Dead Man's Wonderland

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| Rating:   | Explicit          |
| Archive Warning: | Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Rape/Non-Con, Major Character Death |
| Category: | M/M               |
| Fandom:   | Tokyo Ghoul       |
| Relationship: | Kaneki Ken | Sasaki Haise/Nagachika Hideyoshi |
| Character: | Nagachika Hideyoshi, Kaneki Ken | Sasaki Haise, Arima Kishou, Nishino Kimi, Nishio Nishiki, Yoshimura Eto | Takatsuki Sen |
| Additional Tags: | Alternate Universe - Insect Hybrids, Survival Horror, Porn With Plot, Explicit Sexual Content, Grotesque Imagery, Canon-Typical Violence, Blood and Gore, Bad end, Merry Bad End, Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, Praise Kink, Size Difference, Nesting, Breeding, Knotting, throat-fucking, Come Inflation, Oviposition, Scent Marking, Double Penetration, Cannibalism, Weird Hybrid Anatomy, Literally just a blazing trashfire of kinks tbh, Yandere Kaneki Ken, Dark Kaneki Ken, Dirty Talk |

Dead Man's Wonderland

by KantUseWhatIKantAbuse

Summary

Hide is forced into a cruel game of survival and soon finds himself trapped in the midst of a hellish nightmare - one from which he may not be able to escape.

Alternative title: Nagachika Hideyoshi and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

(*Smut scenes are now indexed for...convenience. Links can be found in the notes section of Chapter 1.)

- Inspired by Love Sweeter than Black Honey by bumblebutt
He Who Awaits the Breath of Destiny

Chapter Summary

...the bee hybrid’s spine tingles and alarm bells sound off in his head as some ancient part of his brain – the part still controlled by his insect DNA – senses impending doom and urges him to react. But before Hide can even think to respond, his world suddenly erupts into chaos.

Chapter Notes

Smut Scene Index:
I. Scent Marking, Mild Cock Worship (?), Throat Fucking
II. Nipple Play, Biting/Cannibalism, Frottage
III. 69, Finger Fucking, Some More Throat Fucking, Masturbation, Kaneki's Dirty Filthy Mouth e_e;:
IV. Nesting, R*pe, Double Penetration, Knotting, Breeding, Cum Inflation, Oviposition
V. ???
VI. ???

Sooo, I did a thing. I was intrigued by the idea of a world full of human-insect hybrids after reading bumblebutt’s fic Love Sweeter Than Black Honey (It’s unfinished but still a fun read guys - go check it out!), and had been wanting to read something in a similar vein for a while, because I really liked the idea of centipede Kaneki and bee Hide. But alas, there isn’t really any fic for that…thus I decided to come out of retirement and self-supply! In this universe all the characters are human, spliced with varying amounts of insect DNA, but other than that the world that they live in is generally not much different from canon. Insect parts are retractable kinda like kagune or kakuja, so most adults tend to consciously keep their hybrid appendages stowed for the majority of their day-to-day activities.

This story is meant to be kinda horror-ish, but its really just a lot of graphic violence, a little bit of sappy romance, and a fuck-ton of ridiculous porn. It’s also a wee-bit interactive too because I’m an indecisive mess I wrote two different endings, so you get to choose which one Hide ends up with depending on whether you want to see a regular Bad End or a Merry Bad End. Basically, if you’re kind of a gorehound who also enjoys detailed, sorta grotesque porn and has a certain combination of very niche kinks (the tags folks...note the tags), then this is probably for you. Otherwise, please turn around and leave now because this is a very "adult" fic that goes from zero to a hundred reeeally quickly. No idea if there’s actually a market for this kind of thing, but Imma just leave it here anyway in case anybody else out there wanted to read some extremely explicit insect porn featuring these two characters and couldn’t find it anywhere.

¯\_(ツ)_/¯

“Spoken dialogue”
‘Inner monologue’
Chapter One: He Who Awaits the Breath of Destiny

Hide is floating.

A comfortable weightlessness cradles him gently as he rides the waves of oblivion, and while he slowly drifts into awareness he finds himself yearning, as always, to linger there in that feeling for just a little while longer. But no sooner has he thought the thought than the persuasive depths of somnolence begin to part, and the waking world initiates its possessive bid for dominance.

And so, he begins his slow rise out of slumber and into consciousness.

Still drifting in amiable darkness, a small smile spreads across his face as a strangely metallic, salty smell wafts to his nose. Any moment now one of his younger siblings will be calling him down to breakfast – salted grilled perch, poached egg and hot miso soup with a side of ice cold orange jui– ...

‘?’

Cold.

Hide’s eyebrows knit together.

Damn, he’s cold. He must have kicked off his sheets in his sleep again. Absently, he reaches down to pull the covers up over himself, only to find the crease in his eyebrows deepening as his fingers sweep up nothing but more cool air.

When had his room gotten so freezing? Did he forget to cut the heater on before he went to sleep
last night?

…No, that can’t be right; he keeps the A/C in his room set to auto until at least mid-March, and it’s still only the tail-end of February right now. Though the days are gradually getting longer and warmer, mornings and evenings are still bitterly cold; the heat should have cut on as soon as the room temperature dipped to anything below a reasonable 25 degrees centigrade, and he certainly doesn’t remember cutting it off for any reason. It had been running just fine before he had set out for work the previous morning.

Work.

The thought of his job edges Hide ever so much closer to wakefulness. Has his alarm gone off yet? He has to be in for the early shift today and he can’t be late again this morning – not after the blistering earful he got from the shift manager when she caught him clocking in late yesterday.

Final exams just finished a week and a half ago and Hide is now well into his Spring holiday, picking up as many extra hours as he can at his part-time delivery job while school is out. Just last night he ended up working overtime – a last-minute delivery order had come in right before the next shift started, and as luck would have it Hide just so happened to have been the last one to clock in that day. He had been a little disheartened by the fact that he would be late getting home, but ultimately the thought of the overtime pay he would get for running a tube full of documents halfway across town after his shift was over had bolstered his spirits. It had also helped knowing that he and his family had a standing agreement that someone would cover his dinner over for him if he was ever late coming home from work and–

‘Wait. Come to think of it…What was for dinner last night?’

A tiny pang of hunger deepens Hide’s scowl as he struggles to remember last night’s dinner menu. It’s almost as if he hasn’t eaten at all. He’s cold, hungry, and to top it off his bed feels strangely rigid underneath his back…

The delivery boy’s eyes fly open then, only for him to be met with more darkness.

‘What…?’

Hide rolls his eyes about frantically for a moment before closing them abruptly, wincing. His head hurts so badly that he can feel throbbing pain erupt all the way to the back of his eye sockets when he moves his eyes around. Panic begins to set in as he realizes slowly that he is, in fact, not in his comfortable bed at home, but rather outside. Tiny pebbles and stones jut painfully into his sensitive back, causing little sparks of white to erupt around the edges of his vision. Slowly, Hide rolls himself up into a sitting position, careful not to jostle his upper body around too much. His entire
Looking down, he realizes that he is still in his work uniform – a simple, yellow polo shirt with the emblem of his employer, a stylized black cat carrying a fish, embroidered onto the breast pocket and a pair of slim-fit black denims. The rest of his uniform – a black and white cap and a black windbreaker, also bearing the company’s insignia – are missing, as are his ever-present headphones, over-the-shoulder satchel, and - most dismayingly - his coat. His current state of dress sets off alarm bells in Hide’s head. He always changes out of his work clothes before he leaves for home, and he would never go anywhere in this kind cold without his work jacket or warm winter coat.

Something is definitely off. Did he even make it home from work?

“Where the hell am I?” he rasps, mildly surprised at the gravelly quality of his own voice. Just how long has he been out? The delivery boy wracks his brain in an attempt to pull up some kind of memory – anything at all that will shed light on where he is and how he might have gotten there. Unfortunately, his mind is unreasonably sluggish at the moment, which he suspects has something to do with his having woken up in the middle of nowhere with a bunch of his shit missing. Whenever he tries to think back to the time right after he finished his shift, he is met with a hazy white fog and a blinding headache.

With a sigh, Hide decides to give up on that particular endeavor for the moment, instead opting to try and contact someone for help. Flipping his phone out of his back pocket, he finds it more than half-way charged, which is a blessing in itself. According to the date and time on his lock-screen, it's still evening of the same day that his shift ended, which is a mild relief.

A moment later though, that sense of relief is utterly overturned – Hide releases a frustrated groan as he stares down helplessly at the blinking symbol in the upper corner of his smart phone.

[[Out of range]]

“Out of range…? Seriously?” He can count on one hand the number of times that he has ever even seen that indicator lit up before. Not even roaming networks? Where the devil is he, the goddamned ends of the Earth?

A festering sort of unease settles into the pit of the blond’s stomach then, as the gravity of his situation really starts to sink in. The pain in his chest, his terrible headache, his fuzzy memory, waking up with his stuff missing in the middle of a completely unknown location with no way of contacting anyone… Something is definitely amiss here.

Feeling himself start to grow nervous, Hide opts to take action before full-on panic can set in. Using both hands, he manages to push himself carefully up to his knees and eventually into a wobbly standing position. The first few moments are disorienting to say the least, as he feels the blood flow immediately rush from his head down to his extremities, causing him to see white as an odd ringing noise pervades his hearing for a while. But after a minute or two standing still, the sensations fade and his mind begins to clear.

Careful of the searing pain that lances through his skull when he moves his eyes around too much, Hide glances around a bit, taking stock of his surroundings as his vision adjusts to the darkness. He finds himself standing in a wide, partially paved clearing. Above stretches an inky, starless sky partially lit by a sliver of a waning moon; below, hard, unforgiving earth, chilly and a little damp
where the dirt and moss have reclaimed the land from eroded cobblestones. It actually isn’t as desolate or as dark as he had first thought though – under the moonlight, Hide can make out that there are piles of rubble and refuse scattered about the clearing, the remnants of what clearly used to be some sort of civilized establishment.

Slowly approaching the closest mound of refuse, he stops short when something catches his eye, winking up at him from underneath the discarded trash. As he carefully toes away the dirt and bits of stone, a vaguely familiar looking logo makes itself known from underneath the debris and Hide find his eyes going wide as he finally puts together what it is that he is seeing.

‘Ishikiri…Dreamland!?’

Hide stares wide-eyed and open mouthed as he finally makes out the name of none other than the infamous amusement park of urban legend fame – Ishikiri Dreamland.

The first few years after it had opened up, Ishikiri Dreamland had been enormously popular. Hide remembers the fairytale themed park having had numerous television CMs running back when he was in middle school. Every Summer he and his sisters and brother had pestered his mom and dad relentlessly to take them for a visit, but for various reasons they had just never managed to get up the time and money to make the trip.

Unfortunately, before they could ever go the park had closed, having fallen on hard times some years ago, all starting when it had begun to experience a series of unexplained disappearances of guests and staff. Hide can remember there having been numerous rumors about the disappearances at the time. Some urban legends spoke of ravenous monsters roaming the forests around the secluded amusement park late at night, preying on unsuspecting visitors and employees; others of a psychotic killer who used the park as his personal hunting grounds; and some even claimed that the place was genuinely haunted.

Somewhat of an amateur conspiracy theorist himself, Hide has collected his fair share of stories about what had been the cause of all the disappearances, but nobody he has ever spoken to seemed to know much about it. Regardless of what the truth might have been though, eventually the combination of bad publicity from the press and waning popularity due to strong competition from other parks had taken their toll – Ishikiri Dreamland had been forced to shut down due to financial difficulties back when Hide was a freshman in high school.

That was years ago though; he can barely believe the place is still standing after all this time. Casting his gaze about a bit however, Hide realizes that the more he looks for them, the more easily he can identify signs of the park’s former glory scattered among the piles of decrepit junk. At his feet, discarded tickets, pamphlets and various other paper refuse litters the ground like leftovers from some long-forgotten ticker-tape parade; overhead, the gigantic, twisted forms of abandoned rollercoasters and other attractions loom impressively like the bleached bones of long-dead prehistoric creatures; and at eye-level, faded posters and signs emblazoned with the park’s mascot – a cheerfully smiling anthropomorphic dog – seem to watch his every move. In the eerie near-darkness of the moonlit, abandoned park the smiling faces of the cartoon canine take on a somewhat sinister appearance, leering up at him everywhere he looks in the form of discarded toys and disembodied costume heads. Their eyes follow Hide’s every move like some sort of creepy panopticon, unsettling him and putting him further on edge every time one catches his eye.

“It just had to be a creepy abandoned amusement park, didn’t it,” Hide mutters, beyond perturbed by
his surroundings. A particularly terrifying horror game that he played some years ago comes to mind unbidden and the blond-haired delivery boy suddenly finds himself shutting his eyelids very tightly, conjuring up images from one of the silly little cartoon shows that his two youngest siblings watch religiously every Sunday morning in an attempt to chase the unwelcome images from his mind.

At least now he knows where he is though, even if he has absolutely no idea what the layout of the park is. The young delivery boy smirks softly to himself as he imagines guilt-tripping his parents about how if they had just brought him and his siblings to the park as children like they had asked, he would have been able to find his way home that much sooner.

That’s only if he makes it home though.

“Nope! Nope, nope, nope…not gonna go there right now,” Hide chides himself, bringing cold hands up to smack his even colder cheeks a few times. Why wouldn’t he make it home?

A quick glance at his watch indicates that it’s only about 8:30 pm. From what Hide remembers of its location, Ishikiri Dreamland can’t be more than two or three hours away from the city by car at the very most, which means that if he can make his way out of the park in decent time – assuming the public transportation out here runs anything at all like in the rest of the country – he should still have enough time to reach the nearest bus or train station and get back to the city limits before the last train on the metro line headed towards his sector departs around midnight. Even if he doesn’t make it all the way home, at the very least he should be able to get close enough to the city to take a taxi the rest of the way. By then his phone should be back in range as well, so Hide can even call and ask his dad to come pick him up in the family car if it comes to that. He’ll probably be tired, hungry and freezing by the time he gets home, and he’s definitely going to get chewed out over missing dinner without even calling, but if he perseveres, sleeping in his own bed that night is not out of the question.

It’s with that heartening thought in mind that Hide finally strikes out in search of clues as to how to escape the abandoned wonderland.

As he peers around, trying to get his bearings and decide on a course in which to proceed, the delivery boy reluctantly wills out his feelers, hoping that maybe with their enhanced sensitivity he’ll have a little bit more of an idea where to go. By nature most bee hybrids like Hide are gifted with fairly advanced navigational skills. They tend to be able to construct extremely detailed and accurate mental maps – even of locations that they have only visited once or twice – and rarely get confused by changes in orientation; many even have an internal compass of sorts. His mother for example, a honeybee, is constantly aware of where everything is and never gets lost. She can point out the exact direction that their home is located in from literally anywhere.

Unfortunately, Hide’s not that sort of bee. As far as most bee hybrids go, the young bumblebee has a somewhat poor sense of direction and almost no internal compass – he couldn’t find his way out of a paper bag even if he had a map. His one saving grace, however, is that his antennae are very sensitive, and as such tend to pick up on all sorts of vibrations, minute changes in air-quality, and even very subtle scents, such as small nuance changes in pheromones. Right now though, he’s not picking up on much of anything but the strong, metallic smell of rust from the remains of the decaying attractions and rides littering the park.

For a moment Hide considers slipping off his shirt and letting his wings out for a minute so that he can maybe try for a better view. They aren’t large enough or powerful enough for him to really fly,
but if he gets a running start and jumps he can catch quite a bit of air – enough to maybe get a
glimpse of the surrounding area from above the tree-line for a second or two. However, it’s still
exceedingly cold outside and he doesn’t even have a coat on, which means that his wings won’t be
able to function properly – not without warming up a great deal first and perhaps bathing in some
sunlight to energize them. Right now they’re mostly useless.

Scratching that idea, the bumblebee heaves an exhausted sigh, taking a moment to bend over and
place his palms on his knees as he comes to a halt in front of what appears to be an abandoned
souvenir stand and gives his aching body a rest. He has been walking for what has to have been at
least twenty minutes with no sign of an exit or a viable map in sight, and the combination of the cold
and his own exhaustion are finally starting to get to him. The only positive thing is that the crisp
winter air has helped to alleviate his headache somewhat.

He’s just about to take a seat when abruptly his feelers pick up on a strange movement in the air. It’s
not much – sort of like a low thrum that rings out from the darkness, startling him from his somber
thoughts with its foreignness. The place is more than halfway overgrown with foliage, having been
mostly been reclaimed by the deep forest that surrounds it, and by now he’s grown somewhat
accustomed to the air in the park, so he kind of has a feel for what to expect – nocturnal insects and
animals waking up, causing low rustles in the brush as they set about their business while their
diurnal counterparts come home to roost for the night. This ‘noise’ is something removed from all
that – it’s out of place.

Hide immediately goes still, looking ahead toward the direction of the disturbance as he strains his
ears for any accompanying sounds...

Nothing.

The low din continues to irritate his antennae though, and he opts to investigate; after all, he doesn’t
really have any other better options. Following the ‘sound’ brings him to a small incline, and Hide
slogs up it, eyes and ears on the alert for any signs of hybrid life as he parts a few low-hanging
branches, picking his way through the underbrush. That’s when he finally picks up on a constant
low din with his human ears – the subtle rumble of multiple hybrid voices. Hide approaches the
source of the noise, moving carefully toward an abandoned kiosk at the top of the hill. When he
reaches the structure, he cautiously peers around the edge, only to be met with a most unexpected
scene.

Below him lies a small courtyard of sorts, lined with the remnants of a few park structures, which he
imagines at one time were supposed to form some type of little faux town square back when the park
was functioning. Most of the structures look to be almost completely overgrown by now with roots
and creeping vines, which, like the rest of the park, gives the place a look like a scene out of some
fantasy film, save for the fact that scattered all about said scene there are people. There have to be at
least thirty or more of them down there, most of them milling around looking just as confused and on
edge as Hide feels. Some stand off to themselves, looking on dubiously at the rest or fiddling with
their phones futilely; while the others congregate at the center, holding discussions in hushed tones,
eyes darting about their surroundings nervously. The hybrids that populate the courtyard are of
various genders, shapes and sizes, but they all seem to have a similar air of tension and desperation
about them. He’s not close enough to make out clear details, but everyone assembled there looks
somewhat shifty – he sees a lot of backs hunched, shoulders up, eyes roaming restlessly, and street-
faces on at max intensity.
Something about the cut of their stances just doesn’t sit right with Hide, and sure enough, as he sweeps his gaze over the maudlin assembly, he catches sight of a small commotion. There, off to the side of the courtyard, two particularly unsavory looking men face off against one another, embroiled in what seems to be some sort of argument. Nobody seems to be paying either of them much of any mind though, which speaks to the fact that his intuition is probably right – these aren’t just ordinary folk; everything in their measured indifference to the brewing altercation says that they are all too used to that sort of thing. For their part, neither the two men that are fighting seem to have thrown any hands yet though, and nobody’s hybrid appendages are out – they appear to be at the posturing stage, still yelling and hurling insults at one another.

After a few more moments of observation, Hide finally opts to head down and see if he can ask somebody what the hell is going on. He is rather hesitant to show himself, but it’s only getting later and he needs to get home somehow. The delivery boy isn’t exactly thrilled about interacting with any of them, but Hide is no coward, and he is pretty sure he can take care of himself to some extent if he absolutely must; all the heavy lifting from his delivery job has left him fairly well toned, so at the very least he knows that he doesn’t look like anybody’s lunch. As long as he doesn’t let the rest of his hybrid features show, he should be okay.

The bumblebee hybrid steps out from around the corner of the kiosk and makes his way down the hill into the little square. Nobody seems to really notice him, which is encouraging. He is looking around the courtyard for a likely target whom he can question about what’s going on when his eyes settle on a young man in a black hoodie who is standing a little removed from the others, next to one of the dilapidated buildings. The boy’s head is bowed and his hood pulled up high so that his face is mostly obscured in shadow, but Hide can make out the hint of supple, pale features hidden under a fringe of stark white hair. His stance is decidedly stand-offish, but at least he looks to be around Hide’s own age, and he definitely doesn’t seem as intimidating as most of the others.

Deciding to question the young man and see if he knows anything, the bee hybrid takes a step forward, only to stop short as a wave of nostalgia abruptly washes over him. Something in the hunch of the other boy’s shoulders and the tilt of his gaze as he stands in hushed solitude, eyes steadily trained on the ground, sends a twinge of sorrow through the blond. It takes him a few moments and a steadying breath before he can resolutely shake off the familiar ache that has begun to seep into his chest and approach the young man in question.

“Um…hey there, can I talk to you?” Hide calls out to the hooded youth when he is about ten paces away, raising his had in greeting as he puts on his best smile for good measure. It seems to take a moment for his addressee to realize that he is the one being spoken to, but when he does his eyes flash up to meet Hide’s, back lengthening out so that he is standing with his shoulders squared aggressively against the wall of the building that he had previously been leaning on.

The bumblebee hybrid freezes in his tracks, eyes going wide in surprise as his twin amber orbs are met with a pair of piercing, granite colored ones. The boy in question stares right back at him, eyes flashing with something like the briefest hint of recognition, just before his stance loosens slightly and he regards Hide with seemingly equal confusion.

Hide is just about to open his mouth and say something when a loud crackling noise echoes out across the entire area and all around them the park lighting flickers on, startling the bee hybrid mid-motion and causing everyone else in the square to stop whatever they are doing and a look around for the source of the noise as well. Shortly afterward a loud, sing-song tune starts belting out from the rusted loudspeakers overhead and Hide recognizes the old amusement park’s hokey theme song – the one from all the commercials for Ishikiri Dreamland that used to come on when he was a kid.

A few moments later the song ends, and immediately a high-pitched, childlike voice rings out over
the park’s announcement system.

[[Rise and shine, meat-bags! Did you have a nice rest? Feeling groggy? Not sure where you are?]]

At first the sing song voice’s tone is loaded with faux cheer that is very reminiscent of the bright, happy-go-lucky characters that populate television shows geared toward small children, but it soon turns sour with something much more sinister.

[[Let me give you a hint: You’re not in fucking Kansas anymore, assholes. Welcome to the first day of the rest of your lives…or for most of you, the last day of your miserable lives! Ahahaha!]]

Hide’s feelers vibrate painfully atop his head with the harsh sonic waves from the park’s speaker system, forcing the young bumblebee to immediately retract them. From the sound of the voice that booms out over the loudspeakers, the person talking to them can’t be much older than Hide’s little brother, who is only eleven years old and in middle school. Despite their apparent young age though, the speaker, who seems to be broadcasting live over the park’s announcement system, addresses all those listening with the kind of vulgar language that the bee hybrid wouldn’t even expect to hear from most full-grown adults, let alone a child. He wonders momentarily if it isn’t a grown person using some kind of voice-altering device, but something about the quality of the timbre rings true in a way that gives him the sneaking suspicion that he is listening to an actual child, which only serves to make things even more disturbing.

[[So let’s get right down to business shall we? Since it’s obvious that some of you aren’t exactly the brightest crayons in the box, I’m going to try and keep things simple…]]

[[You’re all here to play a game.]]

Hide’s eyes widen at the announcer’s words – he is absolutely sure that he has no desire to play any kind of game that involves being stuck in an abandoned theme park in the dead of night with a bunch of sketchy looking strangers. Suddenly a bit colder than before, the young bee hybrid crosses his arms tightly about his waist as he listens. He wants to believe that this is all some sort of outlandish prank and the television cameras are going to come rolling out any minute now, but he has a horrible feeling that none of this is a joke at all – at least not one for his enjoyment.

[[Tonight, you’re all going to play a rousing game of “Werewolf”!]]

The other hybrids in the courtyard are visibly agitated now. Many of them are glaring up at the various speaker towers scattered around the square, obviously under the impression that they are being toyed with and not liking it. A few throw their hands up and shout curses of disbelief or indignation at no one in particular. Hide finds himself staring up at one of said loudspeakers, eyes glued to the source of the announcements as he waits for the child on the other end of the mic to tell him his fate.
Now some of you have probably played this game before…but let me warn you that this isn’t the same game that you all know and love. We do things a little differently here at Ishikiri Dreamland, so listen carefully. Is everybody paying attention? I’m only going to explain the rules one time, so make sure to listen well…your worthless lives depend on it.]

At that last statement, Hide feels his heart jump in his chest – from the minute he woke up he’s had this horrible sinking feeling that there was something terribly wrong with the whole situation, but so far he’s been just barely able to keep a lid on that fear. Now he can feel it slowly bubbling to the surface as the announcer’s cruel words only serve to validate it and boost its amplitude threefold by gleefully hinting at their demise.

The majority of you have been handpicked by our organization for participation in the game due to your special…’circumstances’. You probably woke up today thinking you were just going to go about your boring scumbag lives, business as usual didn’t you? And now somehow you find yourselves waking up here, in the middle of nowhere, with no idea what the fuck is going on or how you got here, right?

Well congratulations, asswipes - you can forget your old, worthless lives! As far as the rest of the world is concerned, you’re all already dead. In fact, from this point on you are all the property of the game’s proprietors, to do with as we so please.

Now, somewhere on each of your persons, you will find a single playing card. For the purposes of the game, all you sorry sad sacks holding cards shall henceforth be referred to as “Villagers”. Hold onto this card and guard it like it’s your life for the duration of the game, because it basically is.

In this game, the sole objective of all Villagers will be to survive until sunrise. That’s it! There are no rules as to how you must accomplish this…just stay alive until morning. To help you out, there are various supply caches hidden throughout the park containing food, weapons, and other supplies, which we welcome you to use to your advantage. But be careful – there are a total of 112 Villagers in the park, and only a limited number of supplies to go around…So you better be quick.

As long as the lights are on, Villagers will be free to move around without fear throughout the confines of the park. Be sure to use your time wisely though, because when the lights go out…that’s when the Wolves come out to play. That’s riight! Besides the regular players participating in the game as Villagers, we have another group of players, whom we shall henceforth refer to as “Wolves”. The objective of these players will be hunt down and kill as many Villagers as they can for as long as the lights remain off.]

Hide’s heart jumps up into his throat as a penetrating cold, originating somewhere in his spine, begins to seep into every crevice of his body.

This is really happening.

It’s happening and there’s nothing he can do but stand and listen as this sadistic child hands down his death sentence via amusement park speaker-system.

Of course, it wouldn’t be very fair if we didn’t give our Villagers at least a little bit of help…after all, our Wolves all have a “special” advantage of their own. The truth is, there is one other very
special player among you tonight. This player will be referred to as the “Lamb”.

[[“But how do I know if I'm the Lamb?” you say? Why that's easy, dear little lamb-chop - You don’t get a card. Instead, you will find on your person one very special key. Make sure not to lose it, as it is as important to you as the cards are for our Villagers. You will be subject to all the same basic rules and parameters as our Villagers as well.

[[Now the Lamb, just like the rest of you Villager fuckwads, simply wants to make it through to sunrise unharmed. But unfortunately for our poor little lost Lamb, he is in an exceedingly precarious situation. For he is in fact…

[[… a “Sacrificial Lamb”!

[[That’s right~♪ Any lucky Villager who manages to kill the Lamb and take his key will be granted the special status "Wolfsbane" – making them immune to Wolf attacks for the rest of the game! And as for our Wolves? You didn’t think we’d leave you out of the action did you? Any lucky Wolves who claim our little Lamb for themselves will be granted special “Daylight Immunity”! Lights on or lights off, they will be free to hunt anytime, anywhere!]

[[And that’s it! Those are our rules. Please bear in mind that this playing ground is outside the jurisdictions of any national law-enforcement agencies for the duration of the game, and as such there will be no consequences to any of your actions outside those we choose to enforce. Feel free to lie, cheat, steal, maim, dismember…have a party!!

[[I will take this opportunity to remind everyone, however, that we will be watching. If any of you are found in violation of the park rules – including but not limited to loss of your player card or key, attempting to forfeit the game, or, for our Wolves, hunting and killing Villagers or taking the Lamb during ‘light’s on’…it’ll be ‘lights out’ for you, if you know what I mean, ahahahaha!]

[[Ah, and one last thing…Since we’re pretty sure that some of you assholes are doubtful as to the validity of the situation, let’s start things off with a little practice round, shall we? In a few moments the park lights will be shutting off for just a bit…so that you can all get a true feel for how the real game will proceed.

[[Good luck~♪... You're gonna need it.]]

With that a heavy silence falls over the entire courtyard as the speakers fizzle and cut out abruptly. Most of the other hybrids scattered about the square look around at each other and at their surroundings with expressions that range from confusion to calculated passivity to outright fear. For his part, Hide remains staring up at the loudspeaker in front of him in shock, only to be startled from his reverie when he senses someone’s gaze boring into him with piercing intensity. He slowly swivels his head around toward the source of the unnerving sensation, only to have his line of sight
cut off abruptly when there is a resounding rumble of electronic static something like that of a breaker being switched off, and suddenly the park lights go out, plunging them all back into darkness.

The next few moments are accompanied by oppressive silence as the courtyard hums with a sudden undercurrent of frenetic, nervous tension. Hide stands stock still, eyes staring wide and unseeing into all-encompassing black as he is temporarily blinded while his pupils adjust to the sudden, drastic lighting change. The bee hybrid’s heartbeat thunders in his ears even as he strains them to their limits, listening for any signs of movement.

That’s when he hears it – the subtle crackling noise of hybrid limbs being released nearby, followed by a curious sensation of rushing air from somewhere just overhead. The moment he feels it, the bee hybrid’s spine tingles and alarm bells sound off in his head as some ancient part of his brain – the part still controlled by his insect DNA – senses impending doom and urges him to react. But before Hide can even think to respond, his world suddenly erupts into chaos.

A powerful gust of air right in front of his nose sends the delivery boy’s hair flying into his eyes as something huge surges past him just millimeters away from his face, knocking him flat onto his back with the force of the blow-back from its movement. An instant later there is a heavy thud nearby, and then a sickening crunch, immediately accompanied by an aborted screech that is distinctly hybrid in nature. Hide feels a scream rise in his throat before dying just as quickly, as his initial shock is immediately replaced by paralyzing fear. His breathing quickly grows shallow and ragged, until he is lying there stricken and helpless in the darkness, shivering and sucking in feeble, labored breaths to a horrific soundtrack comprised of the sounds of ripping flesh and crunching bone. Someone is screaming – horrific, frantic cries that carry on for several seconds before they abruptly cease, giving way to a deafening silence.

Some indeterminate amount of time later there is another loud click off in the distance, accompanied by the low hum of electricity, and suddenly the lights are back on. Hide lies flat on his back with his arms at his sides, prone and quaking for several seconds after that, chest heaving while the loudspeakers cue up and the park’s theme song blasts overhead. The mindless, cheerful little tune drones on ominously as the delivery boy cowers in terror.

[[Well, that was our trial round folks! Oh and look, it appears we’ve already had our first casualties too...]]

There is a long moment of silence then, during which Hide finally manages to roll over onto his side and clamber up onto his hands and knees shakily, chest still heaving. When he does he abruptly finds himself looking down into the wide, unblinking gaze of a young female hybrid. The bumblebee startles and clamps a hand over his own mouth immediately, stifling a wave of nausea as the thick, coppery scent of blood wafts up into his nose. The bee hybrid carefully climbs to his feet, trying not to look directly at the corpse, but curiosity eventually wins out and he ends up peeking down at the lifeless body hesitantly.
Hide immediately recognizes the young woman as one of the hybrids that he saw hanging around the square right before the announcements had come on, but he is shocked to find her right there next to him – she had been standing at least 10 meters away from him before the lights had gone out. Now her pointed features are contorted into an expression of shock and fear that speaks volumes of what the last few moments of her life must have been like. But it is something else about her appearance that gives the bumblebee pause; the woman’s eyes, wide open and already glazed over in death, are a shocking shade of red the likes of which Hide has never seen before – bright crimson irises floating eerily on a field of black.

The bumblebee flinches as something in the back of his mind piques with curiosity, and he experiences a strange feeling of deja vu at the sight. Hide can’t recall having ever seen another hybrid quite like this, and it’s not just her eyes either; her hybrid parts are enormous – much larger than even most alphas, and the complexity of her hybridization is much more advanced as well – her insect attributes alter her body’s appearance to a degree that Hide has never seen before.

The girl in question looks to be a damselfly hybrid – a large set of wicked mandibles protrudes from the underside of her narrow jaw, and one long, delicate wing extends from her shoulders. The other is missing, completely torn free so that the ragged, bloody stump of it juts grotesquely into the air, seemingly ripped right out of her back. Her throat has been savaged, vocal chords viciously ripped out along with a substantial portion of her lower neck and shoulder. One of her thin, lanky arms lies outstretched in Hide’s direction, while the other clutches desperately at a lower abdomen that is no longer there; her body from the navel down is completely gone, mangled entrails hanging free like loose garters as they tangle haphazardly round the tail end of her severed spine.

Hide really does retch then. The bumblebee leans over and helplessly empties the paltry contents of his stomach right there onto the faded cobblestones, just as the announcements recommence.

[[...So hopefully you’ve all gotten a feel for the stakes of the game now, yes? Since this was only a trial round, unfortunately we won’t be adding these kills to any of our Wolves’ tallies...but please do hold on to that energy for the rest of the night folks!]]

[[And now that it looks like we’re all on the same page...]]

[[Let the game begin!]]

Hide somehow wills himself to get up after that. Around him he can hear the other remaining hybrids in the square stirring into movement as the park music plays again, most likely signaling the end of the announcements. Some of them are congregating around a spot on the opposite side of the courtyard, and when he looks closely at the ground near their feet, he spies a large red-black pool of blood glistening under the faint moonlight – another dead Villager. As the bumblebee collects himself, he glances around and is surprised to find that the boy in the black hooded jacket has disappeared off somewhere, as have a few others who had populated the little courtyard just before the lights went out.
‘Me too…move…I’ve gotta move…can’t stay here.’

Fortunately, the remaining players in the square seem just as disoriented as Hide, and the blond takes that opportunity to creep away around the side of the nearest building and head off down a small walkway. He’s not too keen on striking out alone right now, but he’s even more terrified of being around other people after what he just experienced. With no way of knowing who is a Wolf and who isn’t without literally going around and asking to see every other person’s card, there’s a very good chance that he could end up right near one when the lights go off again, effectively sealing his fate. Instead Hide forces his tired, half-frozen body to the limit, setting off down the narrow walkway at a brisk canter until he has put what he thinks is an adequate amount of distance between himself and the horrific scene he just left behind.

He comes to stop when he reaches what appears to be a little rest area of sorts. There is a public toilet, an abandoned vending stand, and a small sitting area full of half-eroded concrete park tables and crumbling benches, one of which he chooses to take a seat on. The bee hybrid sighs heavily as he struggles to process the situation he’s in right now. A particularly frightening possibility has been nagging at his thoughts the entire time he was fleeing the courtyard, and loathe though he is to confirm his suspicions, right now is probably the best time for him to do so.

The bumblebee proceeds to carefully check each of his pockets one at a time, the large bubble of fear that fills his chest expanding exponentially each time he comes up empty, until finally he is left with just the single pocket on the front of his uniform shirt.

Sucking in a shaky, deep breath, Hide hesitantly slips his right hand into the small, embroidered square of fabric that adorns his left breast…

…and pulls out a large golden key.

Chapter End Notes

So there you go. The jist of the storyline is that Hide spends a horrific night trying to escape this fucked up game, all while slowly regaining his memories. The whole thing is very Hide-centric, so you (technically) won’t get to see much of Kaneki until a little bit later.

The setting and minor elements of the plot (what little plot there is…) are based vaguely on a BL game that I played some years ago, but with a bunch of shit tweaked and added in because I’m a shameless hack like that. This entire fic is basically just some gratuitous porn nestled inside a matryoshka of deep-cut references and headcanon, tbh.

The main story is pretty much finished but I don't have a beta, so it will be updated as fast as I can finish editing. Expect it to span about seven or so medium-length chapters total (per story route), with maybe a few Kaneki-centric bonus chapters thrown in at the end.
Chapter Summary

And that’s when Hide suddenly realizes that he’s been handling this whole Lamb thing all wrong.
“Yeah, that’s right,” the bumblebee gulps. His voice starts as a quiet murmur, but slowly grows in volume as he musters all the courage he can, “I am the Lamb.”

Chapter Notes

To be clear, the Α/β/Ω dynamics in this story don’t just have to do with mating and social roles but also with like… the strength of one’s insect DNA (ie. level/complexity of hybridization). Hybrids with the least amount of insect DNA generally present as omegas, while those with average amounts are betas, and extreme levels of hybridization results in alpha status. Hybrid society is actually pretty progressive in general, but due to the nature of the situation, there are wild amounts of dynamic-based sexism in this fic. It’s explained a little bit in the story too, but I just thought I’d clear things up and mention that it’s all intentional and not just me being a total dunce and fucking up the whole Α/β/Ω concept. (I mean I AM still fucking it up but…)

Also, I just want to reiterate that a good portion of this fic is black and white and smut all over. Seriously, it’s… pretty filthy and also kind of icky, and I just really really want to insist that if you are under-aged or faint of heart or really just like… *decent and pure in your soul* that you please not read this drivel. A mind is a terrible thing to waste.

That said, if you want to listen to some nice horror music to set the mood, you can check out some of the music that I listened to while I was writing this fic [here](#)

“Spoken dialogue”
‘Inner monologue’
//Flashbacks, dream sequences, narration of various other psychological events//
[[Communication via electronics]]

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Two: Bedight Orbit

‘Of course. *I’m the Lamb – the Lamb is me, haha.*’

Hide can’t help the pathetic little laugh that bursts free of his lips as he examines the small golden
trinket under the dim moonlight. He chuckles softly at himself and his spectacularly bad fortune until his laugh soon dissolves into a heavy sigh that borders on a sob when the gravity of the situation descends on him once again.

He’s going to die here.

Alone. In an abandoned amusement park. Murdered by Villagers desperate for salvation or disemboweled by Wolves eager for the chance to hunt them unimpeded by the rules.

He’s going to die here, and his family will never even know what happened to him.

He’ll never get to go to the elementary school play that his youngest sister Miyabi has been working on all semester. He’ll never see his sister Haruka get into veterinary school. He’ll never eat his little sister Manami’s home-made bento or get his ass beaten by his little brother Masayoshi at videogames again. He’ll never get to properly thank his parents for everything they’ve done to make his life wonderful even though he probably doesn’t deserve it.

‘I’ll never get to keep my promise,’ he thinks, a sudden pang of remorse rippling through him at that thought.

‘Wait...what?’

Hide blinks in confusion a few times as he struggles to trace his previous thought back to its origin. What ‘promise’? He wracks his brain searching for a connection, but the swirling white fog that obscures so much of his memory still hasn’t cleared yet, and all the emotional duress he’s experienced over the course of the past hour or so definitely isn’t helping him get his thoughts in order. Moreover, this isn’t really the time to be contemplating that sort of thing – not when he’s tired and cold and hungry and there are a bunch of other players roaming the park who are probably out for his blood – the “Lamb’s” blood. And all over some stupid key no less.

Hide glares down at the little object, playing with it absently as he considers his options. It has a surprisingly intricate design – a long stem patterned with twisting vines covered in thorns and tiny blossoming roses. The handle is large and heart-shaped, and at its center there is a small, detailed relief of a little cartoon bunny holding a pocket-watch. The bumblebee frowns slightly in consternation at the object one more time before slipping it back into his chest pocket for safe keeping while he plans his next move.

The bumblebee hybrid absently chews his bottom lip a little a bit as he weighs his options. On the one hand, he’s scared shitless by the mere prospect of wandering around the park alone; but on the other, he can’t hang around here forever – eventually the lights are going to go out again, and when they do he doesn’t want to be caught out in the open like last time. Moreover, he’s fairly certain that
if he doesn’t locate a decent shelter or some warm clothing soon, he’ll probably freeze to death before any of the other players can even get to him.

Hide’s brow furrows as he remembers what the announcer said about there being supply caches hidden around the park. He’d have a lot better odds of making it out of this ordeal alive if he had some food in his stomach and maybe a weapon of some sort in hand – that’s a fact.

A gust of wind rustles around the side of the dilapidated vending stand and across Hide’s shoulders, stealing away with it what little body heat the blond boy still has left, and his mind is made up for him. Still a bit shaky (and thoroughly freezing his ass off) but otherwise no worse for the wear, Hide picks a pathway that is headed opposite the direction he came from before setting off in search of supplies.

As he walks, he tentatively lets his antennae out again, testing the air for signs of danger. It’s subtle, but he definitely senses a low hum of activity now – a pervasive nervous tension permeating the air throughout the entire park that was not there when he first woke up. The feeling only intensifies as he proceeds, putting him further on edge, but Hide plows forward anyway; at this point, no matter what he does his life is going to be in danger -- he might as well keep moving and make the most of his time while the lights are still on.

After a little while the bee hybrid’s feelers twitch slightly when they begin to pick up on a somewhat promising scent. It’s faint, but he can distinctly taste a tiny hint of something that may be edible coming from somewhere nearby. The bumblebee follows the phantom aroma for a while, careful to maintain caution, until at last he comes to a stop in front of a large, open-air food court of sorts, long abandoned and practically stripped bare by the ravages by time. He glances around carefully, alert to the possible presence of other hybrids, but doesn’t sense anything. Sighing softly with relief, the bee hybrid sets about searching the place – this seems like the perfect hiding spot for a supply cache.

After just a few minutes of rooting around, the bumblebee easily locates a large wooden crate nestled underneath an eatery bench that has been partially up-ended by a huge tree root.

When he pries open the lid, he finds the contents blessedly untouched, and for a moment Hide knows real gratitude. Inside the bumblebee finds a few packages of what look to be some army style rations, some bottles of water, a large military jacket, several kairo* and a big bowie knife.

Hide immediately goes for the jacket; throwing it on and zipping it almost all the way up to his neck, he allows himself a moment to appreciate the warm, fuzzy lining before he turns to the other supplies. He peels two of the kairo out of their plastic wrappings and gives them a good shake before shoving one into each of the coat’s two large hip pockets for extra warmth, then stuffs the rest of the unopened ones in there as well for safekeeping. The bee hybrid then twists open a bottle of water, using half of its contents to rinse his mouth until the taste of bile is mostly gone before downing the rest thirstily.

He’s just about to go for one of the packets of rations when he freezes.

Hide feels his breath still, lungs momentarily seizing in his chest as behind him he hears the distinct sound of hybrid appendages presenting themselves. He turns his head slowly, hardly daring to make a move, and finds himself looking up at a large beetle hybrid.

The man looks to be several years older than Hide, tall and broad-shouldered with grizzled features,
and he stands just a few meters away from where the bumblebee is crouched, hybrid appendages at the ready.

“Ah…h-hey there,” the bee hybrid greets nervously. Trying not to eye the sharp pincers that protrude from either side of the man’s face or the large, wicked horns that sprout from his forehead too obviously, he offers up a plastic-wrapped ration bar, “Hungry?”

The man doesn’t answer. Instead he cocks his head to the side, scenting the air for a moment with his antennae.

“You…you’re an omega, aren’t you,” the beetle’s voice is a low rumble, tinged with a hint of aggression; it’s not a question.

Judging by the size of the other hybrid’s appendages and the sheer extent to which they contort the man’s human appearance, Hide would wager that he’s probably dealing with at least a beta level hybrid or better. Beetles are generally scavengers and predators, and even betas tend to be highly aggressive; the tone of this one’s voice is harsh and commanding, but his scent isn’t overwhelming. Hide is still able to ignore the instinct to capitulate to the superior ranking hybrid -- which tells him the man is probably a high-level beta at best.

“Yes, that would be correct,” the bumblebee confirms with a nod, trying to keep the annoyance out of his voice, “Is that somehow relevant?”

“Haven’t smelled any of your kind around here,” the beetle replies bluntly, as he takes a step forward toward where the bumblebee sits, emboldened by Hide’s admission, ”Let’s see your card, boy.”

And there it is – the very question that Hide’s been dreading. His eyebrow twitches at the loaded manner with which the man spits the word ‘boy’, but he manages to keep his cool otherwise. The bee hybrid feels a few beads of sweat slipping down his back as he slides his hand into the bin behind him.

“My card…? Ohhh! You must mean the one the announcer mentioned, right?” feigning ignorance, the bee hybrid surreptitiously feels around inside the supply crate until finally his fingers brush up against cool metal.

“Don’t play stupid kid,” comes the menacing reply, “…Or should I say Lamb.”

‘Well that didn’t take long.’

“That obvious, huh?” the bumblebee grimaces, and in the next second the beetle is barreling towards him, monstrous hybrid jaws stretched open wide. Hide lunges to the side just in time to avoid having his neck snapped in half by the other hybrid’s wicked pincers, knife flashing out to catch the man across his upper arm in passing.

The delivery boy brings the weapon up in front of his chest defensively as he clambers to his feet just a few meters away, already panting as he tries to ignore a severe stitch in his side.

“Look, man, you don’t want to do this,” the blond entreats as he backs away slowly, careful to keep the other hybrid in his line of sight, “Just let me leave before anyone gets hurt…you have to realize how nuts this entire situation is. Don’t do something you might regret.”

“You know, you’re right?... This is nuts. And no, I don’t particularly want to do this,” the beetle agrees as he slowly climbs back to his feet, “… but I have to. You think I want to die in this godforsaken place? Didn't you see what happened to those poor bastards who got offed in that little shitshow of a ‘trial round’? Fuck, kid, I’m not goin’ out like that! And it’s not just me -- once they
realize what you are every hybrid in this park is going to be after you whether they realize how fucked up all this is or not. There's no talking your way around that."

Hide gulps at the man’s observation. He’s not wrong – sooner or later this stupid key is going to have everyone that he comes into contact with out for his head. That doesn’t mean he’s going to just take things lying down though.

The beetle hybrid sizes Hide up then, eyeing the bumblebee and then the weapon before looking down at the shallow cut in his upper arm. It’s oozing blood through the slit in the man’s sleeve, but he seems unfazed by the injury; the beetle cracks his neck from side to side intimidatingly and begins to advance on the blond again, shoulders squared. "You might as well get it over with and die here, boy," he says, "At the very least I can promise I’ll make it quick for you."

"Yeah... thanks for the generous offer, but I think I'm going to have to consider my other options here," the bee hybrid retorts with a grim smile.

Hide continues to slowly retreat towards the nearest path out of the eatery area, weighing his odds of getting away if he tries to make a break for it against the odds of him successfully defending himself if he tries to stand his ground. If he stays and fights it will assuredly be a fight to the death, and he absolutely does not want anyone to die here – especially not when the obvious intent of the game’s proprietors seems to be to ensure just that. The beetle is taller than he is and has longer legs, but Hide is a lot less bulky and a fairly decent runner. If he manages to get a head start and dart through the trees then just maybe–

Suddenly the loudspeakers clack on overhead, and the park’s cheerful theme-song begins to play. Both beetle and bumblebee freeze momentarily.

'That can’t be a good sign.’ Hide’s eyebrows quirk as his antennae momentarily pick up on a strange vibration -- something that seems like it may be the vaguest hint of a foreign presence coming from somewhere towards the opposite end of the food court --but in an instant, it’s gone.

As the beetle stands frozen, Hide suddenly makes up his mind as to what to do and, unlike when he was in the courtyard, this time his nerves do not fail him; the blond-haired boy bursts into motion, making a mad dash toward the nearest tree-line. A beat later, the beetle hybrid seems to catch on to the fact that his quarry is getting away and takes off as well.

Hide pushes his aching limbs to the limit, sprinting through the narrow but thick swath of greenery that separates the eatery from the main walkway at breakneck pace and hurtling down the winding cobblestone pathway. The beetle is not far behind though – he's hot on the omega’s heels by the time the music starts to wind down. A few seconds of hard sprinting later, Hide bursts through another dense thicket and into a clearing that is something like the one he first encountered before the game started but smaller, and abruptly skids to a halt, falling gracelessly onto his ass. Before him a group of about ten hybrids stands in a loose circle. Some of them are holding makeshift weapons, while others have their hybrid appendages out, and each of them seems poised for action as though waiting for something. They all look at Hide with similar expressions of surprise as he comes careening into the clearing and stumbles to a stop in front of them, falling backwards onto his rear as he narrowly avoids a collision with their little gathering. Not a moment later the beetle comes charging into the square right after him, nearly tripping over Hide as he barges a couple meters past the bee before coming to an abrupt stop himself.

There is a tense moment of silence then as the group of hybrids in the circle look from Hide to the beetle, and then at one another, each one slowly putting two and two together.
‘..Shit.’

The bumblebee scrambles backward just as the little square suddenly bursts into motion and the nearest Villager, a tall, lanky water-strider, lunges toward Hide wielding a thick length of steel pipe. The bee hybrid brings up his knife to parry the attack…but it never connects. Instead another hybrid – this one a petite jumping spider -- tackles his would-be assailant from behind, sending the man careening past Hide and into the ground.

The delivery boy blinks, frozen in shock at the unexpected turn of events for a moment, just before the adrenaline kicks in and he turns to get up and run. However, before he can go anywhere a long pincer latches onto his right jacket sleeve, tugging him sideways toward a hulking wall of a man – it’s a water-bug whose face is contorted into an expression of frenzied determination, intent on impeding the bee’s escape.

All around Hide desperate Villagers are engaged in bitter struggles with one-another, each as intent on preventing their competitors from getting a hold of the Lamb as they are on getting to him themselves. The young delivery boy’s nails scrabble frantically against the paved ground as he tries to get away, but the other man has soon leveraged the grip his pincers have on Hide’s sleeve into a solid grip on the bumblebee’s upper arm using one of his human hands. Hide is yanked toward the man so forcefully that his feet briefly leave the ground, and he flails his free arm slightly as he is lifted up, consequentialy dropping his knife; The bumblebee can the weapon clang to the ground a short distance away, just as the water-bug hybrid brings a huge claw up over his chest, ready to impale him.

And suddenly the music is over and the lights are out again.

A couple of the hybrids in the square are slow to notice the shift, too embroiled in their struggles with one another to pick up on it right away, and that is exactly what seals their fates.

There is little precursor to their arrival – just a violent thrum of tense energy that surges through the clearing, and without any further warning the Wolves are upon them.

It’s mere moments before screams begin to erupt around the little courtyard as the first few Villagers are assaulted – many of them struck down before they even know what’s happening. The hybrid who has a hold of Hide is one of them, so intent on his imminent victory that he’s completely unprepared for the huge scythe that comes skittering across his neck. The water-bug’s face contorts into a look of confusion that would almost be comical if not for the fact that his assailant’s bladed hybrid foreleg is currently hacking into his neck, cutting so deeply that it nearly takes his head clean from his shoulders and causing a violent spray of blood to erupt from the wound as it slices through several arteries in the process.

Hide reflexively squints his eyes and averts his eyes from the horrific scene, still desperately trying to free himself from the man’s grip, which remains stubbornly vice-like even as the Wolf who has just inadvertently saved Hide’s life proceeds to literally pounce on him. There is a sickening, crunching sound as the Wolf in question – a tall assassin bug with long, flowing black tresses, leans up on her toes to lap at the blood-spray coming from the man’s shooting arteries like a small child at a water fountain, just before she ruthlessly tears into the wound at the water-bug’s throat with her hybrid pincers and begins gorging herself on his esophagus and trachea. The woman seems completely oblivious to the terrified bumblebee as she feasts on the dying hybrid, and soon the water-bug’s grip weakens enough for Hide to pull himself away unnoticed.
As the bee hybrid stumbles free from the gruesome mess, eyesight still adjusting to the darkness, he can just barely make out several similar scenes of carnage that are taking place all around the clearing; it looks as though at least four Wolves, most likely attracted by the earlier commotion, have descended on the small square and now the Villagers who were previously so intent on Hide’s demise are suddenly fighting for their lives instead.

Taking advantage of the commotion, Hide stays as low to the ground as he can as he creeps away toward one of the crumbling buildings that line the perimeter, and he is almost clear of the mess when he abruptly finds his feet leaving the ground. The bumblebee’s eyes go wide with fear as he is turned around in mid-air and suddenly finds himself face to face with a pair of glowing red eyes. The Wolf before him appears to be a spider hybrid, and an alpha at that – eight enormous legs and a large arachnid abdomen extend out from the lower part of the tall, muscular man’s back and Hide feels his knees go a bit weak with the scent of his pheromones as they peel off from him in waves. For the most part, the Wolf’s face is obscured by a demonic looking red mask that covers all but his mouth and chin, and is crafted to resemble a traditional, two-horned ogre mask. Hide is being held suspended in the air by two of the man’s long hybrid limbs, and the bumblebee’s lungs nearly seize up in his chest as another of the arachnid’s long, wickedly clawed hybrid appendages extends forward to latch onto his shoulder through the fabric of his coat, causing Hide to wince as the he tugs the blond closer to his captor’s face. He shudders when the cool porcelain of the spider’s mask brushes against the sensitive flesh of his neck and the alpha inhales deeply, scenting him.

