaru's voice had lowered to a raspy tone.

"Why is bug moving?” The colossal giant said in a rumbling voice as he walked towards Riaru's body. "Kyojin crushed bug, bug shouldn't move now."

"You know, grow,” Riaru's raspy voice stated as it picked up speed towards the end, "A cockroach is a bug, slug, but it's veryyyyy hard to kill, pill."

"What's happening?” This question echoed around the stands as Riaru's body was dragged by its current inhabiter towards Kyojin's discarded and blood stained axe.

"If Riaru is a roly-poly, holy, moly, and Yū is a hornet, mourn it, then does that make me a cockroach, poach. Dark, secluded, hardly ever seen, bean. But there's something off, with this cockroach!” The new inhabitant of Riaru shouted to the stands.

Everyone watched as the bleeding, black haired girl reached the axe and attempted to pick it up. "Fu, fu, fu! This sure is heavy! Well it is bigger than Riaru! I shouldn't be surprised, dies, lies!..”

Ohhhhh how I hate lies!”
"Lies come from the goat. No.
The throat, lies come from the throat. And that's all she wrote! Because she died from her lies, I slit her throat!” Slowly the speed of his speech picked up.

"Lies
Dies
Now you're dead
Dead, dead bodies everywhere!
Don't tell mother
Mother
Brother
Brother is here now too!
Oh dear!
Deer
Steer
Clear
Steer clear of him!
Can't let him know
Know
NO!" The split began rambling almost incoherently as he attempted to lift the axe again.

Everyone watched in wonder. "Who brought the crazy one?” Someone whispered to the left of Tsukiyama.

"Yes indeed," the purple haired man asked, “Who brought the crazy one?”

Finally the new split was able to lift the axe up on its side so the blade faced upwards. They tapped their finger against the blade, a drop of blood welling up at the slight contact. "Very sharp," the raspy voice spoke again, although a bit calmer this time. "Hey! Kyojin was it?” The nameless split called out, "Look who's got your precious axe, axe hacks! Ha ha! See that rhymed!”

"Mama! Bug has Kyojin's axe! Mama! Mama! What should Kyojin do?!" the giant man wailed.

This broke the silence.
"Kill her Kyojin! Kill her for mommy and get your axe back!" A lady cried from the stands.

"Yes mama!" Kyojin cried out before storming towards Riaru's body.

"Oh! Here he comes! Yay!" The ground shook as the oversized man stormed towards the new split. "But you should really!" There was a pause as Kyojin rushed forward. "Watch where you're going!"

The split heaved with all their strength to throw the top of the axe head up and into the giant's direct path. Kyojin ran full force into the blade, his stomach taking a heavy blow, along with his leg as the axe fell back to earth and ripped through the flesh in his left thigh.

Riaru's body had already distanced itself from the scene as they danced away as gracefully as their bloody thigh would allow them. Gasps went through the audience and cries of pain went up from the felled giant who now lay on the blood stained tile as he attempted to grasp his stomach wound.

"You see I don't understand, sand, canned, why Jack cut down the beanstalk. When he could've just cut down the giant that would have descended, winded!" Riaru's raspy voice said whilst laughing.

Silence once again silence engulfed the audience.

Slowly Riaru's inhabitant walked towards the fallen Kyojin's wounded leg. The third split investigated the gash closely. "...It's an easy fix, if cleaned and sewed, mowed. The stomach might be harder, but still, you could survive," The nameless voice said as he continued to stare at the wound. "But, you know... what's the fun in that?" Riaru’s face donned a wicked smile as her split swung down her hand to tear at the open gash. Kyojin bellowed and began flailing, trying desperately to reach the source. The girl's arm soon became soaked in blood as the split used their fingers as claws, pulling and scraping away chunks of flesh from Kyojin's already injured leg. "This is for hurting Riaru. You made her hide... did you know that? And Kyojin, guess what?" The split's voice dropped into a deadly whisper, "I'm the only one allowed to hurt Riaru."

Slowly the split retracted their hand, studying it as blood dripped down Riaru’s fingers. “Beautiful,” he whispered before licking a large stripe of gore off their palm. The split laughed in delight.

Whispers tore through the audience as the scene before them played out in a way that none of them could have ever imagined.

The split laughed again, this time a slow laugh that seemed to freeze time as the split threw their head back. Blood was sent flying from Riaru’s mouth as her hair billowed around them.

Two types of whispers made their way around the stands by Mr. MM. One wondering what this type of crazy tasted like and the other which wished to keep the demon child as their scrapper. Tsukiyama too wondered these things, but one desire rose above all else, to see how this young child turned out in this world filled with ghouls. He did not wish to devour her flesh as he did with Kaneki, his need went beyond that. Tsukiyama didn't know what to find crueler, the thought of the girl dying in this arena filled with ghouls or letting her be consumed by her own insanity in the outside world. Tsukiyama deemed the second crueler.

Mr. MM quietly pulled out his phone to send a message out.

Kyojin now panted heavily on the ground in a pool of his own blood as Riaru's psychotic personality state continued to claw at the giant's thigh wound. A splurge of blood suddenly gushed out, dousing the girl's arm and part of their chest in Kyojin's warm and sticky blood. "Oooh! Yay! Looks like I hit an artery! That always fun, sun," the girl's strangely raspy voice echoed through the arena.

The third split used his finger to wipe off a speck of blood from their check before licking it off with
their tongue. "Hmm..." Their voice hummed in content, "You've been eating a lot of fatty foods recently, I can tell from the texture." Another giggly laugh escaped the nineteen-year-old’s throat.

"Surely that's not an investigator," a man with a plain white mask stated from somewhere beside Tsukiyama.

“Investigator?” The grey eyed girl glance up at the ghoul. “Is that what you think we are? An investigator?” The split laughed heartily at this statement. “I got rid of that pipedream long ago. There’s no investigators in this ring! Only me! Well, us… Riaru's and Yū are still there, I can feel them…”

Tsukiyama leaned against the railing before deciding on a bold step. "Yū and Riaru? Who are they?"

The masked, purple haired man called out into the arena below.

The nameless split paused to look up at Tsukiyama. “Why do you want to know about the bitch and our host?”

“Your host?” Tsukiyama asked, amused curiosity tainting his voice

“The… original owner of this body, Yū and I are only… splits,” he spat out the last word in disgust. “Or splits in Riaru’s personality. You see the doc recently diagnosed Riaru...” there was a pause, "us, with... I think it was Multiple Personality disorder."

A smile began to form on Tsukiyama's face, "So you are..."

"A personality state of Riaru's creation? Yes."

"And Yū.."

"Is also one. And no matter what anyone tells you! I'm the first split! Yū likes to take credit for it a lot but she's not. You see, Riaru's subconscious created me to protect her. A wild and unsympathetic personality that could defend her from anyone that tried to do her harm! I was the first!" The nameless split raged. There was silence among the audience. "Then Riaru created Yū."

"And why did she do that?" Shuu asked.

Tsukiyama's phone vibrated in his pocket.

There was a pause as the nameless split looked directly at the purple haired ghoul. "To protect her from me of course."
“Just go home already!” Takizawa shouted as he swatted Juuzou’s hand away from his hair for the third time. “Don’t you have anything better to do?”

Suzuya danced away from Seidou’s hand as he hummed in thought. “Not really.”

Takizawa scowled as he continued to type away on his latest report. All he had to do was finish typing this paragraph and then he could leave, and get away from the newest member of the 20th ward’s CCG. The twenty-one year old smiled at the thought.

Juuzou made his way towards the room’s large window as he lightly plucked at the stitches on his lower lip. The sun had set long ago, and with the moon rising the ghoul’s appetites were sure to as well. I wonder if I’ll run across anymore tonight? A smirk pulled its way across the nineteen year old’s face.

Suzuya looked down towards the CCG’s front steps, its concrete path flickering in and out of existence as the street lamp nearby began reaching the end of its life. A black blob stained the steps, disappearing into the darkness before being reincarnated in the sick yellow of the of the street light. Juuzou used his hands as binoculars as his mouth formed into a curious ‘o’ shape. “This is interesting.”

Seidou let out a frustrated sigh, “Do you have the ability to shut up?”

Juuzou hummed again as he continued to try focusing on the black blob outside. It looked familiar... familiar in a way that only Juuzou could understand. “There’s a body outside.”

“Please will you just!” The rank 2 investigator seemed to choke on air as the boy’s words registered. “What?”

“Mmmhm, definitely a body.”

Seidou scrambled up from the office chair to see what the resident psychopath was talking about. Sure enough a black stain in the shape of a body laid sprawled out across the building’s front steps. “Is it ghoul or human?”

“It’s a girl.” Juuzou answered as he adjusted his ‘binoculars’.

“That’s not what I asked!”

“It was an unreasonable question, so I didn’t answer.”

“We’ve gotta call one of the investigators if there’s a possibility that it’s a ghoul,” Seidou said as he ran back to grab his phone.

Juuzou continued staring out the window. “She’ll be dead by then,” Juuzou explained nonchalantly.

Seidou froze, “Dead?”

“Mhmm.”

“What do you mean dead?”

“I mean she’ll be dead by then. I know how much it takes to take a ghoul and a human apart. Those
wounds would kill a human after a while, but they would only incapacitate ghoul for a bit,” Juuzou let out a light laugh, “It’s sloppy work. But, if nothing else, it works.”

Seidou gave Juuzou a disgusted look. “We’ve gotta get down there then, grab your quinque, maybe we’ll run into another investigator on our way down. We’ll call a doctor just in case. We can’t take her to the hospital though, if she does end up being a ghoul I don’t want to be responsible for happens. Is that okay?”

"It doesn’t matter to me if she dies."

Seidou glared the white haired boy’s way, she wasn’t going to die.

Takizawa dashed down the stairs in their race to get to the girl, Juuzou slid down the railing beside him.

Juuzou had a smile on his face as they trotted towards the body, two of his scorpion quinques rested in his hands, he was ready for a fight.

The streetlight above them flickered to life again, illuminating the girl before them. Takizawa froze at the familiar face. “We need to call Kohaku.”

“What are you two doing out here?” Amon’s called a few yards ahead of them.

“Amon?” Seidou questioned as he looked up from the girl. “We need your help.”

Riaru woke up screaming as lights blinded her from above, her heart was racing. God save her, she was still there. Tears welled in her eyes as hands came to hold her flailing limbs down. They were going to kill her, she was going to die, the masks were going to eat her. She was going to die. “Die, dead, death, DIE, DEAD, DEATH! THEY’RE GOING TO KILL ME!” The nineteen year old’s shoulder and thigh burned, they were already starting.

“It’s alright Riaru, you can calm down now. You’re safe!” Someone shouted over her screams.

“STOP IT! STOP IT! LIARS! LIARS! YOU’RE GOING TO KILL ME! YOU’RE GOING TO EAT!” Riaru continued to thrash about on the surface beneath her.

“Riaru it’s your brother! Calm down! I’m here now!”

“LIARS! YOU’RE ALL LIARS!”

“Damn it, where is that doctor?”

“Red eyes! Red minds! Blood spilling because of lies!” A maniacal laugh filtered through Riaru’s lips as her back arched up from the desk beneath them.

“Hold her down, we don’t want her to injure herself further,” a cold voice breezed through the office room.

“Arima-san?” Amon asked confused as his superior entered the room.

“Do it now before she hurts herself.”

“Hai!” Amon answered as he rushed over with Kohaku to hold the girl down.

The brother could do nothing but stare at the black haired girl as her sanity crumbled. The white walls began surrounding him, suffocating him. They reflected his soul back, and the twenty-three
year old was horrified by what he saw.

“Who is she?”

“I don’t know,” Kohaku whispered.

Amon’s head snapped over to look at the younger investigator. “I thought you said she was your sister?” Koutarou said, raising his voice as the split’s laughter became louder.

“It’s not her!” He shouted as spittle flew from his mouth. “Riaru!” He screamed in agony. “What happened to you?” Kohaku pleaded, his eyes were wide with terror as he roughly grabbed his sister’s shoulders.

The nineteen year old gazed into the distance, their stare glazed over as her personalities fought for control. Yū struggled against their third split, but could push no further past his own blockade without Riaru, who still remained in hiding somewhere within the dark abyss of their mind. It was because of their host’s weak will that he was able to remain in control. “They pitted a kitten against a hungry wolf,” insane laughter slipped through the split’s mouth. “They didn’t realize that they had mistaken a lion for a mere house cat.”

“Who did?! Who is they?!” Kohaku begged as he shook his younger sister’s shoulders in desperation.

“Dad would be so proud.” The nineteen year old grinned wickedly. Kohaku froze. “Grew up to be just like him, just like daddy! So proud! She just wants you to be proud of your little girl,” the split sniffled.

“Please be proud...” Riaru’s voice began seeping through the cracks as she drew closer to her own insanity.

Kohaku stumbled back away from his younger sister in horror.

Riaru’s attitude snapped, “All of the masks, so many masks, or maybe... they were their faces. Accurate representations of the demons inside, the sinister moon, smiling, laughing, consuming,” a quiet laugh escaped her lips.

Arima tilted his head in interest.

“The man with the moon,” Riaru’s voice dipped deeper, “he liked my slash.” Insanity slipped from the girl’s tongue in the form of laughter, while Juuzou watched on in fascination.

“Who?!” Kohaku exclaimed as anger boiled across his face. “Who are the people in the masks?!”

A light laugh escaped Juuzou’s lips. “I don’t believe she is talking about people.”

Kohaku whipped his head around to look at the white haired boy. “What the hell is that suppose to mean?”

Arima cleared his voice to draw the attention of the fuming investigator, “It should be clear who he means Investigator Genji. Who do we know who wears masks to conceal their identity? For what reason was the CCG created?”

Only the twenty-three year old investigator seemed shocked by this revelation. “Don’t look so surprised, lies, dies!” The third split began relapsing into their speech from earlier as excitement bubble through the split’s veins.
“Now you’re dead!
Dead, dead bodies everywhere!
Don’t tell mother
Mother
Brother
Brother is here now too!
Oh dear!
Deer
Steer
Clear
Steer clear of him!
Can’t let him know!
Know
NO!
Just like daddy! Don’t you know?” The split laughed maniacally.

The young male investigator grew furious at these words and grabbed his sister roughly by her arms, “Stop saying that! You’re nothing like father! Nothing!” For a while after Kohaku’s outburst the only sound that was heard was the boy’s heavy breathing.

“You’re right,” it was Riaru’s voice who slipped through in a quiet whisper. “I’m worse.” She looked wide eyed at her older brother. “Killed...” slowly a smile grew on her face as her voice retreated back to the guttural one from before. “I killed!” He laughed happily. “Have I killed?” Again Riaru’s voice over took her split’s.

Arima was the only one to recognize the quote.

Kohaku froze for a moment before he finally snapped. “Why you little! I told you! You’re nothing like him! Nothing!” He began shaking her violently.

“Juuzou!” Amon shouted at the white haired investigator as he rushed in and took hold of the Genji boy. “Help me!”

Riaru’s body continued to be raked with laughter.

“You’ll never be like him! Never! He’s gone Ri! He can’t get to you anymore! Stop this! Stop it now!” Kohaku screamed at the girl, spit flying from his mouth as he struggled against the two investigators holding him back.

Riaru’s head tilted in confusion. “What are you talking about? Daddy has always been here,” the raspy voice dropping down to a whisper, “He’s one of us, He is one with us. He is us!” laughter flew from the nineteen-year-old’s mouth.

Silence ensued as Kohaku finally gave out, his knees buckling as he dropped to the floor. “I promised to protect you no matter what when they brought you home from the hospital that day.”

A four year old boy stood in the looming doorway of his home: his wide grey eyes watched in amazement as the small procession walked up the sidewalk towards him. Their faces were cast into extreme shadow as his mother carried something tiny in her arms. What was it? He wondered, and where had Mommy's tummy gone?

His father followed behind as he carried a vase of flowers and a few 'Congratulations!' balloons that looked like they were starting to deflate.
The young boy's babysitter gently grabbed his hand to pull him out of the towering grow-ups' ways. They ignored him as they walked into the house. His father splitting off from the mother to go to the kitchen. The four old padded after his mother as fast as he could on his small, still stubby legs.

The babysitter had excused herself out.

He found his mother resting on the living room couch with the tiny thing still cradled in her arms. She patted the spot next to her as the young boy scrambled up on the couch to get a peek at whatever it was. He sat silently on his knees and rested his warm palms on his mother's thighs so he could lean his body over her arm to see what she held.

It was a baby.

"Ko, this is your sister. Her name is Riaru," his mother's voice sounded soft, but was tainted with an exhaustion that he didn't quite understand yet. "Since you're older than her you've got to look out for her when she's in trouble. You've got to be her protector when she can't protect herself, okay?"

He stared at the small life form in his mother's arms, his sister. The responsibility of what his mother had just asked him to do weighed down upon his small frame. Kohaku would protect her, he'd even fight ghouls if he had to! Riaru's tiny fists clamped and unclenched themselves as she slept, her infant mouth puckered out as she breathed, her leg twitched. I wonder what babies dream about?

“And yet, I didn’t even realize what was happening to you within our own home.” He wiped his eyes furiously, refusing to cry. Slowly, with the help of Amon, the grey eyed investigator stood back up. “I might not have been able to keep that promise then, but I’ll make sure to keep it now.”

Riaru studied him quietly for a moment. “But you can’t protect her from me.” Another sick smile blossomed across the third split’s face.

Kohaku opened his mouth to retaliate against her reply, but Arima stepped in before anything more could be said. “That’s enough investigator, the most important thing right now is finding out what happened and getting her wounds treated properly. From what I understand she seemed to be the entertainment for a large group of ghouls. Plus her wounds still seem fresh, which implies that they were inflicted not that long ago. Considering the state she was in upon arrival, the location of this… arena…”

“Restaurant,” Juuzou corrected.

“This restaurant…” Arima conceded. “Must be close, unless of course she had help getting here.” “Meaning…” Amon said slowly trying to process the information that was coming to light. “That she probably couldn’t have gotten here alone. But, the only people who could have helped her escape would’ve been someone who knows what happened,” Amon said as he began to understand the situation. “But, if they knew what happened why wouldn’t they stay? Unless it was because they knew what happened…” He trailed off.

Kohaku, whose blood still boiled within his veins, denied this possibility. “Why couldn’t it have been a good samaritan who dropped her off?”

“You’re pretty stupid for a twenty-three year old,” Juuzou said as he popped a new sucker into his mouth.

“Kohaku,” Amon stated trying to draw the boy’s attention. “What ‘good samaritan’ would drop off a bleeding and unconscious girl at the CCG instead of a hospital. Unless of course they know what
had taken place or had something to hide from us,” the rank one investigator stated as he attempted to make the Genji boy see reason. “If someone brought her here then that means they more than likely know at least a little about what happened with your sister.” Amon sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose as he did so. “But…”

“But, this is only a theory on our end, it is possible that your sister managed to escape, what we assume to be, a sizeable amount of ghouls and drag herself here. Though that is highly improbable,” the white haired special class investigator said.

Seido paced back and forth with impatience as he waited for the doctor in the CCG’s lobby. The young investigator had phoned the hospital thirty minutes beforehand, he should have been there by now.

The brown haired twenty-one year old had to wait another three minutes before two of the front doors burst open. A man in a white lab coat and khaki pants entered the lobby, he had some sort of medical case in tow.

Takizawa rushed over.

"Investigator Takizawa I presume?" The doctor said as he continued towards a RC gate as Takizawa took up step beside him. "I'm Dr. Kanou. Please take me to see Mrs. Genji."

"Hai!" Seidou answered as he led Kanou through the building and back to where he had left the rest of the group.

"The possibility of that happening is zero!" It was Kohaku's voice that spoke from up ahead as Seidou and Kanou made their way down the hall.

"Anything is possible investigator."

Was that Arima's voice? Takizawa thought suspiciously as he picked up the pace.

"Then it is possible that she escaped that ghoul arena alone!" Kohaku retorted angrily.

"Genji, remember that Arima is your superior," Amon's voice stated icily from around the corner.

So it is Arima, and what's this about a ghoul arena? Seido thought confused.

They rounded the corner.

The first person that the two saw as they entered the small office was Juuzou sitting on one of the desks as he swung his legs back-and-forth carelessly. Next came Kohaku who stood pacing the room. Then came Amon and Arima who both stayed along the wall and hung further away from everyone, Amon kept his eyes on the pacing investigator. While Arima had his gaze turned towards the crazed girl as she lay on one of the office desks, studying her blood stained hands.

Kanou skipped all introductions as he pushed past the pacing brother to get to the mentally unstable girl as fast as he could. "What happened?" The doctor asked as he knelt down in front of the nineteen year old.

Kohaku was instantly by his side. "We aren't too sure, but she has decent sized gash on her shoulder as well as one on the back of her thigh. We tried our best to clean them but haven't had a chance to do much since she woke up." Kanou sat the girl up and lifted the girl's leg up to look at it, Riaru gave no reaction. A Tch sound escaped The Doctor's lips. Kanou paced around to the other side of the desk to inspect the shoulder wound. He pointed at his supplies that sat further behind him. Kohaku
picked it up at Kanou's silent request.

The doctor took a small flashlight out of his medical case and shone it into Riaru's eyes. "Do you know where you are?" The girl nodded as she continued to study her bloody hands, Kanou pushed them back into her lap to draw her attention towards to him again. "Alright, can you tell me what your name is?" Kanou asked as he went on to check her ears.

"You know… They never gave me a name," came the split's gruff answer.

Kanou’s movements slowed for a moment at this reply. *So we meet at last*, the doctor thought as he pulled away from the nineteen year old’s ear. "Ten minus seven?" Kanou asked.

"Three," the split answered almost immediately.

Kanou sighed as he clicked off the flashlight, "Her pupils are dilating as usual and she still seems mentally able to understand and comprehend conversation," he paused, "whatever happened seem to have caused severe mental strain which is most likely the cause of this personalities appearance."

Kohaku seemed slow to understand what the doctor was saying. "Personalities?"

"I assume you're her brother, yes?" Kanou asked as she continued to study the girl. Kohaku nodded. "Then you should be aware that I was actually the one to diagnose your sister with Dissociative Identity Disorder not that long ago. Though they may have called it Multiple Personality Disorder when they explained it to you."

"Then I'll explain it to you in terms that may help you understand." Dr. Kanou glanced back at all of the others, "I think we may need to find a quieter place to talk though, I'm not one to break Doctor-patient confidentiality more than is needed..."

Kohaku continued nodding before he shook his head, "They know most of it anyways, it's fine. Please continue."

Kanou sighed before explaining further, "As far as we know your sister has at least three different personality states that she can switch out with from time to time. Her two most common ones from what I can tell are Riaru herself, the more quiet spoken and polite one, and the second one is Yū, who is more sarcastic and impolite she's the one who isn't afraid to talk back."

"What about her third personality?" It was Juuzou who asked the question from the desk he sat on behind the two.

"I can't give you any real facts as I am just now meeting them, but I do know that this third personality state of hers is containing the schizophrenia that Mrs. Genji was diagnosed with earlier on in her life. Now normally schizophrenia won't manifest itself in a person until around the age of twenty. But, from the old reports I read from her previous doctors it was clear that her schizophrenia had developed earlier than most. Now, it seems to me that what took place drew out this third personality," Kanou explained as he continued to pull out medical supplies from his case.

“This… is the one that…” Kohaku’s head stiffly turned to look at the monster that sat just feet away from him. “This…”

Riaru’s grey eyes peered from under their eyelashes as an sinful smile corrupted the girl’s once innocent face. The split didn’t have to say a word to convey the message that Kohaku was receiving.

"There are three of you," Kanou stated quietly to the teen, "Can, I talk to the other two? I need to ask them a few questions if that’s alright with you."

“Ah, come on Doc, I just got here,” the split sighed.
Kanou lowered himself into a crouch, so that he looked up at the bloodstained girl on the desk. “I’m sure you’ll have another opportunity to have fun soon enough, but right now...,” the man trailed off as he offered the split a smile. “I’ve gotta talk to Riaru and Yū for a bit.”

Riaru’s current owner scratched casually at Riaru’s cheek causing red flakes to drift towards the table. “I like you, you're like me. But, before I leave I think I found an answer to your question!” The boy-girl gave the doc a red stained smile.

“My question?”

“You asked what my name was, remember? Well, I think I’ve come up with a good one! You can call me Nanashi, or just Shi for short.” The split flashed the old doctor a smile, a chunk of some sort of flesh marred the sincerity.

Kanou nodded slowly, studying at the black haired nineteen year old. ”I think Nanashi will work just fine.”
“We had the lab test the dried blood on the girl like you asked, it seems that the opponent she was
forced to fight was indeed human,” the man stated as gave his report to the Special Class.

The white haired man gazed out the window, his eyes following a bird that had strayed towards the
building. “This girl, you said she was a former investigator correct?” He inquired.

“Yes sir, she had been a prodigy for the time that she was here,” the brown haired twenty-four year
old answered as he joined his superior in watching the bird.

“If she was a prodigy why quit?” The bird’s white underbelly drew the men’s attention as it soared
slightly above them.

The investigator shifted uneasily as the past rose up to greet him once again. “Her mentor was...
killed during an investigation... Rumors said she had a mental break down and forgot all about
anything she had to do with the CCG.” The bird swooped lower. “She was a rank three investigator
though, so not many people made a fuss about her discharge. She might have been a prodigy, but the
circumstances... that got her in... well... they gave her a bad aura. Most people tended to steer
clear.”

“A bad aura?” The white haired man asked while his eyebrows rose with mild curiosity, he peeled
his eyes off the white dove.

“The... actions of her father, Tokaga, was a beacon of warning to us investigators, her past was a
constant reminder of the creeping darkness that haunts everyone here. No one hated her... they just
hated her past, and her past was the only thing most of us could see, myself included.”

The world had become dull to the nineteen year, everything had been tainted by the grey nothingness
that consumed her. She was empty, perhaps she was in shock?

Both her mother and brother questioned Kanou putting off of the girl’s next appointment with Mori
as the girl’s mental health had become far worse than her physical these last few days. She seemed so
listless laying in her bed for most hours of the day. The family couldn’t help but tip toe around the
fragile looking nineteen year old as she stared at the ceiling with a glazed expression.

The mother was growing increasingly worried for her only daughter as all of the meals she prepared
for the girl went untouched outside of her door or on her bedside table. Ramen grew soggy, curry
grew cold, fish became sour, and tea proceed to become lukewarm in its cup, everything went
uneaten.