“You,” the Wolf’s voice is a low purr, and Hide can feel the surprise and electrified excitement that permeates his tone, “Omega! You reek of it. You’re the Lamb, aren’t you.” The bee hybrid is literally quaking now, all too aware of the fate that awaits him now that he’s been caught. He had nearly forgotten that in addition to all the Villagers wanting him dead, Wolves gain an advantage for capturing him too.

“Yeah...that’s right,” the bumblebee gulps. His voice starts as a quiet murmur, but slowly grows in volume as he musters all the courage he can, “I am the Lamb.”

“I’m the Lamb…it’s me! I’m the Lamb!! I’M THE LAMB!!” Hide feels his voice rising another decibel and then another as he cries out for anyone within the general vicinity to hear, until soon he is screaming at the top of his lungs, startling his captor slightly, “It’s ME! I have the stupid key, assholes! You want it? Come and get me! I’M RIGHT HERE!”

The sounds of carnage in the square die down soon after Hide begins screaming, and now the spider’s gaze is off him and instead directed toward the four other Wolves, who have left off their previous engagements. The few survivors of the massacre limp or crawl away as fast as their limbs can carry them as the distracted Wolves swiftly approach the bumblebee and his captor. Like the spider, all of them wear masks as well, but Hide can still make out their odd crimson eyes shining through the darkness as they move in on the arachnid and his prize.

“Haha...hahaha... clever little whore,” the alpha’s voice is a low, malicious rumble in Hide’s ear, and the bumblebee gulps softly as he turns his face away, reeling as another wave of pheromones washes over him.

“This one smells like an omega...Is it true? Is he the one?” one of the Wolves, the female assassin
bug that cut down Hide’s would-be attacker just a few minutes ago, hisses demandingly as she advances on the two of them. The spider gives a small, dejected sigh as he looks from Hide to the other Wolves gathered around them and back again.

“Yes, he’s the one,” the spider concedes, sounding annoyed, as he levels Hide with a piercing glare, “And now that everybody in the bloody park knows, I take it I’m going to have to share with the rest of you as well. Ugh.”

“Finally you do something useful for a change instead of just lurking around like a fucking creep,” the smallest of the five, who appears to be a tarantula-hawk, spits derogatorily as she steps up to give Hide a cursory sniff herself. He can feel his head grow light as he gets a whiff of her scent when she comes near – another alpha, this one with equally overwhelming pheromones. “Hn…you’re right though, this one is an omega.”

“God, could they get any more obvious with the innuendo in the rules?” mutters another male hybrid, this one an agitated looking dragonfly with short blue hair. “Seriously, I mean he’s literally the only omega in the park, and he smells to high heaven of it. It’s a lucky thing we found him first – this is technically ‘his’ territory you know, even if he’s chosen to abstain this time around.”

“So, we gonna do this here or what?” the tarantula-hawk pipes up impatiently, sneering a bit as she leers up into Hide’s face eagerly, “Come on, I want this over so I can get back to the hunt!”

“Here. And just remember,” the spider growls, tugging the omega out of her reach, “I caught him, which means I’m first.”

“Whatever asshole, just try not to ruin him before the rest of us get a turn,” the tarantula-hawk snaps as she turns away from the larger alpha with an indifferent toss of her long red locks.

The blond’s eyebrows quirk in confusion at the surprising level of civility with which the Wolves seem to be addressing one another. This…this is not what he had in mind when he decided to go through with this (admittedly hastily conceived) plan – not at all. Nothing makes sense here. The Wolves should be fighting over who gets to make a meal of Hide’s entrails by now, but instead they seem relatively unbothered by the fact that there are five of them here and only one Lamb between them. Not only are they unbothered – they actually seem to be rather well-acquainted with each other.

A cold sweat breaks out along the bee hybrid’s back.

“Ah, but wait… th-there are five of you,” the bumblebee croaks, voice suddenly hoarse. The scents of the five Wolves – all of them clearly alphas - muddle Hide’s thoughts slightly as the heady mix of aromas invades his senses in a way that he’s never experienced before, compelling him to submit without even having been ordered to do anything, “Even if you all eat me together, there’s still only one key.”

One of the Wolves, a tall, chocolate-haired scarab beetle, gives a loud bark of laughter at the omega’s words and the others soon join in, laughing raucously as Hide’s eyes dart nervously from mask to mask.

“Ahh…silly little Lamb,” the spider chuckles as he leans in until he is so close to Hide’s face that a lock of his chin-length black hair tickles the side of the bumblebee’s cheek, “Who said anything
about *eating* you?"

Hide’s expression scrunches up painfully as he wracks his brain, trying to figure out what exactly he’s missing.

Any Wolves who claim the Lamb for themselves will be granted “Daylight Immunity” and get to kill whoever they want whenever they want...right?

The spider’s mouth quirks up into a sadistic grin, laden with suggestion, watching while the bumblebee’s brows knit together in concentration as he tries to figure out what he’s been overlooking; and it’s only then that the real implications of the rules finally sink in for the befuddled bee hybrid.

'No...'

Any Wolves. 
*Wolves*. Plural.

Any Wolves who claim the Lamb for themselves. 
*Claim*, not kill. 
‘Claim’.

Hide feels his entire body go rigid and the bottom drop out from his stomach, just as the spider smirks and begins to lower him back down onto the ground again, this time using four of his hybrid appendages to pin the bumblebee’s limbs while he straddles the stricken boy’s hips. The other four Wolves spread out about the square again, where they set about digging into the remains of the dead and dying Villagers that lie strewn about.

“No...w-wait,” the blond insists. He holds his voice as steady and even as he can, but even Hide can hear the way it cracks and trembles with fear at the end, “How do you even know what exactly the rules mean? How do you know they don’t mean one of you needs to take my key after you cl-...’claim’...me?”

“Well then, I guess we’ll just have to *try it and see,*” the spider replies smugly as he tugs down the zipper to Hide’s newly acquired jacket, once again exposing him to the cold.

“You know what? This’ll go so much easier if you bring out your little insect bits and *present for me like a good little whore,*” Hide shudders; there is a tangible *force* behind the spider’s words as he leans in and runs his tongue over the shell of the bumblebee’s ear lewdly. He’s never experienced an alpha’s ‘*push*’ before; ordinarily it’s illegal for people to use their pheromones to influence omegas
an offense punishable by law with almost the same severity as sexual assault. It’s all the bumblebee can do to close his eyes and bite his lip, suppressing his hybrid limbs as they react to the hormones emanating from the man above him, itching to spring free as per his command.

“You know, I was going to take my time with you,” confides the arachnid, whispering conspiratorially into the bumblebee’s ear as he slides a hand down to run long, bony fingers over the seam of Hide’s jeans, lightly pressing them into his entrance through the fabric. “Find a nice little spot between some trees… spin up a pretty little web to wrap you up nice and tight in… spend some time playing with you until I got your little hole nice and slicked up for me – maybe even let you suck me off a few times before I seeded you and knotted you up real good,” he sneers, “Not just your hybrid hole, but your tiny little boy-pussy too.”

The man grabs him then, clutching Hide’s entire backside from the seam of his ass to the front of his perineum just below his balls with one large hand in a painful squeeze that makes the bee hybrid’s eyes water and draws a little yelp from him.

“If you weren’t such a clever little bitch, we could’ve had some real fun… before I slit you open and suck out your pretty little insides like a milkshake that is.”

Hide whimpers softly as another pale hand unzips him and finds its way down the front of his jeans, wrapping painfully tightly around his limp member through his underwear.

“But since you chose to let the whole fucking world know you’re the Lamb like the little whore you are, we just don’t have that kind of time anymore,” the bee hybrid’s face is flaming with embarrassment and confusion as he’s assaulted by wave after wave of the alpha’s unbearably strong pheromones, bringing him low as the spider snarls menacingly into his ear. “That’s why I’m going to need you to hurry up and show me your slutty little hybrid cunt. Now, Omega.”

This time the push is so hard that it rocks Hide’s consciousness a bit, and he is suddenly panting open mouthed, eyes watering as he gives in to his inner insect and allows his hybrid parts to come free. He can feel the familiar prickling sensation across the skin of his lower back as his human cells begin to part, making way for his stinger and hybrid abdomen to emerge, and causing him to wince as his hybrid tail juts out over the hem of his jeans and is immediately pressed down into the uneven stones underneath him. His shoulder blades draw in toward one another as a sensation that is a cross between a tickle and an itch blossoms between them, and soon a pair of delicate, translucent wings are tearing their way free of his back, chafing uncomfortably as they are crushed against his spine underneath the combined layers of his shirt, undershirt, and jacket.

“...Ahaha! Well I can see now why you didn’t want to present,” the man above him laughs, taking a moment to eye Hide’s hybrid parts with mild amusement, “Just look at how tiny you are.”

Hide grunts with discomfort when a rough hand releases his ass and slides down to grasp at the base of his stinger mockingly. The bumblebee hybrid turns his head away, face burning as the other man ruthlessly mocks his insect parts.

The way one’s second sex presents is dictated by the amount of insect DNA one possesses – a trait which also happens to determine the size and level of development of one’s hybrid parts. As is typical of most omega class hybrids, Hide’s insect parts are less well-integrated into his genetic makeup and indeed somewhat underdeveloped overall, making for smaller hybrid parts and far less alteration to his human form when they’re released. He’s been told often that the way his hybrid parts present – smaller and decidedly low-key in appearance even for an omega – creates a strange sort of dichotomy between his masculine looks and whimsical looking hybrid presentation,
giving him a slightly fairy-like appearance that many consider to be unbalanced or even comical looking.

He’s been reminded of this fact many times throughout his life, to the point that he should be used to it by now; however, the way that the alpha mocks his appearance causes genuine tears to prickle at the corners of the bee hybrid’s eyes. The part of him that identifies as an omega, the part that craves desperately to meet other, stronger hybrids’ expectations – especially alphas’ – is absolutely mortified.

“Don’t…please,” the bumblebee’s face contorts with shame as he feels a part of himself shrivel up and curl in on itself – old, deep wounds reopening in the space of seconds.

“Oh, don’t worry little bee, I’m still going to fuck you,” the spider promises, loosening his grasp on Hide’s shaft just a bit so that he can stroke the bee hybrid lightly inside his jeans. Hide’s face is flaming and his eyes are hot and itchy with unshed tears – the other hybrid’s overwhelming pheromones have him embarrassingly hard under the man’s touch despite his terror.

The bumblebee’s breath catches in his chest suddenly when he feels the arachnid’s larger, heavier hybrid tail bear down against his own, and something tapered and wet presses up against him, “Mm…Still gonna make you mine. Gonna knot you up…make you beg for it like the needy little omega slut you are.”

“Ah! W-wait! Wait! Please!” the blond cries, eyes squeezing shut as he pleads frantically, “You can’t! Not there!”

“Yes here,” the alpha hisses, and Hide shudders as he can feel the tip of the alpha’s large erection begin its slow slide out of the place where it is sheathed inside the spider’s hybrid abdomen, rigid shaft slathering the bumblebee’s sensitive underbelly with glossy pre-ejaculate as it rubs against him, searching for his entrance.

The tip of the spider’s grotesquely over-sized hybrid cock lines up with his tiny entrance and Hide yelps and shudders as a bit of warm, runny precum drips down into his slit.

“Gonna fuck you right here, in your greedy little omega c-urkh!”

Hide’s eyes fly open as a few drops of something warm and wet splash onto his cheek. The bee hybrid’s face cracks into a look of shocked horror then, as he follows the spider’s eyes down to where five human fingers protrude from his chest.

The alpha makes a few more helpless gurgling noises deep in his throat as his collapsed left lung struggles to take in air, causing a wave of red-black blood to bubble up over the corners of his lips, and Hide looks on in terror as the blood-drenched digits are tugged free of the spider’s rib-cage just as abruptly as they appeared. There is a loud ripping, sloshing noise as they curl around something inside the man’s chest cavity, dragging a huge, throbbing mass of flesh wrapped in thick, pulsing arteries along with them as they leave.

The bumblebee’s mouth is agape in an aborted scream while he scrambles backwards just in time to watch the spider fall on his side, twitching and spasming as he pours his life’s blood out onto the cracked stones through the ragged fist-sized hole in his chest. Behind him a dark figure – swathed in black from head to toe, face obscured by a terrifying mask that looks like a lip-less, snarling mouth full of teeth – rises up high on massive hybrid appendages, bringing the bloody hand up to press the still pulsing mound of flesh into a mouth already awash in red. The other four Wolves are alert to the commotion by now, leaving off their meals to come racing over to where the huge hybrid towers over Hide, suspended by an enormous, writhing, clicking mass of hybrid limbs.
The blond is rigid with shock as he feels a gust of air and something huge and heavy whistles by his cheek and into the closest Wolf, catching her mid-jump with such force that she flips around in mid-air before she is slammed into the ground with a painful crunch.

The courtyard is a maelstrom of movement as the four remaining Wolves engage the enormous creature at full force. Hide’s antennae vibrate with the sound of heavy chitin appendages scraping and clacking against one another repeatedly all around the square while the predators clash. He’s frozen stiff for a few solid moments, stricken with fear as his body struggles to come down from the shock of what almost befell his person mere moments ago. And then there is a loud thud off to his side as something lands right near him, startling the bumblebee from his stupor.

Hide looks down into the lifeless eyes of the tarantula-hawk as her severed head rolls heavily into his lap, and immediately finds his feet again, scuttling away on his hands until he literally stumbles and falls over the body to which it used to belong, struggling not to lose his lunch for a second time that evening.

At the center of the square the sounds of fighting have started to fade into a chorus of blood-curdling screams and stomach-churning wails, with a gruesome cacophony of cracking bones, ripping ligaments and gnashing teeth providing a sickening back-drop to the slaughter. To make things even more unpleasant, the park music has cued up again as well.

Barely daring to breathe, Hide gets down on his hands and knees and begins to crawl away as quickly and as quietly as he can, heading for the edge of the clearing as the cheerful tune piping away in the background combines with the grotesque slurping, crunching sounds that fill the square to provide a gruesome soundtrack to his retreat.

Counting the number of Villagers slain during the five Wolves’ short-lived killing spree earlier as well as the Wolves themselves, there are probably enough fresh bodies in the courtyard to keep the huge (hybrid? creature? monster?) predator occupied for a little while, but even so Hide can’t get out of the little clearing fast enough.

He dares not make a sound for fear of attracting its attention to himself as he slinks away into the darkness, startled near to death when his hand accidentally bumps into the knife he dropped earlier, sending it skidding a few centimeters away with a small metallic clang. Once his heart recedes back into his chest, Hide feels around for the weapon until he finds it, tucking it into his coat pocket for safe keeping before moving on.

It feels like agonizingly slow going as the lights are still out and he can barely see three feet in front of his own face, plus he’s forced to endure the horrible smells and sounds as he picks his way through a field of dead bodies, but Hide manages to make it all the way to the edge of the square and through a thick patch of undergrowth to another small walkway before he finally finds his legs somehow and begins to run.

It’s not until the lights flicker back on and he has run all the way down the path and nearly into an entirely different themed area of the park, that the bee hybrid finally leans over in the middle of the walk and breaks down, hands clenching at his knees as he sobs so hard that he dry-heaves.
Well *that* escalated quickly.

Me: *God, I hate puns.*
Also me: ...*kid...or should I say...Lamb...* *phhhbbbt*... Look, I made a funny, durhurhurr!

**kairo** - Little heat packets filled with flakes of iron and salt and water and stuff that you can buy to stick in your clothes for warmth. When you shake them up the ingredients inside mix together, causing the iron inside to oxidize and produce rust. The chemical process of the iron rusting slowly releases heat, which allows the packets to get pretty hot and stay that way for hours. Don't ask me why I know all this, I just do.
Chapter Summary

The bee hybrid is jolted back to reality when he feels a shift in the weight holding him down and the white-haired boy unexpectedly pulls back, face darkening.
“...You’re shaking,” he observes.

Chapter Notes

(Congratulations! We have made it to the half-way mark of this story. After this chapter the fic splits off into two possible story-lines, ending in a Bad End and a Merry Bad End respectively. Please be sure to check the notes at the end of each chapter for instructions on how to navigate the endings, because chapters won't be posted in order anymore from here on. )

I apologize in advance for the relatively pedestrian nature of this chapter. I rewrote it like three times and I’m still not quite satisfied, but I feel like it serves its purpose well enough as is. Was going to hold off on posting a bit longer so I could get things just right, but tbh this is an extremely self-gratifying smutfic that is not meant to be all that plot-oriented or deep. I’m glad people are enjoying the story, but full-disclosure this fic is literally something that sprung up because I wrote over 14,000 words of porn one day and then realized that it was kinda confusing w/o some kind of context. I might decide to go back and edit/rewrite some parts for plot flow and overall writing consistency someday, but for now I think I’m gonna just try to breeze through these edits as fast as I can so that I can keep updating at a good clip until it’s all done.

“Spoken dialogue”
‘Inner monologue’
//Flashbacks, dream sequences, narration of various other psychological events//
[[Communication via electronics]]

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Three: Bonded By The Soul

After several minutes of choked sobbing, the bumblebee’s cries finally settle down a bit, until he sits half-crouched in the middle of the semi-eroded walkway, shoulders still shuddering from time to time as his chest heaves with exhaustion. A harsh gust of cold wind howls down the desolate cobbled
path, carrying with it the scent of pine-needles and dry leaves and jolting Hide from his stupor as it chills the sweat-damp hair that is partially plastered along the nape of his neck.

‘What am I doing? I have to get up...have to move...’

Still shaking, the young bee hybrid tries to steady himself with a few deep breaths before attempting to stand, only to find himself overcome with a wave of dizziness. His body feels strangely warm.

It’s not the kind of oppressive, uncomfortable warmth that accompanies a fever; nor is it the slowly spreading, itchy hotness originating from his core that heralds an upcoming heat cycle; instead it’s more like his skin itself is producing warmth, slowly releasing it from his pores. He’s been feeling this strange tingling sensation to some extent ever since he woke up, but now it’s strong enough that it competes with the constant dull pain in his chest in terms of level of discomfort.

Hide unzips his coat to let the brisk winter air cool him a bit, and shakes his head from side to side, trying to clear it as a strange ringing noise fills his ears. The young bee hybrid abruptly slumps to the ground then, leaning over on his hands and knees in the middle of the pathway while the inside of his head goes white, just before the ringing rises to a deafening crescendo. For a brief moment the oppressive muzzy feeling that has pervaded the bumblebee hybrid’s thoughts since the moment he woke up parts, and suddenly Hide finds his surroundings shifting and churning violently as his memory transports him to another time and place.

//The little bumblebee's face contorts with the troubled frown that mars his features as he watches a lonely tear slip down the dark-haired boy's cheek.

“So what now?” the blond queries softly, disbelief evident in his tone.

In response the smaller boy merely gives a slow shake of his head.

“My aunt and her family are coming to my house to pick up my things today,” he murmurs, “I’m going to have to go live with them after this weekend.”

“W-what?” Hide says incredulously, “Wait... does that mean you can't come play anymore? Am I gonna get to see you again?”

The other boy’s face scrunches up painfully as tears suddenly well in his large grey eyes and Hide realizes his mistake right away. He hadn’t meant to upset the already devastated looking young hybrid, but it’s too late – the dark-haired boy’s words are a garbled rush as all his feelings, thoughts that he’s probably been doing his best to bottle up and keep to himself since his mother’s passing, come pouring out all at once in a flood of words and expressions.

“I’m scared, Hide...I tried to tell them that I don’t want to go...that I want to stay in my old house, but they say I can’t. Now that m-mom is gone there’s nobody to take care of our house anymore and it has to go back to the bank,” he hiccups, bringing his palms up to scrub at his eyes clumsily, “I mean...my aunt doesn’t live too f-far from here, so I might still get to come play with you s-sometimes but...”

The smaller boy’s voice breaks off as his entire frame suddenly shakes with a sob, tiny nine-year-old body barely able to contain the massive wave of sorrow and fear that has overtaken him. “My aunt’s
family h-hates me, Hide! And they live all the way across town… I don’t w-want to go with them! I’m gonna have to c-h-change schools and sleep in a new r-room… I won’t get to come to the park to see you anymore! I’m going to be alone again, Hide! I-I-…!”

“No! You won’t be alone, ******!” Eyes burning, the blond clutches the smaller boy by the shoulders hard enough to make the other hybrid wince a little through his tears, “I’ll never let you be alone again… I promise.”

Hide hastily reaches inside his shirt then, small fingers clapping around the familiar metallic weight that hangs heavy against his chest.

“H-Hide?” the other boy looks up at him in question as the blond snatches at the plain, silver chain that dangles around his neck, tugging it up over his head, and proceeds to slip it over the dark-haired boy’s crown instead. The smaller hybrid blinks as the chain settles around his collar and the simple, tear-shaped pendant at the end thuds softly into place at the center of his chest. “Wha-?”

“So you can remember… that you’re not alone,” the bumblebee says softly, mustering up the most confident smile he can, “As long as you’ve got this I’m with you, ******, no matter where you are.”

The dark-haired boy stands there silently for a few moments after that, tears still streaming down his face as he stares down at the little trinket for a while. When he finally ventures to look up into the bee hybrid’s eyes again, his face blossoms with the most beautiful, fragile smile Hide has ever seen.

“…Thank you, Hide.”

Hide blinks profusely as the scenery around him gradually fades back into the lonely, dark surroundings that are his current reality. After the (psychedelic trip? hallucination?) vision finally dissipates, the bee hybrid’s recollection of the event comes back to him hazily, like watching a faded old home-movie on a blurry television set, and with it a flood of half-coherent memories from his childhood.

Coal dark locks falling delicately against supple skin that glows like soft moonlight.

Baleful dove colored eyes that dart eagerly along lines of text as small, porcelain fingers pluck gingerly at the corner of a page.

A gentle, calming scent that fills his nose and tickles his antennae like freshly blooming lilies.

His promise.

The bumblebee hybrid is engulfed in a wave of shame at that thought. How could he have possibly forgotten something so important? His promise – a solemn vow he made a long time ago to a scared little boy whom he now barely remembers, details obscured in the jumbled abyss that overshadows so many of his memories.

There’s more to this particular memory than just the revelation of the existence of said promise itself though - something more about that little boy from his memories that he feels like he needs to
remember right now. Hide closes his eyes for a moment as he searches for any other information that he might be able to call up, some thread that he can latch onto that will lead him to a deeper understanding of the significance of that particular memory and why he would suddenly recover it now, of all times, but he comes up woefully empty.

Instead, another vision of the terrifying creature that he just escaped from surfaces at the back Hide’s mind, and the bee hybrid shakes his head in frustration, suddenly remembering where he is. He needs to move – he won’t be able to remember anything if he’s dead.

‘What was that thing, anyway? I mean it looked like another hybrid, but it wasn’t like any hybrid I’ve ever seen…It was huge. Plus the Wolves in the square…their appendages…their eyes…and that girl in the courtyard after the trial round…What the hell is going on with these people?’

The bumblebee shudders violently at the memory of the obscene slurping, crunching noises that had filled the small courtyard while he listened to the massive creature gorge itself on Wolf and Villager alike, swiping the sleeve of his jacket across his eyes roughly to dispel any remaining tears. He’s heard of crimes of passion or cases of self-defense where people with particularly high levels of insect DNA have injured or even killed others with their hybrid parts in instances where their insect instincts kicked in, but he’s never heard of a case where a killer devoured their victim the way he’s seen since he got here. It’s like the Wolves have regressed hundreds of years in their evolution, to a time when different hybrid species still viciously hunted one another for survival. The creature in the square in particular was like a living version of the early hybrids now described in history and biology texts - ruthless killers, subject to the overwhelming pull of their insect ancestors’ DNA and almost entirely divorced from the more rational, socialized aspects of their human psychology.

Hide pales as he briefly imagines himself being eaten alive by the creature in the square – pulled apart limb from limb and severed into tiny bits to be swallowed down more easily. He needs to get as far away as he possibly can; even with the lights on, he doesn’t want to be anywhere nearer to that thing than he has to be.

What feels like several minutes later, the delivery boy finally manages to get up and start moving again, and he finds that although his legs are still a bit shaky and his emotions are completely out of whack, for the most part he’s okay. The only thing of some concern is the fact that his midsection still hurts like hell and he’s getting hungry. Hide paces along the pathway like that for a little while more, collecting his wits as best he can, until he passes a dilapidated sign indicating that he is now leaving the “Sleeping Beauty” themed area and heading into the “Alice in Wonderland” zone.

A slight chuckle leaves the bee hybrid as he walks past the sign.

“How appropriate…this is definitely one hell of a rabbit hole I’ve fallen down,” the bumblebee muses bitterly, releasing a heavy sigh.

‘Wait…’

The bee hybrid blinks a few times as his own words give him pause, before hastily shoving his hand into his shirt pocket to bring out the large, golden key that marks him as the Lamb. Hide’s eyes widen slightly as the shiny little trinket glints up at him under the partial lighting, mocking his situation with its cutey, delicately carved details. The markings on the key are a clear reference to the classic children’s tale which shares the name of this section of the park, and it can’t be a coincidence that his marker – the cursed object that has effectively placed a giant bounty on his head
– is a *key*, something that opens locks. There’s got to be something to this.

He’s just begun musing on the possible implications when the faint sound of footsteps nearby jolts him out of his thoughts. Hide takes no chances this time; scanning the area, he quickly locates what seems to be a large, defunct park ride – a sort of variation on a carousel – and ducks into it, quietly slipping out his knife as he goes. Once he does so, it becomes fairly obvious that someone is following him – careful footsteps trace his own a little ways behind him as he makes his way through the broken down ride, ducking between crumbling seats and fallen props as he surreptitiously circles around, deliberately leading his pursuer on a complicated course that forces them to pick their way through a pile of collapsed beams and debris to come after him.

Just as the other hybrid is trying to squeeze through a particularly small opening in the fallen debris, Hide quickly doubles back and clambers up onto one of the fallen beams, quieting his breath. When his pursuer finally manages to extract themselves from the tight spot, they pause as they get to their feet, apparently looking for him, and that’s when the bumblebee strikes, lunging down from his perch to pin the other hybrid on their back with his full body weight. For their part, the hybrid in question seems completely taken by surprise by the attack, barely managing to let out a soft ‘*oof*’ of surprise when Hide tackles them. The bowie knife immediately flies up to press menacingly into a tender throat as the bee hybrid glares down into his stalker’s face.

A moment later the blond-haired boy’s expression is contorting into one of surprise however, when he recognizes his would-be assailant. A pair of startled grey orbs peer up at him through scattered white locks and Hide pulls back a little in surprise. It’s the boy from the courtyard – the one he had approached just before the announcements first came on.

“Y-you…” The bee hybrid murmurs, voice softening and brow scrunching up in confusion a bit before he can get his bearings back, “Wha…?"

"What are you doing here? Who are you!?” As Hide’s gaze narrows again into an accusing glare, the boy beneath him slowly slides his hands up at his sides in a peaceful gesture.

“Kaneki,” the boy replies flatly, eyes flickering briefly to the blade once before sliding back up to capture Hide’s again, “My name is Kaneki Ken.”

“W-why were you following me? What do you want!?” the bumblebee demands, struggling to keep his voice steady as the rush of adrenaline that floods his veins threatens to destabilize his tone. His heart is racing with anxiety that seeks to overtake him; even Hide himself can tell that his voice is dangerously pushing the limits of what would be considered calm.

“I’m not here to hurt you,” the white-haired boy states plainly, his low tenor quiet and measured in a manner that borders on sounding lifeless.

“H-how do I know that!?” Hide counters, pressing the knife up against the underside of the other boy’s jaw a bit tighter, holding his hand as steady as he can - any closer and he could very easily nick an artery.

The boy beneath him blinks up at him once, then glances at the weapon that is currently pressing dangerously tightly against his throat, and in another moment their positions are reversed. Hide is suddenly on his back, bowie knife slipping from his hand as the white-haired boy easily flips him and twists the weapon out of his grip in one fluid motion, palming the blade with his non-dominant hand while he uses his dominant one to press down into the blond’s chest – not harsh or painful, but firm enough to make it clear who is in control.

“Look, I didn’t come here to hurt you,” the boy repeats, eyes holding the bumblebee’s firmly as he
speaks. Hide yelps when he feels his back make contact with the ground; his mind goes blank for a moment as his eyes widen in shock at the sudden reversal, and a chilling cold starts to make its way down the omega’s spine when he realizes that he is now entirely at the other boy’s mercy. Any moment now the boy above him will realize that Hide’s the Lamb and when he does it will be over for the bee hybrid.

// “Slit you open and suck out your pretty little insides like a milkshake” //

// “Might as well get it over with and die here” //

// “A Sacrificial Lamb!”//

Hide’s vision blurs as his surroundings shift and merge violently all at once, a sickening kaleidoscope of scenes he’s seen and sounds he’s heard, smells he's smelled before. There’s a sharp ringing in his ears again and a flash of light before suddenly he’s standing frozen in place as a wingless angel, resplendent in white descends on him, foretelling of his impending death.

//As the weapon cuts its graceful line through the chilly night air, Hide wonders if he too will paint such a pretty picture. Instinctively, his eyes close in anticipation of the pain, but to his credit he doesn’t scream. There is a quiet ‘whoosh’ as the air before him parts in the blade’s wake – //

The bee hybrid is jolted back to reality when he feels a shift in the weight holding him down and the white-haired boy unexpectedly pulls back, face darkening.

“…You’re shaking,” he observes.

At those words, Hide follows his gaze down to find that his own hands are indeed trembling at his sides, having gone limp in a posture of submission the moment the other boy had flipped their positions. He hadn’t realized it before in his panic, but this boy (“Kaneki”, that’s what he called himself - “Kaneki Ken”) is emitting all the signs of a high-level alpha; everything from his tone to the subtle play of his fingers against the omega’s chest exudes it, such that the bee hybrid can’t help but react instinctively even through the muddled haze that is quickly settling over his thoughts.

Hide feels his mouth go dry and all of a sudden it’s like he can’t get any air. It feels like he’s running a marathon and drowning at the same time - his heart is racing, but the harder he tries to breathe the more out of breath he becomes. There’s a sharp pain deep in his chest, and for a moment he thinks he might be having a heart-attack, lungs constricting in his chest until it feels like the inside of his rib-cage is simultaneously on fire and imploding on itself while he struggles for air, gasping open mouthed.

There is a soft clang as the knife is discarded off to the side, and strong, gentle fingers are curling carefully around his shoulders, easing him up into a sitting position.
“Hey… are you okay?” the alpha’s quiet, concerned tone echoes through his consciousness even as the edges of the bumblebee’s vision start to fade. Hide barely feels the other boy’s grip on his shoulders shift as tender fingers grasp his chin, tilting his face up so that a pair of troubled grey eyes can peer searchingly into his own.

The other boy’s eyes narrow deeper in concern before widening slightly as he watches the blond continue struggling to take in air.

“You’re hyperventilating,” he realizes at last.

It’s all Hide can do to nod vaguely in response as Kaneki quickly shifts their positions, tugging the bee hybrid forward and turning him around. The white-haired boy is sitting behind him now, carefully leaning Hide backwards into his chest so that the bee hybrid can feel the way his sturdy lungs slowly take in deep breath after deep breath. He’s a tad bit shorter than the blond even sitting down, but his arms are solid around Hide’s sides as he coaxes the bumblebee into a slightly reclined position.

“I need you to calm down,” Kaneki’s voice is a low, compelling thrum in his ear, distant but distinct as it cuts through the haze of his terror and stimulates something deeper, archetypal. It’s not quite a ‘push’ per se, but carries a weight of authority that overrides Hide’s higher psychological processes and starts to usher him into another state – one where he can sense nothing but the alpha’s firm, low tenor deep in his ear and the gentle pressure of the other boy’s fingertips against his skin as they start to rub slow circles into his wrists, coaxing him back into coherency.

“You’re okay, I’ve got you,” the boy murmurs, fingers sliding down so that he is now massaging the palms of the delivery boy’s hands with his thumbs in light, soothing gestures, “Can you tell me your name?”

The bee hybrid is unable to suppress a shiver as the other boy’s low voice rumbles through his chest, and he somehow manages to muster enough breath to wheeze out an answer.

“H-Hide… hiiih… c-can’t breathe…th-think I’m…gonna-”

“No, you’re okay - Look, you’re already coming down,” Kaneki insists, “You’re being so good for me, Hide. Stay with me.”

Hide shudders, eyes fluttering closed at the alpha’s soft praise, and not a moment later a bolt of pleasure rockets down his spine when something warm and wet presses into his the back of his neck. Kaneki lathes his tongue over the sensitive scent glands along Hide’s nape a few times, significantly soothing the omega’s frazzled nerves with the intimate gesture of dominance, and before the bee hybrid realizes it he’s starting to breathe in tandem with the boy behind him - careful, measured intakes through his nose, followed by long, slow exhales through his lips. He melts into the sold, warm wall of flesh behind him as Kaneki continues his ministrations, letting out a soft groan as little sparks of electricity lick up and down his spine, and for a while after that the omega can do little more than lie against the other boy’s chest, trembling occasionally at the intermittent sensation of Kaneki’s broad, generous tongue swiping across his glands while he listens to the soft rhythm of the other boy’s inhale and exhale and his quiet murmurs of reassurance.

Some minutes later, when he finally reclaims his senses enough to remember himself, Hide awkwardly struggles over onto his hands and knees, mind racing as he breaks Kaneki’s loose hold to clamber a few paces away. He plops his rear down heavily as he turns to face the alpha, arms clutching his knees tight to his chest in a defensive pose.

“Sorry… I couldn’t think of a quicker way to bring you down,” the white-haired boy’s quiet voice
finally breaks the silence, interrupting Hide’s muddled thought process as he absently wipes a bit of saliva from the corner of his mouth with the back of his hand.

Scandalized, Hide shakes his head fervently from side to side in response, eyes wide as he hides the lower half of his face behind his forearms. He’s lucid enough to be embarrassed now, and his face shows it – he’s flushed all the way to his ears. His back is still warm where the other boy’s chest had been pressed against him and he can feel the alpha’s potent saliva drying against the nape of his neck, infusing trace amounts of the other boy’s heady scent into his skin. The bumblebee’s face is literally burning right now

“…Thanks,” the bee hybrid finally manages to rasp once he’s reoriented himself enough to speak in semi-coherent sentences, “You don’t have to apologize… ‘s not your fault.”

And it’s true - Hide let his fear get the better of him; the things he’s seen and experienced in the short time since he woke up in this place are definitely starting to take their toll on him. None of that has anything to do with Kaneki though. Even if the other boy had been following him, Hide grossly overreacted by threatening the other hybrid’s life even after he had obviously surrendered. And to top it all off, he had ended up having to rely on the alpha to bring him out of a violent panic attack just seconds later.

The white-haired boy makes a troubled face at his words, diverting his gaze off into the distance.

“I didn’t mean to frighten you,” Kaneki murmurs, voice tinged with remorse in a way that makes Hide’s brows crease.

“No, it’s okay. I definitely overreacted, threatening you like that when you were already down,” the blond insists, raising his head to shoot the other boy a sincerely apologetic look, “Sorry, a lot of stuff has happened since I’ve been here…I guess I hadn’t realized how much it’s fucked me up.”

“Are you alright?” the white-haired boy’s voice is suddenly tight with concern as his gaze snaps up to capture Hide’s, eyes flashing. “You’re not hurt anywhere are you? Did anyone touch you? Did anyone touch you?” And suddenly Kaneki is sliding dangerously far into his personal space again, leaning forward to sweep his intense gaze over the delivery boy’s body as though searching for any signs of harm.

“Wh-what? N-no, I’m actually not hurt… surprisingly,” Hide answers, arms tightening around his knees as he leans away a bit, unsettled by the other boy’s scrutinizing stare.

Seemingly appeased by this reply for the moment, Kaneki gives a low sigh of relief before turning his gaze away to search the floor for something. A moment later there is a soft metallic clatter as the bowie knife skitters to a halt against Hide’s feet. The blond glances up at the other boy with slightly raised eyebrows before shifting onto his knees and tentatively reaching out to reclaim the weapon, hastily shoving it back into his coat pocket.

“Thanks,” Hide says softly, still eyeing the white-haired boy with slight suspicion. “…but why do you care so much anyway?” ‘Why were you following me?’

Kaneki meets his gaze evenly as he answers.

“You don’t belong here. You’re… different… from the other players.” the white-haired boy says plainly, as if that’s any kind of an answer.

“Different…?” the bumblebee echoes confusedly. The blond-haired boy cocks his head to the side, face scrunched up in consternation for a moment before his eyes suddenly narrow in mild annoyance, “Wait… are you just saying that because I’m an omega?”
Kaneki shakes his head firmly in refutation.

“No, it’s not that,” he clarifies, “What I mean is that the other players… they’re all here for things they’ve done - they practically reek of sin - deception, violence...death.

"But you’re different, Hide. You’re… clean.”

“Oooh-kay?” ‘Well that’s not weird or cryptic at all.’

The other boy closes his eyes and shakes his head again, this time in what seems to be slight frustration.

“I don’t expect you to get it, but it’s true,” Kaneki insists, “I could tell from the moment I saw you.”

“You really shouldn’t be here, Hide,” the white-haired hybrid says softly.

The bee hybrid shudders slightly at the familiar way his name rolls off the other boy's tongue, but he manages to play it off relatively smoothly by tightening his jacket around his shoulders.

“So, are you trying to tell me that’s the reason why you were stalking me just now?” Hide queries, eyebrows raised slightly in amusement.

The white-haired boy’s face takes on a mild ‘deer-in-headlights’ look for the briefest of moments, and Hide swears he can detect just the smallest hint of color rise to Kaneki's cheeks before he narrows his gaze, features settling back into a look of cool neutrality.

“This place is dangerous. It’s not safe for someone like you to be out here alone,” Kaneki says flatly, in what sounds suspiciously like a concession. He certainly hasn’t tried to deny the blond's previous accusation.

Hide can’t help the mildly derogatory little snort that escapes him.

“And what? You thought I needed a big strong alpha following me around to help me out? Is that it?” he snarks, “Look, I appreciate the chivalry or whatever, but I’m not completely helpless you know.”

“...Aren’t you though?” the other boy points out bluntly after a small pause, “You just had a panic attack.”

The bumblebee hybrid almost physically flinches at the piercing observation, grimacing as the truth behind Kaneki’s words sets in. Loathe as he is to admit it, the other boy has a point: Hide is way out of his element right now and it shows. Despite his best efforts, pretty much all the bumblebee has been able to do so far since he woke up is run for his life and nearly die several times.

“So, what...you're saying you wanna help me?” the delivery boy asks dubiously, crossing his arms in front of his chest in a defensive gesture again.

“I... might know of a way out of here,” Kaneki says after a moment of hesitation.

“Wait, really!?” Hide exclaims, leaning forward to stare at the other boy in pure wide-eyed disbelief, previous indignation immediately all but forgotten.
The white-haired boy nods slowly.

“The perimeter of this place is crawling with security and there are cameras everywhere, but I’m aware of a spot where there’s a hole in the park’s defenses that can definitely be exploited,” he concludes, looking up to meet his blond-haired counterpart’s incredulous stare with his own somber, light-grey one, “I can take you there if you want.”

Hide can’t help the way his eyes flash with hope at the other boy’s words. If what Kaneki is saying is true, he might actually be able to come out of this ordeal without having to go through another incident like the one he just experienced. To Hide, who is fast approaching his wit’s end, that seems like more than enough reason for him to take the white-haired boy up on his offer.

“Wait, you still haven’t explained why you’re doing this though...Why? Why help me?” the bee hybrid questions hesitantly, looking into the other boy’s eyes with a searching gaze, “I mean, I really would appreciate it if you could show me the way out of here, but...you don’t particularly have anything to gain by helping me out.”

Kaneki doesn’t answer right away. He leans forward so that his thick, white locks fall into his face, obscuring his eyes as he turns his head to the side a bit and lets out a small puff of air that sounds like something between a sigh and a soft, self-deprecating laugh.

“Would you believe me if I said it's because you remind me of someone?”

Hide cocks an eyebrow but doesn’t press anymore after that. He knows that there must be more to the story – for starters, as insistent as he is that Hide doesn’t deserve to be there, the white-haired boy has said nothing about how he himself ended up involved in this sick joke of game; nor has he mentioned how he happens to be so familiar with the park. However, something about the sorrowful tinge to the other boy’s gaze prevents him from voicing his questions.

Kaneki may be a little confusing with his odd silences and intense stares, but nothing he has said or done so far strikes the bumblebee hybrid as particularly threatening. Hide prides himself somewhat on being a pretty good judge of character - if anything, he’s gotten nothing but a protective, patient vibe from the alpha ever since they’ve met. And if he’s being honest with himself, the white-haired boy has had the opportunity to kill him multiple times in just the past several minutes alone. The very fact that he’s still alive seems like enough of an indicator that Kaneki really means him no harm. Not to mention the fact that so much about the other boy – his gentle, melancholic, cloud-colored eyes; his mannerisms; the way he holds the bee hybrid’s gaze when he catches Hide looking at him – feels so familiar. Hide can’t help but feel strangely drawn to him somehow.

“I believe you, Kaneki,” the bumble bee says at last.

And he actually does.

The white-haired boy looks up at him in mild surprise then, just before his eyes slowly soften and his lips tilt up at the corner just the slightest bit in an expression that causes the bee hybrid’s insides to spontaneously melt into a gelatinous pool of warmth.
Once they make their way out of the partially collapsed ride, Kaneki leads him on a winding path through the overgrowth and deeper into the park. As they climb through decrepit rides and half-collapsed props, Hide can’t help but find himself shooting furtive glances at the other boy, wondering what it is about Kaneki that has him letting his guard down around the white-haired hybrid so easily, but he can’t quite put his finger on it. The other boy is very quiet, but not to the point of being unpleasant; they actually fall into a comfortable silence as they make their way cautiously through the park, occasionally exchanging a word or two when Kaneki stops to warn him of an unstable patch of footing here or help him through a particularly overgrown area there.

Hide can’t deny that the alpha’s presence puts him considerably at ease, not only because its’s nice just to not be alone anymore, but because the other boy is extremely gentle with him, giving him a sense that Kaneki is more than comfortable with ushering him around and alleviating the sense that he might actually be a burden on the white-haired hybrid. The blond can’t help but flush when he unexpectedly misses his footing as they are forced to climb up and over a collapsed park attraction - what used to be a part of a large slingshot type ride – and the white-haired boy is right there to help steady him, temporarily enveloping the bee hybrid in a pair of surprisingly well-muscled arms and a sturdy chest all while treating the bumblebee to an unexpected whiff of the alpha’s heady pheromones.

Kaneki smells to the omega like sex and old parchment and ripe orchid blossoms – a young, virile alpha in his prime – and Hide abruptly realizes that he’s embarrassingly turned on by the other boy’s scent. As the white-haired hybrid releases him and sets him back on his feet, Hide tries to tell himself to calm down, that it’s just the residual adrenaline and the fact that they’re in a life-threatening situation causing him to react and get all worked up; but the next time Kaneki casually takes the bee hybrid’s hand in his, helping Hide find his footing across a particularly tricky spot, he can’t help but swallow and shift his stance uncomfortably. Mortifying as it is to admit it to himself, he’s been valiantly fighting an erection since his awful encounter with the Wolves, body reacting instinctively to the pervasive presence of alpha hormones despite his terror. It would be a pure miracle if the alpha didn’t smell his increasing arousal right now, though he has a feeling that Kaneki would probably be polite enough to pretend that he doesn’t notice even if he does.

Somehow the thought of the white-haired boy graciously overlooking Hide's embarrassingly obvious hormonal predicament makes it even more embarrassing, if that's even possible.

The delivery boy desperately wills himself to calm down. If he’s not careful he could end up going into a premature heat. And wouldn’t that be a spectacular development – the young omega trapped in an abandoned theme park crawling with hybrids who either want to murder him or fuck his brains out or both, all while he goes insane with estrus hormones.

The bumblebee is startled out of his sardonic musings when Kaneki suddenly stills and puts his hand up, motioning for Hide to wait. They have just wound their way through a complicated topiary labyrinth that has overgrown its bounds and are making their way down a relatively wide stretch of cobbled pathway. The blond is swiveling his head around, trying to figure out what could have caused the other boy to stop so suddenly, when a chorus of heavy footsteps make their way around
the corner of a nearby building, and suddenly the two of them are facing down a group of five hybrids, all of them male.

The group of hybrids stops abruptly once they notice Hide and Kaneki, and there is a tense moment as the seven of them stare each other down. Hide eases his hand into his pocket, fingers closing securely around the hilt of his knife as the man at the forefront of the group, who seems to be their leader of sorts, opens his mouth to speak.

“Well lads, it would seem that we have the two of you at a clear disadvantage here numbers-wise,” the burly hybrid says evenly, his deep baritone carrying easily across the short distance separating them. Hide recognizes him as one of the two men he saw arguing in the courtyard right before the game started. “So, if you’d be so kind as to show us your cards and prove to us that you’re fellow Villagers, we’ll just have you leave us with any supplies or weapons you might be carrying and be on your merry way.”

Hide gulps softly, eyes shifting over to Kaneki, who has yet to move or say a word. The other boy never asked Hide to see his card, but he probably has some inkling of the fact that the bee hybrid is no Villager. Even if Kaneki presents his own card, the Villagers will definitely realize that Hide’s the Lamb.

The bumblebee is just wracking his brains as to a solution to the predicament that doesn’t end with him and Kaneki having to fight for their lives, when the white-haired hybrid suddenly speaks up.

“Hide,” Kaneki says quietly, eyes still focused on the five men at the other end of the path, “I want you to head in the opposite direction from me. Get to The Cheshire Cat’s Tree and wait for me there. I’ll come find you as soon as I can, I promise.”

The bee hybrid’s eyebrows quirk in confusion at the other boy’s words.

“Wh-”

But before he can get another word out, Kaneki takes off, dashing towards the group of men at full tilt. The five of them square up instinctively, preparing for an attack but rather than engage, the white-haired boy veers off at the very last second, darting off into the trees.

Hide’s eyes go wide as he stands in shock for a split second before the other boy’s words set in, and then he turns on his heel, sprinting away into the woods in the exact opposite direction from Kaneki. It’s not long before he hears two pairs of heavy footsteps thundering after him and he realizes that he’s being followed. As expected, the men in question most likely came to the quick conclusion that there are equal chances that either he or Kaneki is the Lamb or at least has something worth stealing. That’s probably why they’ve split up in coming after them too; after all, there’s no use in their sticking together if they’re all after the same thing - only one of them can be granted immunity for killing him.

The bumblebee is beyond tired by now, but he manages to push himself past his exhaustion, backtracking a bit until he reaches the huge topiary maze that he and Kaneki passed through together just minutes prior. The once well-groomed plants that make up the maze’s walls are now wildly overgrown and reach for the heavens with their twisting, coiling vines, almost blotting out the sky. Hide ducks through the thick plants, using his slight head-start to carefully retrace his steps until he reaches a well-hidden break in the wall of leaves. He remembers how, when they came through earlier, the white-haired boy had seemingly disappeared into the wall of the maze at that particular spot, leaving Hide to look about in sudden confusion for a moment until a pale forearm reached through the bushes and took him by the hand, patiently guiding him through.
Now the blond takes a page from the other boy’s book and quietly ducks into the thick brush, careful to keep his noises to a minimum as he does so. Hide slips through the narrow gap in the otherwise impenetrable foliage and to the other side of the topiary wall, carefully tugging the copious vines and branches closed behind him, and just a few beats later he is rewarded with the sound of two loud sets of footprints clamoring by, bypassing him entirely.

The bee hybrid huffs out a sigh of mild relief but he still wastes no time in putting as much distance as he can between himself and the two Villagers after that. Hide picks his way back through the maze in the general direction that Kaneki had been leading him before they got separated. The other boy had said for him to go to “The Cheshire Cat’s Tree”. He has no idea where that is, but it can’t be too far away seeing as they’re already in the section of the park themed after Alice in Wonderland. The only problem is that there are practically no markers around to indicate where or what anything in the park is besides the occasional dilapidated name-plate here or there.

Hide wracks his brain for ideas as he trudges through the park, completely lost and feeling twice as uneasy and vulnerable now that he’s alone again. The bumblebee hybrid scans his surroundings carefully while he walks, searching for anything that might give him a clue as to which direction The Cheshire Cat’s Tree might be in; there’s got to be a way for him to figure out its location somehow.

That’s when he sees it – a massive, elongated cylindrical form breaking free of the treetops at intervals like some gargantuan sea serpent cresting above ocean waves.

It’s a huge jet-coaster. One of the few attractions in the park that has relatively maintained its integrity, its long, twisted silhouette breaks through the dense foliage overhead here and there, twisting about in a complicated lion dance that loops its way across the night sky. Hide frowns and cocks his head to the side a bit as he traces the ride’s path across the skyline. He’d probably be able to see for quite some distance around if he were able to get to the top of that.

The bee hybrid takes a moment to consider his options then, only to realize that he really doesn’t have any other good ideas. He’s not too keen on trying to scale the massive structure considering the decrepit state of most of the rides in the park, but from the looks of it the jet-coaster seems to be have held up extremely well despite the passage of time – it would make for an invaluable scouting position.

It’s with that thought and a bit of hesitation that the bee hybrid gives a small sigh and turns his feet in the general direction of the soaring attraction.

Given the highly visible nature of his objective, it takes relatively little time for Hide to locate the entrance to the large ride; less than fifteen minutes later he is standing at the top of the huge attraction, looking out over the park from the top of the ten-story tall platform that used to serve as the loading bay for passengers boarding the roller-coaster. The attraction itself is in even better shape than Hide had thought - he had relatively no issues getting to the top of the ride other than the agony of the ten-story climb itself, and the platform feels nice and sturdy under his feet as he heads for a large, open-air balcony that surveys a large portion of the park, including the area that lies beyond what Hide has traversed so far.

The bumblebee is actually somewhat shocked to realize how much ground he has covered since he arrived; he’s not sure, but he thinks he can recognize the courtyard where he started the game way down below, at least a good half-hour's trek from where he is now. In the opposite direction, off toward the farther reaches of the Alice in Wonderland themed area that he hasn't yet been to, Hide manages to make out a few distinct structures, but unfortunately nothing that he sees looks like anything that might be referred to as The Cheshire Cat's Tree. Instead he is able to make out a large
castle of some sort, as well as what looks like it could be a replica of The Mad-Hatter's Tea-Party, and finally a little cottage of sorts whose rooftop is adorned with a prominent pair of white rabbit ears.

'Huh?'

The bee hybrid pauses as he stares at the small building for a bit. Its pristine white ears gleam under the moonlight, perched comically atop a faux thatched roof that appears suspiciously intact considering the eroded nature of all the other buildings Hide has come across thus far.

"Wait... rabbit ears... white rabbit ears," the delivery boy frowns, tapping his forefinger against his jaw a few times as he crosses his arms and holds his chin in his hand, processing.

"The White Rabbit's House!" he exclaims to the empty air as realization finally dawns on him. Hide immediately shoves his hand into his breast pocket, bringing out his key so that he can examine it once more.

Sure enough, the engraving on the handle of the little trinket depicts an anthropomorphic bunny dressed in a suit-jacket and clutching a pocket watch - The White Rabbit from the classic children's tale.

His mind flies back to his earlier musings on the purpose of his key. Just as he suspected, there is something more to this situation than meets the eye – he’s willing to bet money that this key has something to do with that building down there. The only question is: Does he go check it out?

On the one hand, he’s more than ready to get out of this place, and Kaneki has offered to show him a way out. There is no doubt that it would be in his best interest to make his way to the Cheshire Cat’s Tree as quickly as possible so that he can rendezvous with the other boy and take him up on his offer. On the other hand, he still has no idea where the Cheshire Cat’s Tree actually is, which means that he’s going to have no choice but to wander around looking for another clue of some sort to help him get there anyway. In that case, it won’t make much of a difference if he heads in the direction of The White Rabbit’s House, and if he’s being honest with himself Hide is becoming increasingly curious as to how and why he ended up in the game – questions to which he might find some answers if he checks out the little cottage.

Hide stares thoughtfully down at the softly glimmering key as if the tiny object itself holds the answer to his predicament, absently twisting it between his fingers as he considers his options.

Chapter End Notes

(It's decision time! Does Hide head for The White Rabbit’s House?
Yes → go to Chapter 4: Complicated Destiny
No → go to Chapter 5: Missing Truth

You're free to choose either path, but you'll only get the full backstory if you read both endings. Also, I have decided not to give any kind of overt indication about which story-line leads to which ending, so choose carefully!)
So now we have established that Kaneki and Hide appear to have some kind of connection from their childhood. The fun part is supposed to be finding out what exactly that connection is, why they don't recognize one another, and waiting to see whether or not they will ever even realize that they have this bond.

I tried to focus on the chemistry between Hide and Kaneki in this chapter and firmly establish that there is a definite attraction/unspoken bond of some sort. It's so very important to me that people feel the emotional connection between these two so that later on in the story when I completely fuck them over you can all be properly devastated!!!!Ψ(´\¬´)Ψ
Chapter Summary

“Give my regards to the One-Eyed King.”