Kohaku began to visit daily after work, and would stay for hours attempting to converse with his
languid sister. But, all of the man’s efforts went in vain as the girl remained deathly silent. It was day
three of her unending silence when he finally broke, demanding to know what was wrong with the
black haired girl. She had stared at him with soulless eyes and replied with a simple, “I can still feel
the blood on my hands.” He had asked nothing more after the incident and instead contented himself
with watching the news next to her.

“After information on the newest ghoul attack leaked the ward is in uproar, and many will be happy
to know that investigation over the recent abduction of a nineteen year old is now underway. For
those of you who have yet to hear, the girl in question had been held captive by ghouls for several
hours and later forced to fight for her life. Somehow the girl managed to escape and make her way to
the CCG. The name of this victim is still being withheld from us due to safety precautions,” the lady’s voice echoed through the screen as Riaru’s eyes began to glaze over as hazy memories bombarded the girl’s mind. Blood invaded her senses, black blood, gurgling breaths, feverish chunks of flesh bleeding beneath her fingertips, and the thick, salty pieces of chewy fat between her teeth as unstoppable laughter flooded from their lips, her lips.

Her head was pounding.

“Riaru,” Yū’s voice filtered in through the images, “calm down, I’m here.”

“No,” the nineteen year old whispered as her hands raised themselves up to her ears in an attempt to block out the sound.

“He’s not here right now, we’re okay. Let me take over now, your mom and brother are getting worried,” the split struggled to soothe the girl.

“NO!” The grey eyed girl screamed as she tried to smother the voice with her hands. Her wide and unseeing eyes taking in the horrors of the past.

Kohaku jumped at the wailing sound of his sister’s cries as their mother burst into the room to investigate.

“I won’t let you, not again, never again! Never!” She bellowed as tears prickled at the corners of her terrified grey eyes.

“Riaru!” Mrs. Genji cried out as she rushed over to her daughter’s side, fear overwhelming her normal sweet mask.

“Stop it! Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!” the host screamed as Yū attempted to break past the barrier the girl had set against her. Riaru refused to let the split take over, refused to let any split take over, her fear of what would happen if anyone took control scared her. She could still taste the blood.

“Sir, I’ve got a lead on the Genji case!” An investigator shouted as he zoomed in on the shaky and pixelated video footage.

“What’ve we got?” Shinohara asked as the thirty-seven year old leaned over the back of the man’s seat to view the evidence. Suzuya skipped over to the two older investigators as they watched the Genji girl exit a shop before her blurry form leaned over some sort of plant. The video was shaky and unstable, it had obviously been filmed by a phone. The loud rustling of clothes filtered through the computer’s speakers.

The three watched as a masked man exited a nearby alleyway, his hulking form engulfing the left side of the screen as he approached Kohaku’s younger sister.

The girl had been in the process of standing up when then ghoul reached her. They watched as the unknown figure slammed the girl’s head into the closest wall. The nineteen year old collapsing to the ground, unconscious. The camera took a violent turn towards the sidewalk before the phone stopped recording.

“The video was submitted anonymously a few days ago. We’ve yet to track down the one who sent it in, but…” The man paused to rewind the video and zoom in on the ghoul’s half mask, his scarlet eyes only visible as a few red pixels. “This seems to be our culprit.”

Shinohara studied the ghoul’s blurry mask. “It’s not a ghoul I recognize, it’s more than likely that he’s only a lackey, but… it’s our only lead. Run a scan on that mask, see if it matches anything in the
“Yes sir,” the investigator replied as he went to work.

_Who ever recorded that probably knows more than that ghoul_, Juuzou thought as he hummed a vaguely familiar tune. _He wouldn’t have the camera pointed at that cafe unless they knew something was going to happen_, the white haired boy shrugged his shoulders in indifference, it didn’t matter to him either way. Juuzou turned on his heal, following Shinohara out of the dreary room.

“We should call Investigator Genji, let him know what’s happening. I’m sure he’ll be pleased to know we’ve found a lead,” the older man stated as he pulled out his phone to dial the twenty-three year old’s number.

After a few rings the thunderous sound rustling of clothes filtered through the speaker startling the special class as he jerked the phone away from ear. “Genji?” He called into the phone, _what was happening?_ He brought the device back to his face. “Genji!” Shinohara called again trying to gain the man’s attention through the speaker. _Had he not meant to answer?_ Shouts emanated from the other side of the line forcing the thirty-seven year old to remove the phone from his ear again, incidentally allowing his younger partner to listen in.

“Riaru what’s wrong!” It was Kohaku’s voice that rattled the speaker.

An ear-splitting scream echoed after the question, causing the special class to wince, “Stop it! Stop it! Stop it! Shut up! I won’t let you! Not again! NEVER AGAIN!”

Sobs droned on in the background of the entire conversation, their source coming from an unknown individual. “Please sweetheart,” the gentle voice choked out, “Just calm down.”

“I won’t let you! Not when I can still taste the blood!” The scream thundered through the speaker, ripping through the two investigator’s eardrums. The Yukinori snapped the phone shut, effectively ending the call.

Juuzou rocked back on his heels, curiosity staining his red eyes as he continued to hum the same tune from before. _Interesting_, he concluded as they continued down the hall as if the call had never even taken place.

A grim look had made its way onto Shinohara’s face.
Rot

Mori Medical loomed in front of the girl, its windows reflecting back the hazy sky of Tokyo. *Maybe this would help*, Riaru thought as she walked into the building, maybe with his help she could get rid of them.

“You can’t get rid of me Riaru,” Yū stated, fiery disdain evident in her words.

The nineteen year old ignored the comment as she pushed open the front door, the usual hum of activity meeting their ears as the receptionist greeted them with a warm smile. “Nice to see you again Miss Genji, Dr. Mori is currently with another patient, but he should be done in a few minutes. If you can take a seat right over there while you wait.”

Riaru thanked the woman and offered a strained smile as Yū complained about the wait, “Mori needs to hurry up so he can fix this idiotic fear you’ve developed.”

“You’re right, he does need to hurry up and fix this idiotic fear that I’ve developed. And the only way to do that is to get rid of the two that caused it in the first place,” the grey eyed girl snarled as they ambled into the waiting area to take a seat.

There was unnerving silence between the two for a few minutes before Yū replied in a dangerously low voice, “If you get rid of us, you’ll have to deal with all the memories.”

Riaru’s shoulders tensed up, *what memories?*

“Ah, Riaru! Or is it Yū?” Mori strode up to the split minded girl with a shining smile that sent crows feet running from his crinkled eyes.

The black haired girl stared up at the doctor, her shoulders still tensed from her brief conversation with her split. Relief flooded her veins. *He would be able to help.*

Mori collapsed into his office chair, a sigh escaping his lips as his newest patient sat down in a chair across from the thirty-four year old. The girl stared down at her lap, nerves slithering through her veins. *I’m not ready to be alone, she thought as fear clenched down on her vocal cords, but, I’m ready for them to be gone. Riaru hardened her resolve and steeled her grey eyes to stare directly at the doctor before her. “Please get rid of them.”*

Mori carefully studied the Genji girl before him as he chose his next words with care, “Dr. Kanou informed me of what happened, but didn’t mention any details, whatever happened seems to have affected the relationship with your splits... Can you tell me what happened between you three?”

Riaru studied her hands for a moment, their skin raw from the constant washings they had received in the past few days. “Are you scared of them?”

Riaru’s gaze ripped itself from her hands. “I-I’m not scared of them... I’m scared of what they’ll do... Scared of what they’ve done, but most of all I’m angry that I can never stop them when I need to most.”

Mori leaned back in his seat, his interest peaking at this new side of his patient. “What did they do for you to be scared, what happened four days ago?”

Riaru’s fingers trailed up to her lips, the taste of iron filling her senses as the cheers of masked people came back to her... *what had happened?*
“Dr. Kanou said you were covered in a lot of blood, do you know whose it was?” the psychiatrist pressed as he leaned forward, his elbows resting on the wooden desk.

Thundering stomps of the past shook her in the seat as lights blinded her from above. “Don’t freak out, you know what happens when you freak out,” Yū’s hard voice echoed around her head.

What happened, she wondered. How did we get out of there? How did we survive? What did we do to survive? These thoughts stormed through the girl’s mind as confusion took over.

“If you get rid of us, you’ll have to deal with all the memories,” Yū’s voice hissed in her ear as their conversation from earlier reverberated through her mind.

Was this one of those memories?

“I can’t remember,” she whispered to the doctor, defeat resonating in the words as she fiddled with her hands. “But…”, Riaru trailed off. “I know it was bad, I know that we had to fight to survive, and I know I came to covered in blood that… wasn’t my own… I know that I’m still able to feel the blood on my hands… That I’m still able to taste the blood on my tongue…”

The doctor’s hands folded themselves in front of his mouth as he leaned further forward on his elbows.

She could taste it? Had the blood somehow made its way into the girl’s mouth during all of the chaos?

The session went on without incident as the clock marked the end of their meeting. Mori shook his wrist to look at the watch strapped to his arm. Riaru rose from her seat, her head bowed as she began to say her farewells.

“Your mother informed me that you haven’t been eating,” Mori stated as he looked up from the device on his wrist to gage the girl’s reaction. “I assume it has something to do with either your medication or what you told me earlier.”

Invisible hands clenched down on the nineteen year old’s throat as she forced herself to swallow. “It’s not that I’m not hungry, I am… It’s just that everything smells foul…”

Mori hummed in thought as he studied the black haired girl. “I’ve still got time before my next appointment, how about I treat you to lunch?” The man offered as he rose from his chair, the desk creaking in protest as he used it to help haul himself up.

Riaru’s eyes jerked up to meet the doctor’s green ones, her reply stuttering out given her surprise, “I-I couldn’t possibly…”

“If does have something to do with what you said earlier then it’s my responsibility as your psychiatrist to help you take care of it. Though if it is just your medication I’d still feel at fault for your eating habits… or lack thereof.” Riaru stared at her feet, still slightly unsure of his offer. “The office has started calling in a caterer most days, and we always end up with leftovers. Please, join me,” Mori insisted as he made his way towards the door.

Reluctantly the Genji girl followed behind the doctor, her feet shuffling lightly across the floor as they made their way out of the office and down the pristine hallway, the stench of chemicals tickling her nose as she tailed the thirty-four year old.

The girl sat uncertainly before the plate of food Mori had offered her. The stench of the vegetables gagged her, and the noodles reminded her of brown worms. Her hands rose to block any further assault on her senses as she clenched down on her nose and used her fingers to filter the tainted oxygen that entered her mouth. The shrimp that decorated the sliced steak below smelled rotten and
their pale, veiny flesh wriggled with life. “Do the...” the nineteen year old gulped down the lump that encaged her voice, “shrimp seem a bit... to fresh?”

Mori studied the girl from the corner of his eye as he picked up one of the shrimp on his own plate to take a bite. Riaru watched in horrified disgust as he chewed on the wiggling creature. “It tastes wonderful, you should try some,” the doctor stated as he swallowed food, a quiet scream traveling its way down his throat as the shrimp screamed in agony.

Riaru gently lowered her hands from their face. “Shrimp don’t scream,” she whispered in her mind.

“No they don’t,” Yū replied in a low voice.

A laugh echoed in the back of their mind.

“Try eating something Miss Genji,” Mori stated, the words resonating with his soft demand.

The only thing that even looked mildly appetizing on the plate Mori had made for her was the steak, though even that smelled of rot. Riaru’s fork lightly shook in her hand as she picked the utensil up and hovered it over the foul meal with its wriggling shrimp. She pushed aside the moving creatures with caution, exposing the grilled meat underneath. The nineteen year old swallowed the bundle of nerves that formed in her throat. Dr. Mori, seeing this caution, prepared a glass of water and sat it beside her. Riaru’s nose wrinkled at the stench of rot as she drew the piece of meat closer to their partially open lips.

_The medication should mess with her tastebuds, but not her other senses. The way the food tastes is almost certainly because of her medication, but everything else has to be a side effect from the trauma,_ Mori thought as he watched the girl push a small bit of steak past her lips. Disgust morphed the girl’s face as her tongue came into contact with the meat, her eyes clenching closed as the taste of rot rolled across their tastebuds. Riaru gagged on the piece of steak. “Please try to swallow it,” Dr. Mori pleaded as the nineteen year old’s face drained of color. “You need to get some sort of nutrients in you.”

_Could she swallow it?

The girl dropped the fork and reached for the cup of water to her right, all of her senses screaming for her to simply spit the food out. She gulped down the glass of water, the slightly chewed food sliding down her throat with it. Riaru didn’t stop till nothing but drops of the clear liquid remained at the bottom of the glass.

The meat got easier to eat as Mori coached her through the fact that it was her mind that was perceiving the food in such a disgusting way. The doctor eventually persuaded her into trying the noodles and a few of the vegetables, which she promptly spat out into a nearby garbage can. Soon after, the thirty-four year old attempted to get the girl to try one of the still wriggling shrimp, though she had drawn the line when it screamed as her fork stabbed through it.

For the next few weeks this became their new routine, Mori would talk over her grudge against her splits for an hour, invite her to eat with him, and then she would choke down a few mouthfuls of steak as Mori ate his fill beside her, every once in awhile putting in feedback on her progress. Riaru began to enjoy it.
“Missing”

“I apologize Miss Genji, it appears that Dr. Mori had a family emergency and will not be able to meet with you today.”

Riaru blinked at her, surprised. “Oh… Well that’s unfortunate do you know when will we be able to meet next then?”

“I’m not sure, but I’ll make sure to contact you as soon as I receive any new information.”

The conversation played over in the girl’s head as she walked down the sidewalk, the early afternoon sky staining storefront windows shades of light blues and subtle pinks of the approaching sunset. “I wonder what could have happened?” Riaru mumbled reluctantly to Yū, the underlying fear of her splits still obvious.

Yū ignored the slight tremor in the girl’s voice and replied with a, “Maybe someone died.”

A long silence stretched between them as their feet moved almost mechanically through the steadily increasing stream of foot traffic. Both of them so consumed in the thoughts in their minds that the continuous hum of conversation and shuffling of feet becoming lost in the thrum of their thoughts. The soles of their shoes dragged themselves across the concrete without them. Their minds whirled as they found themselves on a preordained path; one that had somehow managed to fuse itself into their minds. And finally, once reality came back to them, they stared at the door before them, their brains slow to process the sight.

Why did they continue to come here?

Anteiku loomed above the split minded girl as strands of her hair blew gently in front of her eyes. A closed sign sat propped up against the wall. The girl looked down at it confused. “Are they normally closed today?” Riaru asked her split off handedly.

“Hmm… and here I could’ve gone for a coffee,” Yū responded as they took a step away from the storefront.

“After what happened last time I honestly didn’t think that we would ever come back. At least… not until we stopped taking that horrid medication.”

Yū let out a heavy sigh as they continued down the sidewalk.

The next few days passed by in a haze for the split minded girl. Her mind always whirling, wondering where Mori could be, and why he had even left in the first place. Yet, even though her mind whirled none of the answers she came up with made any sense.

“Maybe it was him that died?” Yū had suggested at one point. Riaru had ignored the comment.

Even though they no longer had any appointments with Mori they continued to leave the everyday under the guise of going to see him. The last thing they needed was for Mrs. Genji to become concerned over the nineteen year old, Riaru’s mother worried over her daughter enough as it was.

So after Mrs. Genji left that next morning the two decided to make a trip to a nearby library. And then again the next morning, and the one after that. Both made a habit of spending countless hours between towering book shelves. They read old classics and novels still fresh off the press, they ate up compilations of short stories and poems, and got ahold of any Sen Takatsuki work that they could
find. Though the Black Goat’s Egg remained in the lead as their favorite.

It was during these times that her connection with Yū began mending and they bonded through the books that they read together. And though their conversations had regained their normalcy, Yū took obvious note of the door that remained locked just in front of her. Riaru still did not trust her with control, and Yū remained bitter because of it, but the split could not bring herself to hate her for it. No, her hate was directed towards the real problem. The self proclaimed Nanashi. Unfortunately for Riaru, confrontation would be unavoidable if they want to fix what her father had broken.

On their fourth day, after they had torn through a rather sizeable portion of the book shelf closest to them, they took note of something very strange. They were hungry.

They sat in silence for a moment, staring at the book in their hand without actually seeing it, the words before her blurring like she was trying to look at it from the corner of her eye instead of forward. Slowly they looked down at their stomach, it had been quite a while since they had been hungry, even if it was just a light pang. A small smile graced her lips, they were probably the first to celebrate the feeling of hunger.

Perhaps they should pick up some food.

Riaru perched them on the edge of their bed, as the two started down at the hamburger steak in their lap, the smell assaulting their nose as it wafted upwards. Hunger continued to naw softly at their bellies despite the rancid smell.

“It's all in your mind,” Dr. Mori’s voice echoed through their minds.

Riaru used a fork to cut off a small corner of the hamburger steak as steam drifted up into the girl’s face, making it hot. The nineteen year old shifted uncomfortably on her bed before pinching her nose and shoving the small parcel into their mouth.

Their taste buds recoiled.

Riaru swiped at the corner of their mouth as the grey eyed girl stepped out of the bathroom, the rotten taste of meat and the acidic sting of vomit lingering in the back of her throat as she threw themselves back down into her bed.

“Well, that certainly wasn't as bad as the shrimp Mori tried to get us to eat,” Yū stated as they rolled over to stare up at the unpigmented ceiling above.

A light chuckle escaped between Riaru’s parted lips as a car door slammed out the window.

“Riaru?” Mrs. Genji’s voice called on her way to the kitchen, “Are you hungry? I’m getting ready to make some curry! Your favorite!” The rustling of plastic, shopping bags catching the girl’s attention

The girl let out a low groan as she threw their arm over her eyes. Curry was actually Yū’s favorite. “Thank you, but I'm not hungry!”

Silence stretched through the house as Riaru’s mother leaned back against the kitchen’s counter. She stared at the lights above, the backs of her eyes stinging. The woman took in a deep breath, steeling some of her unruly emotions. “Well, if you’re sure sweetheart. I'll make sure to leave any leftovers in the fridge for you to eat later.”

“Thank you,” Riaru whispered back, to low to be heard by the girl's mother as she busied herself with kitchen work.
Reflection

A few tears slid from the corner of the girl’s closed eyes as her arm blocked out her view of the world. All the days before seemed to blur together creating a mosaic of the blurry pages of library books and a collage of scattered memories. When was the last time she had sat down and taken a meal with her mother, or even had an actual conversation with her? She couldn’t remember. A sad sigh escaped Riaru’s lips as she pushed herself into a seated position, their bedroom lights blinding her as she removed her arm from over their eyes. She blinked the black spots from her vision as the nineteen year old threw their legs over the edge of their bed, letting them dangle. “I don’t feel like we’re making much progress,” Riaru said as she looked at their feet.

“When have we ever made much progress?” Yū asked laughingly as she tried to lighten the mood.

“True, but… to be honest… I-I feel like we’re just getting worse,” the girl whispered. “We’ve had breakdown after breakdown since we started seeing Dr. Mori, and I feel like this medication is just giving us some sort of depression.” The girl hopped off of the bed and began pacing across the small room. “You never realize how important it is to be able to eat with other people until you can’t do so any longer,” she told her split as she stopped to look out the window, an array of buildings blocking their view of the sunset. “Don’t get me wrong,” Riaru stated as she began pacing again, “Dr. Mori seems like a wonderful man, but…”

“But, he’s still a stranger that we know next to nothing about?” Yū finished for her.

Riaru nodded silently as she pinched her lips in. “I hope he takes us off this medication soon.” The girl furrowed their eyebrows as she sat back down on their bed. She let out a tired sigh, “Let’s just take the medication and go to sleep. Hopefully everything thing will work itself out in the morning.”

“Agreed.”

Riaru reached over towards their bedside table to grab the small bottle, shaking out the last remaining pill.

“He’ll probably be back tomorrow when we go get a refill,” Yū said trying to soothe the nineteen year old.

“Hopefully,” Riaru replied as she popped the pill into her mouth and gulped down the remaining water from their earlier ‘meal’.

The next day the two headed out of the house, calling a taxi, and making a beeline for Mori Medical. Riaru’s heart felt lighter than it had the night before as the driver slowly made his way through 20th ward traffic. “Perhaps Dr. Mori will finally be there,” Riaru thought to her split as she stared out the car’s window.

“Maybe,” Yū replied as they stared up at the cloudy, winter sky that passed above.

“Thank you for the ride,” Riaru said as they opened the taxi door.

“Thanks for the money,” the driver laughed as he shook the money at her, a bright grin on his face.

The girl waved goodbye as she set off towards their destination, the building’s glass doors reflecting what little light came through the clouds.

“They seem a bit busy today,” Yū commented offhandedly as they entered the lobby.
Riaru nodded in agreement as attempted to shrink into herself as they headed towards the receptionist desk. But, as they approached the two noticed an unfamiliar woman sitting at the computer, Riaru could feel Yū’s brows mentally furrowing together. “Hello?” the nineteen year old spoke softly, gaining the woman’s attention.

Her dark brown eyes, drifted towards the girl’s small face, taking in her appearance. “How may I help you?” the woman asked as she finally met Riaru’s gunmetal eyes.

“Um, my name is Genji Riaru. I need to refill my prescription…” she replied.

The woman turned back towards her computer. “Do you remember who prescribed you the medication?”

“I believe it was Dr. Mori…” the girl said quietly.

The receptionist’s dark irises peered at her from the corner of her eyes, studying her once again. She turned back towards black haired girl, a strained smile on her face. “I’m afraid Dr. Mori is not in at the moment, and until he returns we will not be able to prescribe you any more refills since we don’t have his signature for approval.”

Riaru’s mouth formed a delicate ‘o’ shape as she looked down at their feet. “Do… do you know when he will return?”

“No ma’am, I’m afraid not,” the woman cast a sympathetic look her way before returning to her work.

Riaru’s head drooped, her black bangs shielding her eyes from view as she turned away from the desk.

“Maybe he’ll be back soon,” Yū offered as they headed through the doors once again.

“Perhaps,” Riaru mumbled as a winter breeze whipped around their frame and the monochrome sky above began weeping.

The two were completely soaked by the time they found a dry place to take shelter.

“On the bright side,” Yū offered, “We’ll be able to eat food normally in a few hours… That is if we don’t end up with a cold from all of this rain.”

Riaru let out a surprised laugh through her chattering teeth as they huddled underneath the awning that they had taken refuge under. Their bangs clung to their forehead and hung in front of their eyes, sending cold streams of water rolling down their already chilled face. Together they watched as the weather became worse, the rain came down harder, the wind whipped faster, and thunder roared overhead. Soon enough the small overhang that they had huddled under could protect them no longer.

Wind and rain lashed at their cheeks as they sprinted for the covered entrance of the train station just ahead. They rushed past several people with umbrellas and skidded to a halt as they finally reached a dry spot. Riaru bent over as she attempted to regain their breath, watching as rain water streamed from their hair and clothes. A violent shiver wracked the girl’s body as a gust of wind threw the girl’s wet hair back into their face.

“Well, that was fun,” Yū laughed breathily.

“That… was the exact… opposite… of fun,” Riaru stated between puffs, her teeth chattering from the
cold.

People streamed past them, most carrying umbrellas on their way towards the train; several threw them glances of pity as they passed in their dry attire. Riaru stood back up, her breathing finally back to a more suitable pace as she clutched at the stitch in her side.

“In retrospect we probably should have looked at the weather forecast,” Riaru panted as she walked further into the station.

“When have we ever checked the weather?”

“Obviously not today,” the nineteen year old muttered under her breath as she leaned back against a nearby pillar. The few people behind her glared from the corner of their eyes as they were forced to sidestep her. She shrank away from their harsh gazes and made her way to the opposite side of the column out of everyone’s way.

“You should’ve just told ‘em to shove off,” Yū said with a chuckle.

“I’m not you,” the girl mumbled as she reached down to wring out part of their shirt, a puddle already beginning to form where they stood. She stared at it guiltily before looking around to see if anyone had noticed.

“That’s my point,” the split said mildly annoyed, “If you were more like me you wouldn’t have to deal with half of the problems that you do now.”

“You’re right,” the girl sighed, “Instead that half would be replaced with all of the problematic situations that you put us in.” A small frown twitched at the corner of the girl’s lips as she remembers some such moments.

“Well… You’re not wrong,” Yū chuckled as their eyes drifted towards a nearby vending machine, their stomach giving off a low growl.

“Hungry?” Riaru murmured as she pushed herself away from the pillar. Their hair continued to drip as they made their way towards the wall of vending machines.

“The medication shouldn’t have worn off just yet,” Yū warned the girl she approached the nearest unoccupied one.

Together they stared at the displayed food, the corner of their lips pulling back in mild disgust. Even the thought of taking a bite out of the sweet, red bean mochi turned the girl’s stomach. “Maybe just something to drink then?” Riaru mumbled as their eyes drifted towards the machine next to them as she pulled out a hundred yen and sidestepped towards it. The girl looked up to see her translucent reflection in the machine’s glass front. She hardly recognized the girl that looked back at her. Dark circles had begun to ring the bottoms of the nineteen year old’s gunmetal grey eyes. Their black hair lay plastered to her face from the rain and hung low over their sunken eyes. The reflection’s head tilted down, obscuring its eyes and a sick, toothy grin converged on its face.

Riaru blinked furiously and she took a small step back into a person stood behind her.

“Oh!” the man yelped as her sopping clothes came into contact with his dry ones.

“Sorry,” the girl murmured apologetically as she turned to look at the man, her eyes slightly glazed over in shock as she looked at him.

The man took in her visibly shaken form with a glare. “Just hurry up, I don’t want to miss my train.”
The girl turned back towards the machine, making sure not to look up towards the grinning face that silently laughed at her. She put in the hundred yen and selected a random beverage before scurrying away the vending machine and winding through the crowd of people that had steadily increased over the last few minutes.

The girl took refuge in a dimly lit corner, cradling their drink to her sopping chest. “You okay?” Yū asked quietly, her voice lost within the rumble of the crowd.

Riaru’s breaths came in rapid pants as the walls closed in around her. Her knees trembled and her hands shook as the image of that sick grin plastered itself to the inside of her eyelids. Riaru clutched at their chest, her heart pounding wildly against her chest. The insane laughter was at beating her skull, invading all of her senses, she was fa…

“Stop it!” Yū’s voice screamed from their mind, almost shattering her skull with the violent vibrations it sent through her head.

Riaru took a few moments to calm her erratic breathing. She took a deep breath and held it there until she could no longer. The girl whispered a quiet thank you as she exhaled shakily, adrenaline continuing to pump through her veins. Meanwhile the laughter continued to echo lowly in the back of both of their minds.
"It'll be a miracle if you don't catch a cold!" Mrs. Genji scolded as she helped dry her daughter with a towel. Her hands working up and down her arms, attempting to warm the girl.

"Miracles have been used up long ago and lie cold on the concrete," Riaru muttered under her breath.

Mrs. Genji paused in her speech. "Did you say something honey?"

Riaru quickly shook her head no, clearing it of the fog that had set in. The girl’s mother studied her, worry clear in her eyes. "Why don’t you go take a hot shower and I’ll make some katsudon to warm you up. How does that sound?"

Riaru’s stomach revolted. "That's… that’s alright mother, but we’re really not that hungry." The girl offered her a weary smile as another shiver wracked her frame. After the incident at the train station their hunger has been all but forgotten. True, a light hunger pain continued to gently claw at their stomach, but the mere thought of katsudon turned their tastebuds sour. "I think we’ll take you up on that hot shower though."

Mrs. Genji hid the small frown that tugged at her lips. "Alright then sweetheart, just go warm up. If you change your mind though I can still make you something."

Hot water streamed over the girl's shivering form, purging the wicked smile from the backs of her eyes. And even though the reflection’s insane laughter had ebbed off the girl felt that it remained, just out of their hearing range. It’s weight weighed heavy in the backs of their mind as heat flooded their body. Riaru closed her eyes and looked up towards the hot water that rained down from above, searing their pale skin as it drove out the cold. The four walls seemed to disappear around them as steam clouded their vision and ate at the girl’s mind. The hot fog purging the nineteen year old of every thought that wanted to disturb the unstable peace within her head until only the steam remained.

“So, sweetheart,” Mrs. Genji said turning around at the sound of approaching footsteps. “What did you do today?”

The girl came up beside her mother, another frown pulling at her lips as her mind strained to recall the events of the day. “I…” the girl paused, her brow furrowing. “I can’t remember.” The nineteen year old laughed as she scratched at the back of her head in embarrassment. “It must have not been anything important,” she replied as turned back towards their room to dry her wet hair.

“You didn’t have an appointment with Dr. Mori?” the woman asked worriedly.

“He can’t meet with me everyday mother,” Riaru laughed gently as she made their way down the hall. “If only the world worked that way,” the girl chuckled under her breath as she pushed open the door to her room. Her eyes taking only moments to catch the empty pill bottle perched on the edge of her dresser. Her eyebrows furrowed as confusion swirled through her mind. “We must have run out this morning,” she mumbled under her breath. “Perhaps Dr. Mori will finally be there,” Riaru said smiling.

“Maybe,” Yū sighed.

Riaru’s brow wrinkled as she stared at the receptionist in front of her. “I'm sorry, what was that?”

The older woman’s brows lifted in mild surprise. “I said that our inability to refill your prescription hasn't changed since you came yesterday… Do you not remember?”

The girl stared at her blankly, a mask of confusion clouding her eyes as the girl’s brain went to work trying to recall anything before her shower. “Um… I apologize…” She murmured. “My… Memory of yesterday seems to be a bit… hazy. Sorry to bother you. Please call me if Dr. Mori returns. Thank you.” Riaru gave a quick bow before making a beeline for the front doors.

B“If you get rid of us, you’ll have to deal with all the memories.” Past memories of Yū’s words
Does this have anything to do with what Yū had said? The nineteen year old thought as their feet shuffled numbly down the sidewalk, her gaze on the bright blue sky above. Had the day before been as bright as this? She couldn’t remember.

“Does the fact that I can’t remember yesterday have anything to do with what you said all those weeks ago?” Riaru whispered, “Is this one of those memories that you mentioned?”

Yū stayed silent for a few moments, contemplating her next words. “Yes.”

Although the girl had been expecting such an answer it still managed to catch her off guard as a cloud consumed the sun above. Riaru’s mouth parted slightly, another question already on the tip of their tongue when the split interrupted her.

“Don’t ask me to tell you what happened. If you can’t remember what happened then that means you were not meant to remember what happened.”

“What do you mean?”

“Your mind, our mind, is constantly at war with itself. You know this. As it is the stability we have now is difficult to keep, especially after… well… you know… The both of us are barely able to keep the balance between all three of us,” Yū explained. “Now imagine what would happen if that balance got thrown off.”

Riaru didn’t answer.

“If you can’t remember what happened then that’s probably for the best,” the split stated as the cloud drifted away from the sun, blinding the two for a moment.

“For the best?” Riaru mumbled almost offhandedly.

“For the best.”

Countless hazy pages passed before their grey eyes, the book's numerous words never translating over into actual sentences. Nothing made sense anymore, not the words on the page, not even the thoughts in her mind. Everything had become a whirlwind of insanity and Riaru could do nothing but be swept along in its torrent waters. Hours moved along like seconds as they turned page after page, their brain never registering a single letter.

"osing time."

Words?

"Ma'am?"

Riaru's eyes snapped towards the sound. "What?"

An older man gave the girl a worried look. "The library is closing now ma'am." But, the librarian's grew twisted in their ears.

"What was he saying?" She pondered as her eyes drifted back towards the ineligible book page. She stared as some of the characters drifted together to form a word. Riaru squinted at, attempting to sort out the meaning. "Closing?" the girl whispered, testing out the word.

The librarian gave her a wary nod. "Yes ma'am, it's 7:05. I'm afraid we actually closed five minutes ago."

The nineteen year made a noise of approval. "It's probably for the best," she muttered.

"What was that?" the man asked confused.

The girl's head snapped back towards the librarian, her eyes widening. "Ah! I'm very sorry, I guess I wasn't paying attention to the time. My apologies." Riaru bowed her head slightly. "I'll be leaving then." She offered the man another short bow of her head before pushing up out of their seat.

"We've never been good at keeping track of time," Yū stated as they pushed through the library's doors. "But, you seem pretty out of it... Are you sure you're okay?" the split asked as they hurried down the steps outside the building.

"I'm perfectly fine," Riaru muttered when they had made it to the bottom. "If anything I'm a bit hungry," she replied absentmindedly.

There was a pause as they stopped at a crosswalk. "Well, the medication definitely should have worn off by now if you want to go grab something to eat."
"But... what about mother?"
Yū sighed, "She said she was working late today, remember? She'll be gone till at least nine."
Riaru's grey eyes followed the red tail light of a motorcycle speeding past. "She did say that... Didn't she?" She watched the red light flee further into the distance.
"She did."
A bowl of food sat before them, still as unappetizing as ever as their senses recoiled from the mere presence of it. But hunger gnawed at their stomach in short bursts as they sat at on the restaurant's bar stool.

“Just eat it,” Yū ordered. “Remember what Mori said? It’s all in our head. We just have to get past our immediate senses.”

“You saying that doesn’t make this anymore appetizing,” Riaru mumbled under her breath as she picked up the spoon and ladled up some of the broth. The nineteen year old pinched her nose as the liquid burst into her mouth. She remained frozen like that, eyes shut tightly, nose pinched closed, mouth in a hard line, and soup resting between their cheeks. Slowly the girl’s grey eyes peeked open, surprise dancing in their depths.

It took another three seconds for her mind to register the taste of dirty dish water.

Soup spewed from Riaru’s mouth, partially hitting the waitress that had come to refill her water. Broth dripped down the lady’s arm as disgust shimmered in her eyes and a frown pulled at her mouth.

Riaru stared at her in an horror. “I-I… I just remembered I’m supposed to meet up with someone!” the girl threw out a lie. She scrambled up from her seat, an apology spilling from her lips easier than the soup had as she pulled out a wad of money and threw it down on the counter. The waitress watched as the black haired girl bolted out of the front door as a manager rushed towards the woman’s side to question what had happened.

After that the days passed by at a funeral’s pace as their hunger steadily grew into a unrelenting force. Their days were hazy and hunger filled, and more often than not what they had done that day was swept away in a whirlwind of fog. It got to the point where Riaru’s mother eventually learned to stop asking where they went or what they did.

Mrs. Genji’s worry swelled higher than it had ever before. She had never seen her daughter in such a state. When the woman had sent the girl to Dr. Mori she had noticed things steadily getting better, but now… A sigh escaped her as she leaned against the back of the couch.

Perhaps her son would know what to do.

Kohaku had been meaning to visit his family again, but with the raid on Aogiri taking place in just a few days he couldn’t bring himself to face his mother. After their father had left she had become exceptionally good at sniffing out problems, and the last thing he wanted to tell his mother at this point was that he was about to wage war against a horde of ghouls. But there it was, a minute long voicemail begging him to come home and visit today. The twenty-three year old sighed as he leaned back in his seat to stare at the ceiling.

“Contemplating life again are we?” a voice spoke from behind him, spooking the young man from his thoughts.

The Genji boy perked up as he found the source of the words. “Amari-san! I thought you were going to be out for another week because of the baby?”

Eizō gave him a tired smile. “So did I. But, as it turns out they need be back for the raid.”

Kohaku frowned. “But!” he exclaimed wildly, “You just had a kid... You should be with your wife and son, not-not here! And certainly not participating in a raid like this!”

The twenty-nine year old laughed at the younger man’s exasperated face. “Why can’t you have that much fight in you when we’re out on missions?”

Kohaku frowned at the first class, the edges of his lips twitching as he restrained a smile.

Another notification lit up the young man’s phone. Genji looked down at it, slight fear in his eyes. A defeated sigh escaped him as he looked up pleadingly at Amari. “Can I ask you for a favor?”

“Mother? Riaru?” Kohaku called as he walked through the front door. “I’ve got someone I want to
introduce you to!”
The Genji boy’s brow furrowed when he received no response. Both he and Eizō removed their shoes before continuing on into the house. “Mom?” Kohaku asked as he peaked into the livingroom.

“Someone’s here,” Yū told the girl as they stared blankly up at the ceiling fan as it danced. It was a few moments before Riaru sat up from their position on the couch, startling the two that had just walked into the room.

“Riaru? What are you doing?”
The girl shrugged as hunger clawed at their belly.
Kohaku stared at her bewildered. “Are you okay? You... don’t seem like yourself.”
“There are three different people in my head Nii-chan,” the girl said as she stood up. “When am I ever okay?” She looked over towards the two. “Who’s this?”
The twenty-three year old’s mouth opened and closed unable to respond.
Amari cleared his throat as he introduced himself, “My name is Eizō Amari, I work with your brother. It’s nice to meet you.” He offered the girl a slight bow of greeting.

The boy shook his head to clear it. “Where’s mom?”

“In the kitchen. Have you two eaten yet?” the nineteen year old asked blandly as she headed for the other room.

“Ah, if I had known she was cooking I would have told her I was bringing company.”

“It’s fine. Mother! Nii-chan is here.”
Mrs. Genji’s head poked out of the kitchen, an ear buds dangling from her thin fingers. “What did you say sweetheart?” she asked as her eyes drifted towards their two guests. "Oh! Ko! You didn't tell me that you would be bringing company!" She looked worriedly back at her cooking. "I hope I made enough for everyone,” the woman said nervously as she chewed lightly on her bottom lip. "You made plenty Mother, I’m not very hungry right now,” she said as another wave of hunger tore at their stomach.
Mrs. Genji deflated at the words. “Of-course.” She offered a weak smile to the two men. “Please, come eat. I hope curry is fine?”

“So you’re my son’s partner?” Mrs. Genji asked as she passed around plates. The clinking sound of the family's nicest china filling the kitchen.

“Yes ma’am, he’s a very bright young man.”
The woman laughed, "I’d hope so. He’s not causing to much trouble is he?”
Amari chuckled, a small smile pulling at his lips. “No ma’am. He gets along well with the other investigator in our department.”
Kohaku smiled. “I could’ve told you that much myself.”
Riaru smiled meekly at her daughter.

Mrs. Genji looked up at her daughter. “Sweetheart?” her mother called gently. “Won’t you at least sit with us?” The woman smiled meekly at her daughter.

Riaru’s stomach revolted as she sat down with the other three, the strong stench of curry invading the splits’ senses. The girl’s nose scrunched up at the smell as servings were dished out between the other three. Everyone remained quiet as they ate, but within the silence the annoying buzz of the kitchen light began grating on Riaru’s nerves.

“So Riaru,” Kohaku asked between bites, “What have you been up to recently?”
The black haired girl studied her hands for a moment. “Who knows,” she replied quietly.
Kohaku looked up at the girl silently as he took another bite of curry. He looked over towards his mother and watched as she continually sent the black haired girl worried side glances. Something definitely wasn’t right here.

Eizō had known that the boy’s sister wasn’t totally right in the head. He’d heard the story from Takizawa of what had happened several weeks back. But, the unspoken tension that filled the room
told him that there was more to the tale than what he had heard. Obviously Kohaku had told him some things, but he had always been rather vague when explaining the situation. The boy had told him that his sister was the shy and quiet type, but the silence that emanated from her was different than that. It didn’t feel like she was too shy to speak, more like… She couldn’t. He furtively watched her from the other side of the table, studying how her eyes followed wooden gain of the table, how she flinched slightly each time a fork scraped against porcelain, and how she tried, almost desperately, to keep her nose from crinkling in disgust.

“May I be excused?” the girl asked suddenly, continuing to stare at the table. Eizō’s eyes snapped over towards Kohaku’s mother to gage her reaction. An unanticipated sadness flashing in the woman’s eyes as she gave a subtle nod of consent.

Amari took another bite of curry as the investigator watched the nineteen year old stand up and leave the room. Her retreating form disappearing into the living room and down the hall. The atmosphere had grown tenser now. Both mother and son sent each other silent glances, their gazes somehow communicating with the other from across the table. It was obvious that they didn’t want to say anything with him there. He scooped up another bite of rice.

Why had he agreed to this? Kohaku had seemed so desperate to get him to come along, and after he had explained the situation there was no way he could have turned the boy down. But, now… It seems as if there was more to the story of Genji’s mother inviting him over than what either of them had expected.

Eizō swallowed his bite before clearing his throat to gain the two’s attention. “May I asked where the restroom is?”

Mrs. Genji’s eyes widened slightly in surprise before she put on a smile that didn’t quite reach her eyes. “Of course, it’s the first door down the hall, it should be on your left.”

Amari bowed his head in thanks before leaving the mother and son to talk for a moment. He decided to leave after he returned and thanked them for the meal.

“First door on the left,” Eizō mumbled as his socked feet shuffled silently across the glossy wooden floors as he reached the door.

“...'m fine Yū,” a muffled voice stated beside him. The twenty-nine year old’s head snapped up at the sound. To the right of him a white door sat firmly closed, a voice seeping through the crack to where it just reached his ears.

“I’m fine Yū,” the girl sighed as she sat on the edge of their bed.

“I’m not stupid. I’m just as hungry as you. Idiot,” Yū sighed as she sat cross legged in front of the locked door Riaru had shut all those weeks ago. When will it open? She wondered.

“This medication… It should have worn off by now…” Riaru mumbled as hunger clawed at their stomachs. “I’m... scared that this hunger will kill us.”

Yū was silent, unsure of what to say.

“There’s not enough food in this body for the three people in my head,” the nineteen year old whispered. “I just… I just hope that Dr. Mori returns soon. I’m not sure how much longer either of us can take this..."

It was a few minutes before Eizō returned from the bathroom, his mind whirling from the one-sided conversation he had just heard. No one seemed to notice though as Kohaku and his mother had engaged in a heated discussion while he had been gone. Though their whispering stopped as soon as he set foot into the living room.

The First Class shook out his watch to check the time. “It’s getting rather late,” the man told them as he walked towards the table, “I should probably be heading back home now.” He smiled up at Kohaku’s mother. “Thank you for the meal it was delicious.”

Kohaku stood up as well. “I’ll walk you out.” The boy sent his mother a quick glance before giving him a strained smile.

“It was wonderful to finally be able meet you Amari-san!” the boy’s mother called as the two headed
towards the door. “Please do take care of my son!”
“I was nice to meet you too ma’am, and I will. He’s a good kid, and he’s great at his job. There’s no need to worry.”
“I’m a mother of two Amari-san. There is always a need to worry,” she laughed. “Especially when you are willing to give your life for them.” She smiled. “Now that you have a son of your own I am certain you will soon learn what I mean when I say this.”

“Thank you for coming,” Kohaku told the man as the investigator slipped on his shoes. “I feel bad for dragging you away from your family, apologize to your wife for me will you?” the boy said as he gave him a strained smile.
“No need to apologize, it was nice being able to meet your family. Perhaps I will invite you over sometime to eat with mine. Though maybe once Toru is a bit older,” he chuckled. “I’ll see you tomorrow Genji.” With that the man took his leave, the soles of his shoes clicking across the pavement as he set off towards a busier road to catch a taxi.

There is always a need to worry? The man implored silently as he went on his way. Surely that amount of worry would only lead to overprotectiveness? But, upon knowing the situation the family had been in at one time the investigator could not find it in himself to blame the mother for her fears. “Now that you have a son of your own I am certain you will soon learn what I mean when I say this,” her words echoed in his head.
“Perhaps,” he mumbled, “One day I will know what you mean.”
Cravings

As the days passed, the girl’s hunger steadily grew, leaving nothing but a never ending rhythm that pulsed within them. One that led them by the hand towards a hazy fog of hellish cravings. But, in the gaps between cravings, when the hunger had ebbed ever so slightly, there were several occasions when Mori’s face would flash through their minds. His kind, smiling face bringing them only a short moment of peace before another violent wave of hunger would crash into them.

Was Mori back? She wondered during one such instance. The girl couldn’t recall, but she could vaguely remember a call from the office. Had there been a call? Riaru thought about this for a few moments, she was almost positive that they had contacted her…

“Yū?” Riaru called.

But, it wasn’t the split’s voice who answered back, it was her own. “Yes?”

Or perhaps it was Yū’s voice… Everything was all jumbled up like the hot pots mother use to make.

Did mother use to make hot pots?

Riaru glanced at the clock. “It seems we're late for our appointment.”

“The one with Dr. Mori?”

“Mhmm…” the black haired girl nodded, her bangs obscuring their grey eyes as they headed towards the front door. “I hope Mori isn’t too upset with our tardiness…”

They hummed as they trudged down the cold sidewalk, their bare feet scraping roughly against the pavement. “Where did our shoes go?” she wondered as a traffic light flickered above them. “Did we lose them, or did we put any on before leaving? Do shoes even really matter?” As they continued walking she deduced that the answer was no.

They put one pale foot in front of the other, their identities clashing as hunger drove them forward with each step. “Which way is Mori’s?” Riaru muttered. “Then again does that really matter?”

Another wave of hunger ripped through them, this one stronger than the last. “Ah… it does,” the girl breathed, her voice sounding off even in her own ears. Did that really matter though?

After a time the nineteen year old found herself outside of Mori Medical, their face pressed against the chilled glass of its front door. How had we gotten here? She pushed it open, stumbling in when they lost its support. Hmm, did how we arrive really even matter though? The girl’s head tilted up slightly to look around the room, the only other inhabitant being the receptionist. “Ah, we’re late.” Did that matter? The woman stared at her, a startled expression on her face as she took in the worrisome state of the barefoot nineteen year old.

The door shut silently behind her.

“Worried?” the girl mumbled to the woman. “You look worried. Eye… No… No. Why, why is that?” She shuffled forward a few more steps. “For me? You’re such a kind child… No, woman. Such a kind woman.” A small smile made its way onto the girl’s face. “It’s not as cold outside as it looks.”

Another intense wave of hunger ripped through them, almost bringing the girl to her knees. “Right,” she mumbled, “Mori. I need to see Mori. I’m late for our appointment…” She stared up at the
receptionist, a desperate look in her eyes as the woman stared her down. “Where is he? I need to meet him on the fourth floor… the fourth floor… where is that?” She shook her head, trying to clear it of the fog. “Everything’s a mess, we can’t recall…” Riaru clutched at their black hair, tugging it gently in attempt to relieve the headache that was setting in. “There’s not enough food for three heads opening wetly like genitals to say hello.” They took another step forward, stumbling somewhat over their own feet. “I think, therefor I am. Just as they think, and therefor they are.”

The receptionist stared at her dumbly, an incomprehensible fear resting silently in her dark eyes.

“I think, and she thinks, and he thinks.” She clutched their hair tighter. “And we’re all always thinking! And there’s never silence! Because they’re all always screaming! Screaming in Mother’s voice, how did you fool yourself into thinking?!” The girl’s heavy breathing filled the space, their warbled voices echoing through the lobby. The nineteen year old took another step forward. “I have to tell Mori, I have to see him. Where is he?”

The receptionist’s mouth opened to respond, but fear kept a tight hold on her vocal cords. She had been warned about something like this happening. The doctor’s voice echoed in the woman’s ears, “Just mention the father.”

The receptionist swallowed her fear, as she stuttered out a reply. “H-he’s with your father.”

The girl froze.

“There’s a fifty-fifty chance that if you mention that her father is nearby, she will either a. flee or b. hunt him down.”

“My… father?”

“Y-yes,” the woman stuttered as terror coursed through her veins.

“Is he…” Riaru paused, “Is he here? I’ve… I’ve been meaning to visit.”

If I tell her that he left with Mori will she leave?

The black haired girl took another step towards the reception desk, a dangerous look in her eye. “I asked if he was here,” they muttered darkly, their voices dripping fire as they fused together.

The woman let out a small gasp at the sound. “H-he left with Dr. Mori just awhile ago. B-but, I… I don’t think that they’ll be back tonight.”

The girl’s fists slammed into the counter, the hollow bang resonating through the vacant lobby. The woman jumped back in fear, her eyes snapping closed with the sudden noise.

“Uoh........”,” the girl moaned in agony as she collapsed onto the pristine, white tile beneath them. “Gentle abuse, repeated over and over in “that box”.” Her head lulled down, crystal tears curling at the edges of her eyes. “Where?” she whispered. “Where is “that box”?"

The woman remained frozen in her seat, only the girl’s hands remaining visible to her as they clutched the edge of her desk with white knuckles.

“Where is he!?" she screamed, spittle flying from their mouth.

The woman yelped in terror. “I-I don’t know!” she cried, tears beginning to stream down her soft cheeks. All that could be heard was the woman’s muffled sobs as her hands attempted to hold back the sound.
“Ah…” the girl whispered, her eyes blankly taking at the tiles beneath their knees. “I need to find him, I need to apologize.” Riaru drew their legs up shakily beneath them, using the desk as leverage to stand. “I need to apologize,” she repeated quietly as she turned away from the woman to head towards the door. “I need to apologize for never having finished what we started that day.”

The next time the receptionist looked up the girl was gone.

The helmet seemed to fit to tightly against the investigator’s head, the edges cutting into his temples as he stepped over a ghoul’s mutilated corpse. Kohaku tried not to stare at it too long, the sight causing something in his stomach to squirm uncomfortably. He clutched his quinque firmly at the sight of blood splattered across the hall, he could practically taste the iron.

Thankfully he hadn't needed his weapon yet, seeing as all of the ghouls he had passed were already dead. Their corpses mangled by the young boy that he had been tasked to chase after. The dead ghouls did little to ease his worry though, fear of running into one that was still breathing continued to course through his veins. It wouldn’t be the first time the man had faced off against a ghoul, but in this case Amari was nowhere to be seen and he had been warned repeatedly to not rely on a rescue attempt from Suzuya.

At one point the twenty-three year old stopped to check for life, swearing that he had seen the ghoul’s chest rise. He had stood over the monster, ready to run his thin quinque through it when he realized that the head lay three feet from its body. The twenty-three year old’s hand snapped over his mouth to prevent himself from vomiting.

The black haired man’s eyes were drawn towards the end of the hall as a flash of white disappeared around the nearest corner. There was no denying the fact that there was something certainly something wrong with that boy.

Kohaku shook his head viciously, he would not judge the nineteen year old. He turned away from the body before taking off after Suzuya. It could have just as easily been his sister he was chasing after.

He shivered at the thought.

It took longer than Kohaku had expected it would to catch up with the boy. The twenty-three year old had assumed he would have been able to make quick work of the distance between them considering the trail of bodies Juuzou had left in his wake.

He had assumed wrong.

The boy had already entered a domed tower near the back of the compound by the time Kohaku had finally managed to catch up with him. His breathing heavy as he walked up towards the door his target had just disappeared behind.

“-ason? Are you Jason?” Juuzou’s voiced echoed through the doors just ahead.

The Genji boy’s pace slowed as he listened in.

Who was he talking to at a time like this?

“I… Yakumo… I am… Yakumo…” Kohaku froze at these gurgled words. “No… I-I am Yamori… The demon of the 13th ward… The death god of Friday…” the voice paused to take in deep breath. “Jason…”
Ice slammed through the twenty-three year old’s veins as he finally recognized the alias. He approached the room with caution, his quinque locked in a white knuckle grip as he eased one of the doors open, peeking his head through.

Genji looked through the small opening, his grey eyes taking in the scene. He watched as Jason’s nostrils flared taking in the white haired boy’s scent. “What a nice smell…”

*He probably smelled like death.*

The ghoul paused, his eyes drifting towards Kohaku’s gunmetal one. “Tokage? Tokage…” the monster muttered. “Here to finish me off are you?”

The 2nd class froze at these words, adrenaline pulsing through him like an extra heart beat.


Kohaku stared at the ghoul in horror. *How does he known that name?*

“Tokage…” the ghoul called to him, as he began gathering his limbs beneath him. “Give me more of your flesh!” The ghoul made a sudden lunge for him, his bloody teeth bared as a kagune erupted from his back.

At the sight Kohaku slammed the door shut behind him, bracing himself against it. He waited for the ghoul’s impact, but no such thing ever came.

After a few moments he eased away from the door, uneasiness slithering through him as he cautiously backed away from the entrance. Not long passed though before his uneasiness was replaced by a pure unadulterated fear, one that blindsided him at a single thought.

*Juuzou is still in there.*

Kohaku slammed through the door, not giving much thought as to what he would do once there. He hadn't known what he’d been expecting to find once he had thrown open the door, but what he saw was certainly not anything he had imagined.

“...It's completely different… completely!”

The boy's white hair was replaced with black.