Chapter Notes

Hey kids, sorry for the looong wait on this one. This chapter is actually two chapters in one because I got tired of waiting to get to the smut and decided to just combine chapters so that we can jump right to the juicy(er) stuff. Henceforth, chapters will be about two or three times as long as before, because I feel like it. So...yeah. Be prepared for that, and stuff.

This is the last chapter in this story-line before the climax (no pun intended...I think), so it should probably start to become pretty apparent by the end of this chapter and the next which ending is which. Kekeke~

Also, I apologize in advance, because I feel some people may be kind of upset with me at the end of this chapter. I did kind of try to make up for it toward the end though.

“Spoken dialogue”
‘Inner monologue’
//Flashbacks, dream sequences, narration of various other psychological events//
[[Communication via electronics]]

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Four: Complicated Destiny

As he looks down at the key that marks him as the Lamb, the bumblebee hybrid’s expression begins to take on an increasingly optimistic look. The more he thinks about it, the more likely it seems that there is some special ‘cheat’ to the game that he may be able to literally ‘unlock’ by completing some alternative objective. After all, the Villagers have theirs – murdering Hide and stealing his key grants them invulnerability to Wolf attacks while the lights are off; while the Wolves have their own secondary goal – ‘claiming’ him will bestow them with the ability to kill Villagers any time they wish. Wouldn’t it also stand to reason that Hide himself – the Lamb – also has some kind of extra achievement he can complete that rewards him with a special bonus that will help him through the game or something?

It’s this distinct possibility that Hide is banking on when he finally makes the decision to take a slight
detour and explore The White Rabbit’s House.

The young bumblebee takes the stairs leading out of the rollercoaster two-by-two as he jaunts down them, morale somewhat restored with the knowledge that things might be looking up for him in the near future. After he exits the entryway to the rollercoaster he gets his bearings, figuring out which direction corresponds to the location of the White Rabbit’s House that he pinpointed just moments ago, before setting off.

The quickest path should take him straight through the Mad Hatter’s Tea Party and toward the far edges of the park, so the bumblebee is somewhat reassured when he finally comes up on a large, open area whose space is dominated by a huge dining table, littered with giant teacups, teapots, plates, and an assortment of other cutlery, as well as a multitude of faux food props. Hide is just making his way over towards said table when he suddenly finds himself laid out on his back, crying out loudly.

“A-auugh!”

Coughing and sputtering, the bee hybrid immediately rolls over onto his side and clutches his stomach as his midsection explodes with pain, just in time to feel a ‘whoosh’ of air followed by a loud clang as something heavy and metallic slams into the cobblestones right where his head happened to be just milliseconds ago. Still reeling, Hide somehow manages to heave his entire body weight to the side once again, forcing himself into an awkward roll that ends with the bumblebee temporarily laid out flat on his stomach until he manages to push himself up onto his knees. The bee hybrid groans and shakes his head from side to side to clear it before looking up, only to immediately find himself staring up into the face of his assailant.

It’s one of the five hybrids that he and Kaneki encountered just before they split up – not the leader, but one of the other four - a tall, somewhat unsavory looking young man who can’t be much older than Hide himself and whose mouth is set with a manic sort of grin as he advances on the bee. Watery green eyes light up in triumph as the boy raises a large piece of metal piping menacingly, and the delivery boy realizes with a sort of delayed horror that he’s probably about to die.

Hide watches the moment play out in slow motion, jaw going slack in a pathetic expression of shock as the other hybrid swings the weapon high up over his head, only to immediately pause mid motion an instant later, eyes going wide when, with a sharp whiz of air and a solid ‘thunk’, something lodges itself directly in the side of his neck.

The two hybrids stare at one another blankly for a moment, before the weapon abruptly drops free of the young Villager’s grip, clanging uselessly to the ground as the boy brings a hand up to clutch at his throat. Hide’s would-be killer makes a series of odd gulping, gurgling noises as he struggles to take in air, but his efforts are mercilessly precluded by the narrow shaft of metal that has punctured the side of his neck. Hide looks on wide-eyed as the young hybrid coughs and sputters helplessly, spraying increasingly large flecks of blood and spittle out onto his own chest as he struggles to dislodge the object. The metal bolt has embedded itself firmly in the Villager’s larynx with the force of its entry though, and the man only succeeds in causing more blood foam to burble up around the edges of the point of entry with his futile struggles before another projectile comes whizzing through the chilly night air, this one embedding itself directly in the center of the young hybrid’s chest.

Hide watches wide-eyed in confusion while the Villager’s struggles abruptly cease the moment the second projectile pierces his breast, eyes beginning to glaze over as he slumps to the ground with a languid sort of grace. As he stares on in shock at the sight of his would-be killer’s lifeless body crumpling to the ground at his feet, it suddenly occurs to the delivery boy that he could very well be
next, and the bumblebee immediately gets as low to the ground as possible, shielding his vital points as best he can while he retreats in the opposite direction from which the projectile had flown, crouching down behind the far end of the table. He has just poked his head out around the edge of a table leg and is in the process of scanning the surrounding foliage, searching for the exact source of the attack, when a flicker of movement between the trees directly adjacent to the dead Villager’s body catches his attention.

“You don’t have to hide,” the blond’s eyes widen in surprise as a distinctly feminine voice rings out across the clearing, and a lone figure appears between the tree branches, “I’m putting my weapon away.”

With those words a pair of long, delicate spider legs gently lower the hybrid in question down from her hidden aerie, so that their owner can step carefully into the clearing. It’s a rain spider - around Hide’s own age or perhaps a little older. Dressed in an army-green military jacket almost identical to the one Hide wears, she carefully folds up her weapon – a large handheld arbalest – and hefts it over her shoulder, absently tucking a strand of short auburn hair behind her ear as she approaches the swiftly cooling body of the dead Villager. After briefly checking for a pulse and obviously finding none, she gives the dead hybrid’s body one last baleful look before moving to deftly retrieve the two bolts that struck the man down only moments ago, stowing them away with her weapon. In response the bumblebee is silent for a few moments, considering his situation. His gut tells him that the girl in question is telling the truth, and her weapon isn’t loaded; besides her hybrid appendages, she poses very little threat at the moment.

“Forgive me if I’m a bit cautious,” the blond calls out at last, infusing his voice with as much good humor as he can manage under the circumstances, “But I haven’t had very good luck with new acquaintances lately.”

His reply earns him a grim chuckle from the other hybrid, and when he finally ventures to poke his upper body around the side of his hiding spot, the girl looks back at him thoughtfully for a moment before she makes a small noise of realization. There is an awkward little silence then as Hide stifles a laugh while the spider hybrid promptly retracts her insect parts, cheeks coloring with a small flush.

“Um…It looked like he got you pretty good,” the young woman comments after she manages to recover her composure, gesturing vaguely toward Hide’s midsection with a nod, “Are you okay?”

The bee hybrid winces and rubs at his flank a bit. She’s right - the other hybrid did hit him hard. Little flames of agony lick up and down the sides of Hide’s abdomen as he cautiously hobbles out from behind the table and approaches until he’s a safe distance away.

“I’ll live,” the young bumblebee bluffs with a forced laugh, “Thanks to you. Thank you, by the way, …uh…”

“My name is Nishino,” the young woman replies, “Nishino Kimi. And you are?”

“Nagachika Hideyoshi,” the blond answers.

“Nice to meet you Nagachika-kun.”

Hide is struck by the thought of how bizarre it is for them to be having what sounds like a semi-normal conversation even though they’re in the middle of such a nightmarishly unreal situation, but he can’t help but find it strangely relieving as well. Besides Kaneki, this is the first time since he’s gotten to this godforsaken place that he hasn’t been greeted by someone immediately trying to take his life.
“Nice to meet you too, Nishino-san,” the bee hybrid replies, smile faltering a little bit when his eyes shift over to the body of the dead Villager, “Um…I wish it could have been under better circumstances.”

“I tried to make it as quick as I could,” Nishino says softly, eyebrows wrinkling up in a troubled expression as she casts a thoughtful look to her weapon, “This is a little heavier than what I’m used to, so my aim is off.”

“O-oh…Well, thank you very much for what you did,” the blond follows awkwardly, trying to reassure the remorseful looking girl as best he can, “Really - you saved my life.”

“Haha…right…” the red-haired hybrid says with a weak little chuckle as she looks down at the fallen Villager, “God, this game really does bring out the absolute worst in people doesn’t it? I didn’t even hesitate before shooting that man.”

“If you had I’d be dead right now,” the bumblebee points out, “You didn’t have to save me, but you did it anyway despite the fact that you don’t even know me – I don’t know if I would call that ‘the absolute worst’.”

“I was headed toward the edge of the park,” she says softly, shaking her head from side to side in a conflicted manner, “I heard you scream, and then I saw him attacking you and that you were unarmed and I just…reacted.

“...This makes the third person I’ve killed since I’ve been in here.”

“None of this is anyone’s fault but the game’s directors,” Hide insists, face darkening, “This was most likely their goal all along – why else would they give us weapons and trap us all here with those...monsters.”

“Monsters…” the girl echoes, eyes going strangely soft, “...How much do you really know about the Wolves, Nagachika-kun?”

“What do I know? You mean besides the fact that they eat people?” Hide replies as his expression quirks into a thoughtful frown, “…Next to nothing, I guess.”

“Okay then, what about neo-hybrids?” she tries, looking at him curiously as she gauges his response.

For the briefest of moments, something sparks in the back of the blond’s mind. 'Neo-hybrid' - it feels like he should know that word. But then the spark is gone again as quickly as it ignites, lost in the swirling fog that stubbornly confounds his thoughts. Nishino makes a sound of acknowledgement when the bumblebee slowly shakes his head ‘no’.

“I wouldn’t expect you to,” she reassures him, clarifying her question, “It’s just that you really don’t seem like an ordinary player... The only thing I could imagine was that you were somehow involved with them. How about the the Saiki corporation? The Washuu Conglomerate?”

Hide's ears perk at the second name – The Washuu Conglomerate is a huge group of corporations operating in multiple industries, headed by one massive parent company, The Washuu Corporation. He’s fairly familiar with the Washuu name; being one of the largest delivery companies in the country, his employer often handles deliveries for them and their subsidiaries.

“Yeah, I’ve heard of The Washuu before,” the blond nods, eyes narrowing in a look of suspicion, “What about them? Do you know something about what’s going on here?”

“I guess you deserve to know something about what's going on...If you’re in here you ought to at
least know who is responsible,” the spider gives a long sigh and hops up onto the table at her back, shifting a little bit so that she’s sitting comfortably before going on, “Though you may not have heard of it, The Saiki Company is actually a large subsidiary of The Washuu Conglomerate, headed by the Saiki family… The Saiki Company also happens to be my former employer, and its owners are the proprietors of this game.”

At her last words, the bee hybrid’s eyebrows jump up halfway to his hairline, eyes going wide, “Whoa, whoa, wait…so you’re involved in the game?”

The red-haired girl shakes her head sharply at that, face contorting with distaste, “No, I was never involved with the game…but I did work for them as a medical intern, and I have definitely done some things I’m not proud of as a facet of that work.”

“Up until a today I was a researcher in one of The Saiki Company’s largest medical facilities,” she explains, “And as part of my work I was involved in what they called their Advanced Neo-Hybrid Program – a program that studies and monitors neo-hybrids – or as you’ve come to know them, ‘The Wolves’.”

Hide’s mouth opens in exclamation, but she immediately shushes him, urging him to let her continue her story. “I know, it sounds like something out of a sci-fi novel, right? But just let me finish,” the girl concedes with a shake of her head, “Neo-hybrids are hybrids with extremely high levels of spliced insect DNA - their hybridization levels are literally off the charts. Their abnormally large hybrid appendages and insatiable hunger for hybrid flesh? Those are both products of their overwhelmingly insect biology; and as you know, high levels of hybridization go hand in hand with alpha presentation, which is why they are all alphas – neo-alphas, to be correct.”

“So the giant hybrid appendages…the creepy red eyes…they’re all…?” bumblebee ventures, giving her an expectant look.

“As far we know the over-sized appendages are a result of their high hybridization levels, but their eyes are a little bit more complicated,” the girl admits, “The truth is that we’re not entirely sure about those. We know that they are a side-effect of the mutation that results in neo-hybridization, but it’s still being researched. We do know that all neo-alphas have them, but in the past there have been extremely rare cases in which the subject displayed only one mutated eye.”

“Wait… so why haven’t I ever seen or heard of these neo-hybrids before,” Hide interjects, pinning her with a dubious stare, “I mean, it sounds like they’ve been around for a long time, but I’ve never heard of anything like what you’re describing – this would have been all over the news if it were true. They’re eating people!”

“That’s where the Washuu clan comes in,” she counters, shaking her head slowly, “You have no idea how powerful they are, Nagachika-kun They’re in the pockets of the government, military, police… the Washuu have been financing the capture, creation and research of neo-hybrids for generations now. Though neo-hybridism is a result of a rare mutation whose origins are unknown, the owners of The Washuu Conglomerate have been studying the phenomenon in secret for generations now. The Saiki Company is just a facet of that, working on new medical treatments by studying neo-hybrid biology in order to advance the Washuu clan’s goals.

“Save for the few living off the grid and in secret, the vast majority of neo-hybrids live under the company’s thumb, with their handlers working very hard to make sure that they don’t cause an uproar within the general population. There’s a highly classified law-enforcement agency funded by the Washuu whose entire job is to apprehend rogue neo-hybrids and police those in the system, keeping them in check and out of the public eye – The Neo-Hybrid Counter-Tactical Commission, or ‘NHCC’ for short. Thanks to them neos stay out of the news and confined to living in secrecy –
most people don’t even know that they exist.”

“So…you’re saying they’re basically second-class citizens…prisoners even,” the blond surmises incredulously, “Is that even legal? It sounds like a serious hybrid rights violation.”

“It is a hybrid-rights violation - sanctioned by the government and enforced by the Washuu and their cronies,” the rain spider frowns, eyes clouding over, “Even though neo-hybrids are mostly forced to live in fear of being discovered, it’s extremely difficult for the company to ensure that they don’t grow tired of their shackled existence and stage an uprising – even outnumbered they are extremely powerful. That’s why the company affords them certain... ’accomodations’…such as this game.”

“What you have to understand is that this game wasn’t made for us, Nagachika-kun… it’s for them,” the girl says, looking off into the distance thoughtfully, “Neo-hybrids are unable to digest anything but the flesh of other hybrids, and their natural instinct is to hunt and consume fresh meat - not the over-processed semi-synthetic junk-food that the company provides for them. The company holds these kinds of events as a means for them to be given the opportunity to hunt freely on a regular basis, so that they don’t become too discontent and try to overstep their bounds.”

“So what you’re telling me is, we’re basically here as an appeasement measure,” Hide concludes with a soft nod, stroking at his chin, "...A sacrifice."

“That’s exactly what I’m saying,” Nishino nods back, “Even with the appeasement measures, right now there is a growing faction of neo-hybrids who seek unilateral liberation for all neos so that they can live and hunt freely. One of the only reasons there hasn’t been a large scale uprising yet is that there is also a large group of isolationists who are wary of the reception that they would receive if their existence were known. They wish to continue living separately from the rest of hybrid-kind and have been feeding the company information on possible dissenters for a while now. So far their assistance has allowed the company to successfully intervene, but that stale-mate may soon be coming to an end.”

“Wow…sounds complicated,” the blond comments in genuine surprise, eyebrows raised, “I just kind of thought they were all out for themselves, but I guess if there are that many of them, it would make sense that they have their own social structure too.”

“From what I know, the neos have their own unique hierarchical system - a very loose power structure based purely on strength. They don’t have any appointed leaders per se, but most neos will generally defer to those who are physically stronger than themselves, and those of considerably notable strength wield a high level of influence within the community. For a while now there have been rumors of a ‘king’ – a neo-hybrid who has been recognized as being undoubtedly the most powerful among them and awarded a sort of special status from all neo-hybrids, regardless of faction.”

At the mention of the word ‘king’ Hide feels something stir again in the depths of his heart, nudging at his awareness as though there might be some special significance to that word that he should be aware of. Nishino seems to notice his strange expression but doesn’t mention it, merely quirking her eyebrows at him a little bit before continuing on.

“Recently the company has been desperate to establish negotiations with this king of theirs as they think that he might be one of the few neos capable of shutting down a rebellion once and for all; but from what I hear, he’s extremely reclusive - nobody is really sure what his motives are,” the girl explains after a steadying sigh, "It’s been speculated lately that he might actually be one of a very small minority of pro-integration neos though – neo-hybrids who are open to coexistence with the rest of hybrid kind. Unlike the liberation front, which seeks a world where neo-hybrids rule over all, they seem to believe that there can be peaceful co-habitation between neos and ordinary hybrids.
"I don’t know how true the rumors are, but apparently he has abstained from the past few games now, which could be an indicator that the rumors are true and the king is trying to avoid needlessly killing other hybrids. The only thing that is certain however, is that it would seem the king doesn’t want to be found - his identity is as-yet unknown, and few neos even know what he looks like. All of which means that unless they can devise some method of coaxing him out, the company is at an impasse.

“That’s where the game comes in. Without a definitive way to lessen discontent within neo-hybrid ranks, The Washuu Conglomerate has been putting on these games more and more frequently lately. There’s also some speculation that they are using these games as a method to lure out the neos’ so-called king, but holding more events like this also increases the risk involved. As you can imagine, it’s a lot of work to just ‘disappear’ several dozen hybrids once a month.”

“I was wondering how anyone managed to pull off something like this…not to mention why,” Hide murmurs thoughtfully as he listens to the spider-hybrid’s explanation, “That would definitely explain why the people they pick for the game all fit a certain profile too… criminals, people involved in anti-society activities… people who nobody would miss.”

“And people who are a threat to the organization and the Washuu themselves,” Nishino adds, “People like me.”

Hide’s eyes widen a little bit at that. “Why are you here anyway?” he asks, “You say I’m out of place, but what about you, Nishino-san? You don’t seem like the type to end up in here either.”

The rain spider gives a small, cryptic smile at that observation, absently swinging her legs so that her calves bump against the edge of the table. “Me? I guess you could say I brought it all on myself,” she says with an ironic little laugh, “A little over a year ago I started seeing someone – a neo-hybrid. We met by chance one day and ended up hitting it off…then one thing led to another, and before I knew it I was falling for him.

“Looking back now I realize that he was probably just using me to try and get information for the liberation movement – I mean, he as much as told me so himself when he broke up with me a few months ago. But after he left me I just couldn’t move on. I started digging into the company’s records and found out that my employer, The Saiki Company, was involved in some really foul business… from then on I felt like I couldn’t just sit by without doing something about it.

“I got involved with a small group of dissenters after that – a decentralized movement of hybrids affiliated with The Washuu Conglomerate who are just tired of the corporation and their unconscionable bullshit. I’ve been feeding information to them in exchange for intel on the game for a while, trying to find a way to get in contact with my ex. That’s how I found out that Nish— my ex— would be participating tonight. I managed to make arrangements to be ‘outed’ by one of my affiliates a few days ago, and before I knew it I was being kidnapped and stuffed into a truck earlier this evening.”

The blond stares at the young spider hybrid, mouth slightly agape, as she confesses to purposefully getting herself thrown into the game. He can’t even imagine the level of commitment it would take for someone to do something like that – as far as he can tell, it is pretty much the equivalent to signing up to be voluntarily executed.

“Luckily one of my contacts was able to help me out with some supplies,” the girl adds, looking down at her weapon fondly after she notices Hide’s shocked look, “I know, it’s crazy right? There’s got to be something wrong with me…

“But I just couldn’t leave him alone like that. I mean he says he’s not lonely, acts like he doesn’t
need anyone, but I look at him now and I see myself the way I was before I met him - alone and lost…wishing someone would just stay with me, but too afraid to reach out to anyone.”

“Of course, it’s probably just me being selfish and self-centered like always,” the girl confesses then, crossing her arms about her midsection as she bows her head guiltily, “But…I feel like I have to help him. Even if he was just using me when we were together, he was there for me when I lost my family – the only person who really saw me for who I was. I don’t care if it doesn’t make any sense - I want to be with him.”

“I don’t think you’re crazy Nishino-san,” Hide says after a short pause. “I don’t think you’re crazy at all. Or selfish or stupid or any of those things. I think you’re really smart and kind and forgiving… and brave to come to a place like this searching for someone you care about even after they hurt you like that.”

Nishino’s head slowly lifts at that, soft hazelnut colored eyes widening in surprise as she tentatively meets the delivery boy’s gaze.

“I… I don’t think anyone’s ever told me I was brave before,” she says quietly, shyly running a hand through the short auburn locks at the back of her head, “Thank you.”

“…Nagachika-kun,” the spider hybrid says slowly after a moment, slipping off the wide table so that she can stand and retrieve her cross-bow, “Were you headed somewhere? Before that man attacked you?”

Hide gives a sharp nod of confirmation.

“I’m looking for someone myself, but I’m not really sure where he is,” the bumblebee answers with a troubled frown. It’s been a little while since he and Kaneki got separated, and he can’t help but feel worried for the other hybrid. The white-haired hybrid seems like he can definitely take care of himself, but even so this place is crawling with bloodthirsty neo-hybrids, and there’s also that monster roaming around – none of them are really safe until they get out of the park. “I actually figured I’d check around the edges of the park since I haven’t been yet. I’m headed for The White Rabbits House – it’s not too far from here.”

“I see…In that case, would you like to go with me?” the red-haired girl asks tentatively, “I haven’t searched that area yet either, and it would probably be safer if we stuck together. I’ll watch your back if you watch mine.”

“Oh, and I’m not interested in taking your key, if you’re worried about that,” she adds as an afterthought, “None of the Villagers are meant to leave here alive anyway. Even if someone did manage to kill you and take your key, they’d basically just become the Lamb themselves - they’d either be killed by their fellow Villagers for the key or offered up as a prize along with all other survivors to the winning Wolf at the very end of the game.”

The bumblebee’s eyes widen significantly at that. If what Nishino says is true and the game’s proprietors really have no intention of letting anyone leave here, then there really is no way out of this game other than to escape.

Hide wonders abruptly if Kaneki is aware of this particular aspect of the game. If so, then that would
mean that rather than just escape the game himself, the other boy specifically went out of his way to try and help him get away at the risk of his own life. All of a sudden he feels extremely guilty for giving the other man such a hard time about coming after him; if Kaneki dies here after trying to help him get out it will be partially due to him trying to help Hide, and the thought of it makes the bumblebee’s stomach churn.

“Nishino-san,” the delivery boy says urgently, “We need to hurry. The truth is my friend-“

Hide’s heart abruptly drops into the pit of his stomach as the loudspeakers crackle to life, interrupting him mid-sentence, and the park music begins to play.

For her part Nishino is silent, tossing him a meaningful glance before she slides off the table and unfolds her weapon, quickly reloading it. Hide himself hesitantly pulls out his knife in response, adjusting his grip so that he has the weapon in a back-handed grip before meeting her gaze.

“I’ll take point if you watch the rear,” the blond says after a grim little sigh, “You’ve got better range than I do.”

Nishino gives him a soft nod in response and Hide is already feeling slightly more confident as the smaller hybrid gives a polite little nod and sidles up to him carefully until they are standing back-to-back. Arachnids tend to have very keen senses and excellent reflexes all-around – natural born hunters. Reluctantly, Hide lets his antennae slip out to test the air; the red-haired hybrid is a welcome ally, but with all Nishino’s attention trained on the rear-guard he needs to be as alert as possible to attacks from their fore.

A soft, slightly alluring scent reminiscent of ripe nashi and fresh peony flowers tickles Hide’s feelers, and he realizes belatedly that his newfound friend is probably a low-level alpha, likely right on the cusp of beta-ism, as he hasn’t felt particularly pressed by her presence. Like Kaneki her presence is calming and reassuring, but it lacks the raw sexuality that he felt coming off the other boy when they were together, which is rather uncommon.

The blond’s eyebrow quirks a little as they begin to carefully make their way out of the clearing and onto one of the larger pathways. Usually alphas naturally exude more alluring pheromones when an omega is around, which means that she’s either bonded already or deliberately taking care not to infringe on the bumblebee’s senses. Or…

The bee hybrid’s stomach clenches as he finally dares to voice his question aloud, “…Nishino-san? Not to pry, but are you-“

Hide is startled when without warning he realizes that at some point the increasingly familiar sensation of Nishino’s body-warmth has left his back. The bee hybrid turns around slowly, only to find that the young woman in question has stopped in the middle of the walkway a few paces back, standing stock-still as she stares intently up into the darkness of the trees just ahead of Hide, weapon lowered.

“…Ni-…Nishino-san?”

“I’m sorry Nagachika-kun,” the spider replies at last, as she is seemingly snapped free of her stupor by his words, “I thought I-“

But before Hide can hear the rest, the girl’s words are drowned out by a loud buzz and a huge gust
of air as a massive, elongated figure bursts out from the dense overgrowth up ahead, swooping down
to land in the road directly between them. It’s a praying mantis, its giant hybrid forelegs raised high
as it hovers over the spider for a split second. Hide’s mouth opens in a silent scream just as the
predator’s enormous, bladed fore-limbs swing toward the helpless girl, and in the next second he is
on his back as the neo-hybrid’s enormous wings come to life again, blowing the bumblebee right off
his feet.

And just like that they are gone, leaving Hide with nothing but a jarring pain that reverberates
through his entire body and the haunting echo of Nishino’s muffled cries as she is carried off into the
night.

“Nishi…no…sa…” the world tilts and spins on its axis for a moment as Hide’s head is filled with a
familiar ringing noise, and in another moment he is shutting his eyes tightly, struggling to remain
coherent as his surroundings threaten to shift and splinter apart.

The younger boy’s eyes narrow at him from across the street in a genuine smile that has the bee
hybrid’s cheeks warming as his heart suddenly picks up a staccato rhythm in his chest. The dark-
haired hybrid raises his hand shyly in a small wave as he heads toward the eagerly waiting
bumblebee, and in the next moment Hide’s ears are abruptly filled with the screech of rubber on
asphalt, followed by a sickening crunch. The little bumblebee’s breath catches in his chest, face
crinking up in shock as his nose is assaulted by the peculiar scent of burnt tires and coppery blood,
and for a few seconds Hide just stands there, frozen in place while he watches the few people in the
park suddenly burst into motion. A woman riding by on her bike squeals to a halt and clambers off
of her ride to immediately rush to the scene of the wreck, just as the driver stumbles out, phone in
hand, and begins to dial for help. An elderly man joins the first passerby as she carefully
approaches the tiny pile of limbs that now lies crumpled on the ground in front of the car along with
the vehicle’s ruined front fender.

There are a few seconds of confusion as the two bystanders try to decide whether or not to move the
body, and then suddenly, with a loud wail and a rumble of heavy tires against the pavement, an
ambulance is there. A pair of large, burly paramedics hastily usher aside the two surprised good-
samaritans to scoop the motionless little body up out of the ocean of blood that surrounds it,
whisking the tiny boy off into the back of the emergency vehicle. As he watches the whirlwind of
motion, Hide suddenly feels something prick at the corner of his relentlessly observant mind – alarm
bells blaring in his head that something is terribly, terribly wrong. The driver has barely gotten off
the phone with emergency services - how did the paramedics get here so fast?

The blond watches helplessly as the car’s driver piles into the back of the ambulance alongside the
stretcher, and finds his eyes catching on something familiar along the lower edge of the back of the
vehicle as the back doors slam shut; something that makes his eyes go wide - first in recognition and
then in terror.

He needs to do something – to move, to yell, to scream – anything but just stand there, but instead
Hide finds himself dropping to his knees and curling in on himself, overcome with tremors as his
rational thought processes shut down and fear takes over. For a long time after that the little
bumblebee stays that way, hunched over on his hands and knees, fingers digging into the grass
desperately as he struggles just to breathe again.
Hide is not sure how long he lies there in the middle of the path, eyes and mouth open wide as he desperately tries to process what just happened, but for a while all he can do is replay the incident in his mind again and again and again, until Nishino’s gently smiling expression as she spoke of the hybrid she loved gradually begins to overlap with the beaming look of affection that is directed at him by the boy in his memory and the inside of the bee hybrid’s head deteriorates into a garbled mess of barely cohesive scenes. The stricken bee hybrid shudders as he feels his breath beginning to catch in his chest again, and Hide soon realizes that another panic attack is probably imminent.

Again.

He’s done it again. Brought misery to someone who least deserved it – entire futures full of hopes and dreams, dashed into oblivion, completely ruined simply for the crime of having associated with him. Nishino-san. The boy in his dreams. Kaneki.

“Kaneki…”

The thought of the white haired boy snaps Hide back to the present almost instantly, as he remembers the slow steady rhythm of the Kaneki’s heartbeat against his back, the sensual, soothing murmur of the alpha’s low tenor deep in his ear, patiently coaxing him back down to earth.

Kaneki.

The other boy is still out there somewhere, looking for him, needlessly putting his own life in danger for Hide even though the bumblebee is clearly little more than a useless burden. The image of the white-haired boy’s back as he flew toward the group of Villagers standing in their path earlier reasserts itself in Hide’s mind then, and in the next moment he is shakily climbing to his feet, trembling fists clenched tight as he wills himself into action. This time when he finds Kaneki, he won’t be putting the white-haired boy in danger again – he’ll make sure of it this time.

The rest of his trek to The White Rabbit’s House is blessedly uneventful, and Hide makes fairly good time reaching the little cottage despite the lack of signs to point him in the right direction. The blond is actually surprised when he picks his way through one particularly dense thicket and suddenly finds himself staring up at the side of an eerily well-preserved building - a prim little pink
and white affair with a single story and a cheerfully yellow, faux thatched roof. He’s too close to make out the large, perky white rabbit ears that adorn the roof itself, but as Hide makes his way around to the front of the house he recognizes a cutesy little fake mailbox sitting at the end of the walkway leading up to the front of the building, which is similarly topped with a pair of white ears, and knows that he is in the right place. When he approaches the front façade of the house, the bumblebee finds himself faced with an intricately carved cherry-wooden door whose large doorknob puts up a firm resistance when the bee hybrid attempts to twist it.

‘Showtime already, huh?’

The delivery boy hesitantly pulls out his key then, carefully fitting it into the large keyhole that sits under the doorknob; and when he gives it a little twist he is rewarded with a loud click and the sound of tumblers rotating as the lock gives way and the door swings open easily, as though inviting him inside. Hide swivels his head this way and that as he cautiously peeks through the doorway first, knife drawn and at the ready while he checks for any signs of danger, and upon finding none, the youngbee hybrid carefully steps inside. The park’s lights are still out as they are currently in the middle of a period of darkness, but the interior of The White Rabbit’s House is curiously well lit.

Inside, the blond is mildly surprised to find the little edifice very well-appointed; small though the space is; there is a comfortable looking little living area that makes up the front of the building, complete with a small, round tea table and a plush looking settee. Further in the back he can also make out a cozy bedroom nook, dominated by a large cushion-laden bed that appears very enticing to the bumblebee’s tired eyes. Deciding to investigate the sitting area first, the blond makes his way over to the settee and small table, and immediately zeroes in on a peculiar looking little vial of liquid sitting conspicuously at the center of the round tabletop. It is accompanied by a small envelope, simply labeled with the words: {{Open Me.}}

‘Well, I did have the key to get in. I suppose it could only be for me…’ The bee hybrid gingerly plucks the envelope from the table before carefully tearing open one edge with a fingernail, and slides out the small, folded up piece of paper that is tucked inside.

Hide’s eyebrows raise significantly as he unfolds and reads the simple little missive addressed to himself.

{{Dearest Lamb,

Congratulations! It would appear our little Lamb is the clever sort this time around. As you can see, we have provided you with a very special prize to commemorate your achievement. Upon ingesting this special drink, you will be granted protection from both Wolf and Villager attacks! We also invite you to make yourself comfortable while you are here. Please feel free to use any of the amenities here in The White Rabbit’s House for your personal comfort while you await the conclusion of the game.

Enjoy~

-The Management}}

“…That’s it? I just drink this and I’m immune?” the boy says aloud when he’s done reading, though he’s fairly sure that he game’s proprietors can neither hear him, nor would they bother to respond even if they could.
Hide frowns down at the letter thoughtfully for a few moments. He’s honestly not sure what to think of the rather anti-climactic conclusion to his little quest. Overall, this is pretty much what he was expecting to find when he set out for The White Rabbit’s House, but it all seems a little bit too easy - especially considering what the other players’ bonuses entail. The Villagers’ task requires them to kill him and claim his key, while the Wolves are required to hunt him down and physically ‘claim’ him for their bonus to take effect. Meanwhile, all Hide has to do is open a door and drink a weird looking drink?

Something’s not right here.

The delivery boy hesitantly picks up to the drink in question, examining the simple little tag attached to it.

{{Drink Me.}}

The oddly iridescent substance inside glimmers softly under the ambient lighting of The White Rabbit’s House, a vivid, translucent lilac color that doesn’t give him particularly ‘tasty beverage’ vibes. Hide is none too keen on drinking the weird substance, but the instructions in the letter are clear: drinking this will grant him protection from both Wolves and Villagers – that’s exactly what he wanted, right? Not to be a burden on Kaneki when he finally finds the other boy again…to be able to make his way out of the park alongside the other hybrid without worrying about everyone within a five-mile radius trying to fuck him or kill him for his key.

Popping the little bottle open, the delivery boy gives its contents a cursory sniff and, finding that it doesn’t seem particularly noxious or dangerous, takes a tiny sip first, smacking his lips a few times as he considers the taste. It’s strangely tangy and sweet with a weirdly thick, syrupy texture - perhaps a bit bitter but definitely digestible.

“Guess it’s bottoms up…”

And with a grim little smile the bumblebee downs the little vial’s contents in one swig, coughing a little as he struggles to swallow around the strange viscous texture of it for a few moments, until eventually there is nothing left in his mouth but a strange tingly feeling and a bittersweet aftertaste. Hide waits for a moment to see if there is anything to herald his new status – an announcement or some kind of physical change – but nothing comes. Instead he finds himself standing in the middle of The White Rabbit’s House like an idiot, holding an empty vial in one hand and a confoundingly succinct instruction letter in the other.

The bee hybrid frowns deeply. It feels like there should be a little more to it, but it is painfully obvious that nothing more is forthcoming. Slightly perturbed by the lackluster conclusion to his brief side-quest, Hide gives the little cottage one last once-over but when he finds nothing particularly of note the omega makes his way to the door again; he doesn’t have time to stand around here pondering the game’s proprietors’ motives – he needs to find Kaneki as soon as possible.

Stepping back outside The White Rabbit’s house, Hide finds himself once again at a loss. He’s
exhausted all conceivable options so far and still no luck in finding The Cheshire Cat's Tree, which leaves him back at square one.

“Where are you, Kaneki?” Hide voices aloud in frustration, shaking his head a few times as he steps onto a small faded path that leads in the opposite direction from whence he came. He feels a little bit more confident now, having completed his bonus objective and ostensibly gained immunity, but a part of him is still skeptical over whether or not he is actually safe now – he doesn’t really have any way to test it out, and the announcer hasn’t made a peep since the beginning of the game. Without any concrete evidence that he is indeed free from danger, Hide opts to keep a low profile and is beyond relieved when a few minutes later the park music comes back on, heralding their entry back into a period of light. With the lights on again, the bee hybrid is much better able to see, and a couple minutes of walking later, he is somewhat pleased to find himself entering a relatively well-preserved area of the park.

As he enters the little clearing, the bee hybrid finds himself actually panting a little bit with exertion even though it has only been a short walk. Wiping his brow with the back of his wrist, Hide is slightly surprised when he pulls his hand away to find it dripping with sweat – he’s burning up. The same tingling, burning sensation is all over him again, causing his skin to overheat, and this time the bee hybrid actually slips off his jacket and ties it around his waist, relieved by the sensation of the cold winter air against his skin.

Opting to rest for a minute or two while he cools off, the bee-hybrid is just casting his gaze about in search of someplace to sit when he spots a little kiosk tucked into the corner of a small clearing that used to be an eatery area – one which boldly declares itself an information stand in large, somewhat faded letters – and is suddenly struck with an idea. A few moments later, the bumblebee has clambered over the top of the wide service counter of the information stand, diving head-first into the abandoned kiosk as he digs around.

“……Yes!”

The delivery boy hastily clambers back out of the stand with a large, glossy piece of paper held triumphantly in his left hand and proceeds to plop down right in the middle of the walkway, spreading out his prize under the bright fluorescent park lights so that he can get a better look. It’s a guide to the park – leftover from when the place was still functioning, and on it the different areas and attractions are clearly marked. Hide quickly gets his bearings, finding the roller-coaster that he first used as a scouting post, then The Mad Hatter’s Tea Party, and finally The White Rabbit’s House, which he just left not long ago.

‘This little area here must be where I am now…which means…’

Hide is surprised to realize that the area referred to as The Cheshire Cat’s Tree is actually not far away according to the map; it sits right on the outer edge of the park, toward the North-Western boundary. If he doubles back and goes North from The White Rabbit’s House a little bit, he can be there in almost no time.

The blond utters a sigh of relief and folds up his newly acquired map, tucking it into his back pocket before he sets off in the direction of The Cheshire Cat’s Tree.

A little more walking brings Hide back to the area near the White Rabbit’s House and beyond, and he is soon well on his way to reaching his final destination when his antennae suddenly twitch with vibration. Breath catching in his throat, Hide lunges to the ground immediately, diving out of the way just before something large and heavy goes sailing right through the space that his chest had
occupied not a second earlier with a hard gust of air. As the object in question thuds to the ground off to the side with a heavy clang, Hide’s arm instinctively flies up and out, knife in hand, and when it does he is rewarded with the sensation of his weapon burying itself in something soft and forgiving as a loud cry sounds above him.

“Augh!”

His would-be assailant lets out a loud cry as they fall back, clutching painfully at the handle of the bowie knife that currently lies buried deep between their ribs. Still reeling from the shock of having just barely held onto his life, Hide is taken aback when he vaguely recognizes his attacker as one of the Villagers from the little square that he was chased into by the beetle hybrid when he first arrived – a survivor of the five wolves’ vicious attack.

“Haha!…Lamb!…You’re the Lamb! Haha!…Finally found you again…!” the cricket rasps, grasping for her weapon, a large sledge-hammer that currently lies buried head-first in the loamy ground off to the side of the cobbled path. A closer look shows that she is in pretty bad shape – her body is covered in cuts and lacerations, most likely souvenirs of the massacre that they both barely managed to escape with their lives.

“W-wait…it’s over!” Hide pleads, eyes wide as he watches the small girl heft the heavy weapon up over her shoulder with a strength born of the desperation that burns in her frenzied gaze, “You don’t have to do this!”

The delivery boys scrabbles backward a little bit, moving to stand up, but as he struggles to find his feet, the back of his heel catches on the ground and Hide finds himself falling back onto his rear. Taking advantage of his misfortune, the petite hybrid centers herself in front of the fallen bee, seemingly lining her aim up with the blond-haired boy’s forehead.

“Ahaha!!! Hold still little Lamb! This’ll only hurt for a second!!!”

She is just leaning back to throw her weight into the blow that will most likely rob Hide of his life when with a grimace the bumblebee hybrid lashes out with his leg in a well-aimed kick that sends his heel driving right into the handle of the knife that currently protrudes from the other hybrid’s rib-cage. There is a moment of shocked silence as the girl pauses mid-movement, eyes wide, just before she makes a pitiful little sound high in her throat and her arms suddenly buckle, bringing the sledgehammer hurtling down to clamor against the cracked stone pathway, narrowly missing the bee as its wielder slumps to the ground alongside it.

In the wake of the encounter, Hide doesn’t move for a while as he takes a moment to confirm that he’s still in one piece. The girl who just attacked him hasn’t moved in some time, and a heavy sense of finality settles in as he slowly realizes that she’s not going to either – not ever again.

Hide considers examining the body – if only to confirm his fears - but thinks better of it. He’s genuinely not sure that he can face the reality of the situation right now, and it’s not because he regrets what just happened.

It’s because it was so easy.

‘Don’t look.’
It’s actually the lack of feeling that’s the most jarring. The bumblebee has seen more than his fair share of death this night. This one is perhaps one of the least traumatic, despite the fact that it’s the only one that he himself is directly responsible for, which might be one reason for the detached feeling of it all. Still, Hide has somehow always thought that the act of killing someone would be much more difficult - some heavy, momentous psychological transition in which he went from being a person who had never even thought of taking a life to someone who had made a conscious decision to do so.

But in reality the entire moment is very fleeting – anticlimactic even – much like death itself. One moment the girl was alive, breathing and moving and struggling to hold on to life as best she could, and the next she was motionless – an empty husk of flesh and bone.

Likewise, Hide had always been a person who could never have imagined taking a life – until he did.

‘Get up - you have to keep moving.’

The bumblebee hybrid slowly rises up onto his knees and looks down at his hands to find them surprisingly clean. There is little blood besides the growing stain that mars the fallen hybrid’s white woolen blouse, adding to the dirt and grime and dried up splotches of red-brown that already decorate the battered garment; but Hide wipes his hands on his thighs anyway before casting his gaze about, trying to regain his bearings.

He can’t stop now - The Cheshire Cat’s Tree should be just beyond the next stretch of woods. He needs to move – to get up and get going so that he can make his way there as quickly as possible, needs to find…

“Hide!”

The blond blinks as a familiar tenor rings out behind him. Turning his head slowly, he looks up toward the source and finds a pair of soft grey eyes staring down at him from just a few paces away.

“…Kane...ki?”

“Hide…”

It’s the subtle play of emotions across the other boy’s face that breaks him. Hide watches the young alpha’s expression slowly contort into a look of disbelief and remorse as they lock gazes, and realizes then that the other boy is reacting not to the situation that he's found the blond in, but to the hot tears streaming down the bee hybrid’s face - tears Hide hadn't even realized he was crying.

“I shouldn’t have left you on your own for so long,” the white-haired boy murmurs apologetically, eyes downcast, “I came as soon as I figured out where you were.”
“K-Kaneki…s-sorry…I'm sorry…I didn't mean to…i-it wasn’t supposed to be like this,” he murmurs back half-coherently, clenching and un-clenching his hands helplessly in his lap, “I did what the instructions said...I didn't...didn’t want...anyone else to...because of me...I mean, the last place she saw me was so far away...d-don’t even know how she could have found me here…”

His words fade into an indecipherable jumble of syllables as Kaneki approaches and carefully tugs him to his feet, giving him a quick once over to see that he’s not injured. The alpha pauses briefly once they are face to face, brow furrowing in consternation before he gives a small sigh of defeat.

“…It’s your scent, Hide,” the other boy says abruptly, “I’d been meaning to tell you when we were together earlier. You smell...very good. It was strong before, but it’s extremely concentrated now…like a beacon. I could smell it all the way from my tree - that’s how I found you.”

“My…scent?” the omega queries, eyebrows furrowing even further as he struggles to understand.

Kaneki heaves another sigh before going on to elaborate.

“I’m pretty sure you’ve been drugged with something to make you produce a high volume of potent omega pheromones as though you’re in heat, probably by the game's administrators as a way to liven up the game - it...wouldn't be the first time. That’s most likely what's been attracting other hybrids to you since you’ve been here, alerting them to the fact that you’re an omega,” the white-haired boy says with a frown, leaning in for an experimental sniff, “If I could smell you well enough to track you from that far, that means the other players can too. I think maybe-”

As soon as his nose nears the omega’s nape, the alpha physically flinches as though he’s run into a wall. Hide’s shoulders jump in surprise at the sudden movement, and when his eyes snap over to meet the other boy’s, he’s slightly taken-aback to see Kaneki staring at him wide-eyed, eyebrows quirked in disbelief.

“I marked you here earlier,” the white-haired boy breathes, “But now you smell like…”

“K-Kaneki?” the blond whispers, suppressing a shudder as the other boy leans in again, scenting carefully along his nape, his collar-bones, the backs of his shoulders. Hide feels his heart jump up into his throat when the alpha’s hands suddenly slide forward to grab him by the elbows, holding him firmly in place while Kaneki looks him in the eyes.

"Hide,” the alpha intones then, startling the bee-hybrid with the low, seething quality of his voice, “Has anyone…touched…you? While I was away?”

“Has anyone...?” the bee hybrid echoes, blinking owlishly at the question as he wracks his brain to figure out what it is that the other boy could be referring to, before realization suddenly dawns on him.

'Does he mean Nishino-san?’

Hide shakes his head softly as he lets out a small sigh, “I made an ally while I was looking for you – an alpha. We teamed up to try and get to The Cheshire Cat’s Tree, but we were attacked during one of the darkness periods. She…didn’t make it.”

Kaneki’s expression tightens slightly at the blond-haired boy’s explanation, but he doesn’t press the issue any further as he slowly releases the taller boy, letting out a huff of a sigh that is two parts relief, one part reluctant acceptance.

“I'm sorry,” Kaneki murmurs softly, apparently having come to his senses again, “It's just…”
The alpha’s mouth dips into a frown then, letting out a small sound of consternation as he crosses his arms about his chest and lowers his gaze to his feet, seemingly contemplating something.

When at last he meets the bumblebee’s eyes again, his expression is set in a look of grim finality.

“Hide, come with me,” he says simply, before he turns on his heel.

The bee hybrid quickly falls into step behind him, still a little worried by Kaneki’s abrupt change in behavior, but mostly just relieved to have him back again. The alpha’s presence is a welcome distraction from the swirling maelstrom of confusion and pessimism that is Hide’s current emotional state.

“Um…Kaneki?” the blond hesitantly interjects a few beats later as he twists his head this way and that confusedly – he had assumed that they’d be headed for The Cheshire Cat’s Tree, but it seems like the other boy is leading him roughly back in the direction of The White Rabbit’s House.

“Isn’t The Cheshire Cat’s Tree that way?” he queries with a vague nod in the direction they should be heading, just as they eventually come to a halt not too far from the little cottage, “Where are we going?”

The white-haired boy does not answer right away, instead casting his gaze about the perimeter of the small clearing that they’ve come to, apparently scanning for signs of danger.

“…Kaneki? What are we doing here?” the delivery boy tries again, looking around with a slightly perplexed expression. The other boy has brought him to a small, secluded area among the trees, where the undergrowth is a little bit sparser and the grass is soft and mossy under their feet. Just as Hide is starting to worry a bit, the alpha slowly turns to face him, shoulders squared.

“I’m going to mark you, Hide,” he says at last, “Properly this time.”

“Down on your knees for me.”

A shudder ripples down the omega’s spine as the white-haired boy’s low, authoritative tone rumbles though him and Hide can’t help the way that his insides quiver with excitement and just a hint of nerves as he obediently shifts to a kneeling position in front of the other boy. He knows why the alpha is doing this - apparently Hide’s scent glands are working overtime right now, spewing copious amounts of artificial but potent omega pheromones into the air around him through his pores, which means he will continue attracting other hybrids unless they do something to dampen his scent. It’s still the first time he has ever really felt the alpha in Kaneki’s voice properly though, and it’s doing horrible, unconscionable things to the bee-hybrid’s self-control.

“…Good.”

The omega’s shoulders go rigid as he hears the telltale sound of a fly zipping down behind him, accompanied by a low sigh of relief that echoes lewdly in the bumblebee’s ears as the young alpha shrugs his bottoms down over his hips a bit. Hide bites his lip fiercely, clamping his eyelids shut while he desperately tries not to imagine the white-haired boy’s face as he carefully tugs his
swelling, reddened member free of its confines and takes himself in hand. Kaneki is not helping at all though - it’s impossible for the bee hybrid to miss the little aborted moan that slips past the alpha’s lips as he lines the head of his cock up with the sensitive scent glands at the back of the omega’s neck and gives his shaft a tentative stroke.

The bumblebee is almost positive that the boy behind him can smell his arousal by now, even under all the artificial heat pheromones that he’s exuding, so he doesn’t bother to fight it any more, panting softly as he curls his fingers tightly into the undersides of his thighs - literally sitting on his hands to keep from doing something that he’ll probably regret later. Kaneki is working his shaft slowly now, treating the delivery boy to the illicit sounds of flesh on flesh as the alpha strokes himself hard. They’ve only just started and he can literally hear how wet the other boy is already – judging from the slick sounds that emit from the white-haired hybrid’s hand as he pumps his erection. Kaneki’s cock is already dripping in slick, runny precum.

The omega starts when a hand clamps down on his left shoulder from above, and he’s not sure if it’s there to hold him in place or steady the boy behind him as Kaneki’s strokes grow increasingly fervent in their intensity; it’s not long before the other boy’s hand is working furiously over his own heated flesh, filling the little clearing with lewd, wet slapping noises as he moves his grip down to the base to jerk himself roughly, hand snapping forward and back again and again as he flicks his wrist on each upstroke. Kaneki is panting openly now, his breath a hot current against the tops of Hide’s ears as he curls in on himself in anticipation of his release, and Hide can sense when the other boy’s hand suddenly moves forward to pump briskly at the tip of his shaft, feverishly stimulating the sensitive head as the alpha nears his climax.

For a few moments the bee hybrid’s world is nothing but inky darkness and blistering heat while he sits with his eyes shut tight in anticipation, imagining it were himself coaxing the white-haired boy closer to the edge - his lips wrapped around the alpha’s shaft, taking the other boy’s swollen red cock deep into his throat to milk him for his seed while Kaneki pants breathlessly above him, desperately chasing completion - and the blond can feel himself going a bit lightheaded with his own arousal all of a sudden. Hide’s teeth come down over his bottom lip again as he struggles to contain himself, but soon the bumblebee’s lips are parting in a small gasp as he feels rather than hears the other boy give a voiceless moan and shudder into his release.

“Here it comes! Hngh…Hide!” the alpha’s strained cry sends a shiver of pleasure rippling through the omega’s entire being, and it’s a miracle that he doesn’t come on the spot as with a final flick of his wrist, Kaneki is coming, pressing the head of is cock forward into the pinnacle of the other boy’s nape as he empties his load. Hide makes a startled sound that’s something like a high-pitched yip when he actually feels the slit of the other boy’s cock dilate against his skin, shuddering with the force of the rush of ejaculate that thunders through the alpha’s shaft when it erupts from his tip, spewing thick ribbons of syrupy cum, laced with trace amounts of the other boy’s potent urine, directly across the back of the omega’s neck.

The bee hybrid instinctively tilts his head forward into a submissive pose while he waits for the alpha to finish marking him, and he is rewarded with a low growl of satisfaction as Kaneki pumps himself a few more times, smearing the head of his cock across the sensitive glands along the back of Hide's neck as he coats them in a thick layer of his semen. Even in the midst of what sounds like an intense orgasm, Kaneki is thorough in his marking, making sure to aim a few spurts into the backs of the bee hybrid's ears and along the sides of his neck as well in an attempt to target the areas releasing the most hormones. Hide can feel his pulse quicken each time the alpha’s sensitive tip spasms against the flushed skin of his neck, pulling soft gasps of hyper-stimulation from them both, and it takes every ounce of restraint that he has not to turn around and try to capture the reminder of the other boy’s spending on his tongue.
When at last the white-haired boy finishes anointing Hide with the warm mixture of his piss and cum, he is slow to pull away, leaning forward heavily while he catches his breath, and the blond does the same, taking a moment to savor the strong scent of the alpha’s marking as it seeps into his skin, temporarily making the bee hybrid his. The delivery boy experiences a brief moment of contentment then, as he basks in the sensation of having been claimed by the young alpha – at least for the time being.

He stiffens suddenly when he feels a soft gust of air play across his neck but relaxes as soon as he realizes that Kaneki is just giving him an experimental sniff.

“So…? Did it help?” the delivery boy queries tentatively, voice coming out far huskier than he had anticipated.

Kaneki gives a heavy sigh of relief as he leans back. “Much better. Before you smelled like you were in the middle of an intense heat…it was driving me crazy,” he admits reluctantly, “Now you mostly just smell like….well…mine. No one in the park should bother you anymore, but you might need another shot before you get out of here – you’re still gushing pheromones.”

Hide feels his chest inflate slightly at the word ‘mine’ but manages to reign in his emotions enough to nod solemnly in response. He hesitantly turns to face the other boy, so that he can thank him properly, only for his eyes to widen slightly when he finds himself staring right into the tip of the alpha’s fully erect member. Kaneki is still rock hard even after the massive load that he just sprayed up against the back of the omega’s neck, and it doesn’t look like his erection will be going down anytime soon – not without serious intervention.

This time Hide doesn’t hold back; a wet tongue rifling across flushed lips is all the warning the blond offers before he surges forward to take the head of the other boy’s cock into his mouth.

“H-Hide!” the white-haired boy hisses incredulously, bolting upright immediately at the sensation of his tip being engulfed gently in the smoldering heat of the other boy’s mouth, “Nngh…Hide, you don’t need to–”

“I know,” the bumblebee cuts him off, pulling back from his prize with a wet pop to glance up at the alpha through his eyelashes with a meaningful look, “Just…let me do this, Kaneki. Please.”

Kaneki stares back at him for a moment with a slightly troubled look, but he doesn’t try to push the bee hybrid away. Instead he sets his mouth into a resolved line and puts out his hand, palm up. When the blond hesitantly capitulates, slipping his palm into the other boy’s outstretched one, the alpha helps him to his feet before walking him back toward a nearby tree and slowly reaching down to untie Hide’s jacket from around his waist. A moment later the bee hybrid is back on his knees, this time with a soft layer of fabric cushioning his legs as he gives Kaneki one more careful look up from under his lashes before tucking a few errant strands of hair behind his ear and leaning forward to press tender lips into the tip of the blushing head of the alpha’s cock.

“…M-mnh…!” Hide pauses at the strangled little noise that the other boy emits when he swipes his tongue out across the top of the wide mushroom-head, lapping away the first large bead of pre-cum that blossoms from the tip, and is pleased to find that a prominent flush has spread across the white-haired boy’s pale cheeks when he looks up. Encouraged, he pulls away for just a moment to lap at his palms and fingers – a poor attempt at disinfection, but better than nothing – before wrapping a hand around Kaneki’s swollen shaft.

Hide is enamored by the sight of the other boy’s erect member - generally alphas tend to be extremely well-endowed, and the blond was expecting as much from the moment he first smelled the other boy’s potent pheromones; but upon seeing it up close, he’s actually taken aback by the sight of
the white haired boy’s huge shaft jutting out dramatically over the wiry dark nest of his pubic hair, reaching for the heavens as it curves up slightly towards his pelvis. Kaneki’s cock is heavy and thick, at least half as long as the bee hybrid’s forearm and about as big around as the omega’s wrist at its widest point. Still slick with the remnants of his first release, it glistens almost threateningly under the soft moonlight, standing at rigid attention as it pulses heavily in Hide’s hand. The bumblebee’s eyes are wide with rapt attention as he gives the other hybrid’s shaft a gentle squeeze, gaze roving over the thick, worm-like dorsal vein that runs the length of the appendage, throbbing fitfully as it pumps fresh blood up the length of the white-haired boy’s massively engorged cock.

It’s strangely beautiful in its obscenity, and Hide can’t help the little sigh of arousal that leaves him as he runs his fingers loosely up its shuddering length, pulling a ragged gasp from the alpha when he roughly flicks his thumb over the tip experimentally.

“A-ahh…!”

Hide’s eyes snap up to the white-haired boy’s face when he groans fitfully at the sudden harsh stimulation, to find Kaneki biting painfully into his lower lip up above, eyes clenched shut. “Ah, sorry,” he murmurs, ducking his head apologetically as he readjusts his grip, “I’ll be gentle, I promise.”

True to his word, the blond strokes the other boy a bit more gingerly this time, applying careful pressure as he works the alpha’s solid length in long, languid strokes, and is rewarded with Kaneki’s soft sighs as he gradually eases into the omega’s touch.

“…Better?”

Kaneki’s reply is a low hum of satisfaction as he tilts his head back a bit and presses his hips forward, until the head of his cock bumps insistently up against the delivery boy’s lips. Hide wastes little time before capitulating; he concentrates his strokes on the bottom half of the other boy’s rigid member, fondling the alpha’s heavy sac with his free hand while he leans forward until his mouth hovers over the tip of the swollen shaft, allowing his hot breath to ghost across the sensitive flesh and draw a tortured moan from the boy above him. The blond extends his tongue out over the bottom row of his teeth as he suckles at the head of the other boy’s cock a few times, reveling in the slightly bitter taste of the glossy pre-cum that bubbles up over the tip, before he finally comes down around the entire shaft, shuddering at the deep moan that ripples through the white-haired boy as he is properly engulfed in the omega’s warm mouth again. Hide swallows down a moan of his own as his own member strains against the confines of his jeans, while the muscles lining his inner chamber clench and un-clench uncontrollably, creating a growing pool of warmth in the pit of his abdomen.

He takes a moment to indulge in Kaneki’s labored breathing before he bobs his head experimentally a few times, applying slightly more pressure to the base of the other boy’s cock with his fist each time he comes up for air. He’s emboldened when the white-haired hybrid slides a hand around to the back of his head to curl insistently in the messy blond locks there, and soon he sets up a steady rhythm, sliding forward until the alpha’s wide, bulbous head kisses the back of his throat, then pulling back all the way to lap at the other boy’s slit and swirl his tongue around the head, occasionally bringing his fist up to pump at the tip while he catches his breath. Kaneki’s erection is leaking thick rivulets of salty, semi-opaque pre-cum now, and Hide shudders each time the alpha’s cock twitches in his mouth, sending a fresh stream of pre-ejaculate directly down the back of his throat – the other boy is close.

Hide has just pulled the alpha’s shaft all the way into his mouth, as far as it can go as he prepares to deep throat Kaneki in earnest and finally bring him to completion, when suddenly his expression contorts in surprise. The bumblebee’s eyes crack open as the other boy’s free hand moves to grip the
base of his own shaft, and without warning Kaneki rolls his hips forward, forcefully feeding the
remainder of his massive length down the omega’s throat while he tugs the blond forward with the
hand in his hair, until Hide is gagging at the sensation of the thick tip pushing past his palate and into
the deepest parts of his throat column.

“Mngh!?”

“Haa…ha-aaah…!” Kaneki’s pubic hairs tickle the bumblebee’s cheeks as Hide’s nose brushes up
against the alpha’s pelvis, and the white-haired boy releases a drawn out groan as his cock settles
heavily into the back of the omega’s throat. There is a moment of discomfort as the bee hybrid tries
to take in air through his nose while struggling not to choke around the other boy’s shaft, but he is
given little time to dwell on the untenable nature of the situation before the alpha is pulling back
again, making the slow slide back out of Hide’s throat until nearly half of his erection hangs free of
the omega’s mouth. Hide coughs and sputters a little bit as the other boy pulls out, sucking in as
much air as he can before Kaneki’s hips come surging forward again, opening the blond up wide as
he shoves his engorged cock back down into the bee hybrid’s throat as far as he can. The
bumblebee feels his head starting to grow a bit light with the effort of maintaining a steady supply of
oxygen through his nose, and just as he is beginning to think that maybe he’s bitten off more than he
can handle, he abruptly finds himself being guided down onto his hands and knees by a firm hand on
his shoulder.

Kaneki eases them both into a much more comfortable position, with Hide pressed low on his hands
and knees while the white haired hybrid kneels in front of him, so that the next time the alpha thrusts
into his mouth, his tip slides all the way back into the omega’s esophagus until he is fully seated,
thoroughly impaling the bee hybrid on the throbbing length of his cock. A glittering stream of drool
makes its way down the side of Hide’s mouth as Kaneki immediately begins to thrust shallowly into
his throat, and in a few moments the clearing is filled with the illicit sounds of flesh on flesh as the
alpha dips his tailbone and begins to fuck him in earnest.

Hide plants his palms firmly into the ground, trying his best to hold still as the other man pounds into
him with reckless abandon, throat muscles clenching up in delicious agony as the alpha finally lets go
of his inhibitions and uses him the way he wants to be used, fucking his throat like it’s a toy.
Kaneki’s testicles, still heavy with unspent seed, slam up against the blond’s chin, and Hide’s fingers
dig into the material of his jacket desperately as he imagines the way the alpha’s cum will taste - what
it will feel like when it finally bursts up against the back of his throat and the other boy empties the
contents of his gravid balls deep inside him.

The white-haired hybrid’s blunt black nails scrape against the back of his scalp as Kaneki tugs him
forward a bit more and begins to piston his hips against the omega’s mouth in short shallow thrusts
that send his cock-head skittering across the bee boy’s epiglottis again and again while the alpha
mercilessly chases his release. He emits a low groan at the added stimulation to his cock as he brings
a hand down to wrap around Hide’s throat – not tightly, but enough that the bumblebee can feel
every bump and vein along the alpha’s shaft as Kaneki massages the underside of his jugular lightly,
grunting softly into each thrust. He can feel it when the white-haired hybrid’s balls finally clench up,
pressing lightly into his chin just before the alpha’s thick shaft shudders and throbs with the force of
the molten heat that surges down its length, and a moment later Kaneki is moaning low and deep into
his climax, nose tilted up at the moon as he empties his load into the depths of the omega’s throat.

The bee hybrid trembles as the alpha presses his hips forward persistently, still thrusting intermittently
as he steadily floods the delivery boy’s esophagus with a heavy stream of hot, thick ejaculate, and in
the next moment Hide is finishing too; shuddering uncontrollably with the intense wave of ecstasy
and relief that rolls through him, his internal muscles clenching fitfully as he comes untouched.
Kaneki’s release carries on for some time, such that the bee hybrid eventually brings his hands up to
grasp tightly at his hips while the white-haired hybrid pours load after load of steaming hot seed down the back of his throat, pumping his stomach full of the alpha's heady white essence.

The white-haired boy is still ejaculating nearly twenty minutes later when Hide finally feels his jaw growing tired; his belly is half full of Kaneki's spending already with the alpha showing no signs of finishing up anytime soon. The delivery boy's eyebrows come together as he reluctantly pulls back until Kaneki's tip is held gently in the cavern of his mouth and brings a hand up to cover the base of the other hybrid's pulsing shaft, earning a lengthy moan from the other hybrid as he works the base with firm but gentle strokes, milking him of his seed. The white-haired man seems to catch on quickly, and in another moment his dominant hand comes down to cup Hide's jaw, alleviating some of the strain on it as Kaneki uses his other hand to roughly knead his own sac, massaging his testicles with increasing pressure in an attempt to coax the last few loads from them, clearly intent on filling Hide to the last drop with his cum.

"Ahh...F-fuck...Hide...!"

Their combined efforts seem to bring quick results and in another moment Hide is struggling to swallow down the thick, heady wave of searing hot cum that floods his throat as Kaneki shudders and curls into him again, shooting one last concentrated load up against the back of his throat with a lengthy, labored moan and filling the bee hybrid's mouth with the slightly bitter, salty after-taste of his powerful essence once more.

"N-Ngh...Mnn...!"

When the white-haired man finally pulls out, his cock comes away from the blond's mouth trailing a long string of opalescent white cum mixed with glistening saliva directly from its tip, and the bee hybrid can't help but whine a little bit at the loss of the alpha's presence inside him. Hide sits back heavily on his haunches, licking carefully at the shiny, slick trail of excess semen that dribbles down along the corner of his mouth, careful not to miss a drop while he watches Kaneki swipe himself dry and tuck his spent, softening member back into his slacks with a bit of a dazed expression. The delivery boy is somewhat startled when a few beats later he suddenly feels a gentle hand comb through the hair at the back of his head, stroking lightly at the spot where the alpha had been digging his nails into the bee hybrid's scalp in the midst of violently fucking his throat.

"...Feeling any better?" the white-haired boy asks quietly, tilting his head down and to the side a bit to carefully peer into Hide's eyes as he kneels alongside the bumblebee, all while rubbing tender circles into his nape, the sides of his neck, the underside of his head. Kaneki seems relieved when the blond-haired hybrid gives a soft sigh at the gentle stimulation and nods silently in the affirmative, releasing a pent-up sigh of his own.

"Sorry," the bumblebee's voice is a husky murmur as he leans slightly into the other man's touch, eyes already growing heavy in the wake of their heated tryst. His skin is still hot and tingly and he can feel a sort of muzzy light-headedness coming on now as he awkwardly apologizes to the other boy for initiating something like what they just did so abruptly and without discussing it with him first, "Didn't mean to...use you...like that, I just..."

Kaneki gives a small laugh and shakes his head. "I wasn't exactly kicking and screaming," he counters suggestively, lips tilting up at the corners slightly in a way that makes Hide's stomach muscles clench up again despite the exhaustion that numbs his limbs, robbing him of his strength and leaving him uncharacteristically docile.

"It's not your fault you know," the white-haired hybrid says gently after a short pause, hesitantly bringing his hand back down to brush an errant strand of hair behind the bee hybrid's ear, "That's the type of place this is - a place of death and depravity...of sin. That's why I wanted to get you out of
here as soon as possible. This is no place for someone like you, Hide."

"Someone like me?...Haha...Right...I guess that's what I thought too when I first got here," he laughs bitterly, rubbing rough circles into his tired eyelids with the butts of his palms as he struggles to stay awake, "Now I'm not so sure anymore."

"I don't care what it is you think you're responsible for...you don't deserve any of this, Hide." The white-haired boy's voice is a distant low thrum in his ears as Hide finds himself struggling to keep his eyes open, and he's just so warm - it's like he's being enveloped in his own personal heated blanket.

"...Hide?"

He means to tell Kaneki that he's alright - that he's just tired and needs a moment to regroup, maybe even a few short minutes of shut-eye before they head out for The Cheshire Cat's Tree and make their attempt at escape; but when Hide opens his mouth, this time all that comes out is a string of garbled consonants and vowels.

The next thing he knows, the bumblebee hybrid is tumbling limply forward into his white-haired counterpart's lap as his eyes roll up into his head.

//Less than an hour after leaving work, the young bumblebee finds himself creeping around the rear of the Saiki Building searching for some method of ingress. According to what little useful information he's managed to glean from the company website, this location is a massive medical research facility, where they're doing work on gene therapy and other related treatments. A bitter scowl overtakes the blond's features at the very thought of what kind of depraved experimentation is probably going on at this very moment, hastening his footsteps as he circles around to the facility's rear. The front of the building is fairly busy, its doors constantly opening and closing as its workers exit the building one after another in a steady stream, eager to start the weekend – which means that the back of the building, where Hide is headed, is relatively quiet.

He has just turned a dark corner, looking for something that he can use to get over the forbidding barbed-wire fence that surrounds the entire back portion of the structure, when something comes careening around the very same corner from the opposite direction, smacking into him so hard he is knocked back onto his ass with the force of the collision.

"Woah! Wha-" Hide's words catch in his throat as he glances up to see what caused the accident and finds himself staring right up into an unsettling pair of mismatched eyes. The bumblebee's eyes go wide as he sweeps his eyes over the source of his fall, mouth slightly agape. In front of him stands a young woman with short dark hair, covered in nothing but a simple, white hospital gown. Barefooted and wild-eyed she stares at Hide in shock for a moment, and he stares back, mesmerized by her bizarre appearance. The woman's left eye, bloodshot though it is, is a beautiful sky blue color dotted with flecks of purple, while her right eye is an unsettlingly bright red, blossoming vibrantly on the backdrop of an inky black sclera – a neo-hybrid.

"H-Hey...are you okay?" the blond queries as soon as he has gathered back his scattered wits
enough to speak, slowly rising to his feet, “Sorry to stare, it’s just…you’re a neo-hybrid…right?”

“Look, I can’t really explain right now, but I’m any ally,” he tries again when the young woman merely cocks her head at him slightly as he questions her, as though his words do not compute, “Um, I think we need to get you out of here before someone sees you. Don’t worry! I think I have a friend who can help.”

Hide has just pulled out his cell phone, ready to send off a message, when suddenly he hears the soft, clicking, crackling noises that usually accompany someone bringing out their hybrid parts. Eyes wide, the bee hybrid slowly looks up from his phone just in time to see a pair of hunger-crazed, mismatched eyes and a gaping-wide hybrid insect maw, full of sharp fangs, coming straight toward him. Hide doesn’t even have time to brace himself for the attack; one moment he’s typing on his phone and the next he’s watching a series of scenes from his life flash before his eyes, all the best parts of his childhood flooding back to him in a single moment like old home movies on automatic playback.

The rich, cloying scent of honey, butter and lemon from his mother’s famous tarts, tickling his nose as he stirs from a nice long nap on the couch on a warm Summer’s evening.

His father’s slippers whispering against smooth, hard flooring as he shuffles across the room and presses a soft kiss into the side of his head, followed by the soft creak of him closing the door when he slips out.

The soft thrum of his antennae as four distinct, high-pitched voices rise and fall in peals of laughter, while pillows and feathers fly across the room.

Soft, pale fingers curling tenderly around his, warming his hands against the brisk chill of an early Autumn morning on the way to school.

A gentle gust of breath fanning across his cheeks when he turns his head too soon and suddenly finds himself a hair’s breadth away from a pair of wide, dove colored eyes.

Silky, coal-dark hair tickling against the side of his neck as a soft, sleepy sigh ghosts across the back of his ear –

There is a flash of silver, and suddenly Hide is watching the girl before him fall to pieces, torn limb from limb in a hail of blood-spray.

The blond-haired boy stares on in shock as his would-be attacker crumples to the ground in a pile of limbs, oddly mismatched eyes eternally frozen in an expression of ravenous madness.

“You’re trespassing,” a low male voice, stripped of emotion sounds from up ahead, and instantly Hide knows that despite having held onto his life somehow, he is still irreparably fucked.

“I-I’m sorry… I got lost looking for a vending machine and I… I just kind of wandered in here. I didn’t see anything, I swear,” the bee hybrid struggles to maintain his calm, just barely managing to keep his voice steady as his mind races. Desperately pleading his case, the bee hybrid pointedly averts his eyes from the killer’s face, trying his best to minimize reasons that the man up ahead might have to do away with him. He finds himself looking instead at the bottom edge of a pristine white coat and the business end of a slim, bladed weapon, at least as long as Hide is tall, held loosely in his savior’s hand and gleaming silver and crimson under the soft moonlight.
“You seem very nervous for someone who didn’t see anything,” comes the flat reply.

“Look, I’m not going to tell anyone anything if that’s what you think. Just please…can you let me go?” Hide entreats, raising his hands up in a pacifying gesture as he searches desperately for an argument that might convince the man to let him live, “I’m just a stupid kid who chases after urban legends and is always running his mouth about conspiracy theories – no one would ever believe anything I say anyway.”

“I thought you said you didn’t see anything. What would you have to say?” the man counters.

“N-nothing! I mean, I do run my mouth about some things, but definitely not this, I-I---!” Hide’s face scrunches up in confusion at the continuing questions as he wracks his brain trying to figure out what to say next. Should he try to keep the man talking? Cry for help? Try to make a run for it?

“…Have you ever taken a life?”

Hide flinches at that, blindsided by the seemingly random question.

“Wha-? N-No! I would never-!” the young bumblebee can feel his breath growing shallow and quick as he struggles to keep up with the man’s odd questions, panic rising by the moment.

“Not even indirectly? How about in self-defense?”

“No, never! Just…please just let me go…I’m begging you. Nobody will ever know what happened here, I swear to you.”

The man in white pauses for a moment then, as though contemplating something.

“No,” he agrees, “They won’t.”

And then Hide watches as the man before him lifts his impossibly long blade again – this time so that it is level with the bumblebee’s chest. The young delivery boy shudders as an unpleasant thrill of anticipation runs down his spine, remembering the effortless way that the weapon just carved into the young woman at his feet. There had been a certain kind of beauty about the way the cold steel had glided through the other hybrid’s pliant flesh – an artistry to it even; his would-be killer’s limbs had fallen to the ground at her sides before she could even register that she had been cut. One moment she had been flying towards Hide, ready to end his life, and the next she was in pieces, looking for all the world like some kind of morbid modern art installation as her body fell apart cleanly, a macabre jigsaw puzzle of limbs.

As the blade cuts its graceful line through the chilly night air, Hide wonders if he too will paint such a pretty picture. Instinctively, his eyes close in anticipation of the pain, but to his credit he doesn’t scream. There is a quiet ‘whoosh’ as the air before him parts in the blade’s wake, and then a searing pain that seems to rend his entire upper body in two. The world lurches beneath him then, and when next the bumblebee opens his eyes, everything is side-ways and his abdomen is burning with agony.
The bumblebee blinks tears and sweat from his line of vision profusely, struggling to make sense of what is going on even as his mind begins to grow foggy with the pain. He can hear the sound of hard-heeled shoes clicking against the pavement as the man approaches him, and then there is a faint flicker of sensation somewhere around Hide’s left hip pocket as, a moment later, his assailant crouches down into his field of view. The man’s solid alabaster features betray little emotion as hethumbs through Hide’s wallet, reading off his personal information from his ID cards in monotone.

“Nagachika Hideyoshi…male, honeybee, 20 years of age… hair color: blonde, eye color: light-brown, blood type: O-positive, registered organ donor…undergraduate - Kami University, Department of International Studies… student identification number 15-421-1097…” Hide shudders in an agonizing breath as he is abruptly turned over onto his back and -(How is he even still alive at this point, anyway?) -the man in question adjusts his glasses absently before he peers down into the prone boy’s face. The bee hybrid lies there, helpless while the man in the white coat rifles carefully through his receipts, membership cards, pictures of his family, and then…

“Hn,” as he comes to one particular item in Hide’s wallet, something that sounds suspiciously like a laugh – if indeed the man before him is even capable of such an expression – breaks free of his lips unexpectedly; and all of a sudden the bespectacled murderer is looking down into Hide’s face with a strange glint in his eye.

“Healthy…young…free of the stench of death…and-“ the man gives the bumblebee a cursory sniff, pausing completely for a moment before he continues, “……a very fertile omega.”

Oh god, no wonder he isn’t dead already – murderous psychopath number two hasn’t finished with him yet. From the looks of it the man in white has plans for Hideyoshi. Hide contemplates rallying what little strength he can still muster and ending it himself before he can become the maniac’s plaything, but as it is he can barely keep his eyes open. His entire upper body is wet with blood now, pouring profusely from the perforation in his side, and he is growing colder by the moment. He isn’t sure, but it feels like he’s quickly losing sensation in his extremities too as his body pools its flagging resources– all sure signs that he is bleeding out rapidly. How much blood can he feasibly lose before he goes into shock and dies anyway? A litre? Two litres? He doubts he’ll survive much longer either way – not without serious medical intervention of some sort.

Hide’s eyes flutter as the world suddenly tilts on its axis again and the man shifts him carefully, bringing him to an awkward half-sitting position. His assailant has an arm underneath his back now and is lifting his upper body slightly so that the bumblebee is forced to look into his cold silver eyes. He is surprised to notice that the man who has attacked him is strangely beautiful - a pale angel of Death; somehow, impossibly, Hide finds himself slipping into an odd sort of comfort in the man’s arms, his thoughts drifting inexplicably to his sparse memories from his early childhood as a vaguely familiar scent – white jasmine, freesia, and the faintest hint of hawthorn – tickles his nose, and the bee hybrid muses that at least he can take some tiny, absurd sense of pride in the fact that an actual angel has seen fit to come down and take his life. An inane chuckle bubbles up in the blond’s chest at the thought. He imagines briefly that he is one of a very select few people who get to spend their last moments pondering what nice features their murderer has.

“Unnh…a-auggghh!” Hide groans incoherently as he is shifted so that he’s being held in just one of the man’s arms. He might be on his way out, but there is still pain – a lot of it. There’s a small pop like the sound of a cap being opened, and suddenly the bumblebee is staring down the mouth of a suspicious looking vial. Hide’s vision swims as he vaguely contemplates the clear, lilac tinted substance that fills the receptacle being held over him. Its distinct color shimmers slightly in the darkness with an unnatural light, casting an eerie glow across the bee hybrid’s paling cheeks. And then, abruptly, Hide feels a twinge of cold against his lips as the man upends the vial’s contents
directly into his mouth.

The boy sputters and gags as his throat is engulfed in the viscous foreign substance. It’s bitter and sour and sweet all at once, clinging to the insides of his mouth like the nectar of some strange fruit – thick and runny and potent smelling as it burns its way through his system like liquid fire. Tears crowd the corners of the bumblebee’s eyes as he struggles to swallow it all down so that he can breathe again and Hide wishes desperately for this to just be over with already. But despite his fading consciousness, the bee hybrid is quickly realizing that there is little chance of that happening any time soon. Even critically wounded and on the verge of death, Hide’s sharp analytical mind is constantly working, putting together clues – and right now all signs point to the fact that this man, whoever he is, is far from finished with him.

As if to further prove that point, the man in question gives the vial a final cursory glance, clearly confirming that all of its contents have been downed, before effortlessly lifting Hide up and slinging him over one shoulder. Several agonizing minutes later, Hide finds himself being loaded into the back of a large truck, where he is vaguely horrified to find that he is not alone – the trailer of the vehicle is piled high already with motionless hybrid bodies.

As the door to the truck closes, the bumblebee catches a glimpse of porcelain lips moving softly, the angel’s low voice just barely audible over the hum of the truck’s engine as it starts up.

“Give my regards to the One-Eyed King.”

Chapter End Notes

(To continue this story-line, head to Chapter 6: City of Flickering Destruction)

First off, let me say that I was soooo excited to finally get to write BAMF Kimi in this chap, and I am genuinely sorry that she doesn't get more screen time in this fic. (>_<;;)

Other than that, nothing to see here folks - just me being a low-key-high-key pervert, aaaaas usual... (T /layouts /)

Originally the only adult-ish thing in this chapter was the scent-marking scene, but then I was like "fuck it, why not?" and threw in a surprise blow-job at the end just for kicks...which is partially why this chapter took so damn long (I get kind of self-conscious about my porn sometimes...lots of editing and angst ensues, ugh). I also kinda felt after re-reading this chapter a couple thousand times that since Hide is sorta starting to go off the rails by this chapter, he probably wouldn't be able to stop at just letting Kaneki jizz all over his neck like that...something had to happen. And that something is a ridiculous, gratuitously explicit porn scene FOR YOU!

What can I say? I was in a mood.  pageNum
Chapter Summary

The room is permeated by soft, clicking, slithering sounds and it’s only then that Hide realizes that what he just bumped into was the other boy’s enormous tail. Having pressed its massive length along the perimeter of the nest’s walls so that it’s away and out of sight, it fills the room with a soothing, low cacophony of susurrations and tiny clicks as it coils and drags gently along the surface of the wood behind him.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! I hope you didn’t think I had abandoned this fic, because I have no intention of doing that. I do apologize profusely for the long and unannounced hiatus though! I’ve had a lot of personal stuff going on, plus some computer trouble, but I should be able to start updating more regularly again and continue to bring you semi-quality fic (Cuz I’m out for Summer break now, woooo!).

By the way, thank you so much to everyone who read and bothered dropping kudos, comments, etc! I’m sooooo overwhelmed and humbled by how much love and support this fic has gotten so far! Before I started posting this fic I honestly had no idea if this fandom was really still alive or not, but you have all proven to me that it is still going strong, and that just makes me so so happy you guys. Thank you!!! I’m working on a gift for everyone who has been reading this fic and given it love, to be revealed along with chapter 7 (my favorite chapter, hehe) so please do look forward to that.

Oh yeah! I also recently started a blog here, which I have been updating pretty frequently. Since I don’t really have a good way to communicate with readers here at AO3 in between chapters, if you’re ever wondering if a new chapter is on the way soon or not that’s the best place to check, as I will try to announce upcoming stuff and do work progress updates there. You can also lookit my artwork, fic ideas and writing excerpts/previews or ask me questions about my work over there too!

Please be aware that this chapter is a real beast. It's obscenely long compared to previous chapters at almost 22000 words. I know it’s a lot to read through in one sitting for some people, but I couldn’t stand to break it down into smaller chapters, because then I’d have had to push back other parts of the story and I reeeeaally don’t wanna do that. The upside is that there's lots of Kanehide goodness packed into this one. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Five: Missing Truth

The blond-haired man scowls thoughtfully at the glittering object as he twists it between his fingers, considering the possibilities. He wants very much to believe that finding whatever it is that his key
opens will lead to some kind of useful discovery, but his gut is telling him that this is quite possibly some kind of a trap. Considering the sadistic nature of the game’s directors, it may very well just be a red-herring — a way to bend Hide to their will for the purposes of the game. After all, both the Villagers and the Wolves were made explicitly aware of the fact that capturing the Lamb would grant them a special boon; if the moderators intended for Hide to have some similar option, wouldn’t they have mentioned it in the rules?

There is also the fact that he’s probably been forcibly entered into this horrible game — though a lot of his memories are still confoundingly inaccessible, preventing him from recalling a lot of important information including how and why he ended up in the park, Hide feels like there’s a strong chance that he’s been abducted. And if that is indeed the case, it seems logical that if anyone would go to all the trouble to kidnap him and throw him in here, they would do so for a reason, meaning they'd be disinclined to help him out. Not to mention that if what he has been hearing so far is true and he is the only omega in the park, the game’s proprietors absolutely have plans for him — and whatever those plans might be, he definitely is not keen on helping move them along any faster if he can help it.

With his mind finally made up, Hide instead chooses to set his sights on an area that lies beyond The White Rabbit’s House toward the outer edge of the park, which appears somewhat suspiciously empty. From what he can see from his high vantage point, the park is dotted here and there with a few large attractions such as The Red Queen’s Castle and The White Rabbit’s House, which are brightly lit, forming little beacons of festivity between the overgrown vegetation that is steadily retaking the park. However, upon further inspection it becomes apparent that one particular area is rather suspiciously dark. It’s not much of a clue for him to go on, but Kaneki did mention that there is a hole in the park’s security that he might be able to use to his advantage, and this might be it. Thus Hide decides to bank on the hunch that heading there will lead him to the other boy.

The bumblebee makes his way down from the elevated platform as swiftly as he can, head swiveling about as he tries to reorient himself. The quickest path to his destination seems to be to cut through The Red Castle, which lies not too far away, adjacent to the tea party. Hide makes his way as swiftly as he can in that direction, determined to reach his destination while the lights are still on. It’s been a while since the last darkness period, and he’s fairly certain that the game’s operators are stretching the suspense out of pure maliciousness towards the game’s participants — the lights could go off again at any moment now. That’s why the bumblebee hybrid is relieved when, after ten or so minutes of walking, he finally finds himself coming up on a large, unkempt croquet course, nearly completely overgrown with wild plants, which marks the entrance to The Red Queen’s Castle.

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The bumblebee hybrid is just cutting his way through the abandoned playing field when a flicker of movement off to his right peripheral catches his eye. Nerves on high-alert, the bee hybrid immediately turns his attention to the gates leading into the castle keep and is greeted with a highly unwelcome sight. It’s the two hybrids who were chasing him earlier — the ones Hide had lost in the topiary maze — and they are not alone this time. Before them stands another hybrid — a woman with short red hair, whose petite frame is currently tucked into a low, defensive stance as she faces the two Villagers. The bumblebee hybrid’s eyes narrow as they dart between the two men and the young woman. It does not appear to be a friendly engagement. Even from where he stands, which is a good ten yards away, Hide can tell that whatever is going on, this encounter is probably not going to end well for the girl — she’s outnumbered with few options for escape, and the two men look like they are already visibly agitated, most likely from having lost track of Hide earlier.

The delivery boy bites his lip for a moment as he watches the scene unfold— he’s considering doing something really, really stupid.

One of the men makes a move toward the girl, and before he realizes it Hide’s mouth is snapping
“Hey, assholes!” he bellows, infusing his voice with as much cockiness and disdain as he can muster, “What are you doing bothering her when the Lamb’s right here?”

The two men’s heads immediately snap in the blond’s direction to regard the source of the noise with blatant surprise, two sets of eyes widening slightly when they recognize their quarry from earlier. The girl is looking at him now too, mouth slightly agape as she cocks her head to the side in what is probably confusion. She looks between the two men and Hide questioningly, but the Villagers are paying her no mind now, eyes narrowing on the bee hybrid as their attention is drawn by something much more interesting.

“This is what you’re all after, isn’t it? The key?” the boy shouts, holding his key high until he’s confident that they have all seen it, “Why don’t you come and get it?”

No sooner has the bumblebee’s challenge rung out across the croquet yard than the two men are turning and coming after him at full tilt, the young woman completely forgotten with the promise of a greater prize. Hide wastes no time gawking over the situation either — the moment he has confirmed that the two men’s attention is centered fully on himself, the blond takes flight, turning on his heel to head in the general direction of The Mad Hatter’s Tea Party. He’s just made it back to the tree-line when the sound of heavy electrical static sounds overhead and the park speakers blare to life again, loudly trumpeting the Ishikiri Dreamland theme song.

‘Oh, you have got to be fucking kidding me. Now? Seriously!?’

Unbidden, flashes of his last experience during lights-out come flooding back to the young bee hybrid, and Hide finds himself suddenly wishing for Kaneki as he instinctively thinks back to the feeling of warm arms resting about his sides and a gentle voice murmuring encouragement into his ears from behind in an attempt to stave off an oncoming sense of lightheadedness.

He has just changed direction, turning off the main walk and onto a smaller pathway in hopes of making it as difficult as possible for his pursuers to follow him, when he suddenly skids to a stop mid-stride. There, in the middle of the pathway stands a dark-robed figure — another hybrid.

Unbidden, flashes of his last experience during lights-out come flooding back to the young bee hybrid, and Hide finds himself suddenly wishing for Kaneki as he instinctively thinks back to the feeling of warm arms resting about his sides and a gentle voice murmuring encouragement into his ears from behind in an attempt to stave off an oncoming sense of lightheadedness.

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Taken off guard by the abrupt encounter Hide stands stock still in the middle of the path, eyes wide as the other hybrid, apparently having noticed the bumblebee’s presence, slowly turns to face him. The hybrid in question is tall, at least a good ten centimeters taller than Hide himself, with a lanky build and thick, tousled hazelnut hair, but it is one particular aspect of his appearance that causes the blond to stop in his tracks. Behind the wireframe glasses that sit perched on the man’s nose, a pair of bright red irises glow eerily under the moonlight, pinning the delivery boy in place under their gaze.

The Wolf, who can’t be much older than Hide himself, gives the air a cursory sniff before leveling the bee hybrid with a suspicious look, eyebrows quirking slightly as his eyes light for a moment with a hint of recognition. The bumblebee merely looks back in confusion at him — he’s never seen the other hybrid in his life, but the man seems to recognize him somehow all the same. As a result, the two of them end up staring at one another in awkward silence for a moment before the park music finally comes to an end and with a shudder of electrical energy the lights are out again.

“Tch,” the Wolf sucks his teeth in annoyance, and the bee hybrid feels his breath catch in his throat as the telltale noises of hybrid appendages ripping their way out from under the Wolf’s skin reach his ears. A moment later Hide’s eyes go wide as an enormous pair of wicked forelegs stretch out from the other hybrid’s sides and a gust of wind picks up from the huge pair of elongated wings that buzz to life atop a slender, elongated hybrid thorax — a preying mantis hybrid.
Hide’s eyes widen as the brown-haired boy raises his massive, scythe-like forelegs menacingly, but before he can even flinch the other hybrid is flying at him, hybrid limbs outstretched. Hide steels himself for what is coming, eyes snapping shut instinctively as he prepares for the end.

But it doesn’t come.

Instead he is startled by the sound of a blood-curdling screech going up behind him a moment later. The bumblebee hybrid’s head instantly swivels around to regard the source of the nose, eyes snapping open when he is confronted with a scene of horror.

The two Villagers, apparently having caught up to Hide at some point, both stand not twenty paces behind the blond; however, no sooner have they found their quarry than the tables have turned — the Wolf has already set into one of the two men, as evidenced by the high-pitched scream that the Villager is emitting as he falls back a few paces, clutching frantically at the gushing stump of his severed forearm. Hide watches in wide-eyed terror as the praying mantis viciously rips into the second Villager next, eviscerating him instantaneously as he brings both of his serrated, scythe-like hybrid forelegs across the Villager’s midsection in scissor-like motion that sends the man’s insides spilling out over the cobblestones like so many reams of fresh chanja, a slick cascade of reds and pinks. The Wolf moves so fast that the second man is barely able to register that he has been attacked, mouth opening and closing aimlessly a few times in a series of partially formed vowels while he brings up trembling forearms to meaninglessly try and hold in his guts. It’s to no avail — they splash out over his hands and onto the ground at his feet in a morbidly fascinating spectacle. Hide physically flinches when the man crumples to the ground in a twitching heap just a moment later, already too emotionally invested to move or shut his eyes against the brutal scene.

“Pipe the fuck down, will you?” the Wolf admonishes with another irritated suck of his teeth, just before he casually brings a sharp foreleg across the shoulders of the first hybrid, effectively silencing the screaming man when he is neatly decapitated. “Fucking loud-mouthed meat-bags,” the young man mutters distastefully before turning his attention back to the bee hybrid, “Don’t you people have any idea what time of night it is?”

Hide instinctively backpedals a few paces as the other hybrid slowly advances on him, valiantly holding back a wave of nausea with a hand over his mouth as his eyes dart from the Wolf to the bodies of the two dead Villagers and back again. The bee hybrid desperately wills his leaden feet into action — to turn around and run — but it's not use; he barely manages another couple steps backwards before he stumbles harshly. With fumbling fingers, the blond finally manages to reach for his knife, but before he can even think of brandishing the weapon the Wolf is right in front of him, face darkening in a scowl of annoyance as he loudly sucks his teeth again.

Hide’s eyes quirk in confusion as the brown-haired hybrid seems to hesitate for a moment, but a second later the delivery boy is letting out a loud, pained expulsion of air as the Wolf rears back one long leg and slams his shin into his midsection, knocking the breath out of the bumblebee as he is sent hurtling across the pathway. The bee hybrid gives a loud groan when he collides solidly with the trunk of a particularly large tree that is positioned off to the side of the path, insides alight with abject misery. A moment later, as he slides to the ground, a dull throbbing pain picks up in the back of his skull where his head just connected forcefully with the unforgiving bark.

Hide watches through swiftly dimming eyesight as the bespectacled Wolf saunters over to peer down at him, face creasing with an even deeper frown as he realizes that the bee is still conscious. He cringes instinctively despite his swiftly fading awareness as the young Wolf raises his right foot high above his helpless victim’s chest. The bumblebee’s face contorts as he braces himself for the imminent blow, but they are both surprised when something off to the left gives the Wolf pause.
“-shiki…un!!...Nishiki-kun, wait!!”

An unfamiliar new voice, this one female, rings out sharply from somewhere down the pathway, ripping the chestnut-haired hybrid’s attention from his prey, and the bumblebee can just make out the dumbstruck expression that crosses the Wolf’s face as his head snaps up to regard the source of the noise. Through rapidly blurring vision, Hide can just make out a petite hybrid figure sprinting toward where he lies prone on the ground.

And then the bee hybrid’s eyes are rolling up into his head as he finally loses his grip on consciousness and the world unceremoniously fades to black.

//”Wow, Nagachika, I never took you for the cradle-robbing type.”

Hide nearly jumps out of his skin as a low, feminine voice suddenly sounds in his ear, startling him from his reverie. A petite young woman wearing a high-school uniform stands behind him, peering over his shoulder to look at the object currently held in the bumblebee’s hands.

“It’s not like that!” Hide exclaims as he clutches the photo to his chest defensively, directing his gaze up to half-heartedly scowl at the other hybrid.

“Are you sure?” the girl questions dubiously as she slides into the booth across from him, “Because the look on your face when you were staring at that picture just now wasn’t exactly what I’d call platonic.”

The blond boy can’t help the splash of red that blossoms across his nose at that, but he shakes his head in denial as he tries to explain.

“Touka…you remember how I told you that I’ve been looking for somebody? My friend, who went missing back when we were little?”

The other hybrid’s eyebrows lift at that, as she gives a slow nod. “Yeah, the one who was in the accident, right?” she replies, the usual twinge of sardonic humor noticeably gone from her voice.

“This…” Hide says, holding up the photo so that she can see more clearly, “Is him. We were best friends before he disappeared, but it’s like I’m the only one who remembers him. Even my mom and dad keep telling me that I’m just confused - that it was all in my head and I’m just confusing an imaginary friend from my childhood for someone real…but I finally managed to find an actual photo of him.”

“Ahh, so this is the boy you’ve been chasing after all this time huh? The reason for the weirdo conspiracy obsession and all the snooping around and shit?” the dark-haired girl comments as she eyes the photo appraisingly, “Cute…I can see why you still have such a hard-on for him after all this time.”

“I do not have a-!”

Hide balks and lowers his voice when he realizes that the family sitting in the next booth over is staring at them over their burgers.

“Look, this photo was really hard to get ahold of — he was always super reclusive when we were in school and almost never participated in any school events - but I finally managed to track down an old article from our school newspaper with a photo from a school play that we were in together. I was able to get a copy made and have it blown up into a full-sized print,” the blond explains, gazing
down at the picture with a triumphant little smile, “This photo is basically the only concrete thing I have of him…to remind me that he’s real.”

“Wow. That’s actually really sweet…in a creepy stalker kind of way,” his friend comments half seriously, “So…? Has this missing boyfriend of yours got a name?”

Hide shoots the moth a dour look at her choice of words, but still can’t bring himself to make any protests to the contrary.

“Honestly?” the bee hybrid answers hesitantly, “I…can’t really remember.”

The lackluster reply earns him a skeptical look from the girl across from him but Hide plows ahead with his explanation anyway. “The truth is my memories from that time are still all kind of mixed up. I actually saw a specialist about it once to see if I could maybe get some of my memories back, but the doctor I saw wasn’t able to help me. She said that often when a person experiences something too physically or emotionally traumatic to process, their mind will try to seal away the memory to protect itself. Apparently, it’s really common with childhood trauma. She suggested that I may be subconsciously suppressing a lot of stuff from my childhood that’s just too painful to remember.”

“…And you believe her?”

“I’m not really sure…it might explain why I have so many gaping holes in my memories from my early childhood though. Since I started digging into my past, I’ve managed to recall a few things, but the truth is I still can’t really remember much of anything from before I was about ten years old, and the stuff I do remember is really vague and disjointed.”

“But if that’s the case then how can you be sure that things really happened the way you think they did with you friend’s disappearance? That your brain isn’t just piecing together some of those random, fragmented memories into some event that never actually happened?” Touka questions with a quirked eyebrow, “People create false memories and fill in details that weren’t actually there all the time, you know.”

“Not you too, Touka,” Hide frowns, shaking his head in exasperation, “Are you gonna tell me it’s all just my imagination now too? That I’m just making it all up?”

“That’s not what I’m saying, stupid,” the other hybrid grumbles, immediately reaching over to give her friend a hard swat across the side of the head, “What I’m saying is it’s hard to believe that a kid could just disappear from the hospital like that without anybody ever looking into it — no missing posters, no police report…nothing? Are you sure he actually went missing? Being separated from a good friend for any reason when you’re little can be pretty traumatic…Isn’t it possible that you were friends with this boy, but for some reason he had to move away or something and the shock from it fucked with your memory of what happened?”

The bumblebee shakes his head from side to side in refutation, eyebrows furrowed in a troubled expression. “You don’t understand,” he insists, “I remember so much about him, Touka. His voice, his eyes, his gestures…what he smelled like even…Everything except his name.”

“That accident definitely happened, and I know that there’s no way he would have left without telling me how to reach him,” Hide insists adamantly, tucking the picture back into his wallet for safe keeping, “The way he disappeared was just way too suspicious. Plus, it’s like nobody from my old school even remembers the boy in this picture — no name, no personal info…no school records at all. I’ve hacked every hospital in the vicinity of where he was injured, but not one of them has any record of a boy coming in with injuries that match the ones he sustained from around the time of the accident.”
“Maybe everyone’s right and I’m just freaking out over nothing… but I know how I’d feel if I went missing and nobody came looking or even remembered me, Touka,” the bumblebee says, eyes narrowing in a slightly forlorn expression as he stares down at his hands, “I think that’d have to be about the loneliest feeling in the world.”

“Ugh, enough with the sap already…I get it. No skin off my nose if you go digging where you don’t belong again and up finding out some shit you didn’t bargain for. Just so you know, any sane person would’ve called it quits as soon as they got to the part about cannibalistic super-hybrids who live underground,” Touka relents with a huff of nonchalance and a mild eye-roll, flipping open her menu, “So, what’ll it be? ‘The Usual’?”

“For your information I happen to find cannibalistic super-hybrids make for some of the best dinner guests — no cooking necessary,” Hide retorts cheesily, thumbing open his own menu, “Mm… actually I was thinking maybe I want to try the new avocado cheese burger that they added for the summer, but I had kind of a late lunch today. Mind ordering one without the combo?” he asks, lifting his eyebrows as he shoots a questioning gaze across the table.

“God…maybe you really are one of us,” she replies with a snort before her mouth dips into a concerned frown, “And won’t it look kind of weird if I don’t at least have something to drink with it?”

“Ah, yeah I guess you’re right…uhhm…maybe just get it without the combo and then order a small water with it? Just act like you’re on a diet or something.”

“I’m pretty sure people on ‘diets’ don’t go to burger joints,” the purple-haired girl grumbles as she folds her menu back up agitatedly and holds out her hand for Hide’s so that she can put them both away.

“They do when they’re on a ‘date’ with their oh-so-handsome omega who loooves burgers!” he grins back cheekily, reaching over to press the call button.

As retribution for his sickening cheerfulness, the moth hybrid makes a point of glaring unamusedly across the table at him in silence until their waitress finally arrives to take their orders.

“…—headed meat-sack— …….—lways getting in the way——…….—any idea how much danger you put yourself—……. —could have been fucking killed!”

Hide winces as a vaguely familiar masculine voice invades his ears with its sharp tone, hastening his return to the waking world. The moment he regains consciousness, it’s like a large portion of the fog holding back his memories has cleared up, as a plethora of images, sounds and feelings come rushing back to him.

For a while Hide simply lies there with his eyes still closed, struggling to get his bearings as he listens half-attentively to the heated exchange of words that is going on not too far off to his right.

“You think I care? There’s no way I could let you just go off and try to handle everything on your own again…not after what we’ve been through together!” counters a feminine tone, this one slightly less recognizable. Judging from the way their voice cracks audibly at the end, Hide can tell that
whoever it is must be holding back tears.

“Anyway, it’s…it’s not just that,” the second speaker admits hesitantly, taking a steady breath before letting all of her feelings out in a rush of emotion, tears audibly in her voice, “Don’t you get it? I…I can’t do this without you, Nishiki.”

The bee hybrid can hear the tension suddenly break as the male hybrid suddenly sucks in a frustrated breath before hurriedly walking back his previous statements.

“Shit…Shit, shit, shit, ok, ok. Don’t cry,” he pleads desperately, “Look…I’m sorry, alright? I was…scared…and I didn’t know what to do. I got frustrated and said a bunch of shit I didn’t mean -- you know how I am. But I didn’t really mean any of that stuff…alright? You could never ruin anything for me, Kimi. I mean, fuck…you’re probably the best thing to ever—”

There’s an abrupt, awkward pause as the male hybrid chokes on his words mid-sentence and proceeds to make a series of awkward, unintelligible noises while he suddenly struggles to find his words.

“Hold on a second…can’t do what without me exactly?” the young man sputters, tone audibly flustered as he demands clarification for his female counterpart’s previous statement, “K-Kimi…are you telling me you’re…?”

“Wait…what?” comes her confused answer. There is a poignant moment of silence from both of them, followed by a gasp of surprise from the second speaker.

“No, of course not!” she exclaims in abject mortification, finally catching on to the implication in his words, “What the hell Nishiki!? I’m trying say that I can’t live without you -- I’m not pregnant, you asshole! Do you really think I’d put our baby in danger like that? Over you? Are you nuts!?”

“Fuck! Fuuuuuck! I don’t know, okay? You just sounded all serious and hormonal and shit all of a sudden!” comes the defensive reply, “Don’t scare me like that, Kimi! I almost had a goddamned heart-attack just now!”

“Well it wouldn’t be a concern in the first place if you’d learn to bag it up once in a—“ the female hybrid pauses in the middle of her scathing retort as she finally notices the bee hybrid’s eyelids beginning to flutter open, “N-Nishiki-kun, look! He’s waking up! Oh, thank goodness…I thought you’d killed him you jerk.”

“That’s funny…So did I,” her less enthusiastic counterpart comments, earning himself a sharp elbow to the ribs for the sarcastic remark. He storms off with an irritated grumble just as Hide finally manages to open his eyes all the way.

“Hello, are you awake? How are you feeling? Are you in much pain?” the remaining hybrid, a young woman with short, mulberry red hair and warm brown eyes, peers carefully down into Hide’s face as he blinks up at her groggily a few times, still trying to process the fact that he is indeed still alive. It doesn’t take long for him to be convinced however—his abdomen and the back of his head are screaming at him in pain.

“Aughhh…my stomach…” he groans, blinking back tears, “Why couldn’t I have just died?”

The young woman above him frowns concernedly as she looks into his eyes in an evaluative manner for a few moments before shaking her head in disbelief.

“I still can’t believe you’re alive honestly…you should have had massive internal hemorrhaging after taking a blow like that,” she breathes, sounding genuinely surprised, “At the very least you should
have a ruptured a few organs — it’s a wonder you’re even speaking right now.”

“Yeah, I’m not so sure I haven’t,” he rasps back painfully.

“Well it’s good to see that he didn’t knock the humor out of you at least,” the young woman says, eyes narrowing slightly in amusement as she brushes an errant strand of auburn red hair out of her face, “I took the liberty of examining your injuries while you were out, but it looks like all you’ve got is some really severe bruising from where you were kicked — no broken bones or anything from what I can tell…Oh, my name is Nishino Kimi. I’m a medical intern, so I’m fairly qualified to make a diagnosis. It looks like you’re going to be alright.”

“Good to know I’m in capable hands at least,” the bumblebee manages to grin back flirtatiously, voice weak.

“Oh…try not to sit up too quickly, please,” she implores, pressing a gentle hand into his chest to slow the bee hybrid down when he moves to sit up, “You took a serious hit and lost consciousness for a while — I’d like to make sure you aren’t concussed, if you don’t mind. Can you remember your name and what day it is?”

“My name’s Hide…Nagachika Hideyoshi,” he replies carefully, sifting through the jumbled mess of mind for the right info, “The day is…ahh…February…21\textsuperscript{st}, I think? I know it’s Friday…or Saturday morning now, I guess.”

“I’m going to have to trust you on your name, but the rest is correct,” she says encouragingly, “How many fingers am I holding up?”

“One.”

“And do you feel nauseous at all?”

“No.”

“How about sleepy? Confused? Irritable?”

The red-haired hybrid gives a small sigh of relief when he offers her a negative hum in response to each.

“Well…from what I can tell there are no other signs of a concussion per se, but the fact that you lost consciousness even for a short while is a pretty clear indicator that you’ve sustained at least mild head-trauma,” the woman concludes, resting back on her thighs heavily for a moment before carefully climbing to her feet. “I know it’s tough under the circumstances, but it’s best if you take it easy for a while and try not to jostle your head around too much if at all possible,” she advises gently, “If you can, try to avoid stress and vigorous activity, and no sudden moves with your neck, okay?”

Hide nods slowly as he takes her proffered hand and is gingerly helped up to his feet.

“Wait, you’re the girl from the courtyard aren’t you…the one who was being chased…” Hide realizes with a bit of surprise after looking at her a moment, “What are you doing here?”

Nishino grimaces slightly as she watches his eyes briefly dart over to the right, where the neo-hybrid with the chestnut colored hair currently stands frowning off to the side dejectedly, arms crossed in front of his chest as he leans back nonchalantly against the very same tree that he kicked Hide into just a short while ago. The park lighting is still out, which means they are still in a hunting period, but yet and still the young neo makes no move to attack either of them.
Something is definitely off here.

“Ah, of course…you’re worried about Nishiki-kun, right?” the young woman guesses, grimacing guiltily again, “Don’t worry, he’s very sorry for hurting you, and he won’t be doing anything like that ever again…Isn’t that right Nishiki-kun?”

The youth in question grumbles and makes a vaguely dismissive gesture with his hand, but doesn’t say anything to the contrary, merely glaring off into the woods somberly instead.

Hide is doubtful of his ability to believe that the creature that just violently attacked him and kicked him into a tree, very nearly rupturing his internal organs, can be trusted not to try and do him serious harm. Nishino, however, seems very trustworthy, and as she appears confident that the neo-hybrid won’t do him anymore harm, he decides to take her word for it for the time being. Still, he can’t help the small trill of fear that rifles through him when his eyes stray to the cobbled path where he had first encountered the praying mantis hybrid -- there, a little way down the path, lie the bloodied, motionless bodies of the two Villagers from earlier.

“Thank you for your help earlier,” the red-haired girl says hesitantly, “Those men took me by surprise when I was searching near the castle — they came after me because they saw my bow assumed I had other supplies. They probably would have tried to kill me if you hadn’t drawn them away.”

Hide’s eyebrows raise slightly at the word ‘tried’, eyes sliding to the large crossbow that is strapped to the young woman’s back. She seems oddly composed despite the situation they’re in.

“Seems like I should be thanking you,” he replies, smiling wryly, “Your friend over there seemed pretty intent on killing me before you showed up — I’d say you more than returned the favor by stopping him.”

“I won’t ask you to forgive Nishiki-kun,” the girl says with an exhausted sigh, “But please believe me when I tell you that he knows better than to try it again. To begin with, he—”

“Can you ladies wrap it up already?” the young man in question interjects loudly from his place over by the tree, “These bodies are going to attract other neos eventually — you’re in danger every minute you stick around here, and I really don’t feel like fending off a bunch of scavengers…especially not with two defenseless walking, talking lunchboxes in tow.”

Both Hide and Nishino’s eyes widen slightly at the revelation, as the Wolf leaves his resting spot to stalk over to where they both stand staring at him in open confusion.