“He won't die! He won't die!”

The knife in his hand was replaced with a hammer.

“Juuzou did it!”

And the monster beneath him was replaced with one of a different breed.

His quinque collided with the floor.

“*Lemme at him! Lemme at him!*” the girl's boyish laughter echoed across the checkered floor. “I wanna play more! Let me play!” Her psychotic laugh had encaged his mind.

“*Let go Kohaku!*”

“Kohaku~u…”
The past dissolved before his eyes, leaving a bloodstained Juuzou in its stead. He flinched at the sight, his helmet colliding with the door frame behind him.

Curiosity stained the younger boy’s eyes as he studied the twenty-three year old.

“J-Juuzou?” The 2nd class asked hesitantly. “You’re alright?” The tension in his shoulders melted with relief. “Thank God, I was so worried when I realized that you were still in here.”

The nineteen year old’s head tilted ever so slightly to the side. “I wonder who he was talking about.”

The twenty-three year old blinked at him cluelessly, thrown off by the

“Tokage… Tokage…” Juuzou called out, mocking the ghoul’s deep voice as he turned back towards the body. “Give me more of your flesh!” The nineteen year old laughed at his imitation.

“Ah… That's right. Why?” Kohaku mumbled as he leaned against the door frame. “Why did you bring up that bastard?” the twenty-three-year-old asked the corpse.

“Who?” Juuzou replied in his stead, his joyous hum filling the silence as he fiddled with the ghoul’s body. “Kakuhou, kakuhou?”

Kohaku paused. “My… My father.”

“This is no good…” the boy mumbled, “I have no idea where it’s at… I guess I'll just take the whole thing.”

“Why did he have to bring up my father?”

Was this the way they had gone? Then again did it really matter? What were they suppose to be doing again? Hunger ripped through the girl’s stomach again, this time it was a wave strong enough to double them over. Was it eating? Was that what they were suppose to be doing? Then again, did anything else really matter? When was the last time they had even eaten? She couldn’t recall. All she knew was that this insatiable hunger that had consumed them, they needed food, meat… flesh. Flesh? Yes, they needed flesh.

Again they trudged down the sidewalk, the cold that bit into their bare feet hardly registering over this agonizing hunger. “I think, and she thinks, and he thinks, yet there’s only one body to feed because of the “gentle abuse, repeated over and over in “that box”.” She paused, stopping just outside of a familiar building. The strong aroma of coffee drifted down its stairwell to greet them.

Though this alone was not enough to give them pause, there to was an underlying scent that wafted down with the coffee, drawing them in.

Their mind began bursting at the seams, each split fighting for control.

Who would be the one to eat? Who would be the one to eat? Who would be the one to eat?!

The sign outside the cafe read closed, but Riaru’s raging mind barely even registered the words. Did it even really matter anyway? All there is is this hunger. Drool dripped unconsciously down the girl’s face as they made their way up the stairs. All they needed was food. Slowly their feet advanced up the steps, the hollow sound resonating into the store above. We just need to eat. They reaching the landing, stopping there to stare hungrily at the thin door. This is the only thing preventing us from
pacifying this pain. Flesh would pacify this pain. Time creped by slowly as the girl reached for the doorknob and began turning it. The gradual ticking of the handle turning resonated through her mind as the door creaked open. So close. The girl’s head nuzzled its way inside the small crack that she had created. Her eyes scanned the dark cafe, her vision allowing only an empty portion of the room to be taken in at first. Food. The door opened more, the girl’s black hair cascading around her eyes as she gained a better view of the room. Flesh. Eat. Food. So close. So close.

Enji set his bag aside, careful not to make a sound at he listened to a set of footsteps ascend Anteiku’s stairs. And he watched, a small, brown package in hand, as Anteiku’s door groaned open and an unidentified shock of black hair bled through the small crack. A crazed grey pierced his vision as the ghoul watched the stranger, their nostrils flaring.

Her grey eye swiveled towards Enji, locking onto the package in his hand. “I smell...,” she whispered as drool pooled from the corners of her lips. “Food...” Riaru’s head pivoted towards the small parcel, a single black and red eye materialized from the depths of her pitch stained bangs. “Give it to me.”

“How did you fool yourself into thinking you would be loved?”
Not Alone

Night of the Ghoul Restaurant Incident:

The quiet clink of coffee cup and the sweep of the broom filled the nearly empty café as Anteiku closed for the night. For once a peace existed between the eye-patched young man and the purple haired waitress. The two working together in between the gaps of silence, that is until a loud buzzing noise filled the room, scaring both parties.

A mug smashed to the floor, littering the ground with shards of white porcelain. “Shitty-neki!” Touka shouted, a small rush of adrenaline pulsing through her at the breach of peace. “Keep that thing on silent when you’re working!”

The black haired boy apologized profusely as he pulled out the phone to mute the device. The screen lit up as he pulled it out his pocket, a text and attached picture lighting up the boy’s face with a light blue sheen.

Tsukiyama Shuu: *I have a present for you~ Best hurry~*

Kaneki’s eyes trailed nervously down the screen, scared of what picture the man could have possibly sent him. Memories flashed through his mind as an image of the ghoul restaurant burned into his exposed eye. The blood stained floor, the blinding lights, and the two opponents that had centered themselves in the arena. He tapped against it to enlarge the picture. A large body laid sprawled out across the floor as another, smaller form, loomed over them. The moment was frozen in time as the girl’s hand rested in a gory thigh wound on the downed man. The one-eyed ghoul swallowed a lump in his throat as he ripped his gaze away from the image. How was this a present? Slowly his grey eye tilted towards the girl captured in the image, the familiar face offering an insane smile for the camera as her stare aimed itself towards her audience. Her right eye offering an answer to his previous question as it bled red veins across the side of her face. Her pitch stained sclera and her blood red iris nearly stopping his heart. Kaneki finally understood why the purple haired man would send him such an image… He wasn’t alone.

“What’s so important that you decide to stop sweeping Shitty-neki?” Touka asked as she stomped towards the eighteen year old, peeking over his shoulder at the device clutched tightly in his hand. The image startled the waitress as she took in the sight before them, taking a few moments to process the information. “I’m gonna to go get the Manager.”
Fan blades danced above the split minded girl as she opened her eyes, their lids heavy as they forced
them open. “What happened?” Riaru mumbled to Yū as she attempted to focus their bleary vision.

“You know,” a voice stated towards their left, “If you were that hungry you could’ve come in and
asked nicely.”

The nineteen year old rolled their head towards the person, their looming form coming in and out of
focus.

“I was almost finished cleaning up as well.” The girl watched as the man scratched at the back of his
head, surveying the dark and damaged room. Several broken chairs and stools littered the area
around the girl.

"What happened to us?" She asked her split, senses reeling as she tried to recall what had occurred.

"I can’t… remember…" Yū muttered.

“I’ve gotta say,” the stranger spoke up again. “You gave me quite the scare when you peeked your
head in here,” the man sighed. “I thought for sure that you were an investigator… That is until I saw
that eye of yours.”

“Our eye? What’s wrong with our eye?” The nineteen year old thought, panicking as she reached
up towards them. They’re not hurting and there doesn’t seem to be anything wrong with it. Riaru
studied the man, his face lost in the shadows of the dark café. “W-who are you?”

“Normally I would be the one asking that you know,” the man replied, his tawny eyes illuminated in
the headlights of a passing car. “After all you were the one that trashed the place. But, considering
that I actually do know who you are I won’t be asking. It’s Miss Genji, correct?”

The girl could only stare at him. “How does he know my name? Did we meet him somewhere? Is he
a friend of mother’s, or maybe brother’s? He did mention investigators, but didn’t he say that they
scared him? Why would he be afraid of investigators?” Riaru’s heart picked up its pace, thousands
of possibilities racing through her mind, most of them bad.

“Calm down,” Yū instructed, “We don’t need him showing up. But… by the looks of it…” the split
trialed off as they glances around the destroyed room, “he already has.”

Koma studied the girl as confusion stained her grey eyes. He hadn’t recognized her at first, the lack
of blood and the higher pitched voice throwing him off when she first came in. It wasn’t until she
had charged at him that he had realized who she was. It had been several weeks since he’d first meet
her, but he’d never be able to forget those devilish eyes as she had barreled towards him in that
arena.

“H-how do you know my name?” Riaru asked as she pushed herself further up off the ground,
careful to avoid the shards of wood and other debris that could hurt them.
Enji’s eyebrows furrowed inwards. Ah, he thought, I was wearing a mask at the time. It would be foolish to expect her to remember me. The man cleared his throat, “Kaneki told me who you were on our way to help you. I was one of the people who saved you from the restaurant.”

This time it was Riaru’s turn to furrow her eyebrows. “Restaurant? Why would I need to be saved from a restaurant?”

Silence seeped through the café as Enji’s next words weighed heavily on his lips. “The…” the man coughed lightly, “ghoul… restaurant.”

Another car drove by outside, its headlights streaming through the blinds, sending slants of light dancing through the room. All was silent. The nineteen year old stood before him, head down, black hair cascading over her eyes, clothes slightly torn and off kilter, her form haunting in the shifting light.

_Save wasn’t responding, had he said something wrong? Had he triggered memories she’d rather not see?

Her pale lips opened, forming words he couldn’t hear over his own thoughts.

Enji swallowed a lump that had formed in his throat. “What was that?”

“What do ghouls have to do with any of this?” she repeated, her quiet words lingering in the air.

He resisted the urge to flatout laugh in her face. _What do ghouls have to do with any of this?_ He thought, laughter echoing through his head. “You must be joking!” The man’s hardy pounded against the café’s walls, “Everything, they have to do with everything.” The man cracked a smile as he stared at her, trying to lighten the mood, “We are ghouls after all.”

But, there was nothing but silence from the girl.

“Ghouls?” She replied after a time, her mind pulsed. “Ghouls…” Their personalities were fragmenting, shattering, mincing themselves to dust. Distraught laughter fell abruptly from her lips, resonating through the small café, encaging Koma with the sound of her lunacy.

Suddenly Enji was reminded of the restaurant. He’d be lying if he said that the girl he’d seen in the arena hadn’t frightened him, though not necessarily in terms of power. The girl’s blood splattered body, the destruction behind her, the blood in her teeth; none of it had fazed him. But, the flitting laughter the girl had released as she watched several souls fall at their hands had him transfixed, and the insanity that he had witnessed in her eyes terrified him.

The man took a step back.

“Ghouls,” the girl repeated, her quiet laughter quickly becoming hysterical as memories of her father caressed her cool flesh. “You think we’re ghouls?” Another car drove by, lighting up the nineteen year old’s smiling teeth with a flash, blood glistening at their pearly edges.

“There’s no use trying to hide it…” he said almost uncertainly. “I know you’re a ghoul. But… there’s no need to worry… our kind has t-”

“It’s always ghouls,” the girl choked out, cutting him off as her laughter died in their throat. “Why must everyone call me that!” the nineteen year shouted abruptly. “Stop calling me a ghoul! I’m not! I’m not!” Riaru’s words slammed against Anteiku’s walls, reverberating back at an almost painful decimal. “I’m not a ghoul!”
The girl’s heavy breathing filled the cafe, the sound a mere whisper compared to her earlier screams. Enji stared at her in shock, astounded by her outburst. _Was she not a natural born half blood?_ The ghoul took another step back as he continued to think, _the incident with Kaneki was an accident, a series of unfortunate events. Was it possible that another such anomaly had occurred?_ No… she had to be bluffing.

Koma took a step forward, a more serious look in his eye. “There’s no use lying to me kid, you can’t fool a ghoul of my caliber with that kind of acting.”

“Acting?” the girl sputtered, laughter bubbling between syllables. Riaru’s gunmetal grey eyes locked with his as she took a step forward. “A ghoul’s regenerative abilities are supposed to be phenomenal, correct?” Riaru whispered in a low voice.

Enji took another step back at her advance, only daring to nod his head at the question.

“Then tell me,” she spat out bitterly. “Why did it take months to heal the injuries Father threw my way? Tell me! Why was the man’s face who was eaten by ghoul later smashed in by a human! Tell me! Why my toenails took over half a year to come back! My toes won't grow back you know!” Riaru shouted, her voice dipping lower as hysterical laughter flooded from her lips. The nineteen year old pulled at her hair, words spilling from her mouth like froth from a rabid animal. “I wanna play! I wanna play!” She screamed. “Stop it! I wanna play! Let me play!”

Enji stared at her in shock, his body unconsciously shuffling backwards at the split’s display.

Her identities were clashing relentlessly, obliterating any obstacles in their way. “Stop!” She screamed, her voice cracking like thunder. A smile pulled at their lips as silence seeped across the room. “Hammer time.” Another passing car lit up her eyes as she charged at the man. Fresh blood glinted in her teeth as the girl laughed.

Enji prepared himself for the attack, chiding himself for his earlier actions. He had just willingly given his enemy a power boost.
Sanity

The girl’s head pounded a rhythmic beat as sunlight bled through the mouth of two buildings, staining the backs of the split’s eyelids a deep scarlet. She woke up in an alleyway, the sounds of a nearby crowd bringing her into the waking world.

Blaring car horns cleared her groggy mind as she opened their bleary eyes, the sunlight almost blinding them at first. “It almost feels like we drank one too many bottles of sake last night,” Yū mumbled, their lips having to peel themselves apart to do so.

They were thirsty.

A blanket that had been laid over their torso slid down as Yū pushed them up. The split lifted one of their hands, inspecting it in confusion. She was in control.

“Riaru?” she called gently, probing their mind for signs of the girl. She found the door that had remained between them, its remnants scattered about in shards. Almost like that table from last night, Yū thought as she stepped through its beaten frame. Last night… The split’s heart rate picked up as fragments of the night before came hurdling towards her. “Riaru!” she called again as she combed their mind looking for any signs of the nineteen year old.

“We’re not ghouls,” a voice stated from behind the split.

Yū turned towards the sound, finding a horrifically familiar room when she did.

A ten year old Riaru sat curled up in the corner, her long black hair streaming down her rounded face like silky, tar tears. “We’re not ghouls,” she repeated, her small hands gripping the edges of her holiday themed dress with white knuckles. The girl looked up, a cocktail of red and grey staring back at the split. “Are we?”

Yū resisted the urge to step back at the sight as more memories from last night emerged. Instead she forced herself forward, approaching the young and fragile state of her host with the gentleness of a mother. “No,” the split whispered softly, kneeling down to embrace the girl. “We’re not ghouls.”

It is only our body that has somehow become like that of a maneater.

Riaru had spent many hours as a child studying the biology of ghouls. Years before her mind shattered and the first split appeared she would spend long hours going through books and articles. At the time her mother had thought it was her being interested in becoming an investigator, or at least a craving to know more. But, Riaru had read all of those texts for no other reason than to prove her father’s insanity wrong.

Through the bruises, the cuts, the burns she would spout these facts at him.

“I’m not healing.”

But everything she threw his way, he deflected.

“You haven’t eaten.”

“But, I’m your daughter.”
“You were swapped at birth.”

“Just kill me then!” she has screamed one day after a particularly brutal session, tears rolling down her reddened cheeks.

“What would be the fun in that?”

She hadn’t been a ghoul then. So, the question was, what had changed? If the split thought to long on the topic she was certain a migraine would set in. Their already splitting head only adding more weight to her already heavy shoulders. Yū threw the blanket off of them, barely giving it a second glance as she stumbled towards the mouth of the alley.

After she had led the young Riaru to a nicer memory, leaving her there to watch fireworks with younger versions of her mother and brother, she left her to sort through their memories from yesterday. The encounter with the man from last night was rather hazy, she couldn't remember much before walking up amidst the remains of that table. And the events that followed were only coming to the split in fragments.

“We are ghouls after all.”

Yū shook their head as she leaned against a shop window to steady themselves. The concept was completely illogical. Yū looked towards the window, taking in their disheveled appearance. She locked eyes with the two grey ones that stared back. Perhaps this was all a dream?

“There’s no use trying to hide it…”

Their right eye flicked red for a moment, startling the split as she took a step back, almost running into someone walking behind them. She shook her head again, the headache beating wildly with the rhythm of their heart.

“I know you’re a ghoul.”

She couldn't be thinking about this right now. There was no telling exactly what had happened last night, but one thing was certain, the barrier between the three of them had been completely demolished. The third split that Riaru so greatly feared could just as easily take control of their body as Yū could now. That doorway had to be fixed as soon as possible, otherwise they could wake to find him in control and bloody chaos encircling them. We need to get home, minimize any possible damage before the wall gets repaired. Though I can't do it myself, Yū thought as she bled into the crowd around them, trying to find out where they were. It can't fully be repaired until Riaru gets it together, and considering how traumatized she was earlier there’s no telling how long that will take. Her recovery could be anywhere from a few days to a several months. The last time the split had seen Riaru so distraught was directly after the ‘incident’. Yū had only been recently brought into existence, put there to protect the girl from the other split, but there hadn’t been much she could do. Given that she was rarely able to take control from that demon. It was during that time that they landed themselves in the hospital’s psych ward for three months. Their third split running rampant through the hospital and their heads until Riaru finally regained some form of composure and helped take over. The nurses had been shocked at the girl’s sudden change, but after three more weeks, and a lack of violent outbursts, they were forced to discharge the black haired ten year old.

Yū looked up, gaze landing on a nearby street sign. We're closer than I thought. The split sighed, exhaling steam. Come to think of it, it's almost Christmas isn't it? Yū though as she paused at a stoplight, waiting to cross the road. Riaru will want to get something for Mrs. Genji and Kohaku…
even if she can't tell me herself.

This certainly hadn't been the first time that the trio had disappeared for a night, but Riaru's mother treated it as such.

The woman's eyes were bloodshot, and purple bags hung heavy beneath her pale, grey eyes. "Riaru!" the woman shouted as she launched herself from the couch to engulf the split in a constricting hug. "Where have you been?! I couldn't get a hold of you, and I called the hospitals and the police to see if they'd seen you! And when they said that hadn't I got even more worried! I tried calling Kohaku to see if he could send out investigators to find you! I was sure you had been eaten!" The woman sobbed into the nineteen year old's shoulder, barely taking time to take a breath as warm tears began staining the girl's ragged shirt. "But, I couldn't get ahold of him, and... and!" Another sob wracked the woman's tired frame, "I was so worried!"

Yū stood there, frozen for a moment, unsure of what to do. Usually it was Riaru who dealt with her mom and handled the overly emotional woman.

Slowly she let her arms lightly embrace Mrs. Genji in an awkward hug. "Sorry... Mom..."

"Oh Sweetheart!" the woman wailed into their shirt. "I was so scared you had gotten hurt! I-I traced your phone to Dr. Mori's and thought that you had an emergency meeting, but... when I talked to the lady there... she said that you hadn't had any appointments in weeks," her voice dropped lower towards the end. "What've you been doing sweetheart?" the woman whispered, her words somewhat mumbled by the split's shoulder as tears continued spilling from the mother's eyes.

"I know, I'm sorry..." the split replied, gently rubbing the woman's back. "But, it looks like you and I both had long nights. Why don't we talk once we've gotten some rest?" Yū suggested as she pulled away from the woman, holding her as arms length. Her cheeks glistened with tears and she continued sniveling as snot attempted to run from her nose. "We're here, we're safe. There's no need to worry any longer... Go get some sleep, okay?"

Yū steered Riaru's mother towards her own bedroom, her tired head bobbing in agreement. "I'm sorry..." she mumbled, eyelids threatening to close as she was led down the hall.

"For what?" Yū asked, brows furrowing.

"For never noticing what was happening all those years ago..." the woman's words slurred together as she shuffled down the hall. "I promised myself I'd never not notice anything again... b-but I haven't done too well..."

"...But, you've done your best..." the split mumbled, "and that's all that matters to Riaru..." Yū corralled the mother to her bed before leaving her there to sleep, she didn't speak again until she heard a soft snore escape the woman's mouth. "You care... and... that's enough for us..."

Yū closed their bedroom door behind them, fatigue pulling at their limbs as the split went to switch out of their ratty clothes. After changing she held out the shirt to examine it, holes were scattered about the thing, one particularly large one had left them with an exposed shoulder. She sighed, no doubt they had probably received plenty of alarmed stares on their way here.

She tossed it into the trash can before finally collapsing into bed. "I'll take a shower when we wake up," Yū muttered as she flung an arm over their face to block out the morning sun.
It was true that they felt better than they had in weeks, but gravity had a different idea as to what exactly ‘better’ meant.

Yū’s mind was ready to go completely blank when she remembered to check on Riaru. The thought sent a small jolt of alarm to the split, worried on how the girl’s mental state was faring with all of this turmoil.

It took a few minutes to find her at first, having to sort through the different memories that she could've locked herself in… or been trapped in. Yū had been ready to start going through the nightmares when she found the nineteen year old playing hide and seek with Kohaku at a park near their old home.

Her laughter echoed across the nearly desolate playground, giving her position away almost immediately to the older boy. But, like the good big brother he was, Kohaku pretended not to hear the bubbling giggles coming from his left.

Yū settled on a bench nearby, watching the two play.

It would be awhile before Riaru’s mental stability returned, she had never seen the girl delve this deep inside her memories before. The Riaru that she looked at now seemed to be at least three years old, four years before the nightmare that was her life began. She couldn't bring herself to blame the girl though. After almost three years of abuse from her father because he had considered her a ghoul, it was no surprise that she'd be in such a state after discovering that her father was no longer wrong.

A tired yawn escaped the split’s mouth, there was no telling how much longer she'd have to wait for the girl to return with even a small fragment of her sanity. Yū gave the brother and sister one last glance before her eyes drifted close and she fell into oblivion.
Yū woke earlier than anticipated, jolted awake three hours later by the gentle prodding of a certain split. His childish laughter echoing lowly in the back of their mind.

She had to come up with a plan, quickly.

Yū stared at the ceiling for a moment, contemplating her next move. There was no way she would be able to hold him back, the split had no doubt in her mind that he would be loose by sundown. *What to do?*

There was no checking themselves into a psychiatric hospital, their new found secret to much of a risk. Their right eye pulsed painfully at the thought.

Yū shook their head, now was not the time to think about that, they had to get away from Riaru’s mother.

*Get away…*

The split scrambled off the bed, rushing towards the girl’s closet. If they didn't want to endanger themselves or Riaru's loved ones then the best way to do that was to get away from them. Yū threw on a thick hoodie and sweatpants before grabbing a backpack and shoving everything they might need inside. After the bag was brimming with clothes and other necessities she made a mad dash towards the kitchen.

The clock on the stove read 9:37.

A bowl of fruit her mother had set out caught the split’s eye, she paused at it, taking in its contents. She realized, as they stared the bowl’s brightly colored fruit, that they could no longer eat any of it.

Yū leaned against the counter, head bowing over its pristine surface as a headache began settling behind their eyes. The girl’s brows furrowed inward as the question as to how this had happened resurfaced once again.

Yū shook their head, pushing away from the counter. “This isn't the time to think of things like that,” the split mumbled lowly as she went to get a bottle of water to add to their supplies. “We have to get away from here first. For Riaru's sake…” Yū whispered as she headed towards the living room. “We need to disappear.”

The split traversed the more secluded streets of Tokyo, gradually working her way towards the 14th ward. She didn't dare take any public transportation, fear of a sudden take over casting a shadow of unease over her.

At first Yū had thought of disappearing into the countryside, but when she realized that its smaller population would leave them with a higher chance of being recognized again if a certain someone went on a rampage. So instead they headed Southeast, towards the 14th, though at this point she hadn't even cared what ward they found themselves in, as long as it wasn't the 20th. She had to get them away from anyone they had ever associated with.

The split peeked out the mouth of the alley she had found themselves in before slipping into the thin stream of traffic. Yū glanced up at a street sign before checking the time, the split sighed. *I need to*
get us as far away from here as possible, the split thought as she hunkered down against a cool blast of wind that shot down the street. “If we keep at this pace it'll take another hour and a half to cross over,” Yū mumbled as she jogged across a crosswalk, bumping shoulders with someone. “Best case scenario I can hold him off until we get to the 11th or 12th ward.”

Juuzou stared at the retreating figure behind him, a sly smile slipping onto his pale face as the girl’s words drifted towards him. “Ah… Is a certain personality coming to visit I wonder?” The boy chuckled lightly before he turned and continued down across the street, humming as he went. “I wonder what will happen?”

The moment they crossed into the 14th ward a sigh of relief escaped the split, just the mere thought they were out of 20th had alleviated a huge weight that had settled itself on her shoulders. She looked around, shielding their eyes from the early afternoon sun.

It wasn't the nicest ward the split had been to, but it did the trick and got them away from Riaru’s mother.

The split began walking again, taking in the sights and sounds of the new environment as they slowly made their way past the array of shops. A plump street vendor stepped away from his cart, thrusting a kabobed squid towards their face. Yū’s nose drew up, the smell assaulting their senses as she was forced to step back in order to avoid it.

The split had never been a fan of the grilled specimen, even before they had become a ghoul. The sudden reminder caused the girl to grimace, she pushed the thought to the back of their mind. They wouldn't be able to deal with the reality of the situation until they found themselves at a safe enough distance from the 20th ward.

But, there in the back of their mind Nanashi fed on the discarded idea, devouring the thought until it had consumed him. The split had never needed an excuse to do the things he did, but now, whether Nanashi had wanted an excuse or not… he had one.

He stretched, limbs aching from lack of us as the split began making his way towards the doorway. Yū startled at the sudden movement, her pace picking up as she traversed the edge of 14th, desperately trying to get further into ward.

The arch’s broken remains loomed in the distance, growing as Nanashi grew closer to it. A cat-like smile pulled at his lips, his eyes gleaming with delight in the pitch blackness of their mind’s battlegrounds. But today, it was no battleground.

Yū began running, feet pounding into the sidewalk as she took them farther away from Mrs. Genji.

The split’s smile turned into a grin. Of course, a force capable of resisting his onslaught was not to be found here. There was no door to break down, no force to withstand him. All there was to do was take control.

He stepped through the doorway, daylight greeting him as he took control. Nanashi reveled in the feeling of the sun on his skin, and writhed in pure bliss as a cool breeze caressed their flesh.
And what was there for Yū to do, except wait quietly in the darkness for her chance to return?

His eyes flew around the area, taking in the assortment of bright advertisements that littered both storefronts and telephone poles alike.

What was there for Yū to do, except contemplate over how they had ended up in this place?