“What? Am I really going to just leave him to the dogs after he helped save your life?” Nishiki grumbles, shooting an annoyed look toward the blond before settling his gaze back on the dumbfounded young woman, “What do I look like, some kind of animal?”

“N-Nishiki-kun…!” the red-head exclaims, bringing up a pale hand to up cover her mouth in surprise as she gazes up at the Wolf through fondly narrowed eyes, “You mean…?”

“Come on, I know a way out of here,” the brown-haired hybrid mumbles agitatedly. Hide does not miss the faint swath of red that forms across the bridge of the neo-hybrid’s nose as he turns on his heel abruptly to head off down the path, leaving the two dumbfounded hybrids to hastily follow.
After leaving the scene of carnage behind, Nishio leads the two of them on a complicated trail that takes them back through The Red Queen’s Castle and deep into an area of the park where Hide hasn’t been yet. The Wolf is unexpectedly patient in ushering his two much less athletically inclined wards through broken attractions and thick patches of overgrowth, and as he watches the bespectacled young man tenderly assist Nishino over an unstable patch of footing, the delivery boy finds himself thinking back to the careful way that Kaneki had helped him pick his way through the overgrown amusement park not long earlier. The thought of the white-haired youth gives the bee hybrid pause, and a few moments later, Hide is stopping mid-stride, a troubled expression blossoming over his features.

‘Wait…What am I doing? Kaneki’s still out there somewhere…’

All of the hopefulness that he had been feeling at the prospect of escaping the park suddenly dissipates into thin air as Hide remembers the young alpha’s promise to him. It’s been a while now since he last saw the white-haired hybrid, and although the alpha is obviously more than capable of watching his own back, the thought of him alone out there is extremely worrisome. Noticing that the bee hybrid has stopped following, Nishino turns around to hold him with a curious look.

“Nagachika-kun…?”

“Hey, what’s the hold-up back there?” comes Nishio’s impatient tone, as the Wolf quickly registers that the red-haired girl is no longer keeping up, “We don’t exactly have time for unscheduled pee-breaks right now.”

“I’m sorry…but I don’t think I can go with you,” Hide says hesitantly, shaking his head, “The truth is, I’m looking for someone — a friend.”

“A …friend? Here in the park?” Nishino echoes after a beat, eyebrows raised in surprise. For his part Nishio seems strangely unfazed as he stares back at the blond with a slight frown.

“We got separated a while back…but before that he told me to go to The Cheshire Cat’s Tree — he promised he’d come find me no matter what,” the bumblebee explains as an increasingly uneasy expression overtakes his features, “…Which means he’s probably still there waiting for me right now.”

“Believe me, I really am grateful to you both for trying to help me get out, but I can’t just leave him and run off to safety by myself like this…I’m sorry,” the delivery boy admits at last, bowing his head solemnly in apology.

“You don’t need to apologize, Nagachika-kun” the bumblebee looks up in surprise when a gentle hand settles on his shoulder, and he looks up to find Nishino smiling softly as she shoots a pointed look over to the brown-haired neo standing just behind her, “I understand…really.”

“Tch…Guess everyone’s got a weakness, even him…feckless little piece of shit,” Nishio mutters cryptically with a derisive snort, causing both Hide and Nishino to stare at him in confusion.

“What you’re looking for is that way,” the Wolf says flatly after a moment of contemplation, ignoring the bee hybrid’s shocked look as he raises a long, lanky arm to point off slightly North from the direction in which they’ve been headed, “The Cheshire Cat’s Tree, you idiot. Past The Sea of Tears, at the Northern edge of the park, where the lights never shine — that’s where you’ll find your ‘friend’.”

“Seriously?” Hide breathes disbelievingly, “Th…thank you.”
“It’s not for you,” the taller hybrid growls, shooting a quick glance toward Nishino, “Besides, if anything what you’re doing is definitely not in your own best interest…It’s probably not in your ‘friend’s’ best interest either.”

The bee hybrid dismisses the sardonic scoff that follows the taller boy’s statement with an adamant shake of his head, “It doesn’t matter…I’m not leaving this place until I find him.”

“Ugh, I can just see where this is going,” Nishio grimaces disgustedly, “If you really knew what’s best for your friend you’d let me off you before you end up getting the both of you killed.”

“Well I can tell that this person must mean a lot to you, and vice-versa” Nishino interjects encouragingly, nudging her brown-haired counterpart out of the way with a not so gentle elbow to the side, “I’m sure he’ll be happy to know that stayed for him, Nagachika-kun.”

Hide can feel the small flush that creeps up his neck at her thoughtful appeal.

“Thank you, Nishino-san,” he replies sincerely, doing his best to brush off the Wolf’s foreboding words.

“Come on, Kimi,” the tall, impatient young man urges with a dismissive eye-roll and a gentle tug to the smaller hybrid’s sleeve, “I want you out of here before those other assholes run out of targets and come sniffing around.”

“Good luck Nagachika-kun…” the red-haired girl says with a wave as she turns to follow her impatient companion, “And be safe!”

“Yeah, just make sure you don’t let him knock you up,” Nishio dismisses snidely, casually flipping the bee hybrid off behind his back as he leaves.

Hide grimaces at the comment but raises his hand in a small wave as he watches the two of them head off into the woods, unable to suppress a small smile when he watches the petite young woman turn to chastise her much taller counterpart the moment they are out of earshot, jabbing him squarely in the side for his rude comment.

Once he is separated from Nishino and her neo-hybrid companion, Hide feels his anxiety return full force as it finally sets in that he is alone again, and for a moment he can only stand in place, steadying his breath and gathering his resolve before he strikes out on his own once more. Ultimately, it’s the thought of the white-haired boy alone, out there in the park looking for him, that spurs the bee hybrid’s legs into motion. If he’s feeling this frightened and anxious out in the open by himself — not to mention increasingly worried about the other hybrid — odds are Kaneki is probably out there feeling just as uneasy. As he steadily puts one foot in front of the other in the direction that Nishio pointed out just a few moments ago, the bee hybrid finds his thoughts drifting back to his conversation with the purple-haired neo-hybrid from his flashback. Now that a good portion of his memory has come back to him, he can’t help the guilt that shrouds his heart as the how and why of his childhood friend’s disappearance reassert themselves in his mind, along with the realization that he’s probably not so removed from all this as he would have liked to believe. Thoughts of the little dark-haired boy from his past flash through his mind, and Hide can’t help when they overlap with his memories of Kaneki and the way the white-haired alpha had endangered himself without hesitation for his sake. There’s no way he can live with the knowledge that Kaneki is out there risking his life — especially not over someone like him.
Newfound resolve hastens the bee hybrid’s steps as he wades through a particularly rough patch of foliage, and out into a large clearing, which is dominated by a massive water slide. Hide’s eyes trace the ride’s path as it loops and twists elaborately overhead before coming down into a wide swimming pool that is adorned here and there with faded, crumbling models of anthropomorphic animals in Victorian era swimwear — The Sea of Tears. As he approaches the attraction, the bee hybrid swivels his head around searching for the best way across, and immediately regrets it when the throbbing pain in the back of his head suddenly picks up again.

‘Right… no sudden movements.’

The bumblebee frowns to himself as Nishino’s words of caution come back to him before he looks about again, much more carefully this time, and realizes that there is no way he’s getting past the giant obstacle. The pool itself is completely empty but for a few shallow pools of rainwater, rife with algae and moss that have collected here and there, but he’s wary of trying to climb down and walk across it — that would be as good as throwing himself into an enclosed pit with no quick means of escape. He’s going to have to go around.

Though he’s somewhat frustrated by the time-consuming detour, Hide sets his jaw in determination and begins his trek around the edge of the attraction, picking his way over rusted pool chairs and recliners and weaving around concession stands. He is just coming around the side of a large structure housing restrooms and changing stalls when he stops short, antennae twitching fervently as a faint but familiar phantom scent reaches them.

“…Kaneki?”

Unbidden, the delivery-boy’s steps hasten as he turns to head in the direction of the smell — he’s definitely close. Hide clambers over a low cement fence and makes a bee-line for the origin of the smell, caution forgotten all together as his heartbeat suddenly picks up in excitement at the prospect of being reunited with the other man.

The bee hybrid pushes his way through a cluster of overgrown bushes to find himself in a small clearing and immediately stops short when a hybrid form catches his eye. There at the far edge of the clearing sits a black-clad silhouette, hood up and head bent low to the ground. Even with his back turned the blond recognizes the familiar curve of his back and the tilt of his shoulders.

“Kaneki!”

Beyond relieved, the bumblebee begins sprinting across the clearing at full tilt toward the young alpha, just as the hybrid in question hears his call and his head swivels around to pinpoint the source.

“…Hide? …!!!!...Hide, wait!” the white-haired boy shouts.

But the alpha’s warning reaches the other man’s ears too late. Hide pulls up short as he reaches Kaneki’s side and his eyes set on the scene in front of the other boy.

“K-Kane…ki? Wha…?”

The corpse that lies motionless at the alpha’s feet is actually little more than a crumpled pile of assorted half-eaten limbs now — barely recognizable as hybrid — but Hide catches sight of a mildly familiar looking article of clothing, a battered looking sweater drenched in bloodstains, and realizes that he’s looking at the beetle that attacked him earlier on when he had just found out that he was the Lamb. Apparently the man had managed to escape the five Wolves’ ambush earlier, but it seems to
have all been for naught.

“Hide, don’t. Don’t look…” Kaneki implores weakly, face contorting with shame as he reaches out his free hand to grab the blond’s wrist in an attempt to turn him away from the grotesque scene. The moment he does, Hide’s gaze trails down from the hand grasping his arm to Kaneki’s other hand, which is currently gripping one of the corpse’s severed ankles very much like one might a roasted chicken leg, then up to the thick coating of fresh blood that covers the lower half of the other hybrid’s face, and finally over to his left eye, which blazes a shocking red atop its ghostly black sclera.

Belatedly realizing his folly, the alpha immediately releases the bumblebee’s trembling hand and drops the ankle bone, just as his right hand, now free, flies up to cover his left eye in a desperate attempt to salvage the situation.

“H-Hide…I need you to stay calm,” the young neo-hybrid hastily, “I don’t want you to have another —”

“…Hide?”

The delivery boy unceremoniously drops to his knees, breath catching in his throat as he is abruptly overcome by a wave of nausea and a familiar throbbing pain picks up in the back of his head.

“Hide!!!”

The bumblebee hybrid winces reflexively as the other man’s startled cry rings through his skull like a siren, setting off sparks across the inside of his skull. Hide makes to get up but relents when he realizes he can’t feel the ground underneath himself anymore.

‘No stress or vigorous activity…Right.’

As a sudden feeling of overwhelming drowsiness overtakes him and the world begins to fade, Hide senses the ever-alluring smell of Kaneki’s natural pheromones drifting into his nostrils and realizes that even given the horrifying state he’s just found the other hybrid in, the scent of the young alpha puts him inexplicably at ease.

It’s with that final epiphany that the Lamb finally relinquishes his hold on wakefulness and drifts off into blissful unawareness, cradled in the Wolf’s arms and lulled by his reassuring scent.

//Hide hurriedly shrugs out of his uniform shirt and jacket and into his street clothes, wracking his brain over the implications of what he just saw while out on his final delivery assignment for that day. The logo on the side of the building he had delivered to had precisely matched one of the ones that he had recognized on the back of the ambulance as it had sped away carrying his childhood friend all those years ago, and there’s no way it’s just a coincidence that the company that owns said building, Saiki Holdings Ltd., just happens to be a subsidiary of The Washuu Conglomerate.

Quickly snatching his remaining personal items out of his locker, the bumblebee hybrid unceremoniously shoves his uniform clothes into his satchel, along with his empty bento box and headphones, as he prepares to leave. After shooting off a hurried goodbye to his coworkers on his way out, Hide practically sprints down the street and around the corner to the closest metro station, taking the stairs two at a time as he races for the gate, pass-case already in hand. Swiping through, he quickly jaunts down the stairs to the platform, still undecided as to which train he should get on.
The Northbound train, which will be departing from the left side of the platform, will take him straight home, while the Southbound will take him in the complete opposite direction, allowing him to transfer twice and arrive back at the ward which houses the Saiki Building.

A quick glance at his phone shows that it’s still just after 5:00pm. The Nagachika household doesn’t usually start dinner until well after 7:00, so if he hurries he should technically have just enough time to take the train back over to the Saiki building and snoop around a little bit before heading home. However, that’s only if he makes record time getting back across the city on his way back. The trains are guaranteed to be overpacked at that hour, especially coming in and out of the sector where the Saiki building is located.

Hide chews his lip a little bit as he thinks about it; he’ll be cutting it awfully close, and his little sister Minami will definitely be pissed at him if he comes home late again tonight — he has to be up for the early shift at work tomorrow and she already had to fight with him to get up for work early this morning.

Looking up to the LED indicator that heralds the arrival of incoming trains, he can see that the next Northbound coming into the station is only two minutes away, while the Southbound will be arriving shortly after.

Struck by sudden inclination, he slips his hand into the back pocket of his denims and tugs out his wallet, unable to help the way his fingers tremble as he slips out the tiny photograph that he keeps nestled all the way in the back along with a nearly full stamp card from his favorite gyoza shop and the daikichi omikuji that he drew on the fifth try at New Year’s. It’s a shitty photo, grainy and with terrible composition, but his eyes still crinkle up at the sight of the boy from his memories, face schooled into a look of nervous determination as he does his best to portray a king for some kind of school play.

‘…Sorry ’Nami-chan, but I have to see this through. I made a promise.’

A twinge of guilt stings Hide as he carefully tucks the little photo clipping back into his wallet again for safe-keeping, mentally apologizing to his long-suffering sibling for the inconvenience he knows he’s probably about to cause her tomorrow morning. There’s no way he can pass up this chance; his gut is railing at him, demanding action, whispering to him that if he doesn’t go investigate this right now he might somehow miss the opportunity to finally right a terrible wrong and repay a debt that’s been left unsettled for far too long now. Even if the whole thing comes to nothing in the end, at the very least it might still give him some kind of hint as to where to look next.

Heart decided, Hide turns his back on the train that will take him home to his mother and father and little sisters and brother and safety, and instead waits to board one that will lead him straight into the heart of the unknown.//

When Hide finally wakes, it is to the strong, steady thrum of a heartbeat against his ear and warm, thick fabric under his cheek. He can feel himself shifting slightly from side to side as his body rocks with steady movement, but he’s definitely in a reclining position — something firm and warm is wrapped around his back and up underneath his knees supporting his body weight, and his head, which is currently tilted to the side, rests heavily against something soft yet solid. The bumblebee is relieved to find that the horrid pain in the back of his head and nausea from earlier have mercifully subsided, but the inside of his head is a jumbled mess of emotions, half-remembered conversations and flashes of scenery.
Soft silver eyes, piercing and somehow sorrowful at the same time, peering down at him balefully from beneath a halo of dark hair that shines midnight blue beneath stark fluorescent lighting, as a soft, soothing floral scent, tinged with an ever-lingering undercurrent of decay, wraps him up in warmth and coaxes him to sleep.

A giddy ticklish sensation that picks up in his chest as a head of silky black hair nestles itself firmly into it and the bright, delicate scent of lilies wafts up into his nostrils like a gust of fresh spring air.

The crisp, breathy sound of heavy, linen cards flicking against one another as small, clever fingers, deft and strong, shuffle and reshuffle them.

Soft cryptic words that trickle from porcelain lips in barely more than a half-whisper as an angel lays him to rest among the dead.

The steady rhythmic motion of Hide’s body comes to a stop then, as the structure that is supporting him suddenly brings its movement to an abrupt halt.

“…Hide?” a familiar, low tenor sounds from somewhere very close to his right ear and Hide can feel the way firm muscles tense up against his back and thighs in tandem — Kaneki. When the other boy calls his name his voice is soft with concern, carrying a barely discernible tinge of fear, but it still manages send a mild shiver of nervous excitement down the bumblebee’s spine.

“Hey,” he manages to rasp back softly as he cracks his eyes open to peer up at the man in question. Hide is surprised at the strained quality of his own voice. The onslaught of new memories from just now has him feeling significantly drained and disoriented and his face probably shows it.

Kaneki’s left eye has reverted back to its usual pale grey, and now the white-haired boy stares down at him with his gaze narrowed in what looks to be a mixture of relief and anguish. The delivery boy’s mind immediately races as he searches for possible ways to diffuse the tears that he spies gathering at the corners of the other hybrid’s eyes.

“Haha…this is the second time tonight you’ve held me in your arms tonight, Kaneki,” the bee hybrid teases weakly, waggling his eyebrows slightly in a poor attempt to interject some humor into the situation and stave of the oncoming awkwardness that he can sense is about to commandeer the moment, “Not that I’m complaining or anything…but any more of this and a guy could start to get the wrong idea, you know?”

Kaneki blinks at that, eyebrows quirking as his face twists into a look of mild confusion and apprehension that makes something clench up inside the bee hybrid’s chest. Mission: Failed.

‘Dammit, Kaneki why are you doing this to meeee…’

“Hide…aren’t you…?”

“Shocked? Scared? Of a dude who’s literally holding back tears as he cradles me tenderly in his arms?” the blond supplies gently, just barely managing a small snort of nonchalant amusement.

“I—”

“Look, I’m not afraid of you, Kaneki,” the bumblebee insists, shaking his head from side to side as he puts on the most encouraging little smile he can manage.

His insistent message seems to have gotten through to some extent — the other boy stares back at him with a slightly befuddled look for a moment more before suddenly becoming aware of their close proximity.
“Um...think can you stand on your own?” the Wolf queries after a nervous cough, averting his gaze as a small tinge of pink begins to steal its way across his cheeks.

“Y-Yeah I think I’m good,” Hide answers with a bashful nod, tentatively bracing his hands against Kaneki’s shoulders while the white-haired hybrid carefully sets him down. Kaneki grips Hide’s elbow and waist gently for support for a few moments while he gets his legs back underneath himself, and the bee hybrid is acutely aware of the slightly reluctant manner with which the alpha relinquishes his hold a few moments later. They stand awkwardly beside one another for a little while after that, both at a slight loss for words.

“I never meant for you to see me like that,” Kaneki says quietly after the silence has gone on for a somewhat uncomfortable amount of time. His face is still turned away, so even when Hide cocks his head to the side a bit and looks up at him nervously from underneath his lashes, he can’t quite make out the other man’s expression.

“It’s okay, man — I get it. You don’t need to apologize to me for being what you are,” the blond reassures, “I mean, this is already like the second time tonight you’ve looked after me after I lost my shit. I know you’re not going to hurt me...To tell the truth, it kind of feels like I should be the one apologizing right now — for making you tiptoe around my dense ass all night and pretend to be something you’re not.”

The white-haired hybrid’s head snaps up at that, gaze narrowed in remorse.

“I promise I didn’t mean to deceive to you, Hide,” he pleads in earnest, expressive eyes clouding further with his conflicting emotions as he presses a hand to his chin, “But you were so panicked, so...afraid...I was worried I’d just frighten you even more...”

“No, no...I totally get it,” the bee hybrid nods solemnly, hesitantly resting a soothing hand on the other boy’s shoulder, “And I appreciate you trying to be sensitive to my situation...But I’m sorry I put you in that position. I don’t ever want you to think you have to hide who you are from me, Kaneki. I just want you to be who you are — no filters...okay?”

“...Yeah,” comes the mumbled reply.

“So...? We good now?” he peers up into the alpha’s slightly lowered gaze hopefully, giving the other boy a little nudge with his shoulder for good measure.

The white-haired youth looks back at him apprehensively for another moment before the clouds finally start to subside from his gaze and he gives a slow nod.

“Awesome,” Hide beams back, grinning in earnest pleasure for what might be the first time since he’s gotten to the park. “Now that that’s out of that way...mind telling me where we are?”

“I didn’t know when you’d wake up, so I figured it would be best for me to lie you down somewhere safe and let you get some rest,” comes the reply. The alpha’s expression clouds slightly with concern again as he remembers their situation and Hide has to bite the inside of his lip to keep from making a noise at the way the light of the moon hits his jaw just so, “That’s still an option if you need it by the way -- we’ve got hours before sunrise if you want to take a break, Hide.”

‘You have no idea, Kaneki. None at all.’

The blond clears his throat dramatically before vehemently shaking his head in the negative. If these were normal circumstances Hide knows he’d be enthusiastically agreeable to the prospect of the white-haired alpha ‘lying him down’ somewhere — anywhere, in fact — but alas, the fates are cruel
and his life is most definitely at stake right now.

“Nope! You know what? I’m fine! Absolutely perfect, in fact,” the bumblebee rambles nervously, "Yep! I am good-on-that! Fit as a fiddle and ready-to-go!”

“You’re sure you’re not pushing yourself too much?” the Wolf confirms one last time, “You looked like you were in a lot of pain for a while when you were unconscious.”

“Yeah, well, uhh… you’d be surprised at how resilient we omega types can be,” the Lamb insists, nervously grinning back with as much feigned bravado as he can muster, “So, how about you show me the way out of here?”

Kaneki still looks doubtful, but he nods and turns to lead the way off in the direction that he had been headed just before Hide regained consciousness. “We’re actually not too far from the crossing point. I made some ground while you were asleep, so we’re pretty close now,” he explains, pointing up ahead to where a large deciduous tree is visible off in the distance.

“Is that the tree that you were talking about before? The one where you said you’d wait for me?” the blond queries, staring at the plant in question as he quickly falls into step behind the slightly shorter hybrid.

The Cheshire Cat’s Tree is huge — tall enough that the tips of its massive branches reach several meters above the rest of the tree-line — but the lack of lighting in the area makes it such that it’s difficult to identify unless one knows what to look for. No wonder he didn’t notice it when he was searching before.

“Wow, it’s… huge,” the omega breathes in genuine awe as they come closer to the arboreal marvel and its impressive size becomes even more apparent.

“It was already quite a bit bigger than the surrounding trees before I set up my territory around here — so much so that I guess the park’s owners had made it into its own attraction,” Hide’s lips quirk in amusement as he notices the way other boy’s chest puffs out just a wee bit as he speaks.Obviously, Kaneki is very proud of his tree.

“It seems that all the… extra nutrients… it’s been getting since I’ve been coming here have aided its growth even more though,” the alpha adds after a moment of slight hesitation, glancing back at his omega counterpart with a bit of apprehension once the words have left his mouth.

Hide merely stares back at him with his eyebrows raised slightly in response, offering naught but a small smile of mild puzzlement at Kaneki’s slightly questioning gaze.

“Hide… you’re sure you’re okay with this?” the Wolf asks carefully as they pick their way through an area of particularly brittle underbrush.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean… I didn’t… gross you out? You know… when I was feeding?” the pale-haired hybrid clarifies, brow furrowing as a look of anxiety suddenly begins to overtake his delicate features again.

Hide huffs a low sigh and abruptly comes to a halt right in the middle of the dry, scratchy bushes they’ve been traipsing through. They’re pretty close to their goal now, and the closer they come the denser the foliage seems to get. It’s quite obvious that few other hybrids beside Kaneki traverse this area, and the bee hybrid has a feeling the white-haired boy is only taking the more pedestrian route for his guest’s benefit.
“Kaneki… I know you think I’m just this innocent bystander who somehow got wrapped up in all this mess against my will,” he answers slowly, still very much in the process of collecting his thoughts on the matter and processing things himself, “But the reality is, that couldn’t be farther from the truth. I’m no innocent bystander, and I’m definitely no stranger to neo-hybrids.”

That seems to get the other boy’s attention. The alpha makes a small noise of surprise then, eyes widening and eyebrows quirking into a look of open confusion as he stares back at the bee hybrid in silence for a moment.

“You…what?”

“I know, crazy right? I’m still figuring it out myself honestly,” Hide says, holding his palms up in a placating gesture, “I didn’t really get a chance to mention it before — you know, what with all the running for my life and stuff — but since I woke up here in the park I’ve actually been having a hell of a time trying to remember how I got here. Not only that — up until just a little while ago I could barely even recall anything about myself besides the basics.”

“So, wait… you’re telling me that you have amnesia?” the white-haired boy blinks at him in surprise before his eyes narrow and his voice deepens a bit with concern, “And it sounds pretty severe from what you’re telling me… Are you sure you’re alright Hide?”

“Had. I had amnesia,” Hide replies with a shake of his head, “And yes, I’m fine. It’s a long story — I mean a really long story — but just before I found you again I took a pretty bad hit to the head and ended up with a concussion — I think that’s kind of why I passed out just now actually—but ever since then a lot of my memory has been coming back to me. I think I’m actually starting to put a lot of stuff together about my pa—”

“Wait, wait, wait. Wait a minute… You have a concussion?” echoes the alpha incredulously, hands flying up to bury themselves in his hair as he cuts the other boy off.

“It’s really not that bad, man. I mean… well… yeah, I did kinda pass out for a little bit,” he concedes, “But I’m totally feeling better now! Seriously!”

“Not that bad? A concussion, Hide? You fainted in my arms—that sounds pretty bad to me! Fuck… I thought you had just freaked out over the dead body!” the white-haired boy’s face is immediately stricken with guilt and anger as he comes to a sudden realization, “And you were going to tell me about this when exactly? Before or after I tried to smuggle you out of a heavily guarded park full of murderous hybrids? What if you’d passed out again before we made it to the dead zone? What if you’d gotten hurt? Fuck, Hide… I could have gotten you killed!”

“Kaneki—”

“No, Hide! Just… no,” the alpha says with finality, struggling to remain calm, “This… this is not okay. I’m going to need you to take a minute and rest up before we go any further—a few minutes actually.”

“But didn’t I already kind of get some rest when I was unconscious though?” the bumblebee interjects feebly.

“NOW, Hide.”
A few more minutes of walking and several more reprimanding looks from Kaneki later, Hide finds himself parked at the base of the Cheshire Cat’s Tree, well into the dead zone and still holding out adamantly as the alpha tries desperately to convince him to accept some assistance to the upper levels of the huge tree, where the alpha’s base of operations is apparently located.

“Look, I know you’re perfectly capable of taking care of yourself,” the white-haired boy insists at last, “But you’re tired and we’re most likely about to go into another dark period soon. Just give yourself some time to rest before heading back out into the fray—an hour at least. You can catch your breath for a bit and then we’ll be on our way—I promise.”

“…Just an hour?” the bumblebee relents at last, mouth still tilted into a little frown. The young Wolf is staring at him with an earnest look of concern that causes the light of the moon to pool in the depths of his expressive grey eyes, and it has utterly destroyed the omega’s resolve. Hide gulps softly when Kaneki’s face smooths with relief and the other boy steps into his personal space a bit.

“Just an hour,” the alpha agrees with a nod.

“Don’t worry, the white-haired boy adds seriously, apparently noting the way that the omega seems to pull in on himself with hesitation and reading it as uneasiness toward their surroundings, “We’re deep in my territory now, and I’ll be keeping an eye on you the whole time -- You’ll be safe here, Hide. Now will you get on already and let me give you a ride up?”

The bee hybrid all but physically flinches at the other boy’s choice of words.

‘…Why? Why would you say something so unassuming and yet so hot? Why Kaneki? WHY KANEKI?’

Hide’s eyes flutter shut in defeat as the alpha turns around and crouches low to the ground, presenting his back. Something in the delivery boy’s gut — perhaps the only part of his mind not currently preoccupied with imagining how delicious it will feel to have the other boy’s back muscles working against his chest on the climb up -- is telling him that this is an exceedingly bad idea -- that once he enters Kaneki’s space he’s done for. But then the park speakers blare to life in the distance with their familiar tune, heralding the onset of another period of darkness, and it is too late for him to turn back.

The bumblebee sighs and slips his arms around Kaneki’s shoulders carefully as he allows the other boy to accept his weight.

“Make sure you hold on tight,” the white-haired boy warns, “And tuck your head in. I’m going to be moving pretty fast and I really don’t want you getting whiplash -- you could get dizzy and fall off or something.”

“Got it,” the blond mumbles into the alpha’s shoulder, already feeling lightheaded in a different way at the sensation of the other boy’s firm back muscles shifting against him through the fabric of their clothes, as Kaneki stands and adjusts the bumblebee’s weight against himself in one fluid motion, lightly grasping the undersides of the omega’s knees in his hands.

Hide startles slightly when the white-haired boy unexpectedly lets out a soft grunt of exertion and abruptly the small clearing around the base of the tree is filled with the low sounds of tearing flesh and clicking appendages. It takes a moment before the bumblebee realizes that the other boy means to release his hybrid form.
Hide suppresses a scandalized gasp as the shoulder and back muscles of the other boy shudder and ripple against him, and all of a sudden there is a peculiar sensation against the underside of his thighs, as a thick length of solid chitin plating suddenly erupts from Kaneki’s lower back, just above his hips.

‘Hoooolymotherfuckingshit! Nooo, no, no, no...NO FUCKING WAY. What are you doing Kaneki!?'

The delivery boy’s gaze snaps down so that he can stare with a mixture of curiosity, terror and mild arousal as the alpha’s massive tail continues to emerge, stretching on for what seems like miles in section after section of glossy, dark plating, flanked by row after row of vibrant, wicked hybrid legs. When at last the transformation is complete, Hide can feel the other boy panting softly with exertion below him, muscles still twitching slightly as he takes a moment to steady himself. Hide realizes then that he's most likely focusing on suppressing the sudden wave of instincts and new information that will have flooded his brain just after presentation.

Kaneki is a centipede — one unlike the bumblebee has ever seen before. Centipede hybrids are fairly uncommon as it is, but the white-haired boy’s striking coloration and impossibly large size indicates that he is descended from a giant tropical species, which are particularly rare. That’s not the only thing unique about Kaneki’s hybrid form though. Surprisingly, his presentation is quite tame, with his human features appearing relatively undisrupted by his hybrid ones—a rarity among alphas, especially one such as Kaneki, who would definitely fall under the description of an apex predator.

Beyond the sharp, serrated mandibles that project from the underside of the white-haired boy’s pallid jaw and the vibrantly colored, whip-like set of antennae that wave about languidly atop his platinum crown, there is fairly little alteration to his physical appearance save for his enormous tail.

Hide swallows down a small gasp as said tail, easily the primary defining feature of the other boy’s hybridized form, shifts and writhes heavily between his legs, and takes the opportunity to observe the other boy’s released hybrid form as best he can from his limited vantage point. The wide, flat, sectioned length of the massive appendage extends for what seems like several times the length of the alpha’s body, coiling around and in on itself over and over again in a writhing, clicking mass of smooth, violet-black plating and deadly sharp, fluorescent red legs. The sound of Kaneki’s powerful hybrid jaw clacking open and shut a few times rings dangerously in the blond’s ears as the pair of long, flexible antennae that extend from the top of his head wave about languidly, constantly taking in information about their surroundings and seeking out moisture, warmth, and the presence of other hybrids.

Kaneki suddenly shifts his weight as he adjusts his stance, causing the bee hybrid to slide down a bit, and Hide can barely suppress the deep shudder that rocks his chest when he instinctively settles his weight down onto the neo-hybrid’s tail and the large appendage twitches restlessly in between his thighs in response.

‘This…this is abuse. I am definitely being violated in several different ways right now.’

Kaneki gives a low huff of relief, shoulders tangibly relaxing under the bee hybrid’s fingertips now that his hybrid appendages are free, and Hide gives a small, empathetic sigh of his own. He can’t even imagine what kind of self-control it would take to suppress one’s urge to present with hybrid parts of that size, but it’s obvious that the other boy is feeling leagues more comfortable now that they’re finally free.

“Settled?” the alpha checks after a few moments, and Hide can only nod dumbly in response, even though he knows the other boy can’t see him. Kaneki seems to register his consent though — the massive length of his tail shifts heavily under the bumblebee as it uncoils, its movements surprisingly
smooth and fluid for something so large, and the next thing Hide knows there is wind whistling past his ears as they surge vertically up the base of the huge tree.

The centipede definitely wasn’t kidding about the speed of their ascent. Hide tightens his grip and tucks his head against the back of Kaneki’s neck as the other boy launches himself rapidly from handhold to handhold, massive tail wrapping about the trunk as his myriad insect legs find purchase in the sturdy bark, helping propel their owner across the tree’s surface.

The attraction is built such that the perimeter of the tree is lined with a series of platforms, featuring complicated rope-ways, rock walls and other obstacles that guests must traverse to reach the top of the tree, where a large outdoor rest area awaits. However, years of disuse have left the entire thing vastly overgrown with giant creeping vines and foliage from the tree itself. For most ordinary hybrids, getting to the top would be nothing short of a gauntlet. But as Kaneki hurtles up the face of the attraction, bypassing the prescribed course with little regard for any obstacles in the way, the delivery boy realizes that this is precisely why the centipede has made it his base of operations.

The climb up goes by so quickly that Hide is surprised when Kaneki alights on a particularly wide platform and abruptly comes to a halt. He blinks in bewilderment as the white-haired boy carefully crouches down again and it takes a few beats before he can realize that it’s time for him to get down.

“Th-…Thanks,” the bumblebee manages awkwardly as he shakily steps away, heart still pounding from the short-lived but intense close contact. His skin sizzles like it’s been electrified and he’s halfway sure that Kaneki can hear his heart beating out of control in his chest.

The centipede either doesn’t notice or is gracious enough not to make anything of it though, which is somewhat of a relief. He does, however, train his features into a look of mild concern when he stands up and notices the slightly dazed looking expression on Hide’s face.

“You okay? I didn’t go too fast for you did I?” the alpha queries tentatively, completely misreading the bee hybrid’s expression.

“Huh?! Oh! N-no, I’m fine!” the delivery boy insists, earning a small sigh of relief in response. Desperate to change the subject for both their sakes, Hide takes a look around at their surroundings and gives a low, appreciative whistle.

“Hard to appreciate just how high up it is from down below,” he comments in genuine awe.

The large platform atop which they currently stand is a good six or seven stories up at least, supported by several beams that connect to the branches and trunk, bracing it and giving it support. From their aerie he has a clear view of the park, and is able to make out several landmarks that he passed by during his travels, just before the park music finally comes to a halt and the bright lights that illuminate the majority of the landscape below immediately go dark. It’s a little strange not being plunged into darkness as soon as the song ends — due to the fact that Kaneki’s territory is constantly enveloped in darkness there is no change in lighting — but Hide finds that it is far less jarring without the change in visibility and doesn’t leave him shaking in his boots. The white-haired boy was right; he does feel safer here.

Kaneki clears his throat softly to draw the omega’s attention back from the view before ushering him over to a large opening in the tree’s trunk that looks a lot like a giant knothole that has been bored out and expanded into a much bigger hollow.

“Um, Hide?” the white-haired boy queries abruptly as he stops just short of the entrance, a sudden look of realization flashing across his porcelain features, “Could you, ah… maybe wait here for me for a few seconds?”
“Hm?” he replies in mild bewilderment at Kaneki’s sudden request. For some reason the centipede looks a little uncomfortable all of a sudden.

“Oh yeah, sure! Take as long as you need,” Hide answers with an upbeat grin, waving him off insistently as soon as he picks up on the alpha’s change in demeanor.

With an audible sigh of relief, the centipede nods and slips away into the large opening, enormous tail slithering in after him. A few moments later the muffled sounds of several objects being shifted, accompanied by the distinct noise of the other boy’s huge hybrid tail sliding heavily along the inside of the trunk as he moves around hastily inside, reach the bee hybrid’s ears.

Hide’s eyebrows quirk a bit in confusion as he wonders what the other boy is doing, but just as he’s starting to grow concerned, the alpha pokes his head and shoulders out to beckon him inside at last.

“Sure you don’t mind letting me into your secret base, Kaneki? I could have cooties, you know,” the blond teases as he follows the centipede inside, feeling himself slide back into his comfort zone a little when the back of the other boy’s neck flushes ever so slightly in response. As soon as he steps through the entryway he is met by a thick cloth partition that looks to be made out of a large tapestry, most likely scavenged from the park, which Kaneki carefully holds aside for him as he makes his way further into the little nook. They are deep in the pulp of the tree now, close to its core, and he is slightly surprised to realize that the white-haired boy appears to have hollowed out the area by himself. The walls that make up the inside of the little hole are worn smooth to the touch, but he can feel how irregular and uneven they are, indicating that they were probably expanded to their current height and breadth by Kaneki himself. Hide can feel the difference in temperature between here and the outside; in here it’s actually pretty warm and there is a distinct dampness in the air that gives him the feel that this is every inch a centipede’s nest.

“Sorry about the humidity,” the alpha offers quietly as he takes Hide gently by the hand to guide him over to something soft and cushiony, which the bumblebee carefully kneels down on, “And for the clutter. I know these probably aren’t ideal conditions for you to try and relax.”

Hide blinks profusely as there are a few low clicks nearby and suddenly a tiny fire springs to life nearby, illuminating Kaneki’s hands and the underside of his face — which, the bumblebee realizes with a start, is now surprisingly close to his own.

“Wh-what?” the omega breathes back hastily, trying to contain the little squeak of surprise that threatens to leave him when the other hybrid leans behind him to reach for something, temporarily bringing his face down near Hide’s shoulder and causing his warm breath to ghost over the stricken bumblebee’s sensitive collar bones. Instinctively, he tries to move back out of the alpha’s way, but due to the space limitations finds himself leaning right into something smooth and hard. Whatever is behind him gives a little under the pressure of his back and shifts out of the way, startling him a bit.

The little pinprick of light, which he now realizes is coming from a small cigarette lighter held cupped in the centipede’s hands, expands, and soon the room is almost fully illuminated by the soft glow of two large candle lanterns. The lighter is extinguished as Kaneki carefully settles the two new sources of light onto the floor of his small den — one by the door, just out of reach of the cloth partition covering the entrance, and the other off to the side from where he and the bumblebee are currently sitting.
“I’ve heard that bees tend to like their space dry and organized,” the young alpha explains at last as he turns back around to face his guest, running a hand through the hair at the nape of his neck a bit sheepishly, “I know it’s pretty damp and close in here...kind of a centipede thing.”

“Oh! No, it’s perfect!” Hide insists, shaking his head adamantly in refutation, “And besides, I’m not really that kind of bee. I really like your nest, Kaneki.”

And it’s true. Bumblebees are known to be some of the least organized of all the bee hybrids — Hide’s not one to be offended by a little mess in the slightest. Besides, giving a careful glance around, it’s fairly obvious that Kaneki tried his best to tidy things up a little before bringing him inside; the place is nowhere near as messy as the alpha has made it out to be.

The bumblebee smiles softly as he notices the bashful little smile that quirks the centipede’s lips ever so slightly upon having his nest complimented, and settles down into the thick pile of fabric — an assortment of various cushions and bits of cloth that look to have been collected from various parts of the park. They’ve been generously piled into one corner of the room in a moderately large mound, making for a surprisingly comfortable resting area that dominates one side of the room. There are no corners to the space per se, as the place has been roughly hewn out and worried down into a vaguely circular shape, but off to the right-hand side of the makeshift resting area sits a small parlor chair accompanied by a low table, next to which a few small towers of assorted books have been carefully stacked. The sheer number of them is something of a surprise, as each one of the tomes would have to have been specifically brought into the park by the centipede on his visits here over the years. The table itself is dominated by several large sheets of paper — building plans of some sort that look to have seen their share of wear and tear — accompanied by a few writing implements.

It’s very obvious that this is where Kaneki usually spends most of his time while the games are taking place below; the place is more than adequate for a brief respite.

Allowing himself a weary sigh of relief and exhaustion, Hide crawls over to the very center of the pile of cushions and burrows in comfortably, shifting things around a bit until the little nesting area is arranged to his comfort. The centipede remains perched silently at the corner of the pile, looking on with rapt attention while the other boy makes himself comfortable and settles in for his nap.

“…Comfy?” the centipede queries amusedly after the young omega, finally seeming to have rearranged the bedding to his satisfaction, flops back into the cushions exaggeratedly, staring up at the ceiling.

“Extremely,” Hide replies, ecstatic just to be lying down on something soft and warm. He hadn’t realized quite how exhausted he was until he laid down.

“Glad it’s to your liking,” Kaneki snorts back mirthfully as he sifts through one of the stacks of books, “You can sleep or just chill out for a bit — take as much time as you need. I’ll be right here the whole time.”

Suddenly feeling very tired, Hide breathes in deep as he burrows deep into the cushions of Kaneki’s makeshift bed with a hum of affirmation. Taking his coat off to pull over his shoulders as a temporary blanket, the bee hybrid instantly feels a bolt of arousal and contentment ricochet down his spine to pool in the depths of his abdomen as he recognizes the alpha’s deep, heady scent permeating the fibers of the fabric around him. It wraps around him gently like another layer of protection from the cold, and Hide can’t help but let out a barely audible groan of delight as he stretches out and luxuriates in the scent of the other hybrid’s potent essence for a few moments.

‘Maybe this little break wasn’t such a bad idea after all.’
There’s a slight rustling of cloth and the telltale scratching noises of chitin on wood as Kaneki moves back over to the edge of the pile of bedding, now with a large, hard-cover tome in hand. The white-haired boy tugs the nearest lantern over so that it sits directly at his side, as he settles in with his back propped up against a particularly large cushion just a few inches away from where the bumblebee has almost entirely staked his claim over the centipede’s makeshift bed.

Emboldened by the cozy atmosphere, Hide sidles over until he’s lying along the other hybrid’s left flank, earning an indulgent little smile from the centipede when Kaneki glances over to find him nestled nearby.

“…Kaneki?” the bee hybrid ventures after a few moments of listening to the white-haired boy’s steady breathing as he reads.

“Mm?” the young centipede looks up from his book to stare down at his reclining guest attentively.

“Thanks for taking care of me,” the blond says softly, tilting his head back into the pillow that he has propped up under his neck for support so that he can meet the centipede’s gaze properly, “Thanks for everything, honestly. I’m pretty sure I’d be a rotting corpse by now without you.”

“You don’t need to thank me for anything,” the other boy says firmly, frowning a bit at the disturbing mental image that the bumblebee has just conjured up, “You’re going to be alright, Hide. I’ll get you out of here safely — I promise.”

Hide flinches slightly at the word “promise”, sounds and images flashing through the back if his mind unbidden as the centipede’s words trigger an unexpected flood of memories.

‘Haha, that’s right…I almost forgot.’

“To be honest I’m not even sure I deserve all this,” the bumblebee murmurs absently, closing his eyes a little, “All this time I thought I was just some blameless victim…that I’d been kidnapped and thrown into the game at random by some sadistic psycho through no fault of my own at all.

“But the truth is, I’ve been chasing after urban legends and conspiracy theories for years…sticking my nose places where it doesn’t belong and prying around in places I probably had no right to be… playing with fire. That’s how I ended up here in the first place.”

Kaneki’s eyebrows knit together in a slightly troubled expression as he listens to the omega’s impromptu confession, but he doesn’t interrupt, allowing Hide to say whatever it is he needs to get off his chest.

“I finally remembered a lot of important things earlier when I hit my head, and now…and I’m starting to think maybe I’m here because I belong here — that I deserve to be here. Remember how I told you I’m no stranger to neo-hybrids?”

The white-haired boy nods back softly in response, going completely silent as he sets his book down to train his eyes on the bumblebee’s face while he lies back and rattles off his sins drowsily. Hide isn’t facing him anymore; his eyes are trained off into the distance in a thousand-mile stare as he verbally recalls the events that brought him there.

“The truth is, a long time ago I did something…something terrible. I made a mistake, and as a direct result of my actions someone else — someone really important to me who wasn’t even involved — was taken away from me. I’m pretty sure me being here is a direct result of me trying to get them back.” Hide explains, unable to hide the slightly forlorn look that threatens to overtake his features.

“When I was a kid — maybe eight or nine years old I think? — I moved to a new town. There was
this boy from my new school who used to come to the park where I liked to play. He was always there reading by himself, and I never saw him with any friends, so one day I just up and decided I was going to be friends with him. I don’t know why but he just looked so…alone.

“So one day I went up to him… and I asked him to be my friend. He turned out to be the most amazing person I had ever met — kind and smart and funny and cute and thoughtful — It felt like I had discovered this amazing treasure that nobody else knew about. We ended up in the same class in school that Spring too, so you can imagine I pretty much never left him alone. We played together like every day after that, and he seemed so happy. I was so happy. I didn’t want it to end. Not ever.

“Then one day, he showed up looking like the bottom had dropped out of his whole world all of a sudden. His mom had just died and since she had been all he had left, he was going to have to move away soon. I didn’t know what to do…he just seemed so…tiny…and scared.”

The blond can feel his eyes start to burn at the corners a little as the memory of that day comes back to him vividly, and he is forced go quiet for a moment while he collects himself.

“So I gave him something of mine,” Hide continues at last, “It wasn’t much, but it was all I could think of at the time — and I told him that everything was going to be okay. I promised him that I would never leave him on his own again.

“But that ended up being a lie. Something terrible happened to him because of me, Kaneki.”

Hide pauses again then, momentarily contemplating how much of his story to reveal. He wants to tell the other boy everything, but a part of him feels like he’s not even ready to process all of it himself yet. He decides to compromise.

“A few days later we were at the park hanging out again, and it was really hot outside. I’d been complaining about being thirsty, and of course he offered to run over to the vending machines across the street and get me a drink.

“I should have gone myself. I wasn’t even that thirsty…I could have waited until I got home,” the bee hybrid laments, covering his face with his hand in shame as he continues, “He was hit by a speeding car as he was crossing the street to come back to the park. It all happened right in front of me, and I just sat there like an idiot and watched while the whole thing went down. .

“An ambulance came and picked him up, but somehow I knew something was off — it was all way too fast. One minute he was lying on the ground and the next he was in the van being sped away. And that was the last time I saw him.

"I got my mom to take me to the nearest hospital after that, but he wasn’t there. He wasn’t at any of the hospitals that we checked — I couldn’t find him. Right after that my family had to move again and we ended up in a whole new ward — I guess everyone kind of forgot about it with all the commotion over the move. But I couldn’t forget what happened, even after I started at my new school and made new friends. I couldn’t shake the feeling that he was out there somewhere, alone and terrified.

“Ever since then I’ve been trying to find him. That’s how I ended up finding out about neo-hybrids…chasing after clues looking for my friend. I ended up getting heavy into conspiracy stuff and urban legends because I was convinced it had something to do with his disappearance, and I eventually ended up finding out about the Washuu conglomerate. You can imagine the rabbit hole that led me down…

“I was actually investigating one of their subsidiaries, the Saiki corporation, right before I got here,
but some weirdo in a while coat caught me snooping around outside one of the company buildings and tried to kill me. That’s about the last thing I remember before waking up here.”

Feeling Kaneki tense up slightly at those words, he pauses to glance up at the alpha drowsily, having half-forgotten that the other boy was still there listening as he rattled off his story, “Sorry to talk your ear off...I just needed to say it out loud to someone, you know? Otherwise it feels like I might forget again. I’ve already lost so many of my memories from when I was a kid...I don’t even remember his name. I remember everything else about him though — his expressions, his mannerisms...even his smell.

“Heh, now that I think about it, that’s probably why I felt so… I dunno… drawn to you at first,” the bee hybrid finally confesses, eyes narrowing softly as a small flush spreads itself across his cheeks, “You actually remind me a lot of—”

“It’s me, Hide.”

It takes a moment for the white-haired boy’s words to really register properly. A heavy silence settles over the room as Hide’s eyebrows knit in confusion for a bit.

“W-What…? Wait…wait, wait, wait,” the blond insists, sitting bolt upright on the spot as the meaning of Kaneki’s abrupt statement finally starts to settle in, “But…your hair...a-and you don’t even smell the same! You’re…an…an alpha...a neo-alpha! I mean we were still young but the boy I was talking about…he was definitely an omega, like me!”

The white-haired boy shakes his head softly and reaches down under the collar of his shirt to tug at something. Hide is stricken into silence as he recognizes the slim pendant of silver that dangles from Kaneki’s pale fingers, winking softly in the candlelight against the dark backdrop of the Wolf’s clothing.

“K-Kaneki...that’s...” the blond murmurs numbly after taking a moment to process, still staring at the familiar looking necklace, “Wait a minute...You knew? This whole time? You knew!?”

“It’s me, Hide.”

“W-W-What…? Wait…wait, wait, wait,” the blond insists, sitting bolt upright on the spot as the meaning of Kaneki’s abrupt statement finally starts to settle in, “But...your hair...a-and you don’t even smell the same! You’re...an...an alpha...a neo-alpha! I mean we were still young but the boy I was talking about...he was definitely an omega, like me!”

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Hide follows the other boy’s gaze as he gestures broadly toward himself — the coiling mass of centipede limbs that encircles the entire circumference of the room, wicked limbs clacking agitatedly against the wood of the walls.

“After the crash, I nearly died. As far as I know, I ended up being rushed to a teaching hospital owned and operated by one of the Washuu’s head medical researchers, but that was only where the nightmare began,” he murmurs forebodingly, bowing his head in shame, “I was implanted with
organs harvested from a dead neo-hybrid when mine failed. Apparently, they’d been working on an alternative method for creating neos, and I just happened to be a prime candidate. As you can see, the procedure was a brilliant success.”

The bee hybrid flinches at his intonation, eyes falling to the ground as he contemplates his role in his childhood friend’s torture.

“You don’t know what it was like all these years, Hide,” the alpha continues, shaking his head forlornly, “Finding out what I was, figuring out I’d lost everything…realizing I’d lost you. The nightmares, loneliness and isolation, the torture. They did things to me that I can never tell anyone about. They broke me, Hide. Several times.”

A small shudder wracks the bee hybrid’s frame as he lets out a breath of shock and despair. He’s not sure what he was imagining, but this is definitely worse.

“Kaneki, I— ”

“I thought I’d imagined you, Hide,” the other boy breathes, and something in the way his face distorts in agony when he abruptly turns to look Hide in the eyes again nearly breaks the bumblebee, “You have to understand…All this time, I’ve been dreaming of you, wishing I could see you again, but I barely remembered anything. I’d forgotten just about everything about you. Everything but your name.

“When I saw you for the first time in that courtyard, I thought I was going crazy again. I tried to tell myself it was all just some kind of coincidence that you’d showed up all of a sudden — now, of all times — looking so weirdly familiar, and with that name…But I just couldn’t let you go. Not after the way you looked at me when our eyes met for the first time.”

“Kaneki,” the bee hybrid sighs defeatedly, “I…why didn’t you just say something? You could have talked to me about it, Kaneki.”

“Asked you what, exactly?” the white-haired boy counters, with a self-deprecating little scoff of laughter, “‘Excuse me, are you the boy I’ve been seeing every night in my dreams?’; ‘Hey, so you have the same name as this hallucination I’ve been seeing since I was a kid — mind if I ask you a few questions?’

“At best it would’ve sounded like I was some creep trying to pick you up or something,” the alpha concludes with a deep frown and a shake of his head, “At worst I’d have sounded like a complete lunatic.”

“But you’re not,” comes the firm reply, almost indignant in its resolution, “And besides, the last time we saw each other was over twelve years ago! It’s totally understandable that you’d be a little bit mixed up about what happened. Hell, I was confused too—pretty much all my family and friends keep telling me I’m nuts for chasing after some ‘imaginary friend’ from my childhood.

"You’re not crazy, Kaneki…at least no more than I am anyway.”

“You have no idea,” the white-haired boy refutes with an adamant shake of his head, “The things I’ve seen, Hide…the things I’ve done. I’m unstable. Whenever I was alone or in pain and I just wanted it to be over because I couldn’t take it anymore—times when I was so fucked up I didn’t even know who I was anymore—I would ‘see’ you. I'd hear your voice telling me you’d stay with me, telling me to hang on—to just keep going and live.

“I used to imagine one day you’d come for me…that maybe you remembered me too and were out
there looking for me. But time passed…and you never did. After a while everything started to run
together, and I started to forget things. Things like what you looked like, what you sounded like…
even the memory of your scent left me eventually. After a while I started thinking it was all in my
head — that maybe you’d never existed in the first place and I’d just dreamed you up out of
desperation.”

The other boy’s words shoot the bee hybrid straight through to his core, piercing deep and lodging
themselves there like a barbed missile in the tremendous ball of guilt that’s been festering deep in his
heart for all these years.

“Kaneki, I’m…sorry…” the bumblebee answers weakly, unable to help the crushed expression that
overtakes his features as he rises to his knees to face the other boy properly, “I did look for you —
every day. All the time. Fuck, I couldn't stop looking for you. I saw pieces of you everywhere I
went! I...”

“Hide...Hide, it's ok,” the alpha says softly, raising his hand to brush gently against the other boy's
cheek in a soothing gesture, “I know. It’s okay…I know you did. How else would you end up in a
place like this?”

The blond tenses up at the other boy’s words.

“That’s right...he still doesn’t know. I haven’t told him yet.’

“I know you would never have given up on me. I know you must have looked for me everywhere
until you finally found me. I still can' believe you came this far just to get to me,” Kaneki assures
him, voice deepening with finality, “That’s exactly why I have to get you out of here.”

Hide flinches again at the other boy’s words.

“W-wait...what?” the blond squawks in bewilderment, “I just found you! Why the hell would I want to
leave now?”

“Hide...I don’t care what happened in the past or what you think you’re responsible for — you don’t
belong here. Not in this hell,” the alpha says calmly, “You’re not a part of this—not like I am.”

“But I got here trying to find you!” comes the indignant reply, “I don’t know exactly what’s going
on or who did what to you, but I know damn well I can’t let you deal with it alone...not anymore.
Whatever’s going on, just...let me help you, Kaneki. I owe you this.”

“Look, I appreciate you wanting to help, but it’s not that easy, Hide. Whatever’s going on, just...let
me help you, Kaneki. I owe you this.”

The blond merely shakes his head in disbelief, mouth set into an indignant scowl.

“If you’re just saying all this to get me to leave, then you can forget it, because I’m not buying it,
Kaneki. I said I’m not going anywhere unless it’s with you and that’s final.”

“You don’t get it,” the alpha sighs in exasperation, “You’re here because of me, Hide.”

“Well fucking duh, Kaneki!!” the blond yells back, finally losing his patience, “What the shit else
would I come to this terrifying fucking nightmare land where literally everyone I run into wants to
fuck me or kill me—sometimes both!—and people are literally eating people for? The goddamned
fresh air!?"
The alpha flinches at his biting retort. It’s more than clear that the omega is exhausted and fed up with people patronizing him.

“Look, I know you’re frustrated, but that’s not what I mean. What I’m trying to say is—”

“I don’t care what you mean, Bakaneki!” the omega snarls with a vehement shake of his head, “Don’t you get it? I’m not leaving this shit show unless you’re with me, and I mean it!”

“Hide, LISTEN!”

The centipede’s words thunder through the nest with enough force to send little tremors of obeisance thrumming down the bumblebee’s sides — not quite a push, but damn close to it. The omega sits at rigid attention, eyes still narrowed in irritation, but unable to deny his instinctual need to acquiesce.

“Sorry, just…hear me out for a minute, okay?” Kaneki says carefully when he realizes that other boy has momentarily calmed down, reorienting his position so that he can sit with his eyes trained on the omega’s face in a solemn expression, “Look…the man in white who confronted you when you were looking for clues earlier—was he a silver-haired and wearing glasses?”

Hide’s face softens into a look of mild surprise at the alpha’s words before he nods slowly.

“I knew it,” the centipede confirms with a low scoff of exasperation, pressing a hand to his forehead, “Arima.”

“Wait…are you trying to say you know this particular homicidal psychopath?”

The only answer the centipede offers is a small sigh accompanied by a shake of his head.

“Care to fill me in? Because your friend definitely tried to kill me,” the blond gripes accusingly, “As in like…ran me through on a sword practically on sight. I’m not even sure how I’m not dead right now, to be honest. Then, while I was literally bleeding to death on the ground this dude started going through all my stuff and mumbling to himself and shit like a real creep-o. That was right before he picked me up and dumped some kind of nasty-ass liquid down my throat. Oh! And then he tossed me into a van full of dead bodies and just like…left me to die in there.”

“Well, that certainly sounds like him…” Kaneki mutters with a small wince and a profoundly weary sounding expulsion of air from his lungs.

“Dude, I’m not trying to judge you or anything…but is this the kind of company you’ve replaced me with while we were apart Kaneki? Because I know I haven’t been the best friend ever, but I’m actually feeling kind of insulted right now to be honest with you.”

“No, Hide, look…the man you met—officially, he’s an enforcer for the corporation, but he’s also sort of my…guardian…so to speak. I mean he’s not exactly the friendly type, and his methods are definitely…questionable, to say the least,” He grimaces as the blond exaggeratedly mouths the words “abusive” and “toxic” at him while shaking his head in disapproval and pinning the alpha with a meaningful look. “But he’s probably the closest thing to a father I’ve ever had, and I can say with confidence that in his mind he absolutely has my best interests at heart. He’s definitely an ally.”

 “…Who assaults random civilians and throws them into death games,” the delivery boy chimes in skeptically.

“What I’m trying to say is that maybe you being here isn’t so random after all, Hide,” the alpha continues, “You have to understand that for us—neo-hybrids—the Washuu conglomerate serves as both jailer and provider. They keep us safe from the eyes of society and the inevitable genocide that
would most likely ensue if our existence ever became common knowledge; but at the same time, they
keep us under their thumb—restricting our movements, where we live, when and how we eat;
forcing us to comply with their ‘research’ and put our abilities to work for the company. There are
plenty of people, hybrid and neo-hybrid alike, that aren’t satisfied living by their rules, but it’s
difficult to just extricate yourself from the system. Arima is one of those hybrids. He’s been heading
up the resistance from within the company’s ranks for years now, and for better or worse he’s been
grooming me to take over as leader in his stead.

“I’m pretty sure that’s why he sent you here, actually” the young alpha adds hesitantly.

The white-haired boy gives a troubled little frown and shifts his gaze to the floor before continuing
on, to which Hide cocks his head to the side slightly, eyebrows quirked in mild confusion. He’s just
not seeing how any of this proves that he needs to leave.

“…And?”

“And I think he wants me to make you my *mate*, Hide,” Kaneki concedes at last.

There’s a long and embarrassingly awkward pause then as the blond takes a moment to process what
he’s just been told before suddenly his eyebrows shoot up to his hairline.

“Wh-what…you mean like…?” Hide’s eyes are wide in disbelief as he sputters incoherently a bit
before making a rather vulgar gesture with his fingers, earning another grimace and a hesitant nod
from his white-haired counterpart.

“They’ve tried it before—not just Arima, but the corporation too,” Kaneki explains, voice tingeing
with irritation, “There’s an uprising brewing, and they know it; they’re desperate to either bring me
over to their side or neutralize me by any means possible. For months they’ve been trying to see to it
that I meet my end, but I guess recently they’ve figured that the incumbent leader of the resistance
won’t be found or gotten rid of so easily—lately they’ve been trying to lure me out with potential
mates instead. According to Arima their end-game strategy is to gain leverage over me by getting me
to take a mate whom they can in turn hold hostage along with any of my potential offspring.

“I haven’t exactly taken up Arima’s mantle yet, but I’ve turned into kind of a prominent figure
among neos — the resistance movement as a whole would be extremely inconvenienced by me
falling prey to the company’s ideations now. Arima and a few of the other leading members have
been pretty adamant that the best way to circumvent the company’s strategy is for me to just take a
mate of my own choosing—or theirs really—and keep them out of sight where the company can’t
reach them.

“Obviously Arima means well, but…well, you’ve seen his methods. They aren’t much better than
the corporation’s really. Recently he’s been sending hybrids in here reeking of heat,” the alpha
admits with a heavily furrowed brow. Hide doesn’t miss the way that the other boy’s jaw clenches
up a bit as he recalls his previous experiences, “There’s a type of metabolism boosting regenerative
elixir laced with a distilled version of the pheromones produced by omegas during a strong heat. It
was developed by Saiki’s researchers to be used in breeding experiments—in concentrated amounts
and with prolonged exposure, it can be potent enough to push an alpha into an induced rut. I can
always smell when it’s in the park.

“And I’ve *been* smelling it,” the centipede adds grimly, “Ever since you first got here. It’s like its
leaking out of your pores little by little, and it’s only been getting stronger by the hour. It’s been
driving me *out of my mind*, Hide. If it were any more concentrated I don’t know that I could control
myself—Do you know what that *means* for a neo-alpha?”
“O-Oh…” the omega noises dumbfoundedly, “Yeah…I guess that would be kind of a conundrum, wouldn’t it?”

At least now the delivery boy knows why all the other hybrids in the park could tell he was the Lamb so damn easily. Apparently, all this time he’s been running around leaking heat pheromones everywhere he goes.

‘Wow. That’s in no way shocking or embarrassing at all.’

“W-wait a minute…” the blond murmurs, finally putting two and two together to come to the same conclusion that Kaneki has, “That’s what was in that gross stuff that this Arima person made me drink? Fucking Spanish fly for alphas?”

Kaneki gives a ragged little sigh as he softly closes his eyes and pinches at the bridge of his nose in exasperation.

“Do you have to say it like that?”

“Sorry…” the bumblebee replies quietly, before the room is overtaken by awkward silence again for several seconds.

“So…I mean…w-what about the…others?” Hide ventures in slightly subdued tones after a few moments.

“Others?” Kaneki echoes.

“You know…the others…that the company or your mentor or whoever sent for you to…uh…you know…” he mumbles half-audibly, not daring to meet the other boy’s eyes. Kaneki stares over at him for a few beats more before understanding overtakes his features and he clears his throat nervously.

“We weren’t…compatible,” the short explanation that the white-haired boy offers is punctuated with a dark look. As the alpha scowls off into the distance Hide tries very hard not to imagine the specific implications of what happens to potential mates that the other boy finds ‘incompatible’.

“Oh,” he breathes, trying and failing to keep the shameless relief out of his voice as he shifts positions nervously. “I see. A-any particular…reason?”

“W-what? N-no…I mean…well…kind of. It’s not like Arima can just go out and find a matchmaker to help with his stupid little project you know,” Kaneki answers, touching a hand to his chin absently, “As you might imagine the selection pool for the game is pretty limited in the first place — the company usually sticks to people who nobody will particularly miss if they happen to disappear — criminals, mafia types, employees that the organization needs to dispose of…As you can imagine that doesn’t make for particularly great romantic interests. A while ago I actually got really pissed off and told Arima that the day I’d stop rejecting his options would be the day he managed to bring in someone who wasn’t a career criminal drowning in the stench of death.

“I didn’t think he would actually take what I said seriously though,” Kaneki mutters darkly, eyes flashing in irritation, “Let alone bring me—”

The alpha catches himself mid-sentence and makes a frustrated sound in the back of his throat before muttering a few curses and something to the effect of his mentor having absolutely no sense of humor under his breath as he scowls at nothing in particular.

“This is not what I meant. You shouldn’t be here, Hide. You shouldn’t be involved in any of this.”
“But I am,” the blond insists, “You may not want me here, but I’m here now — of my own choice.”

“You were wounded, drugged and tossed into a van. If that’s your idea of consent, then you and I are going to have to have a serious talk, Hide.”

“That’s not what I mean and you know it, Kaneki!” he snaps, “Look, ever since middle school I’ve been chasing after urban legends and conspiracy theories, looking for answers -- looking for you. Now I’ve finally found you, and you want me to just…leave? Just like that?”

“YES,” the alpha bellows, burying his hands in his hair as he shakes his head in frustration.

“Do I have to force you Hide?” Kaneki’s gaze is suddenly shrouded in darkness as he tilts his head downward and allows his hair to fall into his face, his low tone exuding a distinctly foreboding aura. The bumblebee feels his pulse quicken and his back round slightly in the beginnings of a submissive pose as the alpha’s tone drops half an octave and acquires a distinctive air of authority, “Is that what you want? Do you want me to ‘push’ you…? Because I don’t want to Hide but I will.”

“N-no! Wait, wait, wait, Ken, wait!!” Hide pleads as he lowers his head enough to look up into the slightly shorter boy’s face through his lashes entreatingly in a purposefully submissive gesture, “Just…hear me out first, okay?”

“Stop that,” Kaneki growls half-heartedly, tilting his chin up and averting his gaze as he tries to maintain his leverage over the situation. Rather than obey, the omega scoots closer to hesitantly rest his hands on the white-haired boy’s shoulders, pinning him with a pleading gaze.

“Look, Kaneki…there’s actually something really important that I need to tell you — something I’ve been wanting to talk to you about for a really long time,” the blond insists, making sure the alpha’s cool grey eyes are trained on him, before he takes a deep breath and plunges into his narrative.

“So, remember when we first met? Back when we were kids?” Hide asks, “I told you I had just moved into the neighborhood…And I had — that part was true.”

Albeit tentatively, Kaneki’s expression finally softens then, gaze briefly falling to the bee hybrids hands; they are settled firmly onto the centipede's shoulders, as though to steady him, “But the truth is, my parents…aren’t really my parents.”

“I was made, Kaneki. In a lab. As far as I know, my bio mom was a test subject in one of the Washuu conglomerate’s neo-hybrid breeding programs.”

The white-haired hybrid goes rigid, eyes widening slightly at this revelation and Hide finally remembers himself. Removing his hands from the other boy, he retreats a little and looks away self-consciously, crossing his arms awkwardly about his stomach.

“My adoptive parents used to be employees of a certain research facility when they were young…a subsidiary of the Washuu conglomerate,” the bumblebee continues hesitantly, “From what I’ve heard, the company they worked for was involved in some really shady stuff...like illegal hybrid experimentation type shady. Performance enhancing drugs, induced genetic mutations, cloning, enhanced physical regeneration, body augmentation — the list goes on.

“One of their biggest projects was the one my adoptive parents worked on — a long-term experiment aimed at finding a way to produce an even stronger line of neo-alphas by breeding existing neos with...
omega hybrids who had particularly low levels of insect DNA. According to the records, there were very few successful births, but those few trials that did succeed tended to result in even stronger neo-alpha offspring.

“The success rate wasn’t perfect though; sometimes failures were born — proto-hybrids…like me.”

“H-Hide…What? What are you saying?” Kaneki murmurs disbelievingly, face contorting into a look of explicit distress and confusion. The bumblebee can only lower his gaze, shaking his head from side to side as he pulls his arms significantly tighter around his own waist.

“A couple years ago, while I was looking for clues about where you might be, I stumbled onto some pretty surprising info about my adoptive parents — I found out they used to work for one of the same companies I’d been investigating.

“I was shocked. It brought up a lot of questions I’d always had about my early childhood…old memories I had locked away started coming back to me, and the deeper I delved into my family’s past the more I dug up. I ended up learning a lot of stuff — stuff that I almost regret finding out about,” the omega says, smiling darkly, “I couldn’t stop once I found out though…guess I just have one of those obsessive personalities, you know?

“Unsurprisingly, I eventually started getting into some pretty shady stuff myself for the sake of my conspiracy research. I got involved with a certain group of neo-hybrids and their sympathizers who gave me a lot info on my history in exchange for me doing a few jobs for them.

“It turns out my parents were only lower level researchers when they were involved in one of the Washuu’s breeding programs…but I think they always had some idea of what was going on. Failures like me were usually kept around and given special testing to see if they exhibited any particular promise. Some of us — especially the physically gifted ones — eventually got filtered into special training programs where they could be put to use working for the company. But the ones born with extra weak hybrid DNA — failures like me who didn’t show any enhanced abilities — were kept in the lab for research purposes until we were old enough to be put to use…as ‘incubators’ for the next generation.

“They labeled us ‘proto-hybrids’ because our genes are technically more human than insect. Our unique genetics supposedly make us more desirable for insemination than ordinary omegas because our relatively high physical endurance and low levels of hybridized DNA mean our bodies wouldn’t react as violently to the presence of hostile neo-alpha cells and vice-versa. Due to more static genetic profiles, apparently our bodies hold up a bit better under the extreme stress of carrying neo offspring too, resulting in slightly more successful deliveries.

“From what I know, my adoptive parents had been assigned to the section that handled my data directly. They were already pretty much fed up with the corporation’s bullshit and had been planning to leave the company and go into hiding for a while by the time they were approached by the Resistance.

“Initially they had only agreed to help get me out and look after me for a while until I could be placed with another family, but after we spent some time together, I guess something clicked — they didn’t want to let me go. It probably didn’t hurt that they’re bee hybrids like me. In any case they erased my old identity and gave me a new name, a new life — everything. We’ve been in the wind ever since.”

“Hide…I— ” Kaneki fumbles a bit as he searches for the right words, only to be silenced by an awkward smile from his childhood friend. Hide’s look does not have its desired effect though, and instead the centipede hybrid turns his head to the side, something akin to sorrow filling his gaze as he
contemplates the implications of what the omega has just told him.

“No, Kaneki, it’s okay. I mean…I guess it’s really not, but…” the bumblebee fumbles, raising his hands awkwardly in an attempt at a placating gesture. The white-haired boy’s face is clouding over with what looks suspiciously like sympathy and Hide sighs in frustration — making Kaneki sympathize with him is definitely not the goal of his confessional.

“It’s actually not as bad as it sounds; I was really little when they got me out, and I had experienced a lot of stuff no kid should ever be exposed to. I blocked out most of the worst stuff so completely that even now I can barely even remember any of it. It wasn’t even until I got involved with all this that it even vaguely started coming back to me…and anyway that’s not even the point of this whole story. I’m not telling you all this because I want you to feel bad for me, Kaneki.” The bumblebee scratches his head a bit as he searches for the right words to explain the situation in a way that will make sense.

“The corporation would never have let employees with that kind of information go that easily. I mean, my parents were potential whistle-blowers. And me? Not only was I one of their prized guinea pigs -- I was evidence. The company searched for us aggressively after my mom and dad got me out, so we had to constantly be on our guard — that’s why my parents have always kept my hair dyed, why we moved around so much when I was young, why I was never allowed to stay over at friends’ houses or let out my hybrid parts when other people were around…I wasn’t even allowed to go to regular school until I learned how to control my presentation completely,” the bee hybrid confesses with a dark laugh as he scratches at the back of his head bashfully, “People would have had questions about how there got to be a single, dark-haired bumblebee in a family of six light-haired honeybees, you know? I wasn’t allowed to hold onto anything from my old identity, not even my name.”

“Don’t get me wrong,” the bumblebee adds, shaking his head as he notices the baleful look Kaneki is still giving him, “There wasn’t really much of anything to hold onto anyway. Until my folks came along I had practically no one, Kaneki. No friends, no family… The mortality rate for hybrids carrying neo-alpha young is really high, and the ones in the program were constantly being impregnated; the only thing I ever knew of my birth mom was the necklace she left me when she died. I have no idea who my dad is, and I don’t know if I have any other living relatives. For all I know I could have brothers and sisters out there who I don’t even know about.”

“Wait…so your necklace…the one you gave me…?” the centipede queries, voice tapering off painfully as he clutches at the little trinket. The bee hybrid nods softly, eyes glued to the floor in a look of contrition as he proceeds.

“You of all people should know that the company has people everywhere, Kaneki. After I was rescued they had their goons out there looking for ‘a male omega with dark hair, wearing that necklace’…That’s how I knew. The day—” Hide can feel his breath hitch in his chest as a familiar warmth prickles mercilessly at the corners of his eyes, but he pushes through it — he has to finish, “The day you were abducted…a part of me knew it wasn’t just an ordinary accident; Something just felt…wrong…from the very beginning. And then when the ambulance came, I recognized one of the markings on the side of it and I knew…”

And now his cheeks and eyes are hot and itchy, angry tears threatening to break free, but Hide pushes them down because he can’t cry now — he doesn’t have a right to cry. He’s not the one who had their entire life destroyed over a case of fucking mistaken identity. Instead the bee hybrid shakes his head and grinds through his confession because he needs Kaneki to understand, and this is the only way.

“They were there for me, Kaneki. You were caught up in something that had nothing to do with you
because of my stupid mistake, and I should have done something — anything — to stop it...I should have protected you,” he insists, hissing through his teeth now as he struggles through all the years of fear and shame and regret that are just now finally catching up to him, “But I didn’t. I didn’t do anything at all, because I was too afraid. Even after I promised I’d never let you be alone again, I just... let you go.

“You were about the only real friend I’d ever had, and I let you go because I was a fucking coward, Kaneki.”

A powerful silence dominates the space around them for a few moments after that, and Hide sits, red faced and angrily rubbing tears from his eyes with the back of his arm, too afraid to look up into the other boy’s eyes for fear of what he’ll see.

For his part, Kaneki is silent; he sits stock still, empty eyed as he retreats into himself momentarily, still processing.

A few moments pass, and when it’s clear the white-haired boy won’t be the one to break the silence, Hide tentatively looks up from under his bangs, neck still bowed in shame as he carefully regards his stony-faced counterpart.

“Do you get it now? Why I can’t leave you here and run off to safety, like this all has nothing to do with me?” he queries softly, flushed lips still quivering a bit with emotion, “It’s my fault that you had to go through all this in the first place. I got you into this, and now I’m here to get you out. I won’t leave you Kaneki — not ever again. I can’t.”

The other hybrid remains wordless, and now his gaze is somewhere far-off, deeply furrowed brow marring his delicate, pale features. Hide averts his gaze as well, bringing a hand up to rub at his neck nervously as he considers his next words with caution.

“Look...I still don’t remember much from when I was still in captivity, but I’ll always remember how it felt, Kaneki. The loneliness, the fear, the anger...Not knowing who or what I was...Thinking nobody would ever really...care...about me,” Hide gulps softly as he prepares to utter words he’s been holding back for a long time — another admission he hasn’t even properly been able to make to himself yet, “Now that I think back on it, I think maybe that’s why I decided to talk to you all those years ago.

“When I looked at you...I could see myself.”

Kaneki’s gaze flashes up to meet his then, sorrowful dove-grey eyes holding Hide’s wet, amber colored ones captive for a solid beat as he searches the blond boy’s face for the answer to a question that neither one of them has the courage to ask yet.

When Hide finally finds his voice again, it’s breathy and faltering and his words don’t come out half the way that he had hoped they would if he should ever finally get the chance to properly say them to the other boy’s face. “My family gave me everything I have, Kaneki — happiness, affection, hope...a life...but because of what I am, it could never really be mine — those things belong to Nagachika Hideyoshi...not me. Even back then I knew that no matter how much I love my family and they love
me, I’ll never feel safe — I’ll never feel ‘home’.

“That day, when I saw you just…break… after your mom died, it felt like something broke inside me too, and I just…I just wanted to give you what I couldn’t have. I wanted you to have a home to come back to -- something real -- but…” the bee hybrid spreads out his hands out in front of himself, staring at them thoughtfully, as a single tear breaks free to run down the side of his face.

“Everything about me is a lie, Kaneki. My necklace… it was the only thing I could give you that was really…me.”

The silence lies heavy and final between them again for a while after that, and it feels to Hide like it stretches the physical distance between them too. He shrinks in on himself little by little as the quiet goes on for what feels like too long.

It feels like he’s about to lose something irreplaceable.

It feels like rejection.

“Heh…should have known…the only thing about me that’s really me, and even that turned out to be a curse. I’m sorry Kaneki, I never should’ve— ”

“...Thank you, Hide.”

When Kaneki finally speaks, his tone is soft and subdued, hesitant, but the bee hybrid can still feel the gentle warmth that infuses it. The blond boy’s eyes slide back up to the neo-hybrid’s face just in time to watch a small, soft smile — bittersweet, but still the most beautiful smile Hide has ever seen — spread across his features ever so slowly as Kaneki’s gaze finally locks with his own through thick lashes, wet with tears.

Carefully but without trepidation, Hide closes the distance between them then and raises his arms to circle the alpha’s back, until he finally has him wrapped up in a solid embrace. He can’t help the way his arms tremble as he pulls Kaneki’s smaller, sturdier form firmly against himself — a solid, reassuring weight in his arms — and even though he knows that he can’t take back anything that’s happened to the other boy right now — maybe not ever — Hide just holds him there like that for a while, feeling him breathe.

“Please don’t make me leave,” he murmurs into the other boy’s ear when he feels Kaneki tense up slightly at the intimate contact, “Your burden is my burden, Kaneki — always. Let me help you. I know we’ve been apart for a long time and I probably have no right to say it, but I’ll say it anyway:

“I love you, Kaneki Ken. More than anything.”

The white-haired boy is quiet for a moment before responding. Hide can feel Kaneki’s silky white strands rustling against his cheek as the other boy shakes his head slowly, warm, wet cheeks rubbing up against is own as if to imprint their feel there forever.

“…You don't know what you're agreeing to Hide.”
“I do,” he insists, letting out a self-deprecating little laugh, “And it’s okay. I’m okay. It’s… what I was ’made for’ in the first place. Heh… if you think about it, it’s basically just like I’ve finally come full circle.”

Kaneki pulls away from the blond abruptly then, to grab him forcefully by the elbows as his sharp, granite colored eyes bore into startled honey-brown ones with fearsome intensity.

“Don’t ever say that,” Kaneki’s tone is a slow, authoritative growl, like rolling thunder, and Hide shivers as it rumbles through him along with a wave of heady pheromones. The bumblebee realizes then that it’s the first time has ever fully heard the alpha in the centipede’s voice, and it sends a delicious flicker of electricity down his spine.

“Y-yes, Alpha,” he returns immediately, tone quivering in both fear and excitement as he tilts his head back and to the side in an act of pure instinct.

A breath later the other boy’s nose is buried in Hide’s nape, breath tickling the sensitive hairs at the back of the omega’s neck as Kaneki inhales long and deep, scenting him impulsively. Hide’s breath catches in his throat for a moment, heart thudding madly in his chest as he freezes up, unable to think, let alone move, while the white-haired boy’s hands release their grip of his elbows so that the alpha’s arms can slide down and lock around his waist.

Kaneki just holds him there like that for a moment after that, soft, starlight colored locks tickling at Hide’s jaw and collarbone while the alpha nuzzles his neck softly, breathing him in desperately.

But a few heartbeats later the other boy is pulling away again, and Hide can’t help the twinge of disappointment that runs through him at the sudden loss of his body warmth. Kaneki’s head is turned to the side, the melancholy look on his face at complete odds with the hint of pink creeping across his nose.

“You… need to go,” the centipede says falteringly, “I’m…I’m not okay, Hide. I could seriously hurt you.”

“More than it would hurt me to lose you again?” the bee counters sharply, face set into a determined glare, “Come on, man! I said I’m staying and I mean it! You think I’m gonna fucking punk out just because you’ve got special dietary needs!? I’m here for you, Kaneki…and that means all of you.”

“It’s not about that!!” the centipede insists, lowering his head so that his hair falls into his face again, obscuring his eyes, “A lot happened while we were apart! I have a lot of pent up anger and aggression, and I… I can’t control myself sometimes — a lot of times! I shouldn’t be anywhere near you — especially not while you’re like… this!”

Somehow the alpha seems even more adamant now than before about Hide leaving, and the bumblebee scowls deeply as an unpleasant sinking feeling forms in his gut.

“I’m a threat to your safety, and you need to go, Hide.”

The omega’s entire body tenses up as he hears the baritone beginning to creep into the centipede’s voice again, adding an increasing edge of authority to his words, and a deep sense of foreboding washes over the bee.

“Kaneki——”

“I’m sorry,” the centipede breathes helplessly. When the other boy’s gaze finally rises to meet Hide’s again, his eyes are dark and remorseful and wet with agony.
“I’m not your Kaneki anymore, Hide.”

“Kaneki, wai—”

But the next time the alpha opens his mouth, his words are heavy with finality, cementing themselves in the omega’s heart not as a suggestion, nor an entreaty or request, but as a command.

Chapter End Notes

(To continue this story-line, head to Chapter 7: The Excitement Of Both Of Us.)

Phew…what a chapter. I just about broke my damn fingers typing this one out, lol. My laptop was down for a while there, so I ended up writing a lot of it on my phone. (You can just imagine the nightmare that was to edit, ugh.) That said, I apologize for any typos - I'll be going through to try and clean it up as much as I can, but I just wanted to get it up for you guys as soon as it was readable.

I know a lot of people were expecting there to be some smut after the last chapter, especially when Kaneki ended up taking Hide back to his hideout, but instead I decided to give you some emotional porn to build up to the climax. This is some much-needed exposition that gets you where you need to be emotionally for the next two chapters (which actually ARE nothing but porn) and I also was feeling in the mood for some catharsis due to real life events.

FYI, I had always planned for this to be the reason Hide and Kaneki were separated as children, and I had also planned for Kaneki to be pretty much aware of who Hide was, but it was really tough to articulate. I ended up having to rewrite it a bunch of times to get it to make sense plot-wise and stuff and somehow it turned into the dialogue-heavy, melodramatic, emotional shit-storm that you just read through. Apologies if it got a little too sappy for some folks. (I'm just a cheesy hack like that, sorryyyyy. U_U;;)

So happy to finally do the reveal about Kimi actually being alive though! Yes, the preying mantis that kidnapped her in the previous chapter was Nishio after all, so it turns out she didn't actually die. It was so funny reading through the comments that were like “Damn that preying mantis! Man, what an asshole!”, though. Lol, what an asshole indeed.

I also really enjoyed writing the flashback to the convo between Touka and Hide at the burger joint. No, there is no meaningful context for it in relation to the rest of the plot, I just really wanted to write the two of them pretending to be in a relationship and being cute together.

As a heads up the next chapter could take anywhere from a week or two to a month to finish, because I have to rewrite most of it from scratch (don't ask). But all of the smut for chapters 6 & 7 is still in tact and backed up in multiple places, so basically nothing of value was lost. Yay!
08/11/2018: Ahh, I almost forgot! I'm not sure if anybody noticed, but changes in Hide's decisions also alter little details between the two scenarios. I've actually been trying to scatter weird little details and things like that throughout the entire fic (sometimes retroactively( ; 7▽7)), so it might be fun to try and see if you can pick them out! None of them are crucial to the plot though -- I just thought it'd be really cool if ppl were able to discover something new every time they come back for a reread! (≧w≦)♡
The One-Eyed King stares back at him pitilessly for a moment, before a slow grin overtakes his features, eyes lit with with a sardonic sort of pleasure.
socks and shoes have also been removed (Kaneki must have taken them off in an attempt to keep him from overheating) he still has his underwear on.

Brow furrowing as he grapples with his mixed emotions about the situation, the bee hybrid manages to quickly pinpoint his missing articles of clothing with a careful visual sweep of the room. His shoes have been paired neatly and sit on the floor off to the side of the bed, while his shirt, denim jeans and socks lie carefully folded atop the little settee over in the sitting area. A full glass of water, presumably procured from the little kitchen area out front, sits invitingly at the very center of the small side table that is positioned to the left of the large bed. Hide eagerly snatches the vestibule up and gulps its contents down the moment he sets eyes on it. Though every inch of his body is on fire like he’s just stepped out of a sauna, his head is surprisingly clear, which indicates that he’s not in heat—a blessing in itself considering the roller-coaster ride his hormones have been on ever since meeting the white-haired boy. Kaneki seems to have taken up permanent residence in his thoughts from the moment they first made contact; ever since they met the attentive young alpha’s strange allure has been working overtime to push the bumblebee’s delicate hormonal balance out of alignment.

As he downs the last of the much-need hydration, Hide briefly wonders just what kind of hybrid Kaneki is. He has yet to see the other boy present, but his pheromones seem to have an uncannily strong effect on the bee. The intensity of the attraction is so strong that he’s still not quite sure whether it is pure compatibility or just his inner omega getting worked up over the sudden exposure to such a reassuring alpha presence in the midst of a life or death situation. Hide can’t remember having ever felt so at ease around another hybrid. Though they just met a short time ago, their personalities fit hand in glove as though he’s known the other boy all his life, and it’s starting to trouble him; there’s no way leaving the park is going to be easy what with the way Kaneki has become such a fixture in his thoughts.

The delivery boy grimaces, shaking his head to clear it, but even when he closes his eyes and wills glimpses of silky black hair and tiny fingertips tracing along faded pages to the forefront of his mind, they remain there undisturbed for naught but a moment before they begin to meld into thoughts of gossamer white locks against smooth marble cheeks and cool, steady hands closing over his hips as his memories of the enticing young alpha in his present intersect with those of the timid little omega boy from his past. There’s a strange squeezing feeling in the bumblebee’s chest, almost as though his heart is clenching up in grief, as Hide abruptly realizes that his growing feelings for Kaneki are already beginning to merge with his feelings toward the boy from his memories—emotions he’s been trying to put a lid on for years.

“No! Just…stop! Stop right there,” He says aloud, forcefully reminding himself of his priorities—his promise, “C’mon, focus, Hide! This isn’t about you or your feelings—It can’t be, and you know why. So just…stop.’

His own sharp self-admonishment resounding in the quiet of the low-lit room, the bee hybrid hastily stands and grabs his shoes before making his way over to the settee, where he begins to angrily yank his missing clothes back on. However, when he is in the midst of tying up his shoes the omega finds himself suddenly taking pause as he slowly becomes aware of a strangely familiar nasal aura that lingers in the air of the White Rabbit’s house. Now that he has moved away from the bed, Kaneki’s scent has subsided to only that which he can still sense lingering on his own skin, allowing this new smell to tease at his nostrils ever so faintly.

Cautiously, the bumblebee slips out his antennae and turns his head this way and that, testing the air tentatively as his sensitive feelers twitch with nervousness, only to abruptly find himself going rigid as he finally identifies the new smell.
It’s blood.

The bumblebee’s eyes slowly widen in fear as his back straightens and he swivels his head around for a few moments, doing a frantic visual sweep of the little cottage.

‘...Where’s Kaneki?’

Hide’s pulse quickens as he concludes that the other boy is indeed absent from the building. He sincerely doubts Kaneki would have left him unattended while he was in such a vulnerable state without good reason, which means that something must have demanded his attention. The thought of exactly what sort of “something” could have caused the attentive young alpha to leave his side crosses Hide’s mind for a moment, genuinely causing his stomach to churn.

Just as his anxiety is coming to a peak, there comes a faint sound from somewhere outside—a low din that gradually surfaces out of the placid silence of the surrounding park only to swiftly submerge again without so much as a ripple, like a distant siren passing in the night. It’s so fleeting that for a few moments afterwards Hide stands there, frozen in place in the middle of the cottage, vaguely questioning whether he actually heard anything at all. The bee hybrid wants desperately to believe that it was just his imagination, but he can’t help the cold sweat that breaks out along his spine as his intuition—that primordial part of his brain that has been working on overdrive ever since he woke up in this godforsaken place—vehemently insists otherwise, declaring emphatically that he knows exactly what he just heard.

It was a scream.

Shoulders trembling, the courier slowly stands and makes his way toward the front door, eyebrows furrowing as he reaches the threshold and suddenly picks up on the white-haired boy’s scent again, faint but clear, and indelibly mixed with the now all too familiar metallic stench of spilled blood.

“Kaneki...?” the bumblebee voices softly, knowing there’s probably no way that the alpha will hear him but calling out to him all the same, as though just the action of saying the other boy’s name right now might give him some of the courage he so desperately needs.

Steadying his breathing as best he can, Hide pushes down on the latch above the door handle and slowly eases open the entrance to the White Rabbit’s House, steeling himself for what he might find on the other side.

When he steps out the door however, he is somewhat relieved to find that the park lights are on, meaning that either it hasn’t been too long since he passed out, or that they have since gone through another full cycle of darkness. Still, the scent of blood grows stronger in his nostrils the moment he sets foot outside, and that in itself is enough to have Hide’s stomach doing little flip-flops of uncertainty and dread. If the lights are up, there shouldn’t be any Wolves hunting, but the noise from before—which he is now positive had to have come from another hybrid—and the strong odor of blood that faintly permeates the air outside would indicate otherwise.

By chance, the bee hybrid’s gaze drifts down to the short, stone path that leads up the front walk to the White Rabbit’s House, and he feels his heart clench up in his chest the moment his eyes light on the wide, red-black stain that runs the entire length of the little walkway, all the way to the foot of the mailbox. An inaudible gasp leaves Hide’s lips at the sight, followed by a ragged little shudder, as unbidden the haunting memory of Nishino’s stifled cries as she had been carried off into the night resurfaces at the back of his thoughts immediately. Hide closes his eyes and breathes in deep as he steadies himself for a moment—it will do him no good to succumb to panic here. The bee hybrid does his best to flush his mind clear of the terrifying possibilities that are currently racking up there by the second, reminding himself that Kaneki is entirely capable of taking care of himself, even in
this frightening hellscape. Unlike Hide, the white-haired boy has proven himself beyond capable of negotiating the dangers of the park—and with a frightened omega in tow no less; He’s not about to fall prey to the Wolves or the other Villagers so easily.

Forcefully willing down the bile that still threatens to rise in his throat, the young delivery boy makes his way down the little paved walk, gingerly sidestepping the glossy black trail of blood that stains its faded stones, glittering with an unsettling sort of tranquility under the moonlight. To Hide’s horror though, the trail does not subside as he moves away from the cottage. Soon he’s clamping a hand over his nose and mouth in disgust as the potent, coppery stench only intensifies the further he gets from the building.

After a few seconds making his way along the gruesome trail, strung along by the hint of familiar pheromones that lingers persistently in his nose alongside that of oxidizing plasma and iron, the bumblebee abruptly halts when he feels a sudden sensation of wetness blossom from the top of his head. Another droplet collides with his crown shortly after and, finally realizing the source of the impact, Hide slowly tilts his head backward only to be met with yet another droplet of warmth—this time on his face—and then another, and another. One by one they gently wet his cheeks and lips as he stares up in confusion momentarily, trying unsuccessfully to make sense of the strange assortment of reds, blacks and pinks that paint the sky directly above him.

“……!!!”

The bumblebee just barely manages to scramble out from under the wide branches of the tree above without his legs buckling, knees trembling as he gasps for breath and shakes his head slowly in disbelief. The now familiar burn of intense nausea rises up Hide’s esophagus with increased vigor, but thankfully his stomach is too empty for him to wretch anymore tonight. Instead the bumblebee slowly lifts his head again and takes in the gruesome sight from a slightly safer distance.

Up above hangs what looks to be the remains of a hybrid torso. Barely recognizable in its shredded state, the large hunk of meat hangs haphazardly from the lower boughs of the tree’s low branches, entrails—or rather what is left of them—slung across the foliage above like hastily strung Christmas tree lights. Hide collapses backwards onto his rear as he blinks several times in shock and clamps both hands tightly over his mouth against the repugnant smell. The body is fresh enough that it hasn’t yet begun to rot, but a faint essence of hawthorn has already begun to suffuse the area around him.

‘It’s not him. It’s not him. It can’t be.’

The hybrid in the tree is completely unrecognizable, but a second tremulous glance upward reveals that the tattered, bloodied scraps of cloth that still cling feebly to the body’s limbs are a starkly different color from the young alpha’s distinctive black ensemble.

Breaths still coming swift and shallow, Hide ventures another tentative look around, antennae twitching frantically atop his head. The bee hybrid picks up on the scent of more blood coming from not far off and, after a few moments of tortured deliberation, he hesitantly makes his way in that direction, hand slipping down into the pocket of his jacket automatically to reconfirm that his knife is still nestled there safe and sound. He tugs the weapon free of its resting place and grips the handle for courage as he hesitantly approaches the source of the odor, unconsciously clenching his jaw when he realizes that this is none other than the clearing where Kaneki marked him earlier. The other boy’s heady smell increases in strength as he comes closer and Hide feels hot tears prickle at the corners of his vision when he realizes that the stench of blood and death has as well. The bumblebee pauses in front of a thick swath of foliage, the final barrier separating him from whatever is the source of the foreboding odor, and suddenly finds himself physically unable to take another
step forward.

“C’mon, Hide…there’s bound to be blood. *People die here*—that’s the type of place this is, remember?” He reminds himself quietly, doing his best to calm his rapidly short-circuiting nerves, “Kaneki’s smart…and he can handle himself—way better than you can. Plus, he doesn’t have you slowing him down anymore. He’s not about to be done in that easily. He’s okay. He’s okay. He’s o—”

Once the bumblebee finally manages to coax himself into taking that last step toward the truth and pushes through to the other side of the brush, there is a long moment of profound silence as he takes in the sight before him. For a solid minute or so, Hide’s awareness drifts elsewhere, as he finds himself wondering for what must be the 3rd time that night whether what he is experiencing is real, or if this is all some elaborate figment of his imagination, destined to disperse and give way to safety and light when he finally opens his eyes and wakes from his night terrors.

Then reality sets in, and he comes hurtling back into the unrelenting ruthlessness of the present at breakneck speed.

What awaits him in the clearing is a scene out of a horror film. There is blood everywhere—splashed up against rocks and tree trunks and sides of bushes, from which it drips to the ground in thick rivulets, creating wide pools of deep red-black that twinkle pristine and sinister under the moonlight. The macabre paint job is punctuated here and there by further material evidence of the massacre that must have occurred in the clearing not long ago—severed hybrid limbs tossed here and there, reams of half-eaten intestines strewn about like hastily shed nylons, heads brutally smashed or separated from their respective bodies or worse—and amidst it all the all-too-familiar scent of the young alpha he so desperately seeks permeates the little clearing alongside the stench of death and decay, clear and practically domineering in its intensity.

A bit of air leaves Hide’s gaping mouth along with what borders on a small, breathy little whine as he sinks to his knees at the edge of the slaughter bed, shaking his head in disbelief. There are body parts everywhere. A few of them he identifies as having once belonged to some of the other hybrids that he’s seen in the park since he arrived—the ones that are still recognizable that is. There’s so little left of some of them and their body parts have been so haphazardly discarded that for the most part he can’t even be sure what belongs to who. Unbidden, scenes from the massacre that was made of the five Wolves who attacked him earlier resurface in his mind and Hide unintentionally lets out a quiet sob as he realizes he’s seen something similar to this before. There’s only one culprit he can imagine being responsible for such a horrific scene, and he dearly hopes that they are long gone by now.

Attempting to reign in his growing fear with a few more deep breaths, the omega finally manages to shakily climb to his feet, desperately willing himself not to think about whether Kaneki’s could possibly be among the bodies before him. Just as he is doing so however, a peculiar hissing, clicking noise, soft but distinct, gradually makes itself known, capturing the blond’s attention and immediately giving him pause once he realizes that it seems to be getting louder and closer by the moment. As the odd noise approaches, the bumblebee slowly turns around, hesitant to pinpoint its source, but even more afraid not to, only to find his breath catching in his throat as he abruptly comes face-to-face with a vision straight out of his darkest fears.

The creature rises high on what looks to be a massive hybrid tail, rife with clicking, snapping insectoid legs, as it cocks its head to the side a bit and regards him in silence for a moment. Limbs trembling uncontrollably, Hide remains frozen in place as the insectoid portion of his brain promptly
reacts to the presence of a powerful predator, shorting out his sense of reason and other higher psychological processes as his senses are swiftly overtaken by pure fear. The bumblebee hybrid stands absolutely still as the masked figure slowly descends toward him, the surrounding scenery swiftly blurring into obscurity as Hide’s focus inexorably collects on the single, glowing red orb that shines bright and forbidding out from under the shadow of the creature’s hood.

The bee hybrid is only jolted back to reality when a gust of hot breath mists up against his face and he abruptly realizes just how close the creature is. It tilts its head slightly, soft wisps of silky dark hair caressing the stricken bee hybrid’s cheeks as it cautiously descends, slowly pressing forward into his personal space, and a moment later there is a soft, slick sensation against the sensitive skin of Hide’s face as something warm and wet slides out from the wide opening at the mouth of the forbidding mask that covers the other hybrid’s lower face to run across the bee hybrid’s left cheek.

As the monstrous hybrid laps away the blood from his lips, cheeks and even the tip of his nose, the delivery boy slowly loses his grip on the tears that he’s been so desperately holding at bay all this time; and when the salty hot droplets begin to stream down from his eyelashes in a river of fire that stings its way all the way down to his chin, it licks those away too, caressing his shuddering flesh in long careful swipes that are almost tender in their application.

“Hiiiihh!” Hide can’t help the pathetic little gasp of terror that slips free from his lips just as his dominant hand reflexively flies up and out.

The creature before him makes a soft sound of surprise as the knife slides between its ribs with little more than a whisper and reflexively the bee hybrid lets out a little gasp of his own, abruptly pulling away. There is a brief moment of stillness between them as the other hybrid slowly bows its head to regard the injury and slides a black gloved hand down to feel at the wound in what almost looks like disbelief. The silence of the little glade is punctuated only by the rapidly escalating sounds of Hide’s increasingly uncontrolled breathing as the blond takes a halting step backward, knife still in hand. He watches in mild disbelief while the creature curls in on itself as it presses its hand tightly against the now gushing wound, presumably in an attempt to staunch the rapid flow of blood. And as the bumblebee’s mind races with the implications of what he’s just done, that step turns into another, and then another, and in the next instant Hide is turning on his heel and bolting from the clearing, heart pounding in his chest.

By the time the young bee hybrid’s senses start to clear and his ability to reason finally returns to him to some extent, he’s fled deep into the northern section of the park, where the lights never shine, and the foliage is thick and unchallenged by hybrid intrusion. His footsteps begin to slow as the rush of adrenaline dissipates and he gradually runs out of steam, finding that he can no longer ignore the fire in his lungs and battery acid in his veins as he struggles to catch his breath.

Stumbling to a halt in the middle of a small break between the trees, the bee hybrid takes a quick look around and heaves a sigh of relief and exhaustion when he finds that the creature is no longer anywhere in sight. He doesn’t waste any time resting on his laurels though. The blow he dealt the monstrous hybrid was quite deep, but even what should have been a critical blow seemed only to faze it—there is no guarantee that the other hybrid isn’t in the process of catching up to him right now, and when it does it’s probably going to be upset. He needs to find a way out of here as soon as possible…with or without Kaneki’s help.

“Kaneki…” the delivery boy can’t help the slight whimper that leaves his throat as the realization that he still hasn’t found any further trace of the gentle young alpha sets in; he doesn’t want to leave without the other boy, but if he doesn’t he’ll most likely be captured and eaten alive by that…thing…that he just encountered. As if to add insult to injury, the familiar upbeat tune of the park’s theme song starts up overhead just then, announcing to him the fact that they are about to head into another
period of darkness.

“Kaneki, where are you?” the blond whispers, hugging himself tightly as he remembers the comforting feel of the other boy’s arms around him.

“Ahaha, I’m afraid calling for him won’t do either of you much good at this point!”

Hide freezes completely, heart jumping up into his throat as a distinctly feminine sounding voice rings out loudly from just a few paces up ahead. The blond instinctively falls back a half step as his sharply narrowed eyes comb the area for the source of the sound. His gaze narrows even further the moment he spots a diminutive, dark robed figure stepping down from the thick cradle of barren tree branches that outlines the edge of the clearing less than ten meters in front of him.

“Poor little lost Lamb,” coos the tiny hybrid as she alights near weightlessly on the grass before him. Still half obscured in the shadow of the thick foliage behind her, the woman’s appearance is hard to make out, but Hide can just barely distinguish the silhouette of a small, heart-shaped face and a few wisps of glossy, faded moss-green hair peeking out from under her heavy cowl, as well as a single, bright red pupil gleaming like a freshly processed garnet under the moonlight.

“Wondering where your favorite alpha disappeared off to? I’ll bet you were thinking he’d have come and rescue you by now, weren’t you?”

“Who are you?” the omega queries in as steady a voice as he can manage, taking another slow step back out of instinctive caution. The Wolf before him is small – a good 20 or 30 centimeters shorter than Hide himself, but he knows from experience just how powerful neo-alphas are, size notwithstanding.

“Oh, no one important…I suppose you might say I’m just another well-wisher,” comes the oddly evasive answer. The bumblebee can almost hear the teeth in her reply, but he somehow doubts that the toothy smile evident in her tone is at all meant for himself.

“Does that mean you’re going to let me go then?” the bumblebee questions bluntly, wasting no further time in getting to the crux of the matter, “I mean, I assume you’re not planning to attack me, otherwise I doubt you would have wasted time saying ‘hi’.”

“Quite the clever one, aren’t you! And surprisingly straightforward too… I wasn’t sure whether you and I would be able to see eye to eye, but you two are actually a bit more alike than I’d first thought. Something tells me we’re going to get along juuust fine.” the young woman declares with an even wider smile, earning herself a slightly perplexed look from the bee hybrid, “You’re right: I have no intentions of killing you. I just thought you might like to know where Kaneki is…seeing as the two of you seem to have already become such close friends in the time that you’ve been here and all.”

Hide’s eyebrows quirk up at the unexpected mention of the white-haired boy, only for him to find his cheeks practically burning once he catches on to the clear implication behind the diminutive neo-hybrid’s words. Memories of the intense throat-fucking that he received from the boy in question just a short while ago rapidly flit through the bumblebee’s mind’s eye again, and he remembers then that Kaneki’s temporary marking still lingers rather strongly on his skin.

She can definitely smell the other alpha on him.

Shaking his head sharply in an attempt to clear it of thoughts of the other man, Hide frowns and
narrows his gaze slightly as he answers.

You’re a friend of Kaneki’s?” the blond inquires hesitantly. Something in his gut tells him that’s not quite the case, but the girl before him did refer to herself as a “well-wisher”, and the fact that she’s chosen to reveal her status as a Wolf to him during a period of daylight would indicate that she’s not here to feed—she could have much more easily waited until the next inevitable ‘nightfall’ to hunt him down unimpeded were that the case.

“More of a work colleague honestly,” comes the amused reply, “But yes, I’m very well acquainted with dear Kaneki—just ran into him in fact! That’s exactly why I’m here.”

“Seriously!? Where is he? Is he okay? Did something happen to him?” the blond demands impulsively, this time unable to stop the desperation from leaking into his tone as he takes a step toward the girl..

‘Why did he leave me alone like that?’

“Much closer than you think~” the Wolf replies in a cryptic little sing-song voice, grin widening, “And I can assure you he can’t wait to get to you.”

As the park music finally comes to an end, the young woman in question steps forward out of the shadows then, and it’s at that moment that Hide realizes he’s just made a terrible mistake. The bee hybrid’s eyes widen as a thick, fuzzy hybrid limb, about as big around as both his thighs together and tipped in a large, wicked claw, plants itself firmly on the ground between himself and the girl before him, soon to be followed by another, and then another, and yet another. Speechless, the blond lets his gaze slowly travel up one of the massive pillars of hair and chitin only to find that all four of them converge at a single point—a massive, furred abdomen that extends out from the back of the heavy cloak that swaths the neo-hybrid before him.

The tarantula’s perfect smile beams down at him from underneath her cowl as her tiny human feet rise off the ground again and a huge pair of chelicerae blossom forth from her lower jaw, coming together with a loud snap that causes Hide to physically flinch. At the sight of the petite Wolf’s hybrid form, Hide finds himself standing rooted to the spot with his mouth slightly agape, unable to move as he merely stares up at her in slight awe.

She’s humongous—perhaps even as big as the creature that he just escaped from—with eight huge arachnoid legs, thick like massive tree limbs and carpeted in copious amounts of coarse hair, each one of them tipped in a large, viciously pointed nail. They are accompanied by a huge abdomen, similarly furred, that dips down slightly as she rises up on her many limbs to leer down at him from about two times her normal height.

“As much as I’d love to take you up on that offer,” he says, shoving both his hands into his pockets nonchalantly as he nods toward his left leg with a little frown, “I think I may have twisted my ankle a second ago while I was running.”

“Your prince charming awaits, Hideyoshi,” the arachnid declares, indicating the woods at his back with a little flourish and a bow of her head, “Or should I say ‘your king’? Hahaha! Shall I take you to him?”

The blond flinches at the abrupt use of his proper name. Something is definitely going on here, and it doesn’t bode well for him at all.

“Your prince charming awaits, Hideyoshi,” the arachnid declares, indicating the woods at his back with a little flourish and a bow of her head, “Or should I say ‘your king’? Hahaha! Shall I take you to him?”

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“As much as I’d love to take you up on that offer,” he says, shoving both his hands into his pockets nonchalantly as he nods toward his left leg with a little frown, “I think I may have twisted my ankle a second ago while I was running.”

“Oh, don’t worry about that—it would be my pleasure to escort you,” comes the toothy reply as the Wolf then extends a two long arachnid legs toward him, leaning in just slightly with her human body
as she does so.

The delivery boy’s body moves with a speed that he hadn’t even known himself capable of as he lunges forward, hands whipping out of his pockets like vipers to drive the knife up into the tarantula hybrid’s chest with all the force he can muster. There’s a loud crunch as he connects with solid flesh, and Hide’s eyebrows crease deeply as he pulls away just as swiftly.

“Haha…ahaha…Ahahahah!”

The blond’s shoulders jump as the clearing is temporarily filled with loud peals of high-pitched laughter, face twisting up in confusion at sight of the two large, hairy pedipalps that extend out from either side of the young woman’s ribs, parting the closure of her cloak open slightly as they fold tightly across her chest in a protective manner. One of them is gushing blood, the clawed end of it hanging from just a few tenuous fibers of chitin plating in the wake of Hide’s blow, and he realizes with a sinking feeling that she must have guarded herself with it just in time.

“Bold move little Lamb—you could have seriously done some damage there,” the tarantula commends him, tossing an amused glance down at her half-severed limb, “It’s a shame you didn’t aim just a liiittle bit higher.”

The bee hybrid’s back stiffens as she rises to her full height again to regard him fondly, blood draining from his face as he realized just how well and truly fucked he is.

“I do applaud your instincts though—I think I’m finally starting to see the resemblance! Has anyone ever told you that you have all the makings of a stone-cold killer?” the spider comments, voice bounding with unbridled amusement.

“Then again…,” she adds after a small pause, “I guess you already are one, aren’t you? Ahahahahaha.”

Hide’s face twists up in mortification at her words, as his thoughts are immediately flooded with images of the young woman that he dispatched earlier that night.

“Wow, that hurts like a bitch,” the Wolf comments as she uses both her human hands to casually snap off the dangling end of her damaged claw. Hide looks on in a mixture of awe and disgust, a trembling hand flying up to cover his mouth as he watches the bizarre spectacle with a twinge of nausea. The girl in question seems completely unfazed by the loss of the appendage, and in a moment he realizes why. As the bee hybrid looks on he notices that the blood flow from the end of the limb has already been staunched, and the wound itself is quickly progressing from a gaping fissure to a partially healed gash as it stitches itself back together rapidly.