How long had it been since he'd actually seen the sun? Felt it?

The light faded, and the she was left with nothing to do but think.

A laugh escaped Nanashi’s parts lips.

Tell me, what was there for Yū to do?
“I’m sorry ma’am,” the officer replied solemnly, “We were able to catch glimpses of her through several traffic cams and we tracked her phone, both of which led us to the edge of the 14th ward, but she almost completely disappears after that point.”

Mrs. Genji collapsed into the wooden chair beneath her, a sudden faint feeling overcoming her. She pinched the bridge of her nose, a headache settling behind her eyes. “How does a nineteen-year-old, who’s never even been to the 14th ward mind you, completely disappear?” The mother asked exasperated. Dark circles hung heavy beneath her pained eyes as the light outside the police station began fading.

“We’ve contacted several police stations in 14th to help with our search, but they’re in the same position as us at this point Mrs. Genji,” the officer explained to her again, irritation creeping into his voice, ‘I’m afraid at this point there’s nothin’ else for you to do except wait for our call and think about why she would’ve left in the first place… As well as why she’d choose the 14th ward to run off to.”

A sudden rage burned through the woman as Mrs. Genji stood up abruptly, chair skidding out behind her as she slammed her fists into the officer’s desk. “She’s mentally unstable!” The woman snapped at him, spittle flying from her mouth. The woman’s steely glare glued the officer’s mouth shut as she stood her ground in the middle of the precinct, all eyes turned towards her. “She is mentally unstable,” the woman said again, whispering this words this time, tears burning at the corners of her eyes. “I thought that all this time she’d been going to her therapist just about everyday, but come to find out her therapist completely disappeared on her. She hasn’t seen him in over a month now…” the woman said trailing off as she slowly slipped back into the chair provided for her. “But,” she continued, furiously wiping a stray tear off her face, “I’ve already told you this, sometimes there just isn’t a reason for what she does.”

The officer sighed, taking a seat in front of the distraught mother. “I know that you’re goin’ through a lot right now Mrs. Genji, but there isn’t anything more you can do to help us at this point besides think about why she would’ve willingly disappeared. Ninety percent of cases where someone willing runs off there is almost always a reason for goin’ wherever they go, no matter how trivial or insignificant the motive is.”

The woman looked up at the man pleadingly, her dark eyes stained with pain. “I know my daughter, and I know that she wouldn’t do something like this without good reason, but…” she trailed off, voice trembling ever so slightly, “there’s more than just my daughter in that head of hers.”

It’d been two weeks since the split had first disappeared with the nineteen year old’s body. Slipping through the cracks of the 14th ward so that he could cause havoc among its people.

Blood stained the back most alley ways of the 14th ward, victims’ throats torn from their owners by means of the split’s glistening teeth. Their corpses left half eaten in the wake of his jaws, sitting there until their discovery by either innocent humans or scavenging ghouls.

Nanashi had found his own role to play, rather than that of the outcast and psychotic split he donned the mask of a ravenous ghoul. There was no pattern to his killings, whether he was hungry or not the bodies would still continue to pile up. They could hate him for his actions, but in the end they could not blame him for what he did.
After all, this was the nature of the ghoul.

This was the nature of Nanashi.

This is the form his freedom had taken.

Yū came to on a park bench, the sun dipping low on the horizon as the night chill began setting in. The girl had finally managed to worm her way through the third split’s momentary lapse of control, she’d have an hour at most.

Riaru’s bangs invaded the split’s vision, tickling the girl’s eyelashes before the split swiped them away with annoyed hand. She scowled as best she could up at the dark strands of hair that had begun to hang too low.

Yū sat up then, eyes roaming around the small park that they had found themselves in. Where are we? The split wondered, and what day is it?

She knew that time had passed, just the longer bangs and the clothing change was enough to realize that. The split patted their pockets, looking for their phone, did it fall out? Yū looked around them then, searching the ground for the device, instead her eyes landed on the backpack she had packed earlier. Maybe it’s in there? She pulled the bag into her lap, tugging the zipper open as she searched for the phone.

Several wallets lined the top of the backpack’s content, totalling seven. Has he been pickpocketing? Yū furrowed their brows, pulling out the top most wallet as she went to inspect it. She pulled the sides apart, the folds opening wetly like genitals.

The split dropped the wallet, fingers coming back stained crimson as she quickly wiped them down their jacket, the red disappearing into the black fabric. Yū glanced around, nerves on edge, as she checked the empty park for witnesses.

She could smell it now, the rich stench of iron invading their sense, their grey eyes flashed back towards the bloody wallet. Yū used their elbow to block the scent before quickly turning away from the sight.

What has he done?

The split threw the rest of the wallets in a nearby garbage bin after reluctantly removing any money that hadn’t yet been stained red. Beneath the trophies the girl found a crimson soaked shirt that they had been wearing the when they had originally set out, she left it with the wallets before disappearing down the sidewalk.

There weren’t many people out at this time of night, citizens in the 14th ward evidently took the threat of ghouls here seriously. Yū readjusted their backpack as her heart clenched, it was one of the reasons she had chosen this ward in the first place. Though she had hoped that there would not have been a reason to pick the 14th for such a safeguard as that, but it seemed that Nanashi was not willing to let the split’s precaution go to waist.

Street lights flickered on around the girl as Yū made their way down the pavement, flipping their hood up as she turned down a more populated street. Neon signs lit up either side of the split, casting the girl’s face in a myriad of kaleidoscopic colors. One store in particular drew her interest, a bright
pink neon sign advertising their 24 hour internet café.

She never had found their cell phone.

Yū’s hand traveled to the wad of cash that the split had shoved in their jacket pocket, she quickly glanced around the street before pushing open the door.

A quiet bell tone sounded as the split entered the building, the girl’s grey eyes scanning the entrance area as she walked towards the front desk. Yū pulled down their hood, eyes continuing to take in the entrance. “I just need an hour.”

“Name?” the man behind desk asked, his mouth gaping into a yawn.

“Hana Fujita,” the split replied as she offered the cashier a tired smile.

Yū let out a relieved sigh. “So we're still in the 14th ward, and as far as I know we haven’t been found, which is good news. And as much as I hate to think about, him getting rid of our phone was probably for the best,” the split said, sighing as she leaned back in her seat, grey eyes drifting closed in frustration. “I'd completely forgotten about them being able to track us. But, it’s been over two weeks.” The split pinched the bridge of their nose, spinning around in their office chair as she stared at the pock marked ceiling tiles overhead.

Yū stopped herself from spinning around again, instead sitting up abruptly to stare at the Tokyo map that lit up her computer screen.

She quickly pulled up a new tab, fingers flying over the keyboard as she typed in the site address that she needed to get to. She wouldn’t have time to do what Riaru would have wanted… This would have to be enough.

Mrs. Genji sank into a bench just outside of the station, exhaustion seeping into her bones as a cool night breeze blew her greying hair in front of her eyes. The woman leaned back, looking at the dark sky above. She wondered when she last saw the stars, was it when we traveled to the country for mother's funeral? Riaru had been to have been only five or six at the time.

She sighed, sorrow suffocating her heart. If only she had noticed something was wrong with the nineteen-year-old… If only she had called to check in with the doctor… If only she had noticed all those years ago what was happening within her own household…

The woman closed her eyes, brows pinched together as several tears slipped down her cheeks.

She had sworn to herself that she would notice everything that happened within her home from then on out, and yet she continued to miss only the most important things.

The precinct doors slid open beside her, a furious grandmother walking out as she dragged her teenage grandson by the ear towards their car.

Mrs. Genji quickly swiped at her tears as her phone vibrated in her jacket pocket. She pulled it out as the two passed.

“Let go old lady!”
An email notification shined up at her from the small phone screen.

“I’ll let go when you learn to obey the law! I won’t have any Hayashi becoming gangsters! Not while I’m still livin’! Think of how your mother and father would react!”

She pulled the email up, dark eyes scanning the lines of text.

“It was just a little graffiti,” the boy whined.

The woman stood up abruptly, eyes wide as her heart pounded within her chest as the two turned to stare at her. She ignored them as she ran back through the police station doors, gaze pinpointing the detective from before as she stormed towards his desk. The man sat in his seat, hunched over a pile of papers. She slammed the phone down in front of him, his body flinching in surprise.

A frown pulled at the officer’s lips as his eyes found Mrs. Genji’s.

She jabbed her index finger at the mobile device, the screen faceup as an email lit up the device. The woman’s face was fixed with determination as she stared down the officer. “Trace it,” she demanded, words just as steely as her gaze.

Dear Mother,

I’m sorry for disappearing like I did, I know you’re probably worried and I completely understand, but... I can’t tell you where I am, only that I’m safe. I don’t know how long we’ll be gone, just know that we’ll return. Please don’t look for us before then, it won’t be good for either of us at this point. I’ll try to contact you as often as I can to let you know that we’re still okay.

I know you probably have a lot of questions as to why we left, but it’s a long story that we can’t to tell you at this point. We just needed to get away from everything thing for a bit and spend some time with ourselves. We’re not in any danger so please enjoy your time alone and think of this as just a vacation that I’m taking.

Merry Christmas and happy New Year,

Love, Riaru

I would just like to quickly apologize to anyone who’s been anticipating this chapter, I know that it has been quite a while since I last updated. I started college recently so everything has been rather hectic since the semester began. Plus I signed up for a very demanding creative writing class that has almost completely depleted my creative reservers. I will try to keep up with the amount of chapters I was writing before I started, but if I am unable to please try to be patient, I do plan on seeing this story to the end and I hope that you all plan to as well.

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter, and I will see you all next update! ^^
Nanashi woke to the inside of the internet café, bleary eyes taking in the lit up monitor before him. *Damn it.* The split sat up in the seat that he had found himself in as he focused on the screen. A message from Yū stared back at him from the monitor in a bold, black font, the cursor blinking at him from the end of the two word note.

“I know”.

The third split smirked at the letters, understanding washing over him a the simple message. “You may know…” he replied, “but what is there for you to do about it?” Nanashi asked aloud, a light laugh bubbling up through his lips. “You’re smart enough not to tattle on me.”

The split sighed, leaning back in their chair, he spun around in it, taking in their fluorescent lit surroundings until their feet knocked into something under their desk. Nanashi’s eyes were drawn downwards, gaze landing on the backpack at his feet.

His eyes snapped back up to the bold ‘I know’ that leered at him from the screen.

The split immediately went for the bag, fingers ripping at the zippers as he pulled open the largest compartment, tearing at the contents. “Gone…” he whispered, disbelief poisoning the word. “Gone… Gone!” Nanashi slammed the girl’s fist into the keyboard, drawing the gaze of the customer next to them.

He glared at the computer monitor with its five lettered message. “Smart,” the split muttered lowly, “But, also very stupid.” Nanashi pushed them up and away from the desk as he stood up. He picked up their bag as he made his way out of the building, scowl in place as he passed the front desk.

The cashier gave a slight bow as Nanashi made his way to exit the shop. “Have a good night Miss Fujita,” he called after them, mild exhaustion staining the man’s words.

An idea came to the split suddenly, a sick smile morphing Riaru’s face as Nanashi stopped just short of the exit, thinking over the plan. “Too smart to tattle indeed,” the split mumbled, chuckling lowly, “but very… very… stupid.”

He turned on the girl’s heel, a soft smile in place as he walked back towards the man at the front counter. “Say,” the split said, voice coming out as something shy and quiet in a sickly sweet way. “Can I ask what time you get off?”

“You really didn’t have to walk me all the way home Eiji, I would’ve been fine,” the split giggled, hands locked behind their back as the two walked side by side.

The man fidgeted slightly as he pushed his glasses further up his nose. “Well, it’s dangerous for a woman like yourself to be out by all alone at this time of night.”

“Still,” the girl replied, a sweet smile in place as she glanced up at him. “You didn’t have to go through all that trouble to get someone to finish your shift just to make sure that I’m safe.” She leaned closer to the man as they walked down the deserted street, large, innocent eyes smiling up at the café worker.

The twenty-eight year old cleared his throat, a nervous sort of pride taking over. “Well it wasn’t just
because of that,” the man stated, trying not to stare down at the girl next to him too much.

The girl let her arms hang at her sides, fingertips lightly brushing against her companion’s.

Eiji’s breath hitched at the contact. “M-miss Fujita?”

The split cut him off, “Please, call me Airi.” The girl smiled up at the café worker as she led him down a side street.

Eiji’s brows furrowed, confusion staining his eyes. He glanced down at the girl, stopping as he watched her form retreat a few steps ahead of him.

The girl paused, turning to look back at the man. Her head tilted ever so slightly to the left. “What’s wrong?”

“At the café you told me your name was Hana,” he replied, a small frown pulling at the corners of his mouth. The man was ready to blow off the whole incident with a case of bad memory when the girl sighed, smile melting from her lips.

“I’d make up an excuse, but… honestly Eiji… I’m getting a little bored here.” Another sigh escaped the girl’s lips as she exhaled, a thin plume of white billowing from their mouth. The split casually made their way towards the man, grey eyes glowing in the dim light as the night wind picked up around them. “You’re very easy to fool. Did you know that?”

Worry pulled the man’s brows together as he took a step back.

“I’ve gotta ask if you’re simply stupid, or if you’re just that weak when it comes to pretty, young girls?” The girl stepped closer to him, invading his personal space. The nineteen-year-old looked up at the man as another sweet smile pulled at her lips. Her eyes drifted closed for a moment as she took in a deep breath, the cold air stinging their lungs.

A harsh gust of wind whipped through the city streets, sending the girl’s hair billowing out in front of her.

Her eyes fluttered open.

Eiji stumbled backwards, fear spiking his pulse as he tripped over his own feet, sending his to the freezing concrete.

The girl’s single black and red eye bored into him.

“G-g-ghoul… Ghoul! Ghoul!” The man scrambled backwards as he stared, wide eyed, at the monster before him, his heart pounding out an arrhythmic beat.

Nanashi let out an irritable sigh as he glanced down the street. “It’s always ghouls,” the split muttered under his breath. “Why does it always have to be ghouls? Just because someone is fucked up in the head doesn’t make them a ghoul.” Nanashi’s head swiveled towards the man that cowered before him, his red and black eye flashing at the terrified café worker. “Does it?” he asked, a devilish smirk playing at the girl’s lips.

The girl’s teeth glinted in the moonlight as Nanashi rushed towards the man, the wind picking up further to drown out the man’s cries for mercy as he drowned on his own blood. His fists pounded into the girl’s back, his throat stuck between the jaws of the ravenous half-ghoul before him. His punches became weaker and weaker as the split continued to gnaw through the man’s windpipe.
The twenty-eight year old’s consciousness bled to black, the girl’s red eye staining the backs of his eyelids as he fell into an ocean of pitch, drowning with each breath he tried to take.

Eventually his heart stopped beating.

“You said earlier that the tech team was able to trace the IP address back to an internet café in the 14th ward correct?” The lower ranking officer nodded silently in confirmation. “Then were you able to track down the guy that was working there that night?” the detective asked as he continued to flip through some of the paperwork in front of him.

“We tracked him down, but we weren’t able to talk to him...,” the twenty-three year old trailed off.

“And why is that?”

“Witnesses said that they saw the man leave with Miss Genji around nine that night, surveillance footage of the shop confirmed this, but...” the man trailed off. A few moments of silence passed before the detective’s dark eyes glanced at the other man, silently urging him to continue speaking.

“Mr. Adachi was... attacked by a ghoul. We found his body in one of the 14th ward’s morgues...”

The detective froze, eyes connecting with the officer’s. “…What about the girl?” he asked, all attention on the man as he readied himself for the worst.

The man shook his head, a grim look in place. “We’re assuming that after Adachi took Miss Genji to wherever she was staying he got jumped by one of the bastards,” the man sighed, “The officers on sight couldn’t find any sort of identification on him, but it was definitely our guy.”

The detective leaned back in his seat, pushing the palms of his hands against his eyes. A long sigh escaped the man’s parted lips. “Did you find out why she even went there in the first place? Is it possible that she had met Adachi before that night, if that’s the case it would explain why she chose the 14th ward to run off to.” The man dropped his hands away from his eyes, the office lights above momentarily blinding him.

“Mr. Adachi’s co-workers told us that he had never talked about anyone matching Miss Genji’s description, and from what I understood he talked about almost every woman he met in great detail.”

“So, he was a player?” the detective asked.

“More like a stalker. He had three known restraining orders against him, all from female customers who were regulars at his last two jobs.” told him, clarifying the situation.

“So it was only a coincidence that they met that night?”

The officer nodded. “That’s what it’s looking like at the moment, and if that logic is true then that means her motive in going to the café was more than likely the email. I tried to get access to Miss Genji’s internet history during her stay there, but the manager refused to let me see it without a warrant.”

The detective sighed, “The records would probably help clear up some of the mystery around this case, but no judge would sign for a search warrant in a case like this. Especially since the missing person is a nineteen year old who willingly disappeared, they wouldn’t even care whether she’s mentally unstable or not.” The man pinched at the bridge of his nose. “Ride the manager of that café some more, see if you can persuade them to let you look at the records again. In the meantime though
try to get the 14th ward’s precinct to run another facial recognition scan on the area surrounding that café. If we can’t see what she did there, maybe we can see what she did afterwards.”

Nanashi swiped at the blood that stained his lips, as he stood up. The split sent a casual look down at the disfigured man before them, his mouth hanging open in a silent cry. “I do believe that you were my easiest prey yet,” he chuckled, as he kicked at the twenty-eight year old’s foot. “Thanks for the meal.” A smirk pulled at the corners of the split’s lips as he turned from the body and continued down the sidewalk to look for a new place to sleep.

Nanashi glanced down at their clothes as he went, they would need to change clothes again.
Trio

The split wandered the streets as the cold night lumbered on, their black hoodie doing little to provide them with warmth as the wind dragged through the material. And with each gust of wind the freezing blood stain that Eiji had left them with lighted against their skin, raising gooseflesh along their abdomen.

Nanashi shivered as another gale ripped the hood from the girl's head, leaving her midnight hair to billow out behind them. The split put an arm up, trying to block them from the brunt of the harsh wind as he broke away from the street and into a nearby alleyway. He sighed at the lack of wind here before he looked around him. Several dumpsters lined one side of the alley, making the small place reek of rotting food, his nose wrinkling in disgust. Nanashi walked to the other side of the alley, pulling the front of the hoodie up over their nose as he peeked out.

Another road lined the back side of the buildings he stood between, the street deserted as the moon continued to make its way through Tokyo's sky. Red lights flashed at him from across the dark street, illuminating two twin red and white crossing gates as they lowered at the edges of a nearby railroad crossing. Its warning bell ringing out against the freezing air. The split walked towards it, the glaring red lights drawing him in as he stopped just before the striped bar. A train whistle sounded to his right, drawing Nanashi’s eyes as the locomotive stormed past him, bringing with it a rush of air, lights, and sound that made the split flinch. He look a step back, hoodie and hair whipping from the speeding train before it disappeared down the track.

Nanashi peeled their eyes open, watching as the locomotive's taillights as it sped away.

Eventually the crossing gate raised and the flashing, red lights faded into the night, leaving the split to stare across the empty track as the train vanished around a bend. The split stepped forward, his feet unconsciously pulling him towards the rails until he stood on one of them. Nanashi’s gaze turned towards the direction that the locomotive had left in, pondering his options for a moment as another gust of wind ripped at their clothes. His head swiveled in the direction of the alley he had come from, he considered staying there for a moment before his feet began to carry him down the track, trailing in the wake of the train.

“Even I can’t stand the stench of rotting human food,” the split muttered lowly as he once again pulled up their hood and began walking along the railroad planks that lined the center of the tracks.

The wind tore at their clothes as they made their way down the railroad, gravel crunching beneath the girl’s feet as Nanashi squinted into a gust of wind that sent water curling from the corners of their eyes. Ahead of him a bridge levitated four stories from the ground, the area around it falling away from the tracks at what had to be at least a 75 degree angle. The split stepped over one of the rails, making his way towards the edge of the slope, peering down into the area below. The girl’s head tilted to the right, curiosity staining their eyes as he watched orange light flicker up the sides of one of the bridge’s many robust pillars.

Fire?

The split’s gaze roamed the sides of the ravine, looking for a way down to the source of the lights. Spying a path, he made his way over.

He stared down the slope, the area didn’t seem as steep as everywhere else. Difficult, but doable. He
was sure he’d be able to make it back up from here as well.

Nanashi crouched down before easing himself onto the steep incline, their feet sliding down the concrete slope before the split had a chance to put a hand out to steady himself on the way down. Loose concrete and a thin cloud of grey dust followed him in his descent.

The split stumbled at the bottom of the harsh slope, rocks skidding out across the concrete, popping and skipping as they hopped over cracks in the foundation. The sound echoed loudly in the ravine, the noise bouncing against the edges of the concrete valley. The wind seemed died down here, the steep sides of the ravine protecting him from a portion of the cruel weather.

*It seems the wind prefers Tokyo’s city streets over its emergency flood channels,* the split thought as he attempted to dust off their clothes.

Nanashi’s eyed his surroundings, taking in the three figures to his left who sat beneath the bridge, all of them gathered around the light source he had noticed from above. They stood abruptly at his appearance, wariness slithering in the depths of their tired eyes. The three men were gathered around an old, rusted barrel, orange flames glowing from the inside of the steel drum.

The whites of the men’s eyes flickered in the firelight.

The split pulled back the girl’s hood, revealing Riaru’s pale face and their midnight hair to the strangers. Nanashi’s gaze locked with the flickering flames, his feet moving on their own accord as he drew closer to the warmth.

The men didn’t say a word as the nineteen-year-old approached their camp, their shoulders relaxing as they took in the girl’s face.

The split’s hands sought out the fire’s warmth.

One man cleared his throat, trying to draw the his attention. “It’s cold out tonight, what’re you doing out wandering by yourself?”

Nanashi’s gaze never left the crackling fire as the flames licked at their hands, scorching their palms. Warmth began flooding the nineteen-year-old’s veins as the heat slowly worked its way up through their arms. Nanashi sighed as he pulled the girl’s hands back, watching as the burns healed themselves in a matter of seconds. The split flexed their hands as he finally looked up at the men who stood across from him. “Unfortunately I am never alone,” he replied to them.

The men glanced around quickly, bodies tensing as they searched the darkness around them. One man’s eyes flicked back towards the girl. “Did you bring someone with you?”

The split’s gaze drifted back towards the flames, grey eyes watching as the fire danced within its rusting cage. “They’re the ones who decided to come along,” the split murmured as he tapped a finger against their skull. “Unwanted passengers.”

Their shoulders relaxed. “Everyone’s got one or two of what you call ‘unwanted passengers’ up there. It’s one hell of a way to live life, but it’s gotta be done. Isn’t that right boys?” The man lightly elbowed one of his companions in the ribs, a soft smile coming across his chapped lips. The two other men nodded along with whom the split assumed was their ‘leader’.

Nanashi’s gaze once again found that of the man, eyes calculating as he went over the words in his head. The nineteen-year-old only watched them silently as the man shifted under the split’s gaze.

He turned back to the fire without saying a word.
The ‘leader’ cleared his throat. “My names Naoto, and this is Ritsuo, and Shinji,” Naoto pointed to the men beside him, before he continued, “And if you don’t have anywhere else to go for the night you could always stay here.”

Ritsuo’s eyes shot over towards the man, brows furrowing in confusion. Naoto caught his gaze, simply smirking back at him in reply.

A small smile pulled at Ritsuo’s thin lips, understanding of what the man had plans for dawning on him.

*Like a moth drawn to the flames, Naoto thought, the moth unknowingly draws closer to its own death.*

Naoto’s worn boot digging into the nineteen-year-old’s thigh woke the split up the next morning. Nanashi’s lids peeled themselves open, eyes bleary from sleep as his gaze found its way to Naoto’s smirking face. He didn’t remember falling asleep. The man removed his foot from their thigh, allowing Nanashi to push themselves up from the concrete.

The split stared at the men blankly, all emotion barred from the girl’s face as the split starred the trio down.

Naoto’s smirk lost some of its lift, confidence rapidly falling at the lack of reaction from the girl.

Though the man quickly berated himself, his soon smirk slithering back into place. “I think it’s about time for a little repayment.”

Nanashi stared at the man for a moment, thoughts hazy as he rubbed the sleep from their eyes.

“Repayment?” the split questioned, tilting the girl’s head.

Naoto nodded, taking a step forward as he came back within arm’s length of the nineteen-year-old. The man took a strand of the girl’s midnight hair between his dirty fingers, caressing it.

Understanding of what they were asking for finally dawned on the split. “Oh~” Nanashi breathed, a happy smile pulling at the corners of the girl’s mouth before the split’s hand whipped out, wrapping around the man’s throat. “I honestly didn’t think that the three of you would be willing to repay me,” the split said, eyes bright as his gaze bore into the encaged man’s wide chocolate eyes. “I’m really happy that you realized all of the trouble I had to go through, I really had to restrain myself you know.” Nanashi threw the man he’d been holding, Naoto’s head slamming into the concrete with a sickening crack. “My clothes reek of blood at the moment and it was sooo~ hard trying to keep myself in check,” the split said, pausing, “I wish there were more people like you in this world, everyone else has been so rude! I mean the guy from last night called me a ghoul! Can you believe that?”

Nanashi stepped towards one of the other men still standing. “Since you three have been so nice I’ll give you a chance. All you have to do is get to the top of the slope…” The girl’s right eye bled to black. “...before I get to you.”

Who didn’t love a good game of tag?

“You can’t say that I didn’t play fair.” The split laughed. “It was three v. three after all!” Nanashi paused, delving into Riaru’s memories for a moment, “Wow~ nine already? See! You’re all grown,
but I’ve got a nine-year-old on my side!"

The three corpses didn’t reply.

“What?” Nanashi asked as he picked up his heel, digging it into Naoto’s thigh. “Nothing to say?” The split questioned, laughter flitting through the words.

He had played it smarted this time, gently scrambling their brains or crushing the men’s over exposed windpipes. There was much less blood this time after their bodies had finally stilled. And while the three didn’t have any wallets to speak of, they did have their clothes.

After the death of Mister Eiji the split was in desperate need of new ones, the smell of death clinging much too tightly to the black sweatshirt that they wore now.

Nanashi picked up part of their hoodie to sniff, brows furrowing at the smell. Other prey might be driven away by the stench of iron, he thought as he pulled the sweatshirt over their head.