“Wh-wha…?”

“Ahahahahahahaha!” the girl before him giggles loudly, infinitely amused by his perplexed reaction.

“The look on your face right now…ahh…I was so hoping you’d make me do this the hard way. Thank you, dear Lamb,” she confides tenderly, voice a near whisper as she slowly leans in again and caresses his lower lip with a delicate thumb, “I’m beginning to understand why dear Kaneki seems to have such a hard-on for you. You’re so cute! Kind of a shame I had to take all those suppressants…I can only imagine what he’d do to me if I got greedy and gobbled you all up myself. Mmm.”
“That doesn’t mean we can’t still have a little fun together though,” she whispers deviously deep in the bumblebee’s ear, scratching lightly underneath his chin with her forefinger.

Hide shudders violently as the Wolf’s warm breath mists against his throat. Tiny as she is, her presence has incredible force—he’s easily cowed into submission by the powerful pheromones that suddenly seem to exude from her entire body with her suggestive words. The omega can do little but stand rooted to the spot, trembling uncontrollably as the diminutive tarantula hybrid folds her dainty little arms—thin and unyieldingly strong, like narrow bars of solid iron—around his shoulders and draws him in close so that she can press a small kiss to the tip of his nose, giggling delightedly at the way he whimpers and shudders in response. Her bony fingers wind themselves tightly into the hair at the back of his head as she leans in to lick one long, wet stripe up the side of his face, wrapping both her slim little human legs around his torso to hold him in firmly in place when he flinches away from the unsettling sensation. Two sharp pinpricks of pressure at his back—the clawed tips of her outstretched hybrid legs—corral Hide back into place each time he shies away, as the Wolf laps carefully at his cheeks, throat and around the sides of his neck, thoroughly coating him in her potent saliva. And when at last her work is finished, she leans in to run a small, pointed tongue along the seam of the omega’s lips before abruptly releasing him.

“Mmm…not too bad,” the spider comments, licking her lips a little, “A little sweet for my tastes, but nice and spicy.”

Hide grimaces at the unsolicited commentary, only to be abruptly assaulted by the disconcerting sensation of weightlessness as the large hybrid legs at his back latch onto the fabric of his coat and effortlessly lift him up into the air. The harsh fibers that cover the arachnid’s hairy limbs scratch painfully at the unprotected flesh of his hands and face as the bee hybrid is then cradled tightly to the tarantula’s hybrid underbelly, and a moment later the ground lurches away underneath him as his captor begins to move.

The Wolf is none too gentle carrying Hide toward her destination, allowing his legs to bang and scrape against rocks and foliage haphazardly as she hurtles through the woods with all the grace and speed of her species. They’ve only been in motion but a few minutes, however, before she gives a sharp cry of pain and surprise, and suddenly Hide is being forced to shut his eyes against the dizzying view as the world tilts on its axis. The bee hybrid gives a loud yelp of his own when the Wolf unceremoniously dumps him to the ground, his legs alight with stinging, throbbing pain from multiple mid-transit collisions.

“I thought I’d made it abundantly clear by now, Eto...”

“Auuughhh!!!”

There is another loud cry off to his left, and Hide’s eyes widen, snapping over to the source of the vaguely familiar sounding voice. He is rewarded with the sight of a hooded, masculine figure slowly rising from a low crouch to stand over the spider’s twitching form just a couple paces away, one large, heavily furred tarantula leg grasped tightly in his hand.

“…That you don’t...”
The loud, tortured cries of the Wolf—“Eto”, as he had called her—shatter the relative silence of the woods as the dark-haired hybrid slowly twists the leg in his hand until her screams are accompanied by the sounds of joints popping and ligaments snapping. There is a sickening pop as the man gives the limb one last twist, maliciously wrenching the spider’s leg from its socket without hesitation or remorse, and the young woman's high-pitched scream nearly pierces Hide’s sensitive eardrums with its volume.

The bee hybrid looks on in confused horror as the newcomer gives a low, pitiless laugh and tosses the limb off to the side before casually grinding his heel into her neck. Messy black hair frames a smooth, pale face whose neck and lower face are already awash in bright red, and Hide watches as the other man scowls and disdainfully spits out a large wad of half-chewed flesh. Another careful look at the green-haired woman reveals a large chuck missing from her left shoulder, and Hide realizes that the dark-haired hybrid must have attacked her mid-travel, prompting her to toss the bee hybrid aside.

“Tch…You taste like shit, ‘Takatsuki-sensei’. The fuck have you been eating?”

“Ahahaha…hah…Took you a lot longer…ngh…th-than I expected, Kaneki,” comes the Wolf’s rattled reply as she grins up at her captor weakly in amusement, “I’m sure you’ll be pleased to know that…ngggahh!…your dear Hideyoshi and I…ngh…h-had time to become…ah!…very well acquainted while you were indisposed…Ahahahahahaha!”

’Kaneki?’
The blond's expression contorts into a look of pure perplexion as he struggles to follow the exchange, blinking up at the dark-haired hybrid incredulously from his place on the ground.

It is Kaneki.

Although it takes a few moments for Hide to recognize the other boy, for the most part he does look much the same as he did when the bumblebee last saw him. However, there’s something about the way the young alpha carries himself now—the sharpness of his movements, the abrasiveness in his tone, the vicious sneer that lights his face as he grinds his heel into the Wolf’s throat—that make him seem like a different person entirely. Personality-wise, the dark-haired hybrid before him bears little resemblance at all to the gentle, if reticent, young alpha that Hide knows. In addition, his once luminescent white locks now gleam with an entirely different type of allure under the moonlight; glossy, jet-black strands stick to Kaneki’s cheeks and forehead here and there, plastered to his face with an equally dark, somewhat viscous looking substance that the blond belatedly realizes is half-dried blood—a lot of it.

The dark-haired boy doesn’t seem to acknowledge the bumblebee’s presence, nor does he respond verbally to the tarantula’s obvious taunt. Instead his frown deepens a bit more, cool glare intensifying as he cracks one of the knuckles of his free hand under his thumb with a loud snap and shifts the position of his heel so that it fully compresses the Wolf’s wind pipe, shutting her up completely and earning a strained little gurgle and a wheeze of pain from her in response, just before reaching back to grab another one of her hybrid legs.

It’s then that Eto makes her move. Suddenly one of the tarantula hybrid’s free legs is flying toward the dark-haired boy’s neck claw first, forcing him to lean backwards slightly so that he can smoothly deflect the blow with his forearm. The spider’s attack sails harmlessly past its target, but it’s made clear a moment later that the attack was only meant to serve as a distraction as two more wicked arachnid claws simultaneously direct themselves to the joint of the leg that Kaneki holds firmly in his other hand. They viciously slice into her leg just above the joint from either side in a pincer attack, severing the appendage from the green-haired girl’s body and knocking Kaneki slightly off balance in the process as it comes free.

“Haha…I do so enjoy our little talks, ‘your highness’,” the diminutive neo-hybrid comments half-mockingly as she uses the opening created by the dark-haired boy’s slight loss of balance to wrench herself out from under his boot and scuttle away awkwardly on her remaining six legs, “But unfortunately, I’m afraid my work here is finished.”

Recovering his footing almost immediately, Kaneki snarls viciously as he lunges after her, foot coming down in a powerful axe kick that shatters the ground right near her head.

“I must say, it’s a shame we couldn’t spend a bit more time getting to know one another sweet Hideyoshi!” the Wolf declares fondly, completely ignoring the other alpha as she narrowly dodges a consecutive blow from his knee, using that same backwards momentum to propel herself up into the branches of the dense foliage at her back in an impressive show of agility, “As a token of my affection, I’ll be sure to send your next of kin along to collect your remains when it’s all over! Hahahaha!”

And with that, the tarantula is gone; her grating, high-pitched tone lingering hauntingly in the blond’s ears as she retreats off into the night, dragging the half-severed remains of her ruined leg behind her.

“Tch…conniving little bitch,” the dark-haired alpha spits disdainfully before slowly turning on his heel to face the dumbstruck bee hybrid.
“K-Kaneki!” Hide calls out hesitantly, unable to help the slight look of hope that begins to color his features at the realization that the other boy has in fact noticed him, “You’re okay! Thank g—"

“Did she touch you?” the alpha demands, face darkening forebodingly as he slowly approaches the delivery boy. Hide scrambles backwards on his hands a few paces as the alpha nears him, face twisting into a look of pure confusion once more as his short-lived sense of relief dashed to bits in an instant by the other boy’s chilling glare.

“W-wha—?” Hide noises nervously as Kaneki grabs him by the wrists and pulls him to his feet, cutting him off mid-sentence.

“Did Eto touch you?” he repeats. The dark-haired boy’s fingers are so tight around his wrists as he pulls the blond boy to his chest, Hide is sure they’ll leave a mark, “Did she fuck you, Hide?”

“Wh-what are you—Ah! K-Kaneki, wait a…H-hey!” the bumblebee shouts as the other boy roughly grabs him by the back of the neck with his free hand, easily forcing Hide’s head down so that his nape comes right under the alpha’s gaze in a submissive pose. Ignoring the bee hybrid’s angry protests, the dark-haired hybrid abruptly leans in and presses his nose into the tender flesh of Hide’s nape, scenting him deeply.

“Fuck…fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck,” Kaneki snarls, face contorting into a look of anguish and rage as he releases his grip on the delivery boy’s neck and abruptly backs him up against the nearest tree, blunt obsidian nails scoring deep marks into the soft bark at either side of Hide’s waist as the alpha hems him in, “Fucking Eto.”

“K-Kaneki…what’s going on?” ventures the confounded omega nervously, unable to contain the small shiver that runs down his spine at the sound of the derisive little chuckle that emanates from low in the other boy’s throat in response.

"Haha…What’s going on…? You don’t even know why you’re here, do you Hide?” the alpha asks quietly, dark bangs obscuring his eyes as he leans forward to rest his hands lightly on the omega’s hips, “Why the management throws cute little omegas like you into the game in the first place?”

The question earns him naught but another puzzled look from the blond, this one tinged with steadily increasing uneasiness as the bumblebee squirms in embarrassment under his intimate hold.

Something is terribly, terribly wrong.

"You're bait, Omega," the dark-haired boy growls into his ear, teeth grazing lightly against the taller boy's ear lobe with each carefully enunciated syllable, "A tender little morsel, tossed in to raise the stakes—to get me hard…to tease me into the action in the hopes that I'll fuck you and mark you and breed you…just the way you've been practically begging for it ever since you got here. They're fucking with me, Hide. All of them. And you know what?

"It's working."

The blonde blinks and stares back at him in stunned silence, breath coming swift and shallow as he struggles to get his head around what the other boy is saying. He gets that he’s been thrown in by
the game’s proprietors to liven things up, but what does that have to do with the dark-haired boy?

"I should’ve claimed you earlier," Kaneki murmurs throatily, pinning the blond with a smoldering gaze as he presses their foreheads together, "I wanted to take you right then and there, but I hesitated like a coward. Instead I should’ve flipped you around and taken you up against that tree the way I really wanted to—given it to you good over and over again right after I got done fucking your throat. I should have pounded your tender little omega cunt into the dirt, marked you up good, pumped your little belly full of my seed right then and there. Then you and everyone else would know exactly who you belong to."

Flushing profusely, Hide gives a sharp bodily cringe when the dark-haired boy abruptly lets out a low, abrasive burst of laughter, shaking his head.

"Ahahaha! I don’t even know why I was stopping myself. Haha…I could have had you right then, you were so fucking desperate for it—begging for my mark like the thirsty little omega cumslut you are," the alpha laughs softly, so close now that Hide can feel the other boy’s warm breath mist up against his cheeks and smell the carrion on his breath—close enough to kiss him, “I should have had you on your back then and there, Omega—writhing on my cock, choking on my seed while I pumped your sweet cunt into the dirt, marked you up good, pumped your little belly full of my seed right then and there. Then you and everyone else would know exactly who you belong to."

A resounding ‘crack’ rings out in the little clearing as the dark-haired boy’s head snaps to the side with the force of the omega’s open palm connecting with his cheek, followed by a heavy silence as Hide stands there panting and trembling softly for a moment, bitter tears of humiliation finally breaking free to stain his reddened cheeks.

"W-what the fuck, man?" the blond utters quietly after a moment, unable to mask the raw hurt in his voice, “What happened to you? W-why would you say something like that...?"

There’s a weighty pause before the dark-haired boy’s chest suddenly rumbles with another low chuckle.

“Aha…ahahaha…You still don’t get it do you? I guess you really did forget," laughs the alpha ironically, voice deepening with a hint of sorrow as he slowly raises his head to pin the blond with a grim look of pity, “You know sometimes I wonder, Hide—How one person can be so smart…and yet so fucking dense.”

Hide feels a tendril of cold slip up his spine as Kaneki closes his eyes and slowly tilts his head back, a small groan rippling down his throat column as he suddenly begins to tremble lightly with exertion. A familiar stretching, crackling sound permeates the air as the dark-haired boy shudders bodily against him, nails scoring even deeper lines into the bark of the tree trunk at his back as the alpha’s pale fingers clench and unclench with the strain of his presentation. The bumblebee’s stomach muscles knot up as the other boy’s hot breath fans out across his throat, dampening his collar bones with condensation as it collides with the cold air, and he watches, transfixed with morbid fascination, while Kaneki’s spine arches in slightly and section after section of smooth, purple-black protein begins to materialize from the small of the alpha’s back, just above his hips, creeping down from the hem of his hooded jacket until it obscures the backs of his legs. The blond gasps softly in surprise when the other boy’s half-hard cock presses into his hip with the motion, and in response the dark-haired hybrid lets out a low moan, rubbing his growing erection up against the bumblebee suggestively as he slides a knee inbetween his legs to prevent him from moving the moment he tries to shift away.

Hide looks on in stunned silence as the dark-haired boy’s transformation progresses and the clearing
is rapidly filled with the soft, snapping, clicking noises of dozens of long, wicked hybrid legs, as well as the intermittent clacking of chitin plates against one another as Kaneki’s massive tail coils around and in on itself, steaming slightly in the cold winter air. The dumbstruck omega takes in the grotesque sight before him in absolute horror while the alpha’s massive hybrid tail continues to present itself, myriad limbs writhing fitfully under the moonlight as the dark-haired boy produces inch after steaming inch of glistening hybrid flesh from the small of his back, until they are both dwarfed by the massive appendage. He stares on silently in abject disbelief, eyes roving over the sight before him in increasing terror as at last all the puzzle pieces begin to click into place.

“Kane….ki…? Y-You’re the…?” Hide can’t help the way his pitch rises as his breath catches in his throat on the last syllable or the hot tears that gather at the corner of his eyes as something akin to betrayal chills his insides. The bee hybrid’s voice grows breathy and strained as his heart pounds in his chest, and he suddenly realizes that he’s on the verge of another anxiety attack, “You…th-this whole time…?”

“What’s the matter, little Lamb? Are you frightened?” the centipede queries softly, giving another low laugh as he slowly tilts his head back down to reveal a mismatched gaze, the soft grey that rings his right pupil completely at odds with the livid red orb that gleams like a drop of fresh blood against its obsidian sclera in his left eye socket. Bloodstained lips ghost across Hide’s throat as the dark-haired alpha leans in until there is less than a hair’s breadth of space between them, voice dipping down into a throaty whisper.

"\(\text{Y}_\text{e}_\text{shoul}_\text{b}_\text{e}_\text{.}\)"

A quiet whimper escapes Hide’s lips as Kaneki’s sharp teeth graze the side of his neck lightly with each consonant.

“K…Kaneki…please…”

“Please what, Omega?” the other boy echoes quietly, taking the bee hybrid's chin gently between his thumb and forefinger to tilt his face up until they are eye-to-eye.

"P-please…don’t do this,” Hide whispers, eyes clenching tightly shut as he grits his teeth and struggles just to breathe steadily,"...Please!"

"I’m afraid it’s already done,” comes the chilling reply, as the centipede runs a delicate thumb over his lower lip, “The bill has come due, Hide. ”

Thoughts racing, the bumblebee hybrid bites back tears as he slowly opens his eyes to look the other boy in the face. When he does, he finds himself flinching away slightly as the neo-alpha’s smoldering gaze vivisects him on the spot, cowing him with its intensity. Kaneki’s tone is low and cool with finality, and in that moment Hide can feel his head going a bit light with the realization that the quiet, gentle alpha he’s grown so attached to is nowhere to be found.

“K-Kaneki…” the bumblebee breathes quietly, eyebrows scrunching up in anguish as he slowly closes his eyes again, “I’m sorry.”

And then his head is flying forward, forehead connecting solidly with the neo-hybrid’s nose as he jabs his knuckles directly into the knife-wound in the other hybrid’s ribs with all the strength he can muster, earning a loud groan in response. The dark-haired boy recoils reflexively, curling in on
himself in pain, and the bumblebee wastes no time in using the opening to slip free of his grasp and take off into the woods.

Hide’s not quite sure where he’s headed as he sprints away, but the adrenaline in his veins carries him like a tailwind until he is running faster than he’s ever run in his entire life. He’s already managed to make a considerable amount of distance a few moments later when suddenly there comes the low rumble of something massive moving heavily against the ground in the distance.

“Haha…ahahahahaha…Hiüüideeeeee”

The bumblebee hybrid can feel the hairs prick up along the back of his neck as the centipede’s low tenor crawls its way up from the depths of the dry, chilled earth to echo deep in his ears, and he is immediately filled with the knowledge that there is absolutely no turning back now. Kaneki’s current tone and demeanor have made it clear that if he is captured by the Wolf again it will be over for him in more ways than one—he has no other option now but to find a way out of the park, and fast.

Wracking his brain, the delivery boy deliberately veers away from the course that will lead him deeper into the Northern region, instead opting to head back towards the more central area of the park. As he does, he catches a glimpse of the large roller-coaster that he used as a lookout post earlier and he’s not sure why, but something his gut tells him to head for it.

That’s how the bee hybrid finds himself racing up the stairwell that leads to the top of the large attraction, panting heavily as he takes the steps two at a time. It’s not until he gets to the top of the ride, a good 10 stories up in the air, that Hide realizes it’s been a little while since he actually heard any signs of the centipede coming after him, which he’s not entirely sure is a good thing. The bee hybrid swivels his head around, feelers out as he searches for any trace of the young Wolf but comes up empty. Heart pounding, he wracks his brain contemplating his options now that he’s stuck at the top of a 100-foot-tall tower with no way of knowing whether or not the other hybrid is lurking around somewhere nearby, ready to snap him up the moment he makes a move.

As he looks around desperately for ideas, the delivery boy’s gaze finally lights on the high concrete wall that delineates the Northern edge of the park in the distance, and an extremely reckless plan begins to take shape in his mind. Hands trembling, Hide hastily slips off his jacket, followed by his shirt. Surprisingly, the cold wintry air stings far less against his bare skin than he remembers, and the bee hybrid realizes then that his fever still has yet to subside. He can feel the cold but only faintly; his entire body thrumming with an odd sort of frenetic energy, as though he’s had just some really strong caffeine. He hadn’t had an opportunity to pay it much mind earlier, but the bumblebee can definitely sense a difference in himself—some strange new vital force that infuses his body, heightening his senses and granting him a boost of strength.

The bumblebee tucks his shirt into one of his front pockets and secures the large coat around his waist before hesitantly climbing down onto the rails of the roller-coaster. For a brief moment the observation loft is filled with the familiar crackling, stretching sounds of his invertebrate appendages springing forth as he presents, and soon Hide finds himself standing a bit more confidently on the wide metal tracks, hybrid parts granting him better balance as his center of gravity shifts slightly downward toward his hips with the additional weight of his bee abdomen. The bee hybrid then proceeds to make his way up the tracks as carefully as he can, dropping onto his stomach to shimmy along in places, until at last he reaches the highest point of the ride.
As a flying insect, Hide’s not particularly bothered by heights, but an accidental glance downwards confirms that he is indeed very high up. A chilly Winter breeze gusts through the hair at the back of the delivery boy’s head and he can feel the thick stripe of soft yellow and black fur that rings his neck ruffle in the wind, tickling the heated skin around his collar bones.

It’s going to be a long, terrifying way down if he doesn’t make it.

Tentatively, the bumblebee extends delicate, gossamer wings out to either side of his body and allows himself to just feel the wind for a bit, using his antennae to get a sense of where it’s headed. Surprisingly, all his hybrid appendages feel like they’re in exceptionally good condition right now, and as the bumblebee’s wings buzz to life, he feels that same foreign energy that infuses the rest of him coursing through them with even greater strength than in the rest of his body.

He might just be able to do this.

The delivery boy stills for a moment as he gathers his nerve, closing his eyes to try and help himself forget how far the drop is to the ground if he should fail. Hide hasn’t flown in quite a while. Due to his relatively weak presentation, the bumblebee’s wings are rather small in size in proportion to his body even for a bee, meaning that it’s a lot of work for him to keep himself in the air and he tends to tire out rather quickly. He’s usually not particularly good at staying airborne for longer periods of time even under the best of circumstances, but the current situation sees him at an even greater disadvantage—the night air is terribly cold and the sun isn’t out, which means that his wings won’t be able to absorb enough heat to work properly from outside sources, leaving him no choice but to rely on his body heat alone. It’s a highly risky plan; however, with Kaneki presumably hot on his trail, this is quite possibly the only way he’s going to make it across the park and to the wall beyond.

“Ok…ok, just…calm down. You’ve got this,” Hide wills himself aloud as he carefully orients his body toward the portion of the park that houses The Cheshire Cat’s Tree, “It’s just like riding a bike—you never really forget how.”

The bumblebee flutters his wings experimentally a few times, and once he’s satisfied that they’re not about to give out on him, he closes his eyes, standing tall at the pinnacle of the large attraction, and takes a deep, deep breath. Eyebrows clenching up in tense anticipation, he lets go of the breath he’s been holding as he leans forward and plunges over the edge. There’s a nauseating moment of free fall before his soft, pliant wings hit their stride and begin buzzing rapidly enough to give him the lift he needs, but after that the bee hybrid manages to even himself out a little bit until he’s suspended just below the rails, a good 10 meters above the tree tops. Hide can feel the strain on his back and shoulder muscles as they move rapidly to keep him airborne—he won’t be able to keep this up for too long before he needs a break.

The bumblebee leans into the wind as he pushes himself toward his goal, surprised by how much ground he’s managed to make already. His wings are still a little stiff from the cold, but the heat that suffuses his entire body keeps them beating strong and steady against the cold air. Thankfully the wind seems to be working in his favor a little bit as it blows on a slight northwesterly course; it should give him just enough extra push to make it to the wall before his stamina gives out.

Hide has already managed to traverse a couple hundred meters or so when he suddenly tenses up, antennae aingle with the sensation of a heavy ripple of air approaching him from directly below. The bee hybrid flinches bodily as his insect instincts kick in and his wings immediately reverse their thrust, banking and pulling up as quickly as they can manage—but it’s not quick enough. A moment later a yelp of terror goes up from the bee hybrid as a massive shadow erupts out of the trees, stunning him cold as it slams into him from below, just before incredible pressure closes around his hybrid abdomen and wrenches him down from the sky.
The last thing Hide sees before he hits the ground is a long, plated, serpentine tail, glistening forbiddingly under the moonlight while scores of sharp, vibrantly colored legs clench and twist around him, digging into his sides roughly as he is plucked from the heavens and dragged straight back down to hell, enveloped in the centipede’s tight, unyielding embrace.

“Ah…a-ahh…”

A soft moan parts Hide’s lips as his eyes flutter open. Wincing at the sharp pain that emanates from his right side, particularly his right wing, he coughs and sputters a bit as he attempts to sit up, only to find himself unable to move.

“You left me.”

The bumblebee feels every hair on his body stand on end, spine going completely rigid as the centipede’s low tenor sounds from directly behind him. The centipede’s long, wide tail twists and compresses itself around his lower body, wicked hybrid legs digging into the flesh of his hips and thighs as they hold him tightly in place and Hide’s lungs seize up in his chest for a few seconds, causing him to gasp loudly for a few moments as he is unable to take in any air.

“Why did you leave me, Hide?” murmurs the alpha softly, sliding a hand up to grasp the bee hybrid’s jaw between cool porcelain fingers. Kaneki’s tone is almost tender as he winds one muscular, deceptively slim forearm around the bee hybrid’s midsection from behind, leaning forward to press soft lips to the taller boy’s temple, “I was so lonely without you.”

The blond shudders at the feel of Kaneki’s warm breath steaming up against his nape, tickling his collarbones from behind as the dark-haired hybrid’s voice echoes in his ears, hollow and strangely forlorn sounding. The dark-haired boy has him wrapped up in his tail and held tightly to his chest as they recline against the base of a huge fir tree. Hide can see its sprawling branches spread out overhead when he tilts his head back in a futile attempt to staunch the tears of fright that sting at the corners of his eyes. A dull ache suffuses his entire right side, especially his right wing, and a timid glimpse off the side reveals that it is slightly damaged—there’s a small tear in the upper portion of the delicate appendage.

“Kaneki… please…hic…I…,” the bee hybrid hiccups desperately, voice coming out in little more than a strained half-whisper as he struggles to gather his racing thoughts into a semi-coherent stream of syllables, “I can’t stay…I h-have to go. You don’t understand…th-there’s somebody out there waiting for me—s-somebody really important to me. I have to find him! I can’t stay Kaneki, I have to find him, I —Mnnh!”

The blond’s frantic rambling is cut short as the centipede tugs his chin to the side and snatches his mouth up in a biting kiss. Hide’s eyelids squeeze closed reflexively, no longer able to hold back the hot tears that slide down his cheeks as the other boy slowly ravages the inside of his mouth. The alpha laves roughly at his upper palate and the backs of his teeth with his tongue, before he begins thrusting his tongue in and out of his throat repeatedly, choking the bumblebee slightly as he fucks his oral cavity with the slick, wet muscle until Hide’s nose and throat are full of the taste of bitter iron and Kaneki’s strangely sweet saliva. When at last the centipede pulls away he drags a long, red-pink trail of semi-opaque saliva between their tongues, leaving the omega panting and gagging slightly on the odious stench of blood that suffuses his mouth and nose alongside his captor’s unique flavor.
“Puhaah…guh…” the bee hybrid’s head lolls to the side limply as he coughs and sputters, struggling to replenish his air supply even as he gags on the suffocating taste of death that lingers on his tongue.

“Haa…haha…P-please…Kaneki…h-have to…I p-promised him,” Hide sobs quietly, leaning his head back against the other boy’s chest in exhaustion as tears of desperation and anguish slowly leak down from under his puffy red eyelids, “P-please, let me go to him…I promised…I promised…hic…p-please, Kaneki…”

“Haha…ahahahaha,” the amusement that colors the dark-haired boy’s tone is dripping in bitter irony as he slowly licks his lips clean, leaning forward to rest his chin on the bee hybrid’s shoulder and gaze at him thoughtfully from under his lashes, “Oh…? You promised, did you?”

Hide shudders as the dark-haired boy gives another low laugh that is laden with something akin to pity, eyes narrowing almost fondly as he presses his mouth to the blond’s ear, and suddenly Hide’s nostrils are full of the other hybrid’s pheromones, overpowering his senses and clogging his nose with the heady scent of overripe orchid nectar and melancholy and sex.

“Let me make you a ‘promise’ this time little bee,” the centipede whispers, leaning in so close that his teeth graze the outside of Hide’s ear with every syllable he utters, “The only way you’re going anywhere, is with my mark on your neck and a belly full of my seed. Understand?”

“Nn…! …A-ahh…!” the bumblebee whimpers softly at the feeling of a blunt black nail tracing it’s way down the center of his chest, only to slide back up and flick roughly at one of his nipples, “A-ah! K-Kane…! Kaneki, w-wait!”

His cries fall on pitiless ears as the centipede takes him by the hips and lowers him to the ground, eliciting a yelp of pain from the blond when his tattered wings are pressed into the cold grass underneath his back. A sadistic grin lights the alpha’s gaze as he teases the blond, grazing cool hands along Hide’s sides as he leans in to nip and suck at his lips a bit before dipping his sinful tongue back into his mouth.

“M-mmnn!” the bee hybrid squirms fitfully as the centipede catches him up in another searing kiss, thoroughly ravaging the omega’s mouth again with his tongue, lips and teeth. This time when the dark-haired boy pulls away he pauses, holding Hide’s mouth open with his thumb while he allows the spit to pool in his mouth before leaning in to let it drip down onto the omega’s waiting tongue in one big drop. The blond squeezes his eyes closed in humiliation as he is forced to swallow down the centipede’s bittersweet saliva once again, unable to move with the other boy straddling him as Kaneki’s massive tail pins his thighs down from above. The dark-haired boy repeats this process a few times before he finally releases the bumblebee’s mouth for a final time, sitting up to stare down at Hide thoughtfully for a moment while the omega trembles and pants softly, struggling to regain his breath.

“Do you want to know what you taste like, Hide?” the dark-haired boy murmurs, absently flicking a thumb over one of the bee hybrid’s sensitive nipples as he slowly leans in to press soft lips to the blond’s ear again in an intimate whisper, “Me.”

Hide shivers as the alpha suddenly lets out a soft huff of laughter at the sight of the tears of mortification that streak down his reddened face, sending a soft gust of warmth down along the bee’s collarbones.

“Hiih…ah…ahhhhh…!!” Kaneki’s hot mouth descends over his chest then, sucking one of the bee boy’s tender nipples into his mouth, and Hide lets out a soft keening cry as the centipede worries the little nub roughly between his teeth, “Haah…Ahhh…! K-Kanekiiii…ah! Nn—”
Hide’s muffled cries echo out across the empty clearing as Kaneki sucks and bites at his chest until his nipples stand at rigid attention, swollen and wet and aching from the dark-haired boy’s relentless teasing. When at last the centipede hybrid pulls away from his chest with a soft wet pop to admire his handiwork, the bee hybrid can only pant open mouthed as he arches his back slightly against the unforgiving Winter ground, chest heaving softly under the dark-haired boy’s smoldering gaze.

The alpha lowers his head to sniff at his nape a bit then, only to abruptly suck his teeth with distaste. Hide’s tawny, golden skin is already littered with dark red bruises that glisten wetly under the moonlight with the alpha’s sweet saliva, but it seems Kaneki is not yet satisfied. This time he uses both hands to scoop the helpless bumblebee up from under his shoulder blades, growling softly as he presses the omega’s trembling breast toward his face and lowers his head to spread his slick red tongue generously along Hide’s chest, neck and collar bones in long, languid swipes. The centipede alternates from side to side as he swirls his tongue around one pert nipple while rolling the other between his thumb and forefinger, drawing desperate little cries for clemency from the bee each time he takes one of the sensitive little reddened nubs between his teeth to nibble at it roughly. When Kaneki finally relinquishes him again, Hide is a sobbing, trembling mess, hips twitching slightly now and again as his burgeoning erection strains against the front of his jeans.

“Ahaha, was it that good, Hide? *I can already feel your thirsty little omega clit poking into my ass,*” Kaneki murmurs amusedly, reaching down to squeeze at his shaft mockingly through his jeans, “Maybe if you’re good for me I’ll let you suck me off again. You’d like that, wouldn’t you little bee?”

“Nn…ah! D-don’t…please,” pleads the bumblebee, shaking his head from side to side in denial as he claws weakly at the dark-haired boy’s thighs and midsection in supplication. The centipede flinches as Hide unwittingly presses his thumb into his stab wound, exacerbating the injury for the second time that night.

Kaneki gives a small growl before getting to his knees, eyes narrowing into a silent glare that seems to pick the bee hybrid apart piece by piece for a moment with its intensity, before taking the delivery boy by the shoulders and lifting him up from the cold ground abruptly.

“A-ah…ah! Kaneki!? W-wait!” the blond whimpers, wincing at the sharp pain that lances through his damaged wing as the other boy sits him up, turning him around so that his back is facing the alpha.

“*Hn?…What’s the matter? Did you want me to suck on your tits a little bit more?*” whispers the centipede conspiratorially, bringing both hands up to cup and squeeze at his aching nipples from behind, “They’re pretty small, but I think we might be able to get some milk out of them if we work at it…*What do you think, Hide?*

“Hiiihih!” Hide squeals loudly at the rough treatment, as Kaneki spends a little bit longer fondling the swollen little nubs, warm breath ghosting over the bee hybrid’s nape as he nuzzles his collar bones and the sides of his neck intently for a while.

“You know, I’ve always loved flying species,” the centipede confides thoughtfully after a few minutes, leaving off teasing at his nipples to trace a gentle finger along the lower edge of the light-haired boy’s injured wing, “Your wings are just so alluring…So intricate and fragile—*succulent.*"
Hide blanches, breath catching in his throat as the other boy lifts the sensitive appendage and leans in close to lightly drag his tongue across one of the tenuous, translucent veins that patterns its surface.

“Haah…! A-ahh…!” A soft moan trickles from his throat at the strangely intimate touch, back arching sharply as Kaneki finally draws back to lick his lips with an appreciative little hum, leaving behind a thin, glistening trail of saliva that instantly chills the surface of the bumblebee’s wing in the cool winter air as the hot, slick muscle slowly retreats back into the dark-haired boy’s mouth.

“Mm… I’m still sore from where you stabbed me earlier, you know. You don’t mind if I indulge myself a little, do you Hide?” croons the dark-haired hybrid, forcing the blond’s head down with a firm hand around the back of his neck, so that the bee hybrid’s fragile, gossamer flight appendages are laid completely bare under his smoldering red gaze, “After all—”

“N-nh…!” the blond flinches and tries to jerk his head back up as his inner insect senses impending danger and goes on high alert, but the centipede’s hold on his neck is stern and unrelenting. He can feel the dark-haired boy’s half-hard cock rubbing into his lower spine from behind as the alpha leans over his back.

“—You won’t be needing these anymore, will you?”

Kaneki’s warm breath tickles his shoulders from behind and suddenly something hot and moist closes around the tip of his damaged right wing—an intense pressure that soon blossoms into searing pain.

“A-Ahh!?...AAAAAAAAAAGHHHHH!!!! A-AAAAAAAHH HHH!!!!!!”

A tortured scream rips itself from the bumblebee’s throat as the other hybrid abruptly tears into his injured wing, back arching inward in abject agony only for him to be restrained and tugged firmly back into place. The alpha’s lips and tongue are awash in reddish black as the delicate veining of Hide’s wing easily gives way under his sharp teeth and pours its lifeblood out into the neo-hybrid’s waiting mouth, Kaneki eagerly lapping it up as the omega bucks and thrashes violently beneath him.

“Mmmn,” the centipede groans loudly, swallowing down his first mouthful of the other boy’s tender flesh practically whole. The dark-haired boy pauses after that first bite, as though taking a moment to savor his first taste of the bumblebee, before he leans in for another one, and then another, until soon the bee hybrid’s back is a trembling mess of gushing red-black blood and ruined flesh.

“Hiiiih…! A-ahhhhh… Aaaahh!… Ah!… Ha!… Nng!” After the first several agonizing minutes the bee hybrid’s sharp cries die down into pained yelps and moans as Kaneki devours most of his right wing and a good chunk of his left in short order, ravenous with blood fervor.

“Ohh… mm… Hide.” with a low groan of arousal, the centipede shudders and tugs Hide back by the hips, pressing his pelvis forward so hard that the blond can feel the smoldering heat that emanates from his straining cock even through several layers of cloth. Hide’s head is light and foggy with pain as the other boy shivers and licks up the length of his spine before settling between his trembling shoulder blades again to chew and suck at the base of his now utterly destroyed right wing. The bumblebee can feel the cheeks of his ass grow slightly damp as the tip of Kaneki’s now fully erect cock gushes precum, soaking the front of the dark-haired hybrid’s pants and leaking through the seam of Hide’s denims as he ruts the omega fervently through the barrier of their clothes.

“Haah… Ah!… Ah!… Ah!… Hide!”

As the Wolf rapidly approaches climax, he tears into Hide’s left wing again, this time letting up loud, crunching, slurping noises as he tilts his head to the side and gnaws at the thick tendon connecting
the half-eaten appendage to the muscles in the bee hybrid’s shoulder. The pain is still unbearable, but by now the delivery boy’s cries have subsided into quiet whimpers and keens of despair, interspersed with bouts of violent twitching and sobs of agony each time the other boy hits a nerve. As the torture continues, the bee hybrid finds himself losing consciousness—vision going spotty around the edges as Kaneki continues thrust and grind against his ass while ravaging him mercilessly from above.

“Ahh...Hide...Hide! Hide! Ahh...! Nnn...Hnngh!”

Distantly, he can feel the centipede hybrid tense up against him for a moment, just before a low moan sounds deep and his ear and Kaneki bucks and shudders against him, burying sharp teeth deep in the ruined stub of the taller boy’s missing right wing as he comes. Blinding pain lances through Hide’s spine all the way down to his tailbone, and with that the delivery boy’s consciousness finally gives out on him, abandoning him to the merciful depths of oblivion at last.

"//"Hmm...as usual this is impressive work,” the silkworm remarks idly as she clicks through the information displayed before her, “You’re sure you’re not a Dove? The only people I’d expect to have access to this kind of info are the spooks.”

“Haha, I take it everything’s to your satisfaction then,” Hide replies with a small chuckle, “Does that mean I can collect my pay now?”

“Have a party,” she bids with a flick of her chin, tossing a single USB flash drive onto the table between them, “There should be some useful information on there about a number of the Washuu conglomerate’s subsidiary companies and their financial connections, as well as the data you wanted on their most recent projects and some intel on their current movements.”

As Hide reaches out and palms the device, she closes the screen of her laptop, returning it to the protective sleeve it came out of and pushing it over to one side of the wide desk that sits between them.

“Thanks—sounds like just what I’ve been looking for,” the blonde says with a nod of appreciation, unzipping the side closure on his satchel to slip the USB drive inside, “The Washuu have been operating for so long, a lot of their older documents aren’t even digitized—it’s almost impossible to get a hold of some of this stuff.”

“Then I suggest you make it count—This will probably be our last exchange.”

Hide pauses mid-motion at the unexpected announcement, eyebrows raised in surprise, before slinging his bag back over the back of his seat.

“You planning on going somewhere or something?” he asks frankly, not bothering to mask the curiosity in his tone.

“Haha, no, I won’t be going anywhere for a while yet,” the petite young woman clarifies with a small chuckle, “The Doves haven’t caught on to our operation yet, so we’ve probably got a good few months left in this ward. Besides, there’s a good drama I’ve been following that I’d like to see the ending to first. I just doubt we’ll be seeing one another again after this.”

“Wow, I never really took you for the TV watching type,” blinks the blond, the unanswered question
‘why?’ hanging heavy in the short pause between her answer and his comment, “Well, in case this really is our last meeting, I’d like to thank you for everything you’ve done for me up until now.”

There’s a momentary pause during which the woman in question stares back at him blankly for a bit before suddenly erupting into laughter.

“Ahahaha! You’re thanking me?” she guffaws loudly, tears streaming from the corners of her eyes as they roll up toward the ceiling in amusement, “Come on, Hide…I know you’ve realized by now that nothing I’ve ever done for you or your family was out of the kindness of my heart.”

“Heheh...yeah, well I did always kinda get the feeling you just did it to throw a wrench in things,” the bee hybrid says with a little laugh of his own, “But I’m serious—Thank you for everything, Roma.”

“Hahahaha! Hybrids…neo-hybrids…all scurrying about here and there, plotting and planning. So busy. So content,” the red-haired girl muses absently as she leans back and spins around in her desk chair a few times, staring up at the ceiling in thought, “They’re all alike in that way you know. All toiling toward their precious little goals...making so many grandiose plans that they’re absolutely sure will come to fruition.

“They always seem to forget that at any moment the Wheel of Fortune could turn this way or that and send all their stupid little ideations to ruin... I just like to be the one to remind them of that from time to time.”

“Yeah, I get why you did what you did,” he nods in agreement, allowing a small, ironic smile to quirk up the corner of his lips, “But for what it’s worth I still appreciate it anyway. I never would have gotten the chance to do any of...this,” the blond gestures toward himself and then to the room around them with a wry smile, “…if you hadn’t done what you did. Even if it’s all a lie, this is still a million times better than whatever kind of life I would have had in that lab...I like to think that even if it wasn’t your intention, you’ve had a hand in helping me live my best life.”

“Haha...Your best life, huh?” the neo-hybrid echoes as she slowly sits back up, turning to face him, “Say...I’ve never given you a reading before, have I?”

“You want one? It might help you find what it is you’re looking for,” she offers when the blonde shakes his head ‘no’. “Sorry, I don’t really have any cash on me right now,” Hide answers honestly.

“Think of it as a parting gift.”

The bee hybrid shifts in his seat a little, curiosity obviously piqued as he contemplates her offer briefly before giving a slow nod, “Ok, what do I do?”

“Give me a minute, I need to get set up,” the girl answers, turning around to pluck a few items off the low shelf that sits behind her, “Ever had your fortune read before?…”

“No,” Hide admits as he watches her collect the tools of her trade: a tall candle, a box of matches, a thick, rolled up skein of cloth, and a large woven pouch that hangs heavy in her hand, “I’m not really into that kind of stuff to be honest. Is fortune telling popular with neo-hybrids?”

“Oh, there are those of us who dabble in mysticism, just like hybrids do. Our people have been around just about as long as the rest of hybrid kind you know,” she replies, setting the objects down on the table one by one, “We have plenty of old beliefs and superstitions.
“Ever hear the prophecy of the One-Eyed King?”

“Bits and pieces…” Hide answers a bit reluctantly, “I’ve heard that there was once a powerful neo-hybrid by that name...but that’s about it. What about it?”

“The story goes that The One-Eyed King was an extremely powerful neo, who fought to liberate our people from the oppression of hybrid kind generations ago”, the red-head says with a thoughtful looking expression, carefully rolling out the cloth and spreading it out over the table as she recites the familiar tale, “After achieving liberation for our people and leading us underground, he eventually died from wounds sustained in battle, but the prophecy claims that after his passing his spirit remained trapped in this realm and that someday, a full five-hundred years from the death of the first One-Eyed King, there will be born a neo-hybrid unlike any other—his spirit reincarnated—who will lead our people to freedom once again.”

“They say that when he awakens the earth will tremble with his rage and the blood of a hundred thousand hybrids will pour from the skies to quench his thirst,” the silk worm adds with an amused grin, earning a small grimace from her guest.

“Eww…” the bumblebee hybrid noises half-jokingly.

“Heh, the ancestors really had a thing for blood and guts,” she snickers, lighting the candle before setting it off to one side and taking the woven pouch in hand, “Like all divine undertakings, however, the birth of a new king requires a sacrifice. Some time after the king’s passing, his lineage—the Washuu clan of today—split into two opposing branches. They say that the blood of a hybrid child, born from the reunion of the two long-divided branches of the Washuu bloodline and a direct descendant of the first One-Eyed King himself, will supposedly serve as the key to his second awakening.”

Hide stiffens a bit at that, eyes narrowing as he looks down at the backs of his hands with a rueful frown. Roma carefully unties the pouch and removes from it a large deck of cards, which she begins to shuffle deftly.

“Every neo-hybrid child knows the prophecy of the One-Eyed King...many of our kind believe that such events really are destined to come to pass,” the silk-worm says, nimble little fingers flashing before Hide’s eyes effortlessly as they manipulate the heavy linen cards with the practiced ease of familiarity, “There are even those who say he’s already here.”

“Yeah, I’ve heard. It sounds like a lot of people are desperate for something to believe in,” snorts the blond in dismissal, shifting in his seat slightly as he folds his arms in front of his chest, turning his head away, “I prefer to make my own fortune. And as far as I’m concerned, my only destiny is to find out what happened to my friend.”

“He’s still alive, you know,” mentions the silk-worm casually as she cuts the cards into three stacks and sets them down side by side atop the cloth. Hide’s eyebrows quirk up at the abrupt statement.

“The new leader of Aogiri Tree, that is,” she adds, noticing his expectant look, “Apparently, the company’s most recent assassination attempt failed, resulting in massive losses—two of their best suppression squads were completely wiped out and they still haven’t even managed to properly identify him yet. To be honest there are very few neo-hybrids who know what he looks like either, but those who have seen him claim he only has one red eye.

"A lot of their members have already taken to calling him ‘The One-Eyed King’.”

At the mention of the neo-hybrid resistance’s new leader, Hide’s mouth twists into a deep frown. He
can tell where this conversation is going—they’ve been down this road once before. The blond grimaces as Roma leans forward and folds her hands under her chin, looking up at him expectantly. He can’t believe he let the shiesty little fortune-teller walk him into this trap so easily.

“He could make for a powerful ally you know…this young ‘king’ of theirs,” the silk-worm posits suggestively, “You’re a smart boy, Hide...too smart for your own good really. With all the information we’ve passed you on the Washuu and their history, I’m sure you must have some idea about your lineage by now. And if that’s the case, I’m sure you’ve already figured out why the old leader of the resistance was so eager to retrieve you from the company all those years ago. If you wanted to, you could use all that to your advantage.”

“In exchange for what exactly?” he counters with a self-deprecating scoff, “You’ve heard what the prophecy says, Roma...You and I both know there’s only one thing Aogiri and their ‘king’ could possibly want with me—it’s the same thing the Washuu wanted, and that’s definitely not on the table.”

“Is it such a terrible thing to be wanted?” she chuckles, “After all, what with the way you’ve been digging around, it’s only a matter of time before somebody at the company figures out who you are and they come looking for you. Aogiri could protect you…He could protect you.”

“I don’t need protection; I need to find my friend,” comes the adamant reply. Roma smirks softly when the delivery boy’s warm brown eyes meet her own in a firm glare of determination.

“Haha! You know, it’s extremely rare to come by someone with your type of resolve, Hide—neo-hybrid or otherwise,” comments the red-head thoughtfully, “I dare say I’ve even grown quite fond of you in the time we’ve known one another. Hopefully the universe compensates you properly for your perseverance someday.”

Hide can hear the smirk in her words and knows that there’s something she’s not telling him, but he decides to let sleeping dogs lie.

Nobody gets anything more out of Roma than exactly what she’s willing to give.

“Pick a stack,” the red-head says, abruptly drawing his attention back to the cards.

Hesitantly, Hide points to the stack furthest to the left of him and watches as she begins to lay the cards out one by one, until ten of them lie before him, face down on the cloth and arranged into a vaguely cross-like shape. When she is finished, the silkworm reaches out and flips over the card at the center of the cross to reveal a somewhat androgynous looking young man, robed in red and crowned with a shining ouroboros symbol.

“The Magician,” she says, face lighting up with a small grin as she points to the card, “This is you as you are right now—a representation of pure willpower. You act as a conduit between heaven and earth, past and future; a vessel—blessed with infinite potential to manifest your will into reality.”

The next card that Roma flips over features a distinctly masculine figure this time—a somewhat melancholy looking man seated upon a throne and bearing a gilded crown and an intricate pair of stag horns. In one hand he grasps a cup of wine—in the other, a golden pendant inscribed with a pentagram.

“The King of Pentacles. This represents somebody close to you, or maybe someone who is bound to cross your path in the near future; a powerful alpha most likely,” the silkworm tells him, “He’s very protective of you—generous and sensual, but he might have a greedy or possessive side that could get out of control if you’re not careful.”
Hide frowns skeptically at the statement. He doesn’t know anyone that sounds even remotely like they would fit that description. Rather than voice his confusion however, he decides to sit back and listen, watching carefully as Roma flips the cards over one after another and explains what they mean.

“This is the Justice card,” says the fortune teller, tapping the card that sits right above The Magician, “Here she represents your conscious will, which means you desire to see things meet their proper end. You feel that justice evades you, and your desire for it burns so strong inside you that it keeps you up at night. You believe strongly in the chain of causality, and you seek to complete that chain by any means necessary.”

“Hah…sounds about right,” the blond remarks self-mockingly, earning a little scoff of agreement from her in turn. The next card that Roma turns over has the redheaded woman chuckling softly to herself as a smug little smile overtakes her face.

“Aha…what do we have here? The Lovers,” she proclaims with raised eyebrows, “This indicates your subconscious desires—whatever’s driving you from deep inside, whether you realize it or not. The Lovers card usually signifies an important union of some kind—not always in terms of a mate, but in other types of relationships too. It could mean platonic intimacy, or a business deal, or it could even mean taking someone’s mark. If this card is coming up, I’m sure you already have an idea who and what it’s referring to, so I’ll allow you to interpret it as you will, heheh.”

Hide frowns a bit, crossing his legs under the table. As a matter of fact he does have an idea what the card could be referring to, and the very implication, however vague, leaves him feeling distinctly vulnerable. His cheeks warm as thoughts of gentle, cloud colored eyes and tender, pink lips flit through his mind’s eye. Shaking his head sharply as though to dislodge the inflammatory thoughts from his mind, the blond narrows his gaze as he watches the silk-worm turn over the next card.

“The Knight of Swords. This card stands for your recent past—whatever cycle of events in your life is getting ready to end and propel you forward into the next one—and this particular card indicates a tireless drive toward some ultimate goal, sometimes impulsive or rash,” she explains, giving him a meaningful look across the table, “Up until now you’ve been pushing forward relentlessly in pursuit of what you seek, but that’s all about to come to an end soon. This forward trajectory will definitely carry you into the next chapter in your life, but if you aren’t careful, your reckless, one-minded pursuit of your goal could also send you sprinting headfirst into danger.”

“The Six of Cups, reversed. This one symbolizes nostalgia or childhood, but in this position, it usually foretells of a departure from everything that brings you comfort and safety. This card coming up here could mean you’ll be leaving home sometime soon, or perhaps that you’ve been clinging to old memories for too long and will soon be forcefully separated from your past,” the fortune teller says with another pointed look, before moving on to the next card.

“And here we have…The Wheel of Fortune, reversed,” the silkworm declares amusedly, fingering the edges of the card in a thoughtful manner as she speaks, “This card is about the many turns of fortune, but in the reversed position, it’s usually telling you that you need to let go of the reigns. There are forces at work in your life that are beyond your control—a destiny that can’t be avoided or delayed, and you’re going to have to accept that at some point if you want to move on.”

That last explanation earns a little eye roll from Hide, but he manages to hold his tongue, waiting for her to finish her reading.

“The Emperor. This card indicates that there are powerful outside forces governing your environment,” Roma says thoughtfully, “Or alternatively, it could represent a powerful masculine figure who commands a lot of influence over your life—a stoic ruler, perhaps a father or a potential
mate or some other important masculine or male figure who is close to you. This card stands for
order and austerity, meaning that whoever or whatever is influencing your situation is extremely
calculating and will do so very methodologically. They most likely think what they’re doing is in
your best interest, but you should be wary of the methods that they employ—whatever entity is
associated with this card can also easily veer off into heartlessness and tyranny.”

Not sure what to think of that one, Hide cocks his head to the side a little bit. His dad, Manabu, is
actually extremely lenient and kind and has been all his life—it doesn’t sound like any of that could
apply to him. Other than that, the only other male figure the bumblebee is close with is his little
brother Masayoshi, but he’s way too young to have that kind of influence over Hide’s life. The
bumblebee looks on a bit skeptically as Roma reaches for the next card on the table. So far only a
small part of what she has mentioned thus far sounds even somewhat plausible.

“The Hanged Man, reversed…and The Pale Rider,” the petite hybrid declares, turning over the next
two cards in tandem.

“That doesn’t sound good.” Hide remarks with a frown, eyeing the grim reaper as he sits atop his
pale mount, grinning up at them from the very last card.

“Haha, ‘good’ is a subjective term, Hide,” she assures him dismissively, continuing her reading as
she points to the Death card meaningfully, “This card right here? It represents your distant future. It
usually indicates the end of a particular cycle of events, but also the beginning of a new one. Looks
like things will finally come full circle for you sometime in the next several months. The sun will set
on this part of your life, but the Martyr coming out right under it in this position serves as kind of a
caution. The conclusion to this series of events calls for some kind of a sacrifice, and it will be had.
Together these two cards could be telling you that you need to be prepared to make certain
concessions that you’ve been unwilling to make until now in order to reach the particular conclusion
you want.”

“Or...it might mean that while your penchant for martyrdom will be what brings certain parts of
your life to an end, it will also become the cataclysm for something crucial and transforming for
you,” she concludes, folding her hands in her lap and beaming up at him with a self-satisfied
looking little grin.

“Wait...what?” the bumblebee says, looking between her and the cards with his eyebrows raised
slightly in confusion, “No offense, but it sounds like that could mean a lot of very different things. I
thought this was supposed to tell me my future? Nothing’s clear at all about anything you just told
me.”

“That’s because the future isn’t set in stone until it becomes the past. In particular, the infinite
potential radiating from the Magician card means that there are a lot of ways your path could lead,
especially considering that The Wheel is seated right here,” Roma answers, pointing to both cards in
turn, “The cards really just give you some insight into what those different paths might be and what
dictates them. I usually tell my clients that they should consider this as really being more a reading
of you—your desires, motivations, fears, challenges, current influencing factors, et cetera—than it is
a reading of your future.”