The split turned to Naoto, stripping the corpse of his coat and shirt, taking them as his own before tossing their soiled hoodie into the thin trickle of water that ran through the center of the drainage ditch. Afterwards he peeled a pair of fingerless gloves from one man and a grey beanie from another, throwing the hat on top of the girl’s greasy and unruly hair. Before sweeping Riaru’s overgrown bangs beneath the beanie as the split casually strolled away from the scene.

It would be another three hours before a group of teenagers would discover the corpses. And another thirty minutes before the place would be swarming with humans.

From the top of the overpass’ looming rafters a ghoul waited in the shadows, red and black eyes glowing like the dying embers in the barrel below. She watched as both police and bureau investigator crawled below her like ants.

A scowl pulled at the female ghoul’s brows, someone had been hunting in her territory.
I realize it's been forever, so if you're still reading this thank you for not giving up on me or this story!

The place reeked of old lady.

Nanashi fell into the woman’s outdated couch, the action sending up a cloud of the grandmother’s stale perfume. The split choked on the scent, an arm coming up to cover his nose as a scowl crossed their face. Nanashi looked around the one bedroom apartment, he could’ve done better, but the old woman had been easy prey.

Though they’d have at most three days before the stench of decay would nauseate even them. And no doubt draw in complaints from the neighbors. Nanashi sighed, letting their arm drop as he leaned back, staring up at the chalky white ceiling. It was so quiet here.

The usual distant conversations between Yū and Riaru that he used to hear when he was tucked away were silent. The words he used to have to strain too hard to hear were no more. And at times he found himself wondering if their roles had been reversed. If they were now the ones who had to strain to hear his distant conversations with himself.

He smirked at the thought. *If that’s the case then the silence isn’t so bad.*

The split’s eyes flickered towards the t.v. remote beside him, the high that he’d ridden after the death of the grandmother slowly fading as his boredom grew.

But, he was sure a bit of hunting would alleviate some of this boredom. Maybe he could draw out the hunt this time. Build up that tension over a few days before letting it obliterate everything.

Just the thought of this hunt was exhilarating.

A smile stretched across his lips as he pushed them up from the couch before stalking out the apartment’s door.

Oddly enough it was pure coincidence that she’d been in the area when she had. Her sensitive ears picking up on the man’s screams right away. His voice muffled by the wall of the office building he’d been trapped in. Normally she wouldn't have even batted an eye at such a thing, but the fact was that this was her territory. And ever since the incident less than five days ago she’d been very keen on finding the violator. She slowly followed the strong stench on blood up several floors she found another ghoul. One with the same scent she’d found smeared all over the drainage ditch. They stood there, looming over the partly eaten office worker, a wicked smile showing off their blood-stained teeth. “Ah~ What fun. You were really fun, really, really fun.” A sigh escaped the younger ghoul’s mouth, “But, now I’m bored again~”

Her eyes narrowed at the sight, her blood boiling, and kagune bubbling just beneath the woman’s skin. The kokaku bled from her beneath her shoulder blade, wrapping around her arm as the nineteen year old finally looked up from their toy. Nanashi watched in fascination as the kagune hardened before the split’s eyes until it had formed into a spear-like kokaku that extended the ghoul’s reach by at least another foot.
“Wow!” Nanashi exclaimed, childish laughter bleeding from their lips as the body beneath them went completely forgotten. They stepped over one of the man’s sprawled out limbs, drawing closer to the unknown ghoul, their eyes lost in the shadows.

Eventually the split’s gaze drew up to the woman’s own eyes, morbid excitement boiling in their depths at the sight of her black sclera.

“Wow! Wow!Wow!Wow!” Nanashi called out excitedly as blue police lights from the streets illuminated the split’s eyes. “You’ve got one more than I do!”

The female ghoul stared at the nineteen year old's eyes, a cocktail of grey and red. She made sure not to show it, but the site startled her. One-eyed ghouls were near myths. But, her scowl remained in place, either way the one eye was hunting on her territory, had killed on her territory. She lifted her kagune covered arm, pointing it at the younger ghoul. "You've been feeding on my territory kid," she told the split, voice dangerously low.

“Territory?” Nanashi asked almost offhandedly as he leaned forward to look at the kagune more closely. “I don’t remember Riaru ever having read something like that.”

The woman growled, pulling her arm back before lunging forward, ready to run the girl through.

Nanashi danced away from the kagune, the woman’s kokaku piercing through the ends of the girl’s hair, several small pieces floating through the blue lit air as her kagune sliced through several strands.

“Oh ho ho~,” the split laughed, “We’ve been needing a haircut. Can you aim for the bangs next time?” Nanashi smiled devilishly as he put some distance between the two of them.

“What an annoying little girl,” the ghoul growled, charging at the split again.

Nanashi let out a humorous laugh, eye’s alight as the police lights continued to flash below. “A girl, did you hear that guys? She thinks I’m a girl!” There was a moment of silence as the woman look around, studying the shadows.

Had they brought back up?

“Ah…” the split let out a disappointed sigh, “That’s right, they’re not able to come to the phone right now. Hmm~ Yū might be listening in though.” Nanashi tapped their chin in thought.

The woman’s blood boiled in outrage, they saw this as a game!

The woman roared, storming towards the split, catching him off guard.

He barely had time to dodge, the kagune ripping through their side instead of their center mass.

“Ow! Ya ya ya ya! That hurts! Why would you do that?!” Nanashi stumbled back, away from the woman, hands clutching their side as the flesh began knitting itself back together beneath their fingers. “Why would you do that?” he asked again, this time staring up at the woman. Red and grey eyes glaring menacingly at the ghoul. “No one,” the split said lowly, “hurts this body besides me.” Nanashi snarled, hands falling away from the wound as the crater shrunk. He stalked forwards, a crazed look in his eye. “The likes of you are not allowed to even leave a mark on Riaru.”

The split rushed at the woman, teeth bared as something began bubbling up beneath their skin. A warm surge of heat flooding to their lower back.

The woman readied herself for an attack as a tri-tipped tail bloomed from Nanashi’s back, blood red and ready to rip through her flesh. And rip through it did, one of the tail tips catching the woman in
the thigh.

She winced in pain.

Laughter bled through the woman’s ear drums. “I’d been wondering if we had one of these,” the split told her, grinning darkly. “It kind of looks like a pitchfork, doesn’t it?” He asked, tail waving gently behind the younger ghoul.

That’s when their tail whipped around, slamming into the ghoul’s abdomen, knocking the breath from her lungs and sending her flying through a cubicle and into the wall of windows to their left, a large crack forming in her wake as she collided with it. The female ghoul stood up shakily, head still reverberating from its collision with the glass.

Nanashi charged at her again, but this time the woman was ready for it. She lifted her kagune sending it out in a sweeping arch in front of her.

The attack only caught the split on the cheek, but it was enough to send him grinding to a halt. He stared down the ghoul, eyes narrowed and face a flickering ghastly blue from the flashing lights outside. Nanashi reached up, gently touching the wound as if it had greatly offended him in some way. And in his mind, it had. Again... You hurt her again? A G A I N ?

The third split shook with an uncontrollable rage and the female ghoul couldn’t help but wonder if she had made a mistake. In hindsight, the few extra bodies that would have turned up in her territory wouldn’t have made a huge difference to her. It was pride that had lead her into this office, and it was pride that sent a small smirk curling at the corner of her lips. She lunged forward, her speared kagune aiming for the nineteen year old’s head. Nanashi tilted their head to the side until the side of their head made contact with their shoulder.

The woman’s kagune grazed the edge of the one eye’s ear as Nanashi’s tail came up to wrap around the female ghoul’s arm, keeping in from moving. Her eyes made contact with the wide-eyed cocktail before her, the two colors swirling together in her head like oil and water. A crazed smile pulled at the younger ghoul’s lips, blood from their earlier meal still staining their teeth.

That’s when the first bullet slammed through the window, completely shattering the glass and taking the woman through the shoulder, forcing her to the floor. Nanashi’s kagune dropped away from the woman’s arm, hands reaching up to protect their face from the exploding glass. He stumbled back a few steps, feet crunching over the crystal shards.

“The kokaku has been hit.”

The next shot took Nanashi through the thigh. Leg flying out from underneath him, the force sending him to his stomach, his chin slamming onto the floor.

“Bikaku has been hit.”

All attention was suddenly focused outside, and that’s when all hell broke loose.

Nanashi’s eyes widened, gaze locking with CCG sniper perched on the next roof over.

*The police lights,* the woman thought, *had the kid done something to draw their attention before I got here?* Now that the window in front of them was shattered, she could hear the commotion three stories below. A least a dozen sets of feet were marching around in the street, and if she listened hard
enough she could hear the distant pounding of helicopter blades. She cursed the split under her
breath as she began backing away from the window, crab walking backwards as she headed further
into the building to find a way out.

But, Nanashi pushed himself up, glass shards pinching at the skin of their palms, though unable to
actually draw any blood. He seemed surprised more than anything, his eyes never once left those of
the sniper. He seemed calm, but the woman could sense the split’s rage, boiling just beneath the
surface of their bloodied skin. She watched his fingers flex ever so slightly, and that’s when he
jumped.

Using their new found kagune to help propel themselves across the gap Nanashi flew towards the
other roof. Limbs flailing uncoordinatedly as he landed on the building across the street. His face
morphed into a look of absolute fury as he slammed his kagune through the sniper, the man not even
having enough time to react to the threat. The split’s screaming echoed through the area, silencing
even the investigators below. “You ant!” He screamed, the words falling from his lips over and over
again, as he sent their kagune through the man’s body over and over again, and again. The woman
had never seen anything so violent, even from a ghoul.

“Sano is down! I repeat Sano is down!”

The female ghoul could hear the helicopter getting closer now.

“No one is allowed to hurt her except me!” the one eye shouted again, bouts of hysterical laughter
now falling from the nineteen year old’s mouth. “No one! No one! No one!”

And then the spotlight was shining into the building, blinding the female ghoul as she backtracked
further into the building, the wind ripping at her hair and sending hundreds of office papers into the
air. I have to get out of here.

“What are you doing?! What are you doing?! Forget the kokaku! I want eyes on the bikaku ASAP!”

The ghoul could still hear the flitting tones of the split’s laughter over the helicopter’s ear pounding
blades as the spotlight shifted. But, by the time it had reached the other building the black-haired girl
was gone. The only evidence of them having been there was the mutilated corpse and the echo of
their psychotic laughter.

“I need eyes on the bikaku! Where is it! Find them! We can’t let something like that run loose!”
Rat

Gima let his head drop into his hands, a deep sigh escaping his parted lips. Nothing, they had learned nothing about this ghoul. There had been four new bodies pop up since they had last seen the ghoul that they could connect that demon with.

He could understand letting their quarry get away that first time. They hadn’t been prepared. They hadn’t expected there to be more than one ghoul on the scene when they arrived. The officer that had called in the sighting had said he’d only seen one.

Of course he didn’t blame the office, nor the men that he had been there with that night, especially not Sano, the man’s brutal death still hung over everyone’s shoulders. It was like a physical burden that weighed them down everywhere they went. And this ghoul was no different, every life it took was another boulder hung around the necks of the investigators who were working the case.

Akuma, the demon of the 14th ward, call it what you want, was a danger to those living in the ward. Gima could still see the ghoul leaping from the office building, he could still hear their hysterical laughter echoed ten fold from Sano’s com system. The thirty-eight year old tugged gently at his greying hair as he stared at the paperwork before him.

They would have to deal with this quickly, otherwise the whole ward could be thrown into chaos. And there was no doubt that if they weren’t able to take down this ghoul soon then the main office would send in a new team and take the case away from them.

Not only for Sano’s sake, but for the ward’s as well he couldn’t let that happen. By the time they sent over new men there would be no telling how high the body count would have built up.

The split had been able to stay in the grandma’s apartment for a few days longer than expected. Though certainly by the time they had their first encounter with the CCG in ghoul form it had been time to relocate.

The next time the split moved it had been to a small studio apartment near the 4th ward. Though this time they had made sure to keep the body out of the house, afterall moving was to much of a hassle to do every few days. Remembering the reek of the place on that last day pulled a disguised sneer across their lips.

The man’s bed sat on the floor, and the small tv on a rickety pile of old textbooks, it seemed a majority of the man’s money had gone towards the shelf full of books to their right. The split sighed as he looked around the room. There wasn’t much to do in the small space, the shelf of novels doing nothing to peak his interest. Which left the tv as the split’s only form of entertainment within the apartment. He glanced over towards the remote that had been tossed into the middle of the bed before falling into it himself.

Nanashi sat up, staring down at the remote, debating which button push. He’d never had to deal with such a thing, he tried several buttons before the screen finally flickered to life.

“After a decrease in the number of ghoul attacks, CCG is now reporting that a new ghoul known as Akuma has been sending those numbers spiking!”

Nanashi leaned forward, clear interest shining in the depths of his eyes.
“Now Yasuo-san you would think with the rise of killings from this ghoul it would make it easier for investigators catch them. But, according to our sources they haven’t made any headway into the case.” Nanashi watched the two news anchors talk back and forth about the so called ‘Akuma case’.

“Unfortunately Shizu-san this ghoul has been rather difficult to catch, the CCG was only able to claim one confirmed sighting of this monster even though there have been at least five people killed at this ghoul’s hands. One has to wonder if CCG are really doing their job. In the meantime citizens are warned to stay safe and inside as much as possible as the CCG continue to track down and attempt to eliminate this threat.”

The split let out a surprised laugh. “They’re talking about us aren’t they!” Another laugh escaped their mouth, amusement playing at their lips. “Akuma, huh? Hmm~ I think it suits us! Riaru we’re famous!” Of course there was no response from the girl, but Nanashi continued to laugh anyway. “Ahh… I do wonder what your father would say if he could see us now,” the split mused aloud as he turned to look out at the darkening sky.

The sky flickered with lightning as rain began pattering lightly at the window.

“What are you crying for?” Nanashi asked it quietly, his smile slowly shrinking.

The pattering of rain sounded like whispered words in the ears of the half ghoul.

They fell back into the bed, staring at the ceiling. “I can’t hear you~” he whispered.

He fell asleep with the lights on that night.

Two weeks after her spat with the newly named “Akuma” the woman finally caved. A scowl had permanently settled across her face as she made her way to the secluded bar. This was her last option, she would swallow her pride for now if it meant tracking down that rat.

The name “Rat” suits that girl far more than Akuma, running around, gnawing on anything they could get their hands on.

It disgusted her.

The woman stopped in front of the glowing bar sign, glaring at it as it cast her in a sickly yellow hue.

I will swallow my pride.

“Itori!” The female ghoul shouted, bursting through Helter Skelter’s door, a dark look in her eyes.

Itori looked up at the woman, a smirk making its way across her face as she leaned up against the bar. “Akane~ I thought that you said you’d never come back to this… Oh, what did you call it?” The ghoul paused, dramatically tapping a finger to her chin. “A complete waste of space? The black stain of society? Or was it a den of idiotic lunacy? I can’t seem to remember which.” A small smirk played at her lips.

Akane scowled at the other ghoul, pride attempting to burn a hole in her chest.

I will swallow my pride. I will swallow my pride. I will swallow my pride.

“Did you miss my bloodwine that much?” Itori asked, attempting to hold back her laughter.

I will swallow my pride.
Akane grit her teeth. “I only came for some information.”

Itori raised her eyebrows, amusement shining in the depths of her eyes. “If my memory serves me correctly, then the last time you stormed out of here you claimed to have a better source of information.

_I will swallow my pride._

“They’re useless to me in this situation,” Akane muttered irritably as she made her way towards the bar, her pride refusing to let her sit.

Itori took note of the small action as Akane stood just in front of the bar, arms crossed and refusing to look her in the eyes. “So what can I do you for?”

_I will swallow my pride._

I took a few seconds before the woman begrudgingly replied, “I need to find someone.”

“There are lots of someones to find, so the question who is that specific someone for you?”

Akane glanced around the bar, checking for any suspicious persons that might be leaning in to listen before she whispered quietly to the woman in front of her, “I’m looking for a one-eyed ghoul.”

There was no noticeable reaction to the words, only the quirk of one of Itori’s perfectly arched brows as she silently urged the other ghoul to continue.

“I caught them hunting in my territory a while back, very imprudent, very insolent, very insane.” Akane’s eyes swiveled around the room, making sure that there was still no one trying to listen in. “They almost got us both caught by a group of doves last week when I caught them after a kill. Not the best first impression I might add.”

_Has Kanekichi gotten himself into some more trouble?_

“So?” Akane asked, eyes searching Itori’s for answers.

“Mmm~ I’ve had my eyes on a rather young boy rece-”

“No!” Akane exclaimed, “This is a girl! G. I. R. L. I need the girl, do you know anything about her?”

_Ah-

Itori tapped her chin in thought. “I can’t say I’ve heard of any one eyed females.” She grinned. “It seems this time you’ve become my informant!”

Akane’s eyes flashed, anger boiling in her veins before she stormed out of the bar.

_No one! No one can tell me anything about that rat!_
The next time Nanashi stepped out the door he did so with the intention to wreak havoc. The news report from the other night had embedded itself into his head, looping there on repeat.  

_Akuma. Akuma. Akuma. Akuma._

He smiled, remembering the name. His name. Someone had given him a name.

He reveled in the attention, he wanted all eyes on him. He’d always been shoved into the back of the girl’s mind, never forgotten, but always ignored. _Always ignored._ But, that wasn’t the case anymore, he was being recognized for his own handywork.

Recognition. That’s all the split had ever wanted, recognition and a little bit of fun. He smile turned wicked. He was a demon indeed, the name suited him perfectly.

Nanashi let out an excited laugh as he flung them up onto the top of the building.

“Akuma is heading for the roof!”

“We’re famous! Look at us!” Another bout of laughter escaped the split’s mouth as they landed hard on the gravel rooftop.

“We’re on our way us!”

“Ow~” Nanashi sung as he dusted the gravel chucks from their palms as another bullet flew just past the girl’s ear, whistling by before embedding itself into the building across the street. “Wow wow wow wow! That was close!” Nanashi exclaimed. “This is almost as fun as hunting! It’s reversed hunting! Ha! Get it? Because now I’m the one being hunted!”

The rooftop door burst open, two investigators storming through, quinques at the ready. They stared the girl down as the split paused for a moment, gaze switching between the two newcomers.

“We have eyes on Akuma,” the female investigator said, “We are prepared to engage.”

“Ah~” Nanashi sighed, disappointment lacing the breathy exhale. “The game’s over. You’ve seen our face. How unfortunate… I had wanted to play longer~ But, now we have to kill you.”

The woman arched a brow. “We’re not going to let a ghoul kill us.”

Nanashi looked around himself in confusion, wondering where the ghoul they had mentioned was. “Ah~” the split sighed, understanding flashing in their eyes as he turned to look back at the investigators, “I’m still not used to being called that.” Nanashi hummed as he turned to look up at the sky. “Ghoul,” the split tried the word out on his tongue, turning it over in their head.

Somewhere in the back of their mind he could feel Riaru shift slightly at the word.

The investigators took this chance to rush as him as he stared away in thought. “You really are as crazy as they say.”

Nanashi came to just in time to dodge their flashing quinques. “Ah~ So they say I’m crazy?” The split asked, leaping back, as he danced away from the blades. “I can’t say they’re wrong. But, no one
is ever *just* crazy.” Nanashi put more distance between them. “Just as no one is ever *just* angry, or
*just* sad, or *just* scared.”

This time it was the male that rushed forward to attack him. “What do ghouls know about emotions.”

Nanashi’s kagune wrapped around the man’s quinque, slingling it across the the rooftop. “I can’t speak for ghouls, but as someone who was once human,” the split stated, right eye flashing black, “I know quite a bit on the emotions of man.”

The girl’s single red eye gave the man pause, both investigators bewildered by the sight. “What the hell are you?” The man asked, eyes narrowing.

“You know… We’re not quite sure ourselves.”

“What the hell are you two doing up there alone?! I told you to wait for backup!”

“Akuma is a B rank at best sir. There should be no problem.”

Nanashi’s whole reason for wandering out that night was to cause nothing but problems for the investigators of this ward. The split smiled wickedly, and now those investigators were distracted.

He gave no sign of his intent as he ran forward, using their kagune to launch them up before slamming into the male investigator who’d been talking. He went for the throat. Somewhere he could he yelling from the other side of the com system they both wore. Yelling his name, “Is it Akuma?! Kaito is it Akuma?!“ Nanashi swallowed a chunk of the man’s flesh as he crawled off. His blazing kakugan turned towards the trembling woman, as she could do nothing but stare as her comrade choked on his own blood.

*They must be new,* the split thought, wiping some of the blood from his mouth, *if they still react this way to the death of a comrade.*

“Katsumi! What’s happening up there!”

But, the woman couldn’t even respond to the voice.

Gima could hear the laughter from the ghoul through his headset. He ran faster, taking the stairs up to the top of the building two at a time.

“They’ll hang on a wall next to each other,” it was the ghoul’s voice that filtered through his com system. “And then next year they’ll simply be statistics. Because that’s the way the CCG works, and then only those who knew them will be left to remember.”

Gima ran faster, quinque already deployed.

“But, even then, memories fade, do they not? They’ll eventually be forgotten.”
The man burst through the door to the roof, eyes wide, and heart pounding.

The voice continued speaking through his ear piece. “Life is like that. Everyone is eventually forgotten, just some more quickly than others.”

He saw Kaito first, sprawled out, laying in a pool of his own blood. Gima ran over fingers cold as he reached down to check for a pulse. His heart clenched.

“I wonder how quickly these two will be forgotten?”

He stood up again scanning the rooftop. “Where is Katumi?” The man’s asked, growling through the speaker.

“I’m afraid she ended up dropping out of the fight.”

Gima walked towards the edge of the roof, checking the surrounding buildings for any sign of movement.

“Get it? Dropped! Because I dropped her off the side of the building!” The ghoul’s laughter flooding the speaker, echoing through his mind. The man froze, looking down at the street below, the rank 2 investigator’s body laying broken several stories below him. Gima’s eyes snapped shut, looking away from scene with a grimace.

“Did you not like my joke?

Rage boiled through the man’s veins, his anger taking over. “Do you think this is a game?!?” He shouted, turning in a circle as he checked all the buildings within sight of him.

“Yes, actually, I do. And the best part is that it was the CCG who started it! You gave me a name! You recognized that I existed when no one else would! Attention! Recognition!” Gima continued to study to rooftops, but there was no sign of movement from any of them. The speaker crackled, making it hard to hear some of the words being said. They’re going out of range. “But those two beside you, they won’t even know when they’re forgotten, they-”

The speaker cut out, cutting off the ghoul’s words.

“I need a last known location on that earpiece, if we know which direction they’re headed maybe we can find out where they’re staying.”

The split threw the com system over the edge of the building they stood on. “I guess I’d be able to have more fun if I didn’t have to worry about showing our face… Like today, I wouldn’t have had to kill those two so quickly…” Their lips pursed, bottom lip thrown out in a pout. He vaguely remembered Riaru having multiple run ins with masked ghouls during her short lived CCG career. Maybe that would help? “Ah! Then maybe I’ll actually get our face on t.v. without anyone noticing!” The split leapt to the ground, casually making their way back to the studio apartment they had taken over. Where to find a mask though?

“Sir with all due respect I think I think that this incident shouldn’t be made public.”
Gima’s superior looked up, eyes cold. There wouldn’t even be an incident to worry about if you had done your job right when you faced this ghoul the first time.”

The first class grit his teeth, of course he knew that, of course. But, they hadn’t been prepared that night. No one was at fault for what had happened, even though he knew several investigators who blamed themselves and had vowed revenge after Sano’s death. But, this time, this time, it was his fault. He should have never let those two take off after that ghoul on their own.

“This ghoul wants attention. I believe that if we let this incident get out then that will only encourage them, they may even make their next stunt a more public affair.”

“This ghoul has been making a name for themselves over the last few weeks and you’ve been letting them. I gave you this case because you asked me to, you told me that you’d get this ghoul no matter what.”

“And I will,” Gima stated, mouth drawn in a firm line, “This demon has not only killed Sano, but now Katsumi and Kiato as well. I’ll make them pay for what they’ve done.”

The older man sighed as he leaned back in his chair. “I understand what you’re saying Gima, you helped train all three of those kids, but how long is it going to take for you to ‘make them pay’? Because the citizens of this ward can’t wait much longer, headquarters will no doubt send in a team to deal with it within the week.”

“I understand.”

“For everyone’s sake… I hope you do.”

I realized I’ve been skipping around a lot these last few chapters, let me know if you guys like that or not because I’m not to sure on my thoughts about it just yet. And as I’m sure many of you picked up on we’ll be meeting a rather beloved character within the TG universe next chapter! Until then I hope you all enjoyed!
Gima collapsed into the chair at his desk, a tired and defeated sigh escaping him. He stared down at the stack of papers he still had to fill out from the incident the night before. He needed to find this ghoul. But, as Gima began filling out paperwork Nanashi was already on his way out of the ward. Heading East, following a set of twists and turns that he’d memorized after his returned to the apartment. The need for a mask to disguise the girl’s face more evident than ever after the night before.

Thus far they’d gotten lucky, disposing of everyone who’d seen their face was a good way to keep their identity hidden. But, if even one of those investigators were left alive, that would spell out the complete ruination for all of his fun. They’d have to stay hidden, slinking in the shadows of Tokyo. But, Nanashi become jaded to the dark, and he’d lived enough of his life in it.

The split paused outside the back alley shop, the logo sprawled across the wall to their right, drawing their eyes before he made his way through the door, entering the dimly lit room. The checkered floors were among the first things that drew their grey eyes, the repetitive pattern unpleasant if he looked at for too long. He brought their eyes up, taking in the masks hanging on the walls and laying in the glass display cases.

The sound of footsteps sent their eyes flickering away from the masks, taking in the newcomer. “How can I help you?”

The man wore dark shades, tattoos wrapping the exposed parts of his body. Nanashi studied him, interest swirling in the girl’s grey eyes. “We need a mask.”

“We?” The man’s head tilted to the side, the question short.

“She,” Nanashi corrected.

“She?”

By now the girl’s brows had drawn together, the conversation irritating the split to a certain extent. But, he attempted to keep their expression impassive, just as the black-haired man before them. The only hint at the man’s emotions was a small smile. “I.”

The smile turned into a smirk. “A bit tongue tied are we?”

Nanashi scowled. “Not at all.” He hated that he couldn’t see the man’s eyes.

Uta arched a brow, smirk playing at his lips as he studied the girl before him. Bangs just a bit too long, clothes just a bit too slept in, scent just a bit too human, and just a bit to tinged with heavy stench of iron. For some reason he almost expected dark bags to hang beneath her eyes, but the area remained pristine. He hummed in thought as he turned away from the girl, walking towards the small work desk at the back of the room. “Do you have anything in mind? Likes? Dislikes?”

Nanashi hadn’t realized that he’d tensed their shoulders before he felt the muscles in them begin to decompress. He took a slow step forward, following the man as he pushed aside a folding screen and pulled up a stool for the split to sit on. “I hadn’t really thought about it.”
Uta let out an acknowledging hum as he reached up to take the measurements of the girl’s face. They flinched away from the contact at first, right eye flashing black and red as their eyes narrowed at the offending hand.

Another half-blood then, Uta mused silently. He offered her a quiet apology as he brought his sunglasses down to rest at the end of his nose before he began taking the measurements again. Black and red eyes diligently taking in the numbers he measured.

“Do you have any allergies that you know about? Maybe rubber, or metal?”

The girl actually laughed at the question, eyes crinkling and mouth pulling into a smile. “Well I recently developed an allergy to quinque steel,” the split said between laughs.

Uta looked up at the response, pausing in his measurements, ah... Another one then? An amused smile pulled at his lips. “I believe most ghouls have a strong aversion to such metal.” But, Nanashi wasn’t looking at him anymore, instead taking to look at some of the masks on the wall behind Uta. “So, what do I call you?”

The girl hummed, looking a little lost in thought. “Recently they’ve been calling me Akuma.”

“Akuma?” the ghoul questioned, “Can I ask what you did to get that kind of name without a mask?”

Nanashi smirked at the man before him, eyes crinkling with a laugh. “Devilish things.”

Uta gave a small laugh of his own at the answer as the girl’s gaze turn back to the wall behind him. A traditional looking kitsune mask drawing their eyes. Uta turned, following their gaze. “Do you like the traditional look?”

“Mmm, they really do draw the eye don’t they?”

“They do.” Uta backed away from the girl, folding up the measuring tape and setting it back on his work table. “The mask should be done by the end of week. You can come back and pick it up then.”

And so, for the next four days Nanashi spent his time wreaking havoc across the 4th ward. A grand endeavor that had amused Uta the first time he’d heard the name Akuma’s staticed name through the tv. The death of two more people on their hands by the time the mask was finally done.

The second time Nanashi walked into the shop, Uta had greeted them with a grin as he handed them the mask, a smooth matt plastic. “Easy to clean,” he’d said.

Nanashi grinned when he saw it. Blood red, with a wicked smile that had been seemingly caught mid laugh. I’d been made to look like one of Japan’s traditional demon masks. Though unconventional in the fact that it would only cover the lower half of the girl’s face, leaving their heterochromatic eyes for the world to see.

The split gave a giddy laughed, taking it in their hands. He remembered the young Riaru being scared of masks like these, always clutching her mother’s hand tighter when they passed them during festivals. It was an irrational fear of a small child, but a fear nonetheless.

Nanashi handed him the money, several of the bills stained with the rusty brown fingerprints of old blood.
“You’ve been working hard I see,” Uta mused, smirk playing at his lips.

The split began tying the mask behind their head, trying it on. He looks back up, eyes crinkling with a smile as a cat-like grin flourished beneath the mask. “No... just a bit of fun.”

He wasn’t stupid, he’d been consciously aware to many times during Riaru’s time with the CCG to underestimate the power of investigators, and even after nearly two years away from the work force, and the abscission of the Riaru’s own memories from her time with the CCG, he would not quickly forget this fact. But, after the split had walked out with the mask, he’d been confronted with the question, now what? And, once the idea had sparked, there was no containing the wildfire that followed. Out of all of Tokyo the 1st ward remained the most protected from ghouls, the CCG’s presence there making it nearly impossible for any of the flesh eaters to survive there. But, the word ‘nearly’ had set the fire reaching further, the fervor of the idea sent his ears ringing with white noise, and their heart pounding with feverish anticipation. But, he was ever wary not to let the flames encroach on Riaru’s sleeping consciousness, fearful that those caustic flames flickering at the backs of her eyelids would rouse the girl, once again taking his control from him. So, he kept the thoughts in check, kept the inferno under control. But, the idea remained, caustically eating away his consciousness.

What better stage than the 1st ward to announce his arrival?

Nanashi couldn’t keep the sadistic grin from burgeoning it’s way across the girl’s face as they fell back into the bed of one of their newer victims.

*Tomorrow. Tomorrow I’ll make my official debut.*

The excitement was enough to keep the split awake for several hours more, assembling the details for tomorrow as he began piecing together what information he could gather from the padlocked dump of Riaru’s residual memories from her short time stationed at the first ward.

*Happy early birthday, Akuma.*

Chapter End Notes

Honestly I’m such a terrible writer I don’t know how some of you guys are still here with my nonexistent update schedule lol I have most of the next chapter already written out though so you shouldn’t have to wait to long for the next chapter

But, in the meantime if you guys have any questions whether they’re in relation to the story or not you can drop them in my ask box on tumblr!
https://blackhole-called-anime.tumblr.com/
Riaru had been making herself known more and more over the last few days, and because of this Nanashi had been feeling on edge since his last encounter with the CCG. Any mention of their ghouliness sent the girl squirming. Just within the last day memories had been coming unbidden to him, memories that the split would have rather forgotten.

The night he’d arrived in the first ward, he’d woken up screaming, phantom pains lighting their skin on fire. He’d lain in bed awake for several hours, waiting for the burning to ebb as he panted heavily.

So she’s there already? He’d thought sluggishly after the algetic memories had finally faded. The split’s limbs shook faintly in the early dawn light streaming through the window as a numbness crawled over him.

Perhaps that’d been the reason why he’d taken particular notice of the man’s face. It’d been a momentary glance, a passing face in the crowd. But, that was all that it had taken to disintegrate his initial plan to attack a few dozen civilians in the nearby mall.

It’d been years, oh so many years since he’d seen that face. With his flesh peeled off by the teeth of a ravenous ghoul. There had been many times where he wished he’d been able to thank the ghoul that’d done it. It’d been Gecko hadn’t it? Yes, the split wished he could thank them.

He had escaped through that man’s scarred face. He had put himself in the shoes of the ghoul, he had been Gecko. Tearing away at his face, eating his flesh, watching him beg for mercy. And that’s why when the split saw him casually walking down the street, as if he had never done any of those cruel deeds to this body, he stepped out of the alleyway he’d been in, tying the mask behind their head. He drew the gazes of the people around him as he stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, their mask creating a ring around them as people gave him a wide berth.

No one yet knew this face, but still they already feared it.

Nanashi took in a deep breath, eyes never leaving the back of the man’s head. He let their hands drop, letting them dangle at their side. Their face drew into a scowl, caustic rage flooding their vein as their kagune began bubbling up from the girl’s back, slipping through the bottom of their borrowed jacket as it emerged.

The people around the nineteen year old scattered like ants at the sight, screaming as they ran from the ghoul. Men tripped over women, and women over men. Children looked around with wide eyes, some being dragged away by parents and others left abandoned in the middle of sidewalks.

“Goumasa!” The split roared, the man pausing in his steps as the split’s heart pounded wildly with the euphoria of seeing him again. The man turned to look back at him. “Without you, our existence would have been impossible!” Nanashi locked eyes with their target, their prey. Yes, the tables had turned now. The split let out hysterical laughter, his mouth hidden behind the mask as it bared its teeth. “And it seems you weren’t wrong!” The girl’s right eye flashed black. “We did turn out to be a ghoul. All those years of pain at your hands! All for this! All for this moment!” His eyes narrowed at the man. He remembered imaging that he’d been the one to have peeled the skin off of his face. It’d kept his mind off of the pain, imagining that their roles had been reversed. But now, he could finally make that fantasy of a tortured seven year old into a reality.

He’d not seen him since he’d been in that shed with that hammer. Slamming it into him over and over and over and over and over and over and over and- How many years had it been since this
body had suffered at *his* hands? How many years had it been since he had slammed that hammer into *his* face, breaking *his* jaw, bloodying *his* face.

*How long had it taken him* to recover from those wounds? *As long as it had taken for their toenails to grow back? Longer?* He hoped it was longer.

The split’s thumb wrapped around his index finger, cracking the knuckle. He hated the old habit, almost as much as the one who had passed it down to them. He hated the man, what *he* had done was unforgivable.

Another finger cracked.

There was only one thing that he thanked the man for, and that was his creation. Everything else was inexcusable. *Everything else was inexcusable.*

*He* noticed the small hand movement, taking in the action with narrowed eyes.

*I wonder if he even recognizes his own daughter?* The thought amused the split as he stalked closer to his prey. *Even without the mask, this body has changed so much since then. This mind has changed so much since then.*

But, *he* called out the girl’s name like *he* ’d seen them just the day before. “Riaru.”

That word, on *his* lips, coming out wrong from between the man’s gnarled upper lip. “Wrong!” The split snarled, stalking closer to *him*, fury boiling through his veins. “I! AM! AKUMA!” The split roared, rage burning in their flashing eyes. *Inexcusable, everything had been inexcusable. He wasn’t allowed to say her name. He wasn’t allowed. He wasn’t allowed. HE WASN’T ALLOWED.*

*HE HAD HURT HER*, and *no one* was allowed to hurt *her* besides him. It was inexcusable. *Inexcusable.*

They rushed towards *him*, pulling the mask down around their neck, mouth open as they tackled *him* to the ground. Teeth ripping into the man’s lower jaw, their father’s lower jaw. How many times had he imagined himself here? Performing this exact task. He could feel their teeth scrape against the man’s jaw bone as *he* opened *his* mouth to let out a pained scream.

Nanashi smiled around the mouthful of their father’s flesh.

But, of course, *of course*, the split was only allowed that one bite before a quinque was sent through their shoulder, and a bullet slammed into their side. The ghoul’s mouth immediately came away, face twisted with pain, mouth open as he brought up a shaky hand and brought their mask back up. No sound would make its way past their vocal cords, the screams he wanted to release refusing to make its way out.

Someone pulled the man out from under them, dragging *him* away as *he* clutched at *his* jaw. He met the man’s eyes through his watery ones. It wasn’t *him*. Their shaky hands moved further up, clutching their head in pain. It wasn’t *him*. It wasn’t *him*. It wasn’t *him*. Why wasn’t it *him*? The scars were there, but everything was in the wrong place. It wasn’t *him*. *He* wasn’t there.

The quinque twisted, shredding more of their cardiac tissue. They let out a low moan, pain scorching through all of their senses.
They brought their hands away from their head as their body tried closing the wounds, trying to heal around the quinque’s spear like tip. Oh~ Ohhhhh~ The pain. Through his heart. Their heart. Her heart.

“The ghoul is confirmed to be Akuma. Please send back up to our location.”

HER HEART. That’s when the sounds he’d been dying to release came out. Nanashi screamed, a caustic sound that grated against the investigators’ eardrums. “AH! AAAAAH!” Words began spilling from their lips, words that he was sure she had read before. “‘Before I knew it, nine thorns sprang out from the chest cavity!”

The diaphragm shivered, as if about to cry!

(my body!” My body. My body. My body. My body. HER BODY. YOU HURT HER BODY.”

Nanashi tried to use one of their hands to push the point out, but their bloodied fingers kept slipping on the steel.

“Squad zero is en route. Don't let the target escape.”

Their kagune twitched and Nanashi realized the mistake the investigator behind him had made, but they saw the attack coming. The woman abandoned her quinque in the ghoul’s shoulder as their tail lashed out, one of the tailtips just barely catching the side of the woman’s arm.

“You hurt her! You hurt her! You hurt her! You hurt her!” The split screamed, the voice echoing back through the investigator’s earpiece, ringing out clear for those listening on the other side. “Only I am! Only I AM! ONLY I AM ALLOWED TO HURT HER!”

Why? Why was everyone always trying to hurt her. Didn’t they know? DIDN’T THEY KNOW THAT THEY WEREN’T ALLOWED?

No one was allowed.

NO ONE was allowed.

A news chopper hovered overhead, camera zooming in on the injured ghoul.

“Sir, are you sure that squad zero is required?”

Nanashi slowly wrapped their tail around the quinque in their chest, in their heart. “Ah~ Ah~ It hurts so much!” He ripped it out, more blood spilling from the wound with each pump of their damaged heart.
“They’re the closest in proximity to you and Kiyoshi, they should arrive within five minutes.”

Nanashi slung the quinque across the street, the weapon clanging against the sidewalk.

He moaned, standing up on shaking legs as his hand reached into their side to get the bullet out, their fingers digging into their own flesh. They pulled it out, the bullet still hot, searing their fingers before they dropped it on the asphalt. They swung their head towards the unarmed investigator behind them, their mask offering the woman a wicked snarl and the girl’s single kakugan flaring. He turned the rest of their body to face her, cracking a bloody knuckle.

“Kiyoshi, I need a distraction.”

“Repositioning now.”

The split didn’t care about the publicity of the stunt he was pulling, he didn’t care that the man he’d bitten hadn’t actually been their father, none of that mattered anymore. All he cared about now was killing the woman who’d hurt her. Another bullet slammed into their still healing shoulder, causing them to stumble forward. And the sniper, he had to kill the sniper.

Another bullet took them in the neck, ripping through their carotid artery, spraying blood across the pavement. They sunk to their knees.

“Nice shot.”

Nanashi gripped the side of their neck, the artery painting their hands crimson as they attempted to push the blood back in.

“I was aiming for the head.”

Go back in. Go back in. Go back in. Go back in!

They were holding it with two hands now. Desperate to make it stop. He had to make it stop. Their head swam from blood loss, the three bullet holes still weeping blood, and their heart still attempting to repair itself.

His eyes shot to the female investigator before he whipped out their kagune, wrapping it around the investigator’s leg, catching her off balance. Her head slammed into the street as they dragged her down.
“Kaiya!”

The woman weakly kicked out at the kagune, her head swimming from its impact with the concrete. He took advantage of this fact.

Nanashi pulled their mask down again as he dragged the investigator closer to their bloody mouth. He dug their teeth into the flesh of her leg, tearing at the muscles there. Another bullet slammed into the girl’s body, but he ignored it, continuing to tear away at the woman’s leg. They had to heal. They had to heal. They had to heal.

They could feel their heart beginning to pump evenly again, and the artery that had been gushing blood had begun to heal, the blood now only coming out in thin rivulets.

The news chopper continued to hover over the street, it was rare that one was able to catch such a sight on camera, though the camera man had a hard time filming the incident. His skin paling as he attempted to keep the shot in focus.

“Kiaya is down! I repeat! Kiaya is down! We need medics on sight immediately!”

Nanashi swallowed another mouthful of flesh, the woman’s iron rich blood working to replace their own. More! More! More! More!

Another bite, another tear, another bullet slamming into the asphalt just beside them.

The sniper’s hands were getting shaky.

“Squad zero is sixty seconds from your location! Hold out until their arrival!”

The sniper cursed lowly under his breath, trying to steady his hands. He let out a breath, looking through the scope again.

The ghoul was gone.

“I’ve lost sight of the target!”

Nanashi launched themselves up the side of the building, landing heavily just behind the male investigator. The man having only enough time to turn his body to look at the girl, his gun to long to maneuver it into a defensive position. His hand was reaching for the hand gun at his side when the ghoul charged. Eyes flashing as a thin tail impaled the man through his eye. The split was breathing heavily, heart pumping wildly from the euphoria of taking down the offender as he let out a gut wrenching scream.

*How dare he hurt her.*
The man folded in on himself, hands groping to cover the wound as Nanashi brought their kagune back, tails waving agitatedly behind them.

Nanashi took in a shaking breath in attempt to somewhat calm their racing heart. He crouched down next to the man on the single story building, right hand extending to wrap around the man’s throat, cutting off his scream. Nanashi used their left sleeve to clear their lips of the woman’s blood, mask hanging around their neck. “I bet that years from now they’ll call this place haunted, people will whisper every time they pass, “Didn’t you know? Didn’t you know?” The split said. “A man died up there.” The split let out a mocking laugh. “How noble,” he spat.

The man’s com speaker crackled to life, “Kiyoshi. Squad zero, is on sight. Please prepare to offer support.”

The man could only cough, blood splattering from his mouth, staining the edges of his lips as the split let him go. The man’s breathing was ragged, his remaining eye half lidded.

Nanashi look at com system curiously before leaning over to unwrap it from the man’s ear, the sniper only flinching slightly at the contact. He pulled the speaker towards his mouth, a smile unraveling itself as they pulled the mask back up. “I’m afraid Kiyoshi is unavailable at the moment, would you mind leaving a message?” Light laughter bubbled up through the nineteen year old’s lips, slightly muffled by the mask, before they dropped the small device, crushing it under their heel. They brought their kagune back around, wrapping it around the man’s leg, picking him up. He held the man out over the edge of the building, watching blood drip lazily from his demolished eye socket to the asphalt several stories below.

He made eye contact with a white haired investigator before he let go. And then, he was gone.

“A very rare and violent ghoul attack has taken place in the 1st ward today, leaving a civilian and an investigator severely injured as well as another investigator dead. Tallying a total of four CCG investigators and nearly three times the number of civilians killed at the hands of the ghoul ‘Akuma’ over a span of three different wards.”

There were many people who tuned in to the watch the broadcast that night across Tokyo, viewership hitting a record high for the news channel who had filmed the incident. They showed clips of shaky phone video as well as the footage the helicopter had taken that night, sure to leave out the part where their camera man had thrown up out the side of the helicopter.

But, one scene in particular drew the eyes of a certain clown. It was a small detail, but very noticeable to the ghoul who had seen such action repeated many times before. The silent crack of the girl’s knuckle is what drew their eyes, but it was the mask that drew Uta’s.

“Ahh… It looks good on her. I’m glad it’s being put to good use.”

“Who is she?” Nico asked, leaning his elbows against the bar, resting his chin against his palms. “She has Yamori’s little tick.”

This peaked the interest of the others in the room.

“Was she one of his toys?”

Nico tapped at his chin as if in thought, silent for a moment. “No, he wouldn’t have been able to keep quiet about that one.”

Itori nodded her head in understanding, a childish seriousness over taking her features. “There also aren’t many people that survived Yamori ‘game’. There’s only Naki and Kanekichi that I know of.”
Uta popped an eyeball into his mouth, watching a censored version of the girl getting shot on the screen. “If only she wasn’t so reckless. She would’ve fit in well.”

Itori let out a laugh at that, “She’s not reckless, she’s just crazy.”

There was silence as they watched a rerun of the girl pulling the quinque from her chest. “Aren’t we all?” It was more of a statement than a question.

And in the end no one could deny it.

Thank you all for sticking around!

I have a bit of a surprise this chapter! Just a bit of art I did for the chapter!

Akuma!
Nanashi was somehow able to make it out of the 1st ward that night, both their body and mind aching as they stumbled into the 6th ward sometime around midnight. Their clothes were saturated in blood, and jagged holes littered their clothes like a poor imitation of the visceral gore that had laid underneath it just hours ago.

A cocktail of cold and exhaustion had seeped into their bones, but there was something in the back of his mind that kept pushing them forward, further away from the 1st ward. Something urged him to stay in the alleys, to hide in the shadows. Somewhere he vaguely registered the possibility of the ‘something’ being Yū.

But, there was another part of his mind that weighed heavily at their limbs, causing his feet to drag against the sidewalk. The numbers that dragged at his bones had been following him since the battle in the 1st ward. A near constant countdown in the back of his head, 979, 972, 965. At times he even found himself mindlessly reciting the numbers aloud. He understood at one point with an odd clarity that the numbers he’d use to count to keep him sane now stood to do the opposite. But, worse than the numbers was his face. It was everywhere, plastered on billboards, on buses, on the heads of the people he passed. He knew they weren’t real, he knew that. But, every time that scarred mouth of his opened the split would still flinch back, would still attempt to cover their ears just so they wouldn’t have to listen to those words.

“Disgusting.”

“You’re still trying to lie?”

“Trash.”

“You’re worthless.”

“A ghoul.”

“Tell me, what’s one-thousand minus seven?”

The split didn’t even have to check to see what part of the timeline Riaru had entered. Because he could tell. He could feel the fire burst back into their pockmarked soles as he trudged onward. He could feel the cuts weeping and the bruises throbbing, just beneath the collar of her shirt, just above the edge of their skirt. He’d been a careful man, he had to be to get away with the things he did for all those years.

Nanashi stumbled on a crack in the sidewalk, knees colliding painfully with the concrete. He stayed like that for a moment, kneeling on the girl’s hands and knees, limbs shaking from exhaustion as he stared numbly at the ground.

“Can we rest? Can’t we just rest now?”

“No.”

Pitch stained hair isolated them from the rest of the world. And, as messed up and muddled as the split’s mind was at the moment he understood with an immaculate clarity, the world… it’s damaged, broken… Wrong. He just wanted to rest.

It could have been mere seconds or several hours before the split’s mind began to return and he
remembered that he had to get up again. Because they had to, “Get to a safer place first.” All of his focus was going to trying to make their limbs work properly.

But, when they heard the man’s voice, calling out to them like a beacon in the dark, all their senses turned towards him. Those four sweet syllables a blessed abscission of all of the split’s unwanted thoughts. Because he actually recognized the voice.

“Kaneki-kun?”

It was brief, but it was familiar enough to simply ignore. Tsukiyama’s eyes quickly found the kneeling figure in the middle of the sidewalk as he turned the corner, body swallowed by a hoodie much too big for its owner. Given the sparsely populated streets of the 6th ward at this time of night the sight was unusual, but the smell that wafted from the figure was even more so. It’s what prompted the ghoul to call out the name. “Kaneki-kun?”

The form didn’t seem to react, palms remaining firmly planted on the sidewalk.

The man took a step closer, crouching down so he could get a better look at Kaneki’s face. The figure’s head turned towards them slowly, black hair parting like a curtain, revealing the face underneath that was certainly not Kaneki’s.

“Ah~ Moon-san. I knew I recognized your voice. What a surprise, it’s nice to see you again~”

The sight of the girl froze him, the ghoul’s mind taking a moment to process her identity. He’d nearly forgotten her in the chaos that had ensued after Kaneki’s kidnapping. But, there it was, that same familiar grin, and though the glint of blood in her teeth was gone, the psychotic crinkle of her grey eyes remained. Ah~

“My apologies Miss Genji, I’d mistaken you for someone else.”

“Mrs. Genji? No,” they tutted, “that’s her mother’s name.” The grin widened. “I go by Akuma now. A-ku-ma,” she said, carefully pronouncing the word.

Tsukiyama noted a strange vacancy in the girl’s eyes, an almost glazed over absence that was easy to miss with the acidulous smile that marred the nineteen-year-old’s face. “Akuma?” The man arched a brow, he felt he’d heard of a new ghoul by that name.

He offered the girl a helping hand up, noting the exhaustion that pulled at the girl’s expression. He had noticed the reek of iron hanging over her earlier and while he’d been expecting the sight of blood, the ragged holes in her hoodie and the dried blood flaking from old wounds had certainly surprised him. And it wasn’t until the nineteen-year-old had taken his offered hand that he noticed that they too had been stained with blood.

Had she had a run in with another ghoul? Or an investigator perhaps?

The girl stumbled as she stood, the older man acting quickly to catch her from falling again. “My, my, I must ask who did this to you petit loup.”

The girl let out a dry laugh, their only answer to the question a lowly muttered, “Inexcusable.”

He looked down at the girl, her eyes glazed and half lidded, her hands trembling from the cold, her legs unable to fully support her. It was on a whim that he’d extended his hand, and it was on a whim that he offered his help. “Why don’t you come with me? I know of a place where you can stay the
night. It’s not too far from here *petit loup* .”

The nineteen-year-old gave him a lazy nod as he slid one of her arms over his shoulders, taking some of her weight.

There was something, *Yū*, he noted, in the back of the split’s head that was telling him to stay awake, to “be reasonable” about the situation at hand. But, Nanashi was too exhausted to make what the other split would consider to be ‘reasonable’ choices at the moment. So he let the ghoul, ‘*Moon-san*’, help carry them to wherever it was they were going, too tired to really care.

I was almost 2am by the time Tsukiyama pushed open the door to the group’s newly acquired 6th ward hideout, by that time he’d had to switch to carrying the girl bridal style. And as the ghoul had expected, Kaneki was quick to descend the stairs into the living room at his entrance, suspiciously eyeing the unconscious bundle in the man’s arms.

“My apologies for waking you up so late,” Tsukiyama murmured quietly as he gently laid the girl down on the vacant couch.

“Why would you bring someone else here?” Tsukiyama turned to see Kaneki’s brows furrow, a hand coming up to gently rub at the bottom of his nose. “She reeks of blood,” Kaneki commented almost offhandedly, coming to stand beside him.

The man let out a hum of agreement. “I had mistaken her for you at first.”

“Me? Why would you — Oh.”

“She doesn’t seem to be hurt, certainly exhausted, but not injured. Though her clothes tell a much different tale.” Tsukiyama made for the blanket sprawled across the end of the couch as Kaneki stepped closer to study the girl.

“This is her isn’t it? The one from the restaurant?”

The girl twitched in her sleep, barely audible mumbling passing through her lips, “587, 580, 573..” The boy stiffened. A quiet huff of laughter escaped her as she continued her incoherent muttering, “‘Automatic failure at happiness, shapeless spawn.’”

“She’s been mumbling those numbers on and off since I found her. Though she doesn’t seem to be aware of it.” Kaneki’s expression hardened as Tsukiyama draped the blanket over the girl, covering the rips in her hoodie and the twitching of her hands. “But, to answer your question, yes. And I had someone look into her after the incident. Genji Riaru, nineteen, daughter of Genji Mei and Tokage Goumasa. She worked for the CCG as an investigator until her partner was killed and she resigned. She has no job, no known friends, and isn’t attending any university.”

Kaneki took in the information silently, going over the words. Gears turning at an unexpected rate for how late it was. “If she was an investigator… that means she wasn’t born a ghoul…” The news hit him rather hard, knowing that he wasn’t the only one who had suffered at the hands of Kanou. Thinking back he vaguely remembered overhearing the girl mentioning the esteemed doctor in a phone call. But, at the time he hadn’t known that the man had deliberately turned him into a ghoul, he hadn’t known better.

He wondered if she’d already been a ghoul by the time he’d overheard that conversation. The
question of whether he’d have been able to prevent it was playing on loop in the forefront of his mind. A caustic idea that pushed the voices in his head to yell at him. “Become stronger!” They chorused, the voices as unrelenting as cicadas in the summer

He’d been too naïve, too innocent, why hadn’t he realized it sooner? He should have realized it sooner.

The half-ghoul sighed. There were too many unanswered questions. He turned away from the girl, heading back towards the stairs. “Will you be staying then?”

“Just for the night. I’d think it best not to leave her with someone she may not remember.”

Kaneki hummed curtly. “That’s probably for the best.”

Tsukiyama quietly took a seat on a nearby wooden chair, silent as he leaned back and crossed his legs, studying the girl from afar.

She’s survived this long. I wonder how much further she’ll go?

More Artwork~
“Kiyoshi is dead.”

The news shouldn’t have startled her, really it shouldn’t have. Once she had gone down there wasn’t anything from preventing the ghoul from getting in close to him.

*He’s always been terrible at close ranged combat, always shrugging off the extra lessons by boasting about my abilities to keep ghouls busy.*

It was her fault really, for not pushing him to train more.

“Akuma also managed to escape.”

Now *this, this* had startled her. Even with the woman incapacitated, and Kiyoshi… dead, Zero squad had been in route. And from what her superior was saying they’d *seen* the ghoul. *Seen* them *drop* the twenty-five year old off the building.

*They let the ghoul get away.*

Masuda clapped his hands, startling the woman.

“I know this is a lot to take in Kaiya, but I need you to focus. We confiscated several recordings of the incident from a local news station. But, it hasn’t given us everything we need. I need anything you can remember about them.”

The woman clutched at the hospital sheets covering her lap, clenching them in her fists. She took in a deep breath, steadying herself as she though back. She couldn’t remember much after she’d gone down, those memories drowned in a haze of searing pain and from what the doctors had told her, a mild concussion.

“The…. the subject was a female, black hair, around 160 centimeters, bikaku,” she paused, fingers going somewhat slack around the fist full of sheets as another memory surfaced.

Masuda’s eyes looked back up at her expectantly, the pen in his hand hover over the notepad he held. “What is it?”

“It— it could have been a trick of the light, or maybe my memory is just shot…”

Masuda’s brows furrowed. “Out with it.”

“Their eyes….” Kiaya’s gaze met with that of her superior’s as she brought up a hand to cover one of her eyes. “Only one of them had a kakugan.

—

The girl’s eyes snap open three hours later to a tumultuous clap of thunder that shakes the walls around her. She’s up and on her feet in a matter of seconds, mask falling from her hoodie’s pocket, blanket cascading around her ankles. She stumbles to the side, heart thundering in her chest, breathing coming in small gasps. There’s an acute burning in their right hand, an old wound, tiny
white scars freckling their dorsum like barely there stars.

“An unfortunate accident with fireworks. You know, you really shouldn’t have been playing alone. You should have known better, sweetheart.”

Their back collided with the wall behind them. Hands wrapping around their ears to cover the sound of father’s voice. Lightning lit up the girl’s eyes, blown wide with an uncontrollable terror as she slid down the wall into a crouch.

It had been enough to live through these things.

She stared, unseeing, at the floor beneath her, the rain hissing words in father’s voice, “‘Automatic failure at happiness, shapeless spawn’.”

“Shut up,” she whispered, hands clenching tighter around her ears.

“Be quiet now. We don’t want that hapless mother of yours to find you like this.”

“Shut up.”

“It’s best to hide these wounds sweetheart. We wouldn’t want anyone to ruin our fun.”

“Shut up.”

“I really do enjoy our time together. But, dinner’s almost ready so it’s best that you clean up. That is, if you can stomach the food.”

“Shut up!” The words ripped through her throat, raw and desperate to make the voices just shut up.

The screeched words were enough to rouse the house’s inhabitants. Tsukiyama snapped awake in the wooden chair across the room as shouted curses and crashing footsteps echoed from the floor above, feet pounding down the spiral staircase.

The nineteen year old fell into quiet laughter as she lowered her head between her knees.

Her mind was fragmented, splitting, that man’s voice too raw, too close for it to be a simple memory. She wanted to cry, her mind wouldn’t let her, it refused. What’s there to cry about? A voice said in her head, there’s nothing to cry about.

Somewhere she registered the voice as denial.

But, the oh so terrible terror remained, spilling into her chest cavity until she felt like she was drowning. Her lungs shivering with need.

“Miss Genji.” She looked up. Another set of hands coming to rest on top of hers, she flinched at the contact, eyes jumping up to meet those of the white-haired boy before her. This spurred her into taking in a gasping breath.

When had she stopped breathing?

She let him slowly pull her hands down, bringing them to rest in the empty space between them. “Miss Genji. Are you okay?”

There was a charged silence after the words, the boy before her waiting to hear the girl’s response. Her lungs burned.

Another voice spoke up, more familiar, “You are Genji Riaru. Daughter of Tokage Goumasa and Genji Mei. You are both human and ghoul.”

Something within the girl hardened, her voice stabilizing she took another breath before speaking again, “Wrong. I am…. Akuma…. A creation of…. Genji Riaru. I am…. I am a ghoul.”

The white haired boy glanced over to look at another man. Kaneki Ken was a smart man, and he’d had enough panic attacks in his life to recognize one when he saw it.

“Nii-chan,” Hinami’s spoke up quietly from behind him, “She smells like you.”

—

It took another hour to calm the girl down enough to where she fell back asleep, Kaneki, after making certain she’d stay asleep, gently moved her back to the couch. Hinami had fallen back asleep, curled up between Jiro and Ichimi as they sat against the back wall while Kaneki had attempted to calm the girl down, a disgruntled looking Sante only half-asleep on Ichimi’s shoulder. Banjou had leaned himself against the same wall, quietly watching everything play out.

Tsukiyama stepped in closer as Kaneki turned away from the girl, the boy motioning for the two of them to move to a more secluded part of the house, though still within viewing distance of the nineteen year old.

Rain continued to patter outside, the occasional silent flash of lightning casting the room in a dim, flickering light. Banjou was the first to speak up. “Who’s that? A friend of yours?”

Ken sent a furtive glance back at the girl. “She’s another half-ghoul like me. We originally met at Anteiku, and then again when our group rescued her from the ghoul restaurant. I can’t say we’re friends though. It seems likely that we share a similar conversion story.”

Banjou’s brow rose a fraction, he too turning to look at the girl. “You mean?”

The one-eye nodded. “I’m assuming she’s another one of Kanou’s experiments. I remember overhearing a phone call of hers where she mentioned him, of course I hadn’t thought much of it at the time.”

“What are you planning to do with her then?”

Ken was silent for a moment, watching the girl’s chest as it rose and fell with each breath. “I was thinking of sending her in Anteiku’s direction. They’re the ones that helped me when I first— When this first happened, so I’m sure they’d be able to help her,” the boy paused, thinking over his next few words.

Tsukiyama sent him a comprehending look. “You’re worried.”
“I— I want to help her, but I haven’t seen the girl since I watched Yomo walk off with her after the skirmish at the restaurant. Then you carry her in here covered in a mix of human blood and her own — I honestly don’t know what to think, let alone what to do with her. I—” He trailed off as something caught his eye. He stepped forward, walking back towards the couch. Both Banjou and Tsukiyama turning towards the twenty year old, watching his back as he walked away.

Tsukiyama picked up where Kaneki had left off, “You don’t know what sort of trouble she could’ve gotten into, so you’re worried sending her there would cause them problems, right? I certainly think her wearabout during that time period are worth looking into, though I doubt we’ll find much.”

They watched Kaneki crouch down in front of the couch, hand blindly reaching beneath it to pick up the object that had drawn his eye. He pulled it back, the material scrapping quietly against the floor as he brought it up to study in the dim light.

“What is it?” Banjou asked, stepping towards him as Ken stood up, turning the object in his hands.

“A mask?” Ken’s words came out more like a question than an actual answer. He glanced down at the girl’s sleeping form, watching as her brows furrowed in sleep.

Banjou stared down at the mask as another dull flash of lightning lit up the room, a quiet rumbling thunder following it. “A demon?” His gaze flickered back towards the girl. “Is that why she called herself Akuma earlier? I thought she was just talking about ghouls in general, but…”

There was moment of silence before Tsukiyama walked back towards them. “Now that I think about it, she did mention that she went by the name Akuma when we ran into each other earlier.”

“A ghoul alias then?”

Shuu let out a low hum, “Possibly. An alias would certainly make it easier to find out what she’s been up to. I can have a few people look into the name and see what comes up if you’d like.”

Kaneki flipped the mask over in his hands, tracing the line of the mask’s bared teeth, old drop of dried blood flaking off as he did. “Please do.”

Art 1

Art 2

Sorry it took so long! I hope you all enjoyed!

And before I go I would like you all to know that we authors thrive off of comments so let me know what you thought of the chapter and I can guarantee you that my motivation will be out the roof :)}
The next time Nanashi wakes up it’s to morning light bleeding through the backs of their eyelids. The white-haired boy from last night is there to greet them, the slightest hint of dark circles ringing the space beneath his eyes. He offers the girl a sedated good morning as he leans back in the chair he’d moved closer to the couch sometime during the night.

The split sits up slowly, the wounds from her battle healed, but sore. Their hoodie gives off the faintest sound of crackling as they shift, the stretches of blood soaked fabric stiff against their bare skin. Their eyes are unbearably dry, and their tongue has taken to glueing itself to the roof of their mouth.

“I think we have a few things in common.” The boy leans forward, his elbows coming to rest on his knees and the split’s mask partially extended in his hand. “I’d like to talk to you about them if you’ll let me.”

Nanashi doesn’t answer at first, merely takes the mask from his hand and studies it in the light. There’s still blood crusted around the top and bottom, a few splatters adorning the cheeks and nose, he scratches them off with a fingernail. They let out a non committal hum, he’s thirsty and barely awake.

Nanashi looks up again at the sound of footsteps to their left. The purple haired main, Moon-san, stops near them, a glass of water in his outstretched hand. The split accepts the offering silently, taking a minute or two to finish the glass before handing it back to Tsukiyama and turning back to the twenty year old.

Kaneki spoke lowly, his solemnity tainting the space between his words, “Did you have a doctor by the name of Kanou Akihiro?”

Nanashi’s mind easily matches a face with the name, though he can’t say he actually recalls hearing it.

“He use to work at the CCG as a coroner before moving to Kanou General. He…” Kaneki trails off, thinking of a better way to phrase what he was trying to say. “I use to be human.”

The split’s brow raise a fraction, use to be?

“I’d been in an accident and Kanou took advantage of the situation, he was the one to turn me into a ghoul.” The white-haired boy let the information hang there, the words leaving a bitter taste in his mouth. The girl remained silent, so he continued his story. Vaguely retelling some of the events that had occured in the time leading up to the discovery of what he’d been turned into, and a heavily edited version of a few things that had happened after.

Once his story had finished the split continued to stare silently at the mask in their hands, there was another moment or two of contemplative silence before they finally spoke up. “So, Kanou is the reason behind all of this?”

Kaneki let a slight scowl pull at his features, a memory of the man’s smile resurfacing. He let out a heavy sigh, shoving the image away and letting the scowl slide off his face. “I’m sure this is a lot for you to take in——”
“I’m grateful.”

“We’ve both been through something si—”

“No. Kanou, I’m grateful to Kanou.” The split finally looks up, a small smile on their lips. “Life would be so boring without him.”

The twenty-year-old froze. “You—”

Nanashi stood up from the couch, tucking their mask back into their hoodie pocket. “I’d always been called a ghoul, so it’s only right that we’d become one. After all, if someone is told something enough, eventually they may begin to believe it themselves.” The split glances around the room, searching for the front door.

“You—” Kaneki begins again, gaining the nineteen-year-old’s attention, “Kanou broke you, didn’t he?”

“Broke me?” the girl asked, laughter in her voice, “You think Kanou broke me? You’ve got it all wrong. I was broken the moment I was called me into existence. Broken by the man she calls father ,” Nanashi spat out the word. “Kanou just gave truth to a madman’s delusions. Kanou gave reason to the madness that man had cultivated inside of me. I can say with certainty, I’ve never had this much fun in my life~” The smile that split the girl’s face looked wrong when he tried to associate it with the same person he’d met in the café.

Something in the back of Kaneki’s mind said he’d been wrong about the girl, said that she really had been broken long before she’d ever met Kanou. Another part of his mind whispered that this wasn’t the same girl he’d met at the café, not the one who read The Black Goat’s Egg aloud in the stairwell.

The split’s smile dropped a fraction as she turned towards the door, hands going to rest in her hoodie pocket. “Thanks for letting me stay over, but it doesn’t seem like I’ll be able to have much fun around you.” They rest a hand on the door handle, turning their head back to look at the others in the room through ratty bangs. “See you around I guess.” With that she pushed the door open and disappeared down the street.

“We’re archiving your daughter’s case.”

Mrs. Genji stared blankly at the man. “Wha— What do you mean you’re closing it? She’s still missing.”

The detective sighed, setting the file in his hands down. “It’s been over five months now ma’am. I understand that you have cause for concern over her mental stability, but from what we’ve found she left of her own violation. At this point unless she lands herself in either police custody or the hospital, your best bet is waiting until she’s ready to come back.”

The woman stood up violently, her chair screeching as it was pushed back, hands tightly gripping the edge of the man’s desk. “So you’re telling me that you’re just going to close the case?” Mrs. Genji asked lowly, voice seething.

“On the contrary, her case will remain open, but it will no longer be considered an active investigation unless there’s anymore leads. We’ve done all we can at this point, it’s only because of your insistence that we’ve kept the case active for as long as we have. If you’re really that concerned you can always look into hiring a private detective. There are plenty in Tokyo that specifically work on searching for missing persons, I have a small list that I can recommend to you if that’s something
A strained expression made its way across Mrs. Genji’s face. She sat up slowly, trying to compose herself before she opened her eyes again. “Thank you,” the woman’s voice was small, barely audible. She wanted to be stubborn, to continue argue, to force them to listen to her. Instead she counted back from ten, her voice was stronger the next time she spoke, “I’d appreciate it if you could send me a list.”

There wasn’t anything specific that gave it away. Just a subtle revelation that he’d found himself back in the 20th ward. Nanashi stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, looking up at the buildings surrounding him. There was nothing around that he recognized, the only clue was a nearly silent whisper that emanated from the crowd, breathing “you’re home”.

Riaru was closer than ever to resurfacing and Yū had managed to take over four more times since he’d left the 6th ward. The first time she’d made in onto a train that had shipped him all the way to the 23rd ward.

He’d awoken that time to Yū’s voice chanting, “As far away as we can get. As far away as we can get.”

He hadn’t known exactly what it was she had wanted to get away from, but now that he was here he knew. It was only fitting that he’d found himself back in the 20th ward with just enough time to wreak havoc. A smile tugged at the corner of their lips.

“The markings suggest either a rinkaku or bikaku type kagune,” Amari said as he studied the damage done to the building. “Though considering the consistency of the distance between them…” He pointed towards three of the gaping holes in the brick facing. “I would lean more towards bikaku.”

“You got all of that from the markings?” Kohaku asked, squinting at some of the crumbling brick.

He nodded. “It’s not always so easy to tell one type from the other without actually looking at the kagune itself, although rc types do tend to have some consistencies with each other,” the investigator stated. “But, even then the kagunes themselves will all look different and leave separate marks,” Eizō explained as he glanced down at the defaced corpse. “The marks are more like a ghoul’s fingerprints than anything else.” The footsteps behind them when unnoticed as the two studied the damage around them, careful not to actually touch anything.

“The mark of the Devil.”

The voice startled the duo, both turning to see the middle aged man that had appeared behind them. “What?” Genji asked.

“Akuma,” the man stated as if that alone could clear up the younger man’s confusion. “I’m sure you’ve at least heard of her. She’s torn her way through seven different wards, and if this really is her then this’ll make number eight.”

Amari cursed under his breath, scowl pulling at his features. “I’d heard they were back in the 14th ward, but I’d hoping they wouldn’t actually crossover.

Kohaku looked between the two men. “Are we talking about the ghoul that made that huge televised scene in the first ward several months ago?” Genji asked, brows rising.
Eizō sighed, “Unfortunately. We’ll obviously have to wait on either video or DNA evidence to pop up to make sure it’s her. But, from what I’ve heard, the assumption wouldn't be far out there.” The now thirty year old rubbed gently at his temples trying to ward off an oncoming headache, he looked back at the newcomer. “I’m sorry, what did you say your name was?”

“Ah— I didn’t.” He held out his hand for Amari to shake. “Nakajima Yasutomo, bureau investigator. I just recently transferred from the 23rd ward. It’s nice to meet you.”

After introductions, their conversation over Akuma continued.

“Has anyone managed to get a good look at their face, or do you know anything about that?”

Nakajima shook his head. “From what I understand there hasn’t been anyone who’s survived a close encounter with the ghoul since they were originally spotted in the first ward. An old schoolmate of mine told me that the one investigator who survived claimed that the ghoul was a one-eye.” The man rubbed at the back of his head. “It’s been debated since then, but I haven’t heard of any more evidence to back up the claim.”

Kohaku’s eyes widened. “A one-eyed ghoul?”

The three step out of the alleyway, forensics shooing them away as they went to work collecting evidence.

“Those are rare,” Eizō said as they stepped back onto the cordoned off sidewalk.

“In all honesty there hasn’t been a whole lot of confirmed other than the basics, gender, kagune type. Not to mention we’ve got another binge-eater on our hands.”

Eizō sighed, “Thank you for the information Nakajima.” He shook the man’s hand. “You’ve certainly helped us out, come find us tomorrow and we’ll talk more over lunch.”

The bureau investigator smiled. “Sounds like a plan.”

Eventually the three split ways, Nakajima going one way and Amari and Genji the other, Kohaku trailing slightly behind the older man.

“There have been… a lot of dangerous ghoul recently, haven’t there?” Kohaku asked quietly as they made their way down the sidewalk.

Eizō’s head turned slightly towards him, watching the boy from the bare edges of his peripheral vision. He’d be lying if he said he hadn’t been worried about the twenty-three year old lately. He’d been careful not to let it show, but it’d gotten more obvious as the weeks wore on that the boy was distracted. “Has there been any news?”

Kohaku stuttered in his stride, blinking like he was emerging from a sort of haze. A pregnant silence hung over them for a moment before he let out a reticent sigh. “My mother called the other day to tell me that the police were archiving her case. She said she wanted to start looking into private detectives.”

“Have you been seen her since then?”

“No.”

Amari let out a low hum. “You should go see her, I’m sure she’d appreciate it. I’ll take care of today’s report.”
Kohaku watched the back of the man’s head as they weaved through the crowd, words claiming that “everything’s fine” and “there’s no need to do that” catching in his throat. “Thank you,” were the only two words he could manage.

“Make sure you take care of yourself, okay?”

Chapter End Notes

So I skipped around a lot in this chapter, but honestly I've been so tired lately and I can't really bring myself to worry about it. So sorry about that <3
Hope you all enjoy!
When Riaru wakes up in an abandoned apartment building a week later, it’s with blood stained teeth and the overpowering taste of iron on her tongue. She wants so badly to be able to say it tastes disgusting, but it’s the first thing in a long while that she doesn’t want to throw up. She starts to wonder how it had gotten there, wondered if it was her own, wondered if—

“Rairu,” Yū’s voice drags her from her train of thought. The girl can tell the split is worried, can hear the undertone of desperation, “You’ve got to say with me. You’ve got to help keep him out.”

Ah...

Back in their mind, the doorway that once stood to lock out their third split lays in crumbles. Riaru doesn’t say anything for a moment, merely stares at the broken remains of the archway. “I saw it,” the words are quiet, and Yū doesn’t respond. “The reflection of myself. Of our eyes—my eyes, I saw that our gaze was that of a ghouls, and—” she chokes around the lump in her throat, struggling to continue for a moment. “I ran,” the two words come out strangled. “I-I ran! Smashed through the barrier we created! Destroyed it! I…” Her voice drops to a whisper, “I didn’t care who took over as long as it wasn’t me.” She brings her hands up to wrap around their arms in a comforting position, but the movement is awkward and she wonders just how long she’s been gone.

Yū doesn’t know what to say in response, and stays eerily quiet inside their head for a long moment. The split doesn’t know how to comfort her in a situation like this. Riaru doesn’t know what her body has done, doesn’t know to the full extent what Nanashi has done with it.

Yū had seen the news reports, had looked up the video footage online, and yet, even she didn’t know what all the split had done.

So she doesn’t try to comfort the girl, doesn’t try to pass off the taste of blood as something else, doesn’t try to lie. “We need to repair the wall Riaru, that’s our top priority. Everything else can come later.”

She’s right, Riaru knows this, so she hardens her resolve, buries any other questions or thoughts, and the two of them get to work.

Once they’ve repaired the wall as much as it could be, they rifle through the backpack that they’d been using as a pillow when she’d woken up.

It worries her that she doesn’t recognize the bag.

There’s a bunch of small, random things in the bag, a water bottle, a wallet... two wallets actually, there are a few pieces of jewelry that she doesn’t remember owning, beneath it all there’s another t-shirt. When she goes to pull it out she can feel something that’s been wrapped inside it.

Yū goes deathly still in their head when she pulls the mask out, and— it’s only an implication—only an idea—but the thought that crosses Riaru’s mind makes her nauseous. She throws it back in the bag, scrambling towards the nearest corner before she throws up everything in her stomach until there’s nothing but acid that comes out.
Yū refuses to say anything.

Riaru wipes at their mouth with the back of her hand, and washes their mouth out with the remaining water in the bottle they’d found before throwing it back into the bag trying not to think about what any of the things inside it means.

When they finally get outside it’s a lot warmer than Riaru remembers, enough to only warrant a t-shirt to be comfortable. It takes a trashed newspaper to tell them that it’s been six months. It’s two months shy of the split’s previous record and Riaru likes to think it’s because she’s gotten stronger.

Yū thinks about how much more damage the split was able to do despite that strength.

It starts raining on Kohaku on his way to his mother’s house, he was surprised by just how much the weather reflected the thoughts inside his head. It’d only been a week since he’d last seen his mother, but she’d called him earlier about deciding on a PI to help track down Riaru and had wanted to meet with him before making any final decisions.

By the time he reaches the front door it’s pouring and he has his briefcase held over his head, and the collar of his trench coach popped up. His mother is quick to open the door when the twenty-three year old knocks, ushering him inside as she goes to get a few towels to help him dry off. He’s in the process of shrugging off his coat when there’s another knock at the door, it’s quiet, and he almost thinks he’s imagining things until he hears it again, still just as quiet.

He finishes taking off his coat and hangs it on the coat rack before he makes his way back towards the door.

The knock sounds again.

He pulls open the door with a “how can I help you” that dies on his lips.

There’s a girl there, her hair wet and tangled, her clothes soaked through and clinging to her skin. It takes only one heart stopping moment for him to recognize them.

“Riaru.” It’s a breathy statement, like the release of a breath that he hadn’t realized he’d been holding.

Her bangs are overgrown and just long enough to be tucked behind her ears. There’s this far away look in the girl’s eyes and he has to wonder if she even recognizes him. But then her arms are wrapping around his waist, holding him tight. He can feel the cold bite of rain water seeping through his clothes where she’s hugging him, and he doesn’t know what to do for a moment.

He thinks of asking her where she’s been, why she left, what she’s been doing for the last six months. But, he saves those questions for later, instead opting to hug the girl back. The corner of his eyes burn and he wants to think that it’s not because he’s crying, wants to pass off the tears as old rain water.

He can hear her heaving and choking on broken sobs that wrack through her. He can feel her shaking against his chest and he wraps his arms around her tighter, holds her closer. The sound of rain filters through the open door, barely loud enough to be heard over the girl’s cries.
Mrs. Genji drops the towels on the floor when she returns, a cocktail of emotions boiling through her like the aftermath of a chemical explosion had taken place inside her head. She wanted to scream, to cry, to— to— She didn’t know what she wanted to do, so she just stood there. Staring at her children hugging each other. She could hear Riaru (because that’s who it was wasn’t it?) sobbing. It was loud, louder than she’s heard before, her chest was heaving, body convulsing with the force of it.

But still, the woman did not move, scared that if she did the illusion would shatter and her daughter would disappear again. Because this was all just an illusion wasn’t it? She’d simply fallen asleep while waiting for Kohaku, hadn’t she?

But then the nineteen-year-old was running towards her, stumbling slightly on the towels in the floor and crashing into her. Mei’s arms go out automatically to catch her, and when the illusion doesn’t shatter she holds her tighter, face pressing into the girl’s wet hair with her own choked cry.

Riaru’s sobs get louder, if at all possible, as she returned the embrace.

It takes a while, but after their reunion Mei remembers to call the detective and tell him of the girl’s returns.

“Has she said where she was?”

Mrs. Genji chews her bottom lip as she glances over her shoulder to where Riaru sits on the couch. She’s in a pair of dry clothes now, laying against her son’s side, her still damp hair leaving a wet spot on his shirt.

“I haven’t brought it up with her. She just got back and I didn’t want to pressure her into anything. She… She seems okay, certainly happy to be home,” she lowers her voice incase Riaru can hear her, “I don’t want to bring up anything that could change that, not for now at least.”

She hears a sigh come through the line. “I’ll leave it to you then Mrs. Genji. Call back if there are any important updates you think I should know.”

Mei hangs up with a, “Thank you detective” and sets her phone down on the counter before walking towards the back of the couch. “Is she still awake?”

“I don’t think so,” comes Kohaku’s reply. Riaru’s head has fallen to the side, resting on the boy’s shoulder. Mei comes around the other side of the couch, sitting down on the girl’s other side.

“It seems she’s gained some weight back.”

Kohaku hums in agreement, leaning his head against the back of the couch.

“I hate that her leaving like that is what it took for her to get it back though.”
Riaru can feel it when her mother starts running a hand over the top of her head in a soothing manner.

*I’m home.*

_________

*She’s home.*

_________

*We’re home,* Yū thinks, *But, at what cost?*

_________

Riaru dreams of demons that night.

Chapter End Notes

Guess who's back.

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