Hide’s ears prick up at that, eyebrows knitting slightly in contemplation.

“So you mean, like...more of a hint guide than a walkthrough, I guess?” he queries, “I’m supposed
to just take it as advice and not a definitive road map?”

“Isn’t that convenient?” she grins back at him, eyes glinting with an unnervingly familiar look of
secrecy and mischief, “Sounds just about right for a hybrid who keeps insisting he’ll be the one to
“decide his own future.”

“Nn…guh…ugh…”

When next the bumblebee opens his eyes all he can manage is tiny, incoherent groans as he lies limply on his side, shuddering and twitchingsoftly with the aftershocks of the relentless torture that he’s just endured. He can’t have been out for too long, as his back is still raw with the memory of having his wings viciously torn to shreds and he still spies the same large fir looming overhead out of the corner of his eye. Surprisingly, however, the pain that once did firey laps up and down the length of his abused spine has already subsided into a dull ache, punctuated here and there by the distinct itchiness of wounded flesh stitching itself up.

What he feels most is the loss.

Hide’s heart clenches in his chest as the ruined nubs that were once his wings continue to flutter against his shoulder blades in vain now and then, unaware that their days of usefulness are over.

“Welcome back, beautiful,” the dark-haired boy murmurs to him softly, absently sucking at his bloodstained fingertips, “Sorry I made a little bit of a mess earlier. I’m afraid I’m something of a sloppy eater when I’m hungry.”

Hide’s shoulders jump slightly as the centipede’s low tenor sounds in his ear from behind. Kaneki stares down at him from a casual seated position on the ground, regarding the bee hybrid nonchalantly even as Hide’s eyebrows clench up in fear and uncertainty at the alpha’s mere presence. The Wolf’s smoldering red gaze shines unnaturally bright, sending a shiver down the delivery boy’s spine.

//“Without a definitive way to lessen discontent within neo-hybrid ranks, The Washuu Conglomerate has been putting on these games more and more frequently lately. There’s also some speculation that they are using these games as a method to lure out the neos’ so-called ‘king’…”//

//“To be honest there are very few neo-hybrids who know what he looks like either, but those who have seen him claim he only has one red eye. A lot of their members have already taken to calling him ‘The One-Eyed King’.”//

//“You’re bait, Omega. A tender little morsel, tossed in to raise the stakes—to get me hard…to tease me into the action in the hopes that I’ll **fuck** you and **mark** you and **breed** you…”//

//“Give my regards to the One-Eyed King.” //
“Th-The One-Eyed King...” a ragged sob heaves itself from Hide’s chest as he suddenly stares up at
the other boy in disbelief, eyes going bleary with unshed tears, “It was y-you...all this time.”

The One-Eyed King stares back at him pitilessly for a moment before a slow grin overtakes his
features, eyes lit with a sardonic sort of pleasure.

“Bingo~ Sounds like you finally put that big brain of yours to work, huh Hide?” comes the amused
reply, “I’m afraid you’re only half-right though...”

“I guess that means we’ll be moving on to the penalty round, hahaha.”

Gentle hands slide under the bumblebee’s hips to lift him up again, eliciting a small, keening
whimper from him as the centipede pulls Hide into his lap and leans up against the base of the tree
again.

“Don’t worry, little bee,” he whispers, rubbing delicate circles into the delivery boy’s hip bones as he
shifts their positions a bit so that they’re seated upright with Hide lying against him, back to chest.
Warm tears make their way down the bee hybrid’s cheeks once more as his injured back presses into
the other boy’s solid chest, irritating his wounds slightly, “I just needed a little refreshment before we
get started. I assure you: I have no intention of leaving you out of the fun.”

Nimble fingers undo the coat tied around Hide’s waist and the fastening to his jeans then, slipping
both off of him with ease until he is clothed in just his underwear, and the bumblebee shudders
bodily when, without warning, Kaneki slips a hand down into his trunks. The alpha’s chin rests
lightly against his shoulder again as he curls his fingers around the bee hybrid’s shaft and strokes him
lightly a few times before sliding his fingers down a bit further to toy with his entrance.

“Ah! Nnh...K-Kaneki...” he rasps, frightened by the sudden intrusion, “P-please...no more...I c-
can’t…”

“Oh, but you will,” comes the pitiless reply as the other boy traces and tugs at the rim of his tight little
pucker from the outside, “I promise.”

One pale, tapered digit slips inside him then, swirling around the inside of his entrance as the alpha
inhalles deeply at his nape, before plunging deeper inside to stroke lazily at his inner walls, drawing
tiny grasps and moans of arousal and humiliation from the light-haired boy. After a while that one
finger becomes two, and soon the centipede begins thrusting his fingers in and out of Hide’s ass
roughly, occasionally pausing to savor the bumblebee’s soft cries as he bucks and moans atop the
alpha’s digits, until the inside of his underwear is an entirely separate climate from the dry winter air
outside—a sweltering, steaming mess of the bee hybrid’s perspiration and hot, syrupy slick. At some
point the dark-haired boy uses his free hand to tug Hide’s slick-soaked trunks down his hips, leaving
the bumblebee completely naked and panting and moaning fitfully as Kaneki violently fucks him on
his fingers, sending sharp wet plopping sounds echoing through the park as his hand slams up
against the delivery boy’s entrance harder and faster with each consecutive thrust.
“Hiiiiiih…! A-Aaaahh! Nnhh....Ah...! ...Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!!”

Hide lets out one loud, keening whimper after another as the alpha scissors his fingers roughly inside him, spreading him open wide so that his own juices drip down the seam of his crack, further darkening the already wet fabric of the dark-haired man’s crotch. The centipede inhales sharply at the nape of his neck again, nipping and lapping at the sensitive flesh there such that the fresh blood that smears his mouth leaves wide swathes of dark red against the omega’s flushed skin.

“Look at how wet you are already…Haha…Do you like that, Hide?”

Hide tosses his head from side to side restlessly in denial, squirming in the other man’s lap as Kaneki mercilessly works him toward climax. He can feel the other hybrid’s weighty erection pressing into his tailbone from below and the alpha’s thudding heartbeat at his back, echoing his own—the bee hybrid’s heart is pounding out of control like it’s ready to burst.

“I’m gonna spread you open on my cock next…nnh… You want that little bee? Huh? A belly full of my seed?” Kaneki groans, splaying his free hand over the bee hybrid’s stomach as he grinds his fingers up into the underside of his lower intestine suggestively, “Because that’s what you’re getting…haha. I’m gonna knot you up so good, little bumblebee…pump your little womb so full of cum you’ll be able to taste me on your tongue by the time I’m finished.”

“Hiiiiih!” Sparks fly behind Hide’s eyes as the other boy lightly grazes his prostate on a particularly rough stroke, eliciting a loud yip of overstimulation from the blond, “A-ahh!…Ah! Ah! Ah!…hic… Ah! K-Kanekiiiiii…!”

“Mm…you’re taking my fingers so well, Hide. Feel how deep I am inside you?” the alpha croons, pressing his digits upward against the underside of the bee hybrid's lower intestine through the wall of his vaginal channel again for emphasis and earning a breathy little keen of desperation in response, “Why don’t we see if we can’t figure out where that sweet spot is, hmm, pretty?”

Hide squirms and arches his back helplessly as the dark-haired hybrid’s long fingers swirl around aimlessly against the underside of his belly a few more times, just behind his bladder. A soft gasp leaves him when a hot, wet tongue flickers out to tease at the back of his eardrum in time with the motion, sharp teeth nipping lazily at his earlobe now and then as the centipede’s clever fingers travel down from his bladder, poking around near his prostate but purposefully just missing the sensitive little bundle of nerves on each thrust.

“My guess is it’s riigght—”

“…A-Ah!??”

“—About—”


“—Here.”

“…..!......!!!...Nnnnaaaaaahhhhh!!!”

Kaneki’s blunt nails jab directly into his prostate, tearing a scream from the bumblebee’s raw throat as stars explode inside the back of his skull. The bee hybrid’s legs tremble fitfully as his back curves against the alpha’s chest in a steep arch, slick gushing from him in waves as the centipede tortures the sensitive little nub relentlessly, poking and prodding it one moment, only to begin mercilessly stroking and rolling it between his fingers the next, heedless to Hide’s frantic sobbing and pleading as the bumblebee weeps with overstimulation in his arms.
“Ahh,” the centipede releases a low sigh of satisfaction as Hide shudders and convulses against him with the force of his orgasm, before finally melting into the dark-haired boy’s arms—a dripping, panting, boneless heap, “There we go...right where I thought it would be, haha.”

“Nn...nguhh...aaah...” Hide is so far gone that he barely reacts when the other boy finally tugs slick, waterlogged fingers free from his hole, popping them into his mouth to savor the omega’s taste on his tongue.

“Mm...you really do taste like honey, you know that, Hide?”

“...Hide? Hide~” the centipede calls, mouth quirking into a small frown when he realizes that the other hybrid is too lost in the throes of his orgasm to notice or care what else is going on, “Tch...Too much for you, huh?”

Sucking at his teeth softly at the other man’s lack of response, Kaneki readjusts their positions so that the omega lies flat on his back, knees spread, while the alpha kneels over him from above, peering down into his flushed face with an expression that is a mixture of mild irritation and smoldering arousal for a moment before pressing two slim digits up into Hide’s dripping entrance once again. He thrusts his fingers absently inside the delivery boy while he uses his free hand to pull down the zipper of his pants and tug his own erection free. The centipede hybrid’s thick cock springs out of its confines with a small wet slapping noise as it plops heavily down onto the bee hybrid’s flushed cheek, but Hide is largely unfazed by the sensation—the bumblebee’s eyes remain half-glazed as he lies there panting open-mouthed, still flying in the aftermath of his orgasm.

The centipede lets out a low groan as he wraps slender fingers around his own shaft, pressing the tip into the soft flesh of Hide’s cheek, and begins to stroke himself at a leisurely pace, reveling in the sounds of the delivery boy’s breathy moans as Hide continues to buck and writhe on his fingers each time he grazes the bee hybrid’s prostate. Hide’s already weeping erection churns out copious amounts of semi-opaque seed without even being stimulated as he comes easily on the heels of his first internal orgasm, and the dark-haired boy’s own member swells slightly at the sight of the blond losing himself so helplessly to his second release.

“Haha, look what a mess you’ve made, little Lamb,” the Wolf chides mockingly, murmuring into his ear from above, “I haven’t even fucked you properly yet and here you are, squirting all over me like the filthy little omega slut you are.”

“Ahh...! Ngh!!”

“Are my fingers that good, Hide?” Kaneki teases, flicking at his prostate roughly, “If you like that, wait till you take my cock, little bee. Hahaha! I think I’ll take you from the front first...that way I can taste your sweet honey tears while I'm fucking you...lick them clean while I split you open on my fat alpha cock and fuck you full of hot, sticky centipede cum.”

“A-aaah! Aaahhh...!!”

The bee hybrid gives a plaintive little whine as the other man pulls back his hand to swipe long, tapered digits around the inner edge of his anus before thrusting them deep into his core again for emphasis, fucking him lazily on his fingers for a while before settling into a torturous rhythm of rimming and deep thrusting that has the bumblebee keening and begging in mere moments.
“Mm...After that I’m going to make you take my eggs. All of them, Hide...Nnnnh...Are you ready for that little bee?” the alpha groans, hot breaths growing visible against the cold winter air as he strokes himself with increasing fervor, “I’m gonna fuck your little boy-pussy raw, Hide...Plug you up nice and tight on my knot...glut your pretty little omega cunt with my cum and eggs until your tiny little bee belly hangs heavy with my young...Mnnh!”

“Hiiiih! A-ah...!? N-nnnh!”

The centipede’s grotesquely swollen dick curves upward toward his bellybutton heavily, continuing to harden until the entire length throbs, stiff and sore with the strain of excess blood flow, as he slides his hand forward to rapidly jack the tip of his cock. Kaneki leans over the taller hybrid’s chest as he fists his shaft with desperate urgency until his palm is dripping in his own thick white pre-ejaculate, hips jumping a little each time his flushed cockhead brushes up against the soft skin of the Lamb’s face on a particularly hard upstroke. Soon his tip is drooling so profusely it looks as though he’s coming, dribbling thick globs of semi-opaque precum across the other boy’s cheeks as he jacks his cock violently into the bee hybrid’s parted lips. The lost, hopeless look of arousal that contorts the omega’s face seems to stir something cruel and possessive inside the centipede, and in another moment he is violently fucking the other boy on three of his fingers, tapered digits plunging out of the bumblebee in time with each thrust of his cock into his hand as loud, wet slapping noises ring out across the field each time his palm slams up against the other boy’s sopping entrance.

“Haa...! Haa...! Hide...M-mnnh...!”

Kaneki shudders and angles his hips downward as he approaches his climax, wringing the base of his cock several times in his hand before he brings it back up to swirl his thumb around the tip. When he’s finally ready to blow his load, the centipede moans long and deep as the muscles along his hips and lower back ripple furiously and his dick throbbs heavily from engorged root to swollen cockhead, just before his shuddering tip opens wide and spews stream after ropy stream of steaming hot cum straight down into Hide’s open mouth, his entire length shuddering and twitching with the force of his ejaculation.

Hide coughs and sputters a little as the centipede’s thick seed floods his throat without warning, eyes cracking open to stare up at Kaneki blearily as he trembles and scrunches his face up into a look of distressed confusion. As a result, Kaneki’s member drags across the delivery boy’s flushed face a bit, smearing a messy line of hot, sticky ejaculate across the other boy’s cheeks and even into the tip of his nose as the alpha moans and milks his own shaft, rubbing the head of his cock in a slow, clumsy circle around Hide’s flushed lips before thrusting it into his mouth.

Still coming in long thick ribbons of muddled white, the centipede groans and lets out a low sigh of satisfaction as he slowly forces his rigid shaft down the sputtering, twitching omega’s esophagus, before finally releasing his cock and planting his hand on the ground to steady himself as he spills load after load of potent, sweltering hot semen down the back of the bee hybrid’s throat. As he presses his hips down into the blond’s face, the dark-haired boy leaves off stimulating Hide’s core for a moment so that he can grasp the other boy’s jaw, praying it open a bit more to better accommodate the full length and girth of his heavily swollen cock. The centipede settles in so that his crotch is splayed flush against the bumblebee’s face, cock shoved so far down Hide’s throat that the delivery boy’s heated breath mists up against the flesh of the dark-haired boy’s balls as he struggles to breathe through his nose.

The bee hybrid’s legs shudder and tremble at either side of the dark-haired hybrid’s head as Kaneki leans down to lap at the thick pool of runny seed that has gathered at his navel. The omega has stopped coming for the time being, but his lower abdomen is now completely covered in his own spending and his untouched cock continues to strain helplessly against the cold night air, still
painfully turgid and weeping slightly with arousal. The bee boy shudders bodily and gives a long, low whimper that reverberates around Kaneki’s shaft when the centipede leaves off tugging open the omega’s jaw to reach back down and flick the side of his erection teasingly with his middle finger.

“Nnnnggh!” a muffled cry bursts from Hide’s mouth at the harsh stimulation, and the dark-haired hybrid’s eyebrows twitch up in mild surprise when the omega’s tortured member shudders violently at the contact, just before a thick squirt of warm ejaculate shoots free of his tip, splattering right onto the alpha’s lips.

“Haha...Sensitive little thing, aren’t you,” the Wolf gives a low rumble of laughter as he licks away the omega’s cum from his lower lip with a single swipe of his sharp red tongue and reaches his hand down further to squeeze mockingly at Hide’s sac. Kaneki gives a light chuckle at the little yelp that the blond lets out in response to the gentle pressure, fondling the light-haired boy’s balls a bit more before licking back up the length of the Lamb’s rigid cock in one long stripe from root to tip.

“Nnh...Aaah!”

A loud sob leaves Hide’s mouth as the centipede continues to tease him, roughly nipping and licking at his shaft while rolling his sensitive testicles around in the palm of his hand. Seemingly spurred on by the stimulation to his own cock produced by the blond’s moans, Kaneki finally leaves off teasing him after a while and closes warm fingers around the bee hybrid’s base, giving it a firm squeeze as he tilts his head and abruptly pops the tip of the omega’s swollen cock into his mouth.

“M-mnn!! Mnnghh!!”

From there Hide’s demise is swift and merciless. Ignoring his captive’s bucking hips and plaintive moans, the dark-haired hybrid swirls his tongue around the tip of the bumblebee’s erection over and over again, occasionally dipping the tip under the edge of his foreskin to elicit muffled cries from the bee hybrid that ripple through his strained throat, further stimulating his own swiftly refilling shaft. As he suckles at the head Kaneki continues to roughly stroke the base of Hide’s cock, causing the blond’s already painfully engorged member to swell even more, but still not quite giving him the stimulation that he needs to finish. The neo-hybrid keeps up the same pace for several more minutes, moving his hips against the other boy’s mouth in slow, shallow thrusts that bring the tip of Kaneki now rigid member sliding up against the back of Hide’s throat column from time to time, as he spews stream after stream of steaming hot precum down the back of the bumblebee’s throat, swiftly approaching climax once more. When at last Hide’s labored breaths grow strained and intermittent against his skin, Kaneki leaves off stroking the omega’s shaft to fully engulf his member instead, deep throating him in earnest at last.

“Ah! Ohhh...Hide...Nnh...Nn! Nn! Nn! Nn! Ah!”

The Wolf’s thrusts grow urgent as Hide’s stifled moans reverberate along his cock with increasing frequency, and soon he’s slamming his hips into the bumblebee’s face with reckless abandon, forcing his grotesquely swollen member down the helpless omega’s throat so hard that the delivery boy is very nearly gagging on his cock. The bumblebee’s hips buck and twitch against his dark-haired counterpart’s face intermittently as Kaneki relentlessly throats his shaft in tandem with his thrusts, and for a few minutes the entire clearing is silent but for the sloppy, wet noises of the centipede hybrid violently fucking the bumblebee’s face while urgently sucking him off.

When Kaneki finally approaches his release, the hand he’s been using to steady himself leaves the
ground to pin Hide’s hips firmly in place for a moment, and he pulls back to suckle at the tip of the blond’s erection again as he abruptly plunges three slender fingers back into the bee hybrid’s dripping hole.

“A-ahh! M-mnnnh!! Mnngh!!” Hide moans fitfully around Kaneki’s cock as the dark-haired boy’s slender fingers penetrate him yet again, mercilessly stroking the bumblebee’s clenching insides as the centipede swallows up his erection again and slurps loudly around his length, still slamming his own thick cock down the omega’s throat with maddened fervor. From there, it’s only a short time before the alpha finds Hide’s prostate again, and when the dark-haired boy’s fingertips press into the sensitive little nub this time, the combination of penetration and stimulation to his cock has Hide’s vision exploding with the most brilliant array of fireworks he’s ever seen, his entire body shuddering with the force of his orgasm. He’s vaguely aware of slick warmth blossoming in his throat again as Kaneki finishes hard inside him a moment later. The centipede shudders and moans around him as he sends wave after wave of hot cum gushing straight down into Hide’s belly, flooding the bee's insides with the heady scent of his thick, potent seed just before the onslaught of sensation finally overwhelms the blond and his consciousness is engulfed in darkness once again.

//

"...Sumire."

Hide opens his eyes slowly to find himself in his bedroom at home. Overhead, his air conditioner drones along quietly, keeping the room at a comfortable 25 degrees. Off to his side the fish tank that sits on his desk bubbles away, glowing softly in the darkness as the large axolotl that occupies it grins back at him dopily from behind the glass.

"Sumire."

He blinks and swivels his head around searching for the source of the strangely familiar voice as it calls to him again.

"Sumire, wake up. It's time."

Finally his eyes light on the entrance. A young man, clad in pristine white robes, stands there in his doorway, absently pushing a pair silver wire-framed glasses up on his nose as he holds out his hand expectantly in Hide’s direction.

The blond slowly slips out of bed and makes his way toward the doorway. The moment he approaches the younger boy, the soft scent of jasmine and freesia lilts to his nose, underpinned by
the faintest hint of decay, as he carefully slips his hand into the young man's, peering confusedly down into his face as he does.

And suddenly Hide's looking up instead of down, as his vantage point rapidly shrinks so that he is forced to crane his neck backward to get a look at the dark-haired teen's face. In addition to his abrupt height loss, the walls of his room begin to stretch and distort around them until soon they are standing at the end of a long, desolate hallway. Shivering with cold and a twinge of fear, Hide glances up at the bespectacled teen at his side for reassurance, and when he does the sterile white lighting that glares down on the two of them from above gleams off the other boy's dark, chin-length hair, crowning him in a gentle navy colored halo that shines brilliantly off the white of his coat. For a moment Hide can only stare up in fascination at the strangely ethereal sight. The boy in question remains silent, but Hide can feel the gentle warmth radiating from his palm as he squeezes the bee hybrid's now child-sized hand back softly and begins walking, tugging him along so that Hide is forced to move his stubby little legs double time in order to keep up.

“Sumire, after today we’re not going to be able to see each other for a while,” the boy in white doesn't look at him when he speaks. Instead he looks straight ahead, features trained into a mask of indifference as he addresses the increasingly confused child at just above a whisper.

“W-what? Why?” Hide queries softly. He's been expecting this day for a long time—everyone leaves at some point—but his heart still acheses in his chest at the realization that it's really happening. He can't help the tears that crowd the corners of his eyes as he seeks to confirm what he is already certain to be true. “Are you going away Shou?”

“No, not me,” the older boy corrects, “This time you’re the one who’s going to have to go away for a while.”

“Me?”

“Yes,”you comes the answer, this time tinged with the slightest hint of warmth as the bespectacled youth finally stops to look down at him, gentle silver eyes twinkling with something akin to hope, “We'll have to be apart for a little bit, but when I see you again, you'll be far away from here. You'll have a whole new life and nobody will hurt you anymore. You'll be free.”

Hide feels his heartbeat pick up in his chest at the other boy's words—Shou has never lied to him yet, and he wants desperately to be free of this place.

A moment later however, Hide's eyes are clouding over with doubt as he comes to a sudden halt in the middle of the hallway.

“W-Wait...What about you? I don’t want to go anywhere without you, Shou...I'll be all alone again. Can't you come with me?” he asks, tone suddenly darkening with unease, “I know you don’t like it here, Shou. They hurt you, just like they hurt me...and they make you do bad things that make you cry inside. You don't belong in here.”

Hide falls silent as the bespectacled teen looks down at him blankly for a moment. The dark-haired boy doesn't utter a word in response. Instead, he slips a hand under his collar and removes a small silver pendant from his neck. Hide stares on wide-eyed as the older boy then reaches out a gentle hand to smooth back the hair at the top of the bumblebee's crown before slipping the slightly over-sized chain over his head. The little bee hybrid feels his cheeks warm slightly at the unexpected gesture. Shou rarely touches him, and nobody has ever given him anything before.

“S-Shou...?”
“This necklace is special, Sumire. It has the power to connect you to the person who cares about you the most,” the dark-haired boy explains, “As long as you hold on to it—no matter how far apart we are—I’ll be with you.”

“But—”

“Sumire,” the older boy interjects flatly, silencing him, “You and I together...what do we make?”

“...A family,” comes the subdued reply.

“And what do families do?”

“...Believe in one another.”

“Do you believe in me, Sumire?” the dark-haired youth asks him quietly, pinning him with a stony gaze.

“Yeah...I believe in you Shou,” Hide answers in earnest, nodding profusely.

“Good boy.”

Warmth blossoms at the center of Hide’s chest as a tiny smile quirks the corner of the dark-haired teen’s mouth. The little bee stares up at his bespectacled guardian in dumbfounded amazement—he’s never seen the other boy actually smile before.

The rare spectacle lasts for little more than an instant before the boy in white resumes his brisk pace, Hide trailing after him in shocked silence as he fingers the metal trinket now hanging from his neck, wondering in earnest whether what he just saw was real or just his imagination playing tricks on him.

The hallway comes to an end soon after that, and they find themselves staring at a dead end. The young teen relinquishes Hide’s hand as they come to a stop at the end of the hallway, where there sits a tiny little door, no taller than the little bee hybrid’s ring finger.

“What’s this?” Hide questions, peering down at the little portal.

“This is where I leave you,” the bespectacled teen replies, slowly holding his hand out. In his palm sits a small vial, filled to the brim with a strange purplish substance and adorned with a simple label:

{Drink me.}

The little boy tilts his head to the side, looking thoughtfully at the tiny vestibule, and when his taller counterpart gives him a small nod of encouragement, he reaches out carefully to accept it.

“I’m supposed to drink this?” Hide queries timidly.

“All of it,” comes the stern reply, “And remember to follow the White Rabbit, no matter where it leads you.”

He glances down at the drink in his hand again, and the next time he looks up, the dark-haired youth is nowhere to be found. Instead Hide stands alone in the empty, brightly lit hallway, glancing about confusedly. With no other recourse he uncorks the odd little vial and holds it up to his face, nose wrinkling slightly at the odd, bittersweet aroma that wafts up from the unstopped opening.

The little bumblebee grits his teeth and knocks the drink back in one gulp, grimacing slightly at the
bizarre taste, only to find himself blinking in surprise as the walls around him start to shift and stretch again, this time looming so tall that he is forced to close his eyes or risk throwing up.

When he opens his eyes again he is in the same hallway, but now the door that was so tiny before looms before him, the top of the frame reaching a good meter and a half above his crown. The bee hybrid takes a deep breath as he hesitantly reaches a hand out for the door knob, only to stare down at himself for a moment as he realizes that he’s somehow returned to adult form, despite the overall loss in size. Head spinning a little with the fast-paced, consecutive changes to his own physical form, Hide sighs and twists the door knob, blinking in mild surprise at the scene that greets him when the portal swings open easily before him. A peek through the door frame reveals what can only be described as the most beautiful garden Hide has ever seen. Bright sunlight filters down through dense deciduous tree leaves, spattering the ground with mottled blue shadows interspersed with bright patches of the sun's rays. Along the garden floor, every type of flower imaginable blossoms brilliantly at his feet, inviting him in further as they tickle his sensitive nose with their tantalizing scents.

Hide timidly steps through the doorway, only to find his eyes immediately drawn to something small and white darting across his vision.

"...!!!

The bee hybrid’s eyes widen as he watches a small, snowy white ball of fuzz crowned with two long, floppy ears, bounding away down the path ahead of him. The blue-haired teen's parting words echoing faintly in his mind, he sets off behind the little creature right away, sprinting after it in long strides as it scurries away into the depths of the little yard.

After just a few minutes of pursuing the little creature, Hide abruptly comes to a halt when he finds himself stepping onto a vaguely familiar looking stone path. Eyebrows quirking up in confusion, the bumblebee watches as his quarry hops down the path ahead of him and right through the open door to The White Rabbit's House. A small shudder runs down the bee hybrid's spine unbeknownst to him while he cautiously approaches the front door to the little building, as something like a premonition chills his insides.

"White rabbit—White Rabbit's House...How fitting," he mutters to himself as he steps up to the entrance, hesitating slightly at the threshold.

Peering around from the doorway, Hide doesn't notice anything particularly amiss at first—until he sets eyes on the tiny hybrid form that occupies the back of the little cottage. He wastes no time heading for the large bed that adorns the back room of the White Rabbit's House the moment he recognizes the figure located there, eyes wide in disbelief.

The little dark-haired boy from his memories lies curled up at the center of the large bed, small form trembling as he sobs softly into his folded arms.

Hide comes to a halt at the edge of the bed, hands shaking as he slowly reaches out and runs a hand through silky black locks, only to startle slightly when the soft strands suddenly begin to change color, quickly fading from inky jet black to grey to silver, and finally the palest of white as they slip between his fingers. In response the little boy flinches and uncurls himself, retreating to the far end of the bed to stare at the bumblebee in disbelief, plump, tear stained cheeks still shaking a bit with his ragged breath.

Hide jerks backwards the moment he looks upon the little hybrid's face for the first time, mind going blank for a moment.
“...Kaneki?”

The little white-haired boy stares up at him sorrowfully, eyes cloudy with unshed tears as he immediately brings a hand up to cover the brilliant red orb that shines out from his left eye socket.

“ You left me. ”

Hide flinches as the white-haired boy's softly uttered words echo through the little cottage, damning in their finality. The blond shakes his head slowly as the meaning behind the little hybrid's words slowly starts to sink in.

Kaneki. The little dark-haired boy from his memories.

“Kaneki...it's you isn't it? The one I've been searching for.”

“You left me,” the little boy repeats, sniffling softly, "You left me, Hide."

"Kaneki...I'm sorry," he pleads, face contorting with anguish as he looks down into the small hybrid's accusatory gaze searchingly, "I'm s-so sorry! I-I searched for you everywhere! I never forgot our promise! I—"

"You left me, Hide. Why did you leave me?"

Suddenly the sorrowful atmosphere that suffuses the White Rabbit's House begins to take on a more sinister air, as the little white-haired boy's tone deepens and distorts. Hide finds himself backing away from the bed slightly as a twinge of fear sours his stomach and a bodily shudder rifles through him.

Something is coming.

“Why did you leave me, Hide?”

“Hide”
“Hide...”

“Ḥ̴̨̜ ̨̬̪͚̟̠̥̭̪̻̮”

As the bumblebee looks on, the diminutive figure before him slowly begins to shift and metamorphose, small, supple, pale limbs filling out into lean muscular ones that gleam like polished marble under the soft lighting of The White Rabbit’s House, until soon the little boy he has so desperately searched for all this time is nowhere to be found. In his place stands a familiar, dark-haired figure, clothed in black and dripping in blood.

The One-Eyed King looms over Hide forebodingly, pinning him firmly in place under his searing, mismatched glare as he wends tender arms about the bee hybrid’s waist, pulling him in until he’s so close he can count the other man’s delicate eyelashes as they fall across his pale cheeks like soot on snow.

“How could you leave me?” the dark-haired hybrid murmurs, bloodstained lips grazing the side of Hide’s neck ever so lightly with each syllable as he leans in and inhales the omega’s scent.

“K-Kaneki...I’m sorry...” Hide pleads, trembling fitfully in the other hybrid’s arms as the other man gives voice to deep feelings of shame and regret that have haunted the bee hybrid day and night for over a decade, “I d-didn’t know...I never meant to hurt you, I-I—”

Hide shudders as the other man’s mouth slowly descends over his nape and something warm and wet laves out over his sensitive flesh.

“Twas’ so lon’ly without you, Hi_d. A?”

The neo-alpha’s gently murmured words echo in Hide’s ears, just a moment before Kaneki’s sharp teeth finally close over his neck and The White Rabbit’s House is filled with the sound of the bee hybrid’s frantic cries and bloodcurdling screams.

//

“M...Mnn...”

As the persuasive, lingering grip of sleep gradually releases Hide back into wakefulness, a peculiar, wet slurping sound makes its way into his awareness, causing the bee hybrid’s eyebrows to knit up in consternation as his ears are slowly invaded by the odd, disconcerting noise. He flinches slightly when something smooth and pliant descends onto his chest, enveloping his right nipple in wet heat and coaxing a slight whimper from him as the sensitive little nub is twisted and tugged at mercilessly.
The bee hybrid groans softly then, mouth twitching into an increasingly irritated frown, as he suddenly grows cognizant of the peculiar sensation of his hips being jostled backward in a rough motion that precludes him from slipping back into the folds of slumber the way his heavy eyelids are so desperately urging him to at the moment. Face contorting with aggravation and ire at the insistent intrusion on his rest, the delivery boy’s eyes finally fly open when his thighs and lower mouth abruptly explode with burning pain and a strange, uneasy feeling in his lower abdomen makes itself apparent, sending a series of reflexive convulsions rippling through his entire form and jolting him into full awareness at last.

Hide attempts to sit up the moment his mind makes its abrupt return to consciousness, only to find himself wincing in genuine distress and confusion when he is unable to do so. Through his momentary disorientation the bee hybrid can feel the searing burn of both his knees being stretched up toward his head into what can only be described as an untenable position, and it is only then that he finally becomes aware of the source of the discomfort, and with it the reason for his inability to move.

He is currently lying on his back, folded up so that his knees rest at either side of his chest, pressing lightly against the warm, strangely uneven surface upon which he rests, in a position that leaves his rear entirely exposed and his crotch jutting into the air embarrassingly. Face contorting in pain, the bumblebee dares to glance down toward the junction of his legs, where his stiff hip-bones and thigh muscles scream at him in response to the exertion that is currently being levied on them.

The moment he does, Hide feels his heart lurch in his chest.

Above him, Kaneki’s smooth, pale features are twisted up in a perfect blend of desperation and arousal as he forces the last few inches of his throbbing, swollen red cock down into the the omega’s ass with a loud, wet ‘shluck’, and immediately begins to rut the bumblebee with fierce intensity.

“Nnh…Ha-ahh…!” chest heaving with exertion, the dark-haired boy grunts softly and pulls the stricken bee hybrid’s painfully outstretched legs tight to himself until the backs of Hide’s knees rest firmly against his shoulders. He then leans inward, adjusting the angle of his thrusts so that his thick cock plunges straight down into the omega’s core each time he lifts shuddering hips and drives them back down into the other boy’s ass.

“A-ahhh!…H-Hiüü!…Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ahh!”

Hide’s nails skitter helplessly across the slick surface beneath him as he throws his head back and cries out, gasping desperately for air while the dark-haired boy pounds into him, engorged shaft splitting him open like a hot knife with each successive thrust. Unnoticing or uncaring of his return to wakefulness, Kaneki utters a low groan and continues to thrust heavily inside him, grinding his hips into the bumblebee’s ass on each downward thrust as he forces the entire straining, pulsing length of his cock into the depths of the frantic omega’s belly as far as it will go. Hide gasps and chokes out a ragged cry out each time the other boy’s thick shaft slides home inside him, producing a lewd, wet slapping noise as it drags against the slick folds of his insides. The motion sends ripples of delicious friction through his core that pull low moans from him as Kaneki’s blistering tip plunges into the mouth of his cervix, stretching the tight little orifice open little by little as it seeks entrance. The bumblebee gasps desperately as the wide, bulbous head of the centipede’s heavily engorged erection tortures the opening to his womb with each consecutive thrust—every piston of his hips sees Kaneki ramming his cock up into the bee hybrid's cervix with such force that the tiny ring of muscles is eventually forced open enough to accommodate his dripping cockhead, sending bolts of ecstasy deep into the blond boy’s abdomen as the barrier to his uterus strains desperately around the gushing tip of the centipede’s shaft.
The dark-haired hybrid expels a series of low, breathy sighs and deep moans as he pounds into Hide relentlessly in a quick a staccato rhythm that leaves the bumblebee gasping and keening high in his throat for what seems like eons before he finally feels a telltale shudder ripple through the boy above him, as Kaneki’s weighty testicles tense and pull up against the seam of his entrance. Hide lets out a strained, breathless moan as the base of the centipede’s erection throbs heavily inside him, pulsing fitfully with suddenly increased blood flow, and the alpha shifts his stuttering hips forward a bit further, adjusting his angle one final time before he begins to piston them urgently once more. Soon Kaneki is fucking into the omega in shallow, desperate strokes that send the entirety of his leaking, swollen tip surging even further up into the neck of the bee hybrid’s womb with each thrust. Kaneki’s face is flushed and damp with a thin veneer of sweat, slick red tongue lolling from his mouth slightly as he moans deep in his chest and leans in until their foreheads are practically pressed together. His soft, flushed lips brush against the blond’s gently with each heaving breath he takes, sturdy forearms just barely steadying him as he grinds his hips down against the bumblebee’s ass urgently in a powerful mating press.

“A-ahh! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ahh! Nnn-nnngh!!” Stars explode behind Hide’s eyelids as, impossibly, the head of Kaneki’s cock breaches his cervix the rest of the way and a thick, steady stream of the alpha’s hot, runny pre-ejaculate invades his womb, coaxing flood after flood of slick from the omega as he throws his head back and languishes under the relentless onslaught of sensation.

“Haa…Haah...H-aaah...!! Nn-Nnngghh!” A hot gust of the centipede’s breath rolls across the inside of his left inner thigh and in another moment the bumblebee shudders violently and lets out a loud cry, curling in on himself as much as his compromised position will allow in response to the violent gushing sensation that suddenly erupts in his lower belly. A searing geyser of the centipede’s molten hot seed explodes up against Hide’s insides, blindsiding him with the abrupt onslaught of sensory input, and the bee hybrid can do little more than shudder and squirm uncontrollably, panting and moaning as his eyes squeeze shut against the sudden rush of liquid fire that jettisons into the lining of his womb. The thick torrent of Kaneki’s smoldering hot cum bursts up against the thin barrier of flesh that separates Hide’s reproductive organs from his digestive ones with such force that for one terrifying moment it feels as though it might have actually perforated the sensitive membrane and bled straight through into his lower intestine.

“Haa…Ahh…NNh!” there’s a low expulsion of breath from above him, this time against the back of his knee, that causes Hide to shudder violently for a moment. And then strong digits are closing around the thick of his thighs, bringing new heights of distress to the already overextended tendons of his crotch and pelvis as Kaneki grips the backs of his knees and presses them down toward his shoulders again, until Hide’s chest is hemmed in on either side by his own thighs and from above by the solid, damp wall of the other boy’s heaving chest. Impossibly, the new position pushes the alpha’s cock even deeper inside him, until the broad base of Kaneki’s long, swollen shaft strains fitfully at the mouth of Hide’s anus each time the blistering rod of molten hot flesh pulses from root to tip with a new wave of the young centipede’s thick ejaculate. It’s all the bumblebee can do to keep up a semi-steady supply of oxygen to his lungs as he cries out and gasps for air, still desperately struggling to wrap his head around the situation. Kaneki’s gushing tip is kissing the mouth of his womb so intimately now that the young bee hybrid can feel the way the slit of the other boy’s cock shudders and dilates each time the centipede’s heavy testicles clench up against the mouth of his entrance and the rigid length of his shaft throbs inside him, just before flooding his uterus with a fresh new load of the other boy’s steaming hot, viscid cum.

The dark-haired boy forcefully captures Hide’s lips with his own as he continues to spill load after load of his seed deep inside the bumblebee’s core. Hide moans long and low into Kaneki's mouth as the alpha's heady scent floods his senses and his initial shock and disorientation slowly give way to a strange sensation of satiation and fullness that is completely at odds with the agonizing burn that
emits from his strained leg muscles and abused entrance, as well as the terrified confusion that still ripples emptily in his chest. The force of the centipede’s release subsides slightly after a few solid pumps, but even so Kaneki is still coming in torrents inside him. The steady influx of the dark-haired boy’s viscous seed laps up against Hide’s inner walls in heavy waves that warm his lower belly as his insides are glutted with thick ropes of the centipede’s steaming hot cum.

Hide whimpers quietly when Kaneki’s deep, profligate seeding finally subsides and the alpha abruptly takes him by the hips, easily flipping him over and rearranging their positions so that this time the omega lies flat on his stomach with his left cheek pressing down into the wet warmth below.

It’s only then that the delivery boy finally becomes aware of his surroundings. They are now back in the clearing where Kaneki had first marked him with his seed that night, but the scenery has changed significantly. Where the little area was once a nightmarish scene of mutilated corpses and scattered body parts, it is now a vision straight out of Hell. The area is now piled high with the dead—more than Hide can count from his awkward vantage point—arranged in a strangely orderly fashion so that the bodies appear to grow more intact as they near the epicenter, forming a low wall of sorts around the bumblebee and his captor. Directly beneath him lie a number of slightly fleshier bodies, with an assortment of fabrics—bloodstained scraps of clothing which seem to have been haphazardly salvaged from the bodies themselves—that have been meticulously arranged atop them to form a soft layer of insulation.

The bumblebee cringes and bites back more tears and a wave of bile as his cheek is pressed up against a bit of severed thigh and the creeping stench of fresh death invades his nostrils. The bodies that support the nest’s infrastructure are new enough that they haven’t yet begun to truly reek of decay, but just underneath the overpowering essence of Kaneki’s potent semen and urine that suffuses the area, Hide’s keen nose and sensitive antennae can already pick up on the stomach churning odor of drying blood and excrement that rises off the newly dead, filling his nose and mouth with a lingering stench of copper and hawthorn in addition to the centipedes vibrant, floral musk.

Behind him he can hear the other boy shifting about a bit before the alpha’s strong fingers close around his wrists in a vice-like grip, forcing Hide to arch up and back a little as the dark-haired boy pulls both of his arms behind his back with one hand. There is a loud wet sucking noise and a painful tug at his rim as the neo-alpha finally drags his long, heavy shaft free of Hide’s entrance, and a low whimper of embarrassment and discomfort escapes the bumblebee when a hot rush of the centipede’s thick ejaculate subsequently spills free from his tightly swollen little pucker, wetting the inside of his thighs and the backside of his balls as it dribbles down to soil the nesting beneath him in a long, steady stream of molten hot semen.

“D—积极作用—e it Hi d—e—?”

Kaneki’s rough tenor sounds deep in his ear, manic in its intensity, and it’s then that Hide finally realizes just how unhinged the other boy has become in his rut fervor.

“I—mya—e—it just for y—o u:”
The bumblebee shudders violently as the dark-haired boy straddles his ass from above, roughly thumbing apart his cheeks again. Hide can feel the other male’s heavily engorged cock pulsing fervently in time with his rapid heartbeat when the slick member slides up into the crack of his ass, swollen head tugging at his rim slightly each time it glides across his puffy, reddened slit. Kaneki teases him that way for a few minutes, dragging his rigid shaft back and forth across the blond’s abused little hole, tilting his hips a bit once every few passes so that the dripping tip of his member dips part way into Hide’s entrance on each up-thrust, to leak thick globs of the centipede’s runny precum straight down into his core.

“Ahh…haaah…ng!” When at last the Wolf seems to have had enough fun toying with him that way, he angles his pelvis so that his cockhead sits flush against the omega’s entrance, drawing a little moan of surprise from the bee. Using his right hand to position the delivery boy’s hips just so, he tightens his grip on Hide’s wrists, causing the blond to cry out softly in discomfort as he arches up and back a little bit more in response to alleviate the strain on his shoulders. Hide can feel the searing hot tip of the other hybrid’s member throb eagerly against his leaking entrance as Kaneki slowly forces it inside him again, and hot tears stain his cheeks once more when the dark-haired boy nuzzles into his cheek tenderly, warm breath steaming against his neck and dragging another shudder from him. A desperate little sob of pain falls from the bumblebee’s lips when Kaneki suddenly gives a breathy moan and thrusts the remainder of his shaft inside him in one swift motion, forcing him wide open around the centipede’s long, swollen cock once more.

The strain of accommodating the centipede’s impressive girth already has Hide blinking back more tears as he shudders and moans around the painful stretch, but in another moment his whimpers escalate into outright sobs of terror when the centipede’s massive tail shifts and twists itself around him, sharp hybrid legs tickling his hips and thighs as they clamber for purchase against his skin until the base of the large appendage settles heavily between his legs.

“Ah…Nnh!” Kaneki shifts his hips a bit so that thickest portion of his tail rubs up against the bee hybrid’s crotch, and Hide gives a loud yip at the sensation of something long, tapered and wet sliding free from between two of the large plates that line the other boy’s hybrid underbelly, to lick up against his perineum and press heavily into the underside of his ass, just below where the dark-haired boy has already penetrated him with his human shaft.

“Ah!? K-Kaneki…Ah!” Hide pales as the tip of the centipede’s massive insectoid member forces its way past the cheeks of his ass and presses into his entrance just beneath the other boy’s throbbing human cock. He can feel the intricate veining that lines the huge appendage pulse heavily as it shudders against him before releasing a thick stream of runny precum that drips down into his hole to ease its passage.


A frantic cry tears itself from the delivery boy’s already raw throat as the alpha’s tapered hybrid shaft suddenly breaches his entrance, stretching open his tortured rim even wider as he struggles to accommodate the large intrusion. The head of Kaneki’s hybrid cock is not quite as thick around as his human one, allowing it to wedge itself inside him with relative ease, but it is still far too much. Hide can feel how it gradually widens in girth as it proceeds, stretching him open wider and wider the further it presses inside him, until the bee hybrid is panting openly, shivering and moaning around the impossible feeling of both Kaneki’s cocks shuddering and throbbing alongside one another inside him. A fearful glance down toward the junction of his legs reveals his reddened, abused hole, straining pitifully as it is stretched wide around both of the centipede’s pulsing shafts, thick rivulets of
The centipede’s slick, semi-translucent pre-ejaculate trickling down from his entrance to wet his testicles and inner thighs. Despite the unbearable burning pain that already consumes his anus, the dark-haired boy’s tail continues to shift against him slightly and Hide realizes with a horrified groan that the centipede has still only managed to fit about a third of his hybrid cock inside him. The rest of it hangs free from his entrance, pulsing and steaming against the cool winter air as it continues to dribble hot precum straight down into his core.

“K-Kanekiiii…ahhhhn…!” A long, low groan falls from the omega’s lips as the centipede’s lengthy hybrid shaft suddenly stills for a moment before slowly beginning to pull out of him. Hide gasps and moans loudly each time one of the thick ridges that line the large appendage pops free of his entrance on the long, slow drag back out, as the alpha tugs his cock nearly all the way free of Hide’s hole before abruptly thrusting it back in again, startling an agonized cry from the bee hybrid.

“A-Ahh…!? Nnh....! Nnnnggh!”

The centipede’s hybrid member picks up a slow rhythm inside him after that, and soon another hot rush of seminal fluid floods Hide’s womb as Kaneki’s human cock gushes precum, stimulated by the intense friction created against his humanoid shaft when the thick ridges that line the top and bottom of the huge appendage slide against it on each thrust. It’s not long before the alpha begins to thrust his human cock into the omega as well, pounding into him in short, shallow thrusts that run a perfect counterpoint to the languid, lengthy strokes of his hybrid member, and creating a lurid harmony of wet, sucking, slapping noises as the centipede fervently plows Hide’s straining hole with both his cocks. The bumblebee keens and moans loudly as the heavily swollen tip of Kaneki’s human member catches on his entrance with each downstroke, while the bumps and ridges that line the dark-haired boy's lengthy hybrid shaft continue to stimulate his rim relentlessly as they stutter in and out of him on every pass.

“Haaa…! …Nnhh!…Nnnnggh!” the unbearable friction seems to be doing a number on the alpha as well—his cries escalate in intensity until he is gasping and moaning sinfully as he fucks the bumblebee's little hole raw with both his cocks, just as promised.

It’s only a matter of time before the centipede’s thrusts grow urgent in their intensity, prying loud gasps and deep moans from both of them as his hips and tail piston into the bee hybrid’s ass violently, chasing his release with wild abandon. After several minutes of the frantic, torturous pace, Hide moans softly at the sensation of Kaneki finally tensing up against him, gravid balls pulling up against the base of his human cock as both his cocks pulse and shudder heavily inside the omega. The dark-haired boy gasps deep in his ear as his human cock suddenly swells up a bit at the base, just before his tip twitches violently and shoots a long, thick stream of the centipede’s white-hot spunk up into his womb. Hide yelps and shudders as Kaneki’s smoldering hot seed fills him once more, sending a bolt of delicious ecstasy directly to his core. He’s already moaning softly into another portio climax as the other boy’s hybrid member continues to pulse violently inside him, throbbing heavily from root to tip several times until finally a sweltering heat surges up from its base, searing Hide’s entire channel. And then the grotesquely swollen appendage is emptying itself inside him at last, coating his inner walls in thick ribbons of the other boy's sperm and seminal fluid, as Kaneki spills wave after wave of rich, steaming hot centipede cum directly into his core.

Hide’s legs shudder and twitch as the alpha leans down into him from behind, pressing his hips tightly up against the omega’s rear as he forces both his straining shafts inside the blond as deep as he can manage and pumps load after searing hot load of fresh, thick ejaculate into the depths of the bumblebee's belly with both cocks, desperate to impregnate him. The dark-haired boy holds him still that way for a long time, powerful hips grinding down into him from behind as Kaneki begins to thrust his tail again in slow, shallow strokes that stain the backs of the bee hybrid’s thighs a frothy, bluish white as the smaller boy’s potent hybrid semen spills back out of him in long, thick rivulets.
Once the centipede’s thrusts start to grow in intensity, a soft slurping noise fills the bee hybrid’s ears as Kaneki’s hips pull back and his human shaft slowly makes the long slide back out of him. Hide shivers and sighs with relief as more thick streams of the centipede’s cum dribble down from his entrance with the motion, plopping onto to the floor of his nest heavily in slick, steaming hot puddles, and his entrance is finally allowed to relax back into some semblance of it’s normal shape. His respite is short lived however, as Kaneki’s hybrid shaft immediately surges the rest of the way up inside him to staunch the void, filling him to the gills once again as the tip of the centipede boy’s cock easily pushes past his cervix to invade his womb.

“A-Ahhh…! Nn…Nngh!!” a ragged moan tears itself from Hide’s mouth as the centipede mounts him from behind again and Kaneki’s massive hybrid shaft surges upward into his core even further than before, fully impaling him on the dark-haired man’s grotesquely engorged cock until the smooth plating of the centipede’s warm underbelly sits flush against his ass. Soon the bee hybrid is moaning low and loud as the gushing, tapered tip of the dark-haired boy’s heavy hybrid cock grazes the upper wall of his uterus, spurting long thick rivulets of runny, muddled precum up against the sensitive membrane and coaxing waves of warm, runny slick from the omega’s entrance once more. Kaneki moans softly into the dip of Hide’s shoulder blades as he suddenly slides an arm between the omega’s legs and grasps his left knee, before rotating the bumblebee so that he is lying on his back again, legs pressed into the air at either side of the centipede’s enormous tail. Hide gives a loud gasp as the other boy’s cock rotates inside him, stimulating his raw, sensitive insides as its bumps and ridges drag heavily across the walls of his tight channel, only to suddenly find himself gagging around a mouthful of Kaneki’s flesh as the dark-haired boy shifts his hips upward and grabs him by the back of the neck before abruptly shoving his dripping, pulsing human cock down the bee hybrid's throat again.

Coughing and sputtering, Hide shuts his eyes tight again as he focuses on trying to breathe through his nose while he chokes around the other boy’s erection, but he can’t help the loud moans that vibrate in his chest as the centipede begins to move his tail against him once more. Kaneki thrusts the massive appendage up against his ass in long, deep, heavy strokes this time, drawing muffled gasps and moans from Hide as the centipede boy's impossibly long, swollen cock strains against the his tender entrance, thick ridges rubbing up against his aching prostate mercilessly on every pass. The blond’s already tight channel writhes and clenches around the alpha’s enormous girth fitfully, steadily coaxing them both toward climax again as Kaneki pounds his aching, leaking human cock down his throat once more, groaning and shuddering with arousal. The alpha doesn’t last long this time; soon the dark-haired boy is moaning his release into the cold night air as he tilts his head back and spills another piping hot load down the back of Hide’s throat.

Even as Kaneki pulls out of his mouth, trailing a long line of stringy, glossy white cum from the tip of his cock to Hide’s flushed lips and trembling chin, the centipede’s tail continues its relentless staccato rhythm against the blond’s ass, hammering into him with reckless abandon as the bumblebee bucks and keens on his rigid shaft. Kaneki’s hybrid cock throbs fitfully as he pounds into the delivery boy from above, folding him over until he is practically bent double, while the alpha’s heavily engorged shaft plunges inside him again and again, until they are both panting and grunting breathlessly with exertion. The centipede’s shaft slides home inside Hide one last time before it shudders with intention, throbbing and pulsing violently from base to tip—but this time there is no explosion of molten heat inside him. Instead the dark-haired boy gives a long, low moan against his lips as the thick of his tail, right behind his cock, suddenly shudders and swells, and ‘something’ begins to move down the base of Kaneki’s shaft.

Kaneki’s lips move to his shoulder then, heavily lidded gaze feverish as he scents the omega’s nape with a deep moan.

“A-Ah!? Aaaahn!!” Hide’s eyes go wide, flooding with tears as he suddenly realizes what’s coming.
A soft gust of warmth across the back of his neck is the only warning the bumblebee receives before Kaneki’s sharp incisors puncture his nape, drawing a loud gasp from his lips, followed by a long, keening cry as the alpha closes his jaw tightly around the back of his neck in a painful hold. His short, sharp nails dig into the flesh of Kaneki’s muscular shoulders as the alpha gives another low moan and buries his teeth even deeper, sending off little sparks of pain behind the omega’s eyes. There is no doubt that the centipede’s bite will have left a perfect set of deep red toothmarks in the bumblebee’s tender flesh when he is finished, forever marking Hide as his.

The bee hybrid closes his eyes tight, breath coming in short, shallow gasps as the dark-haired boy’s member twitches heavily inside him and the thick bulge continues to makes its way down toward the tip of his shaft. On the way it catches on the neck of his womb, and he finds himself shivering and keening high in his throat as Kaneki's shuddering, throbbing cock shoots wave after wave of hot, runny precum up inside him in an attempt to ease its passage. Several beats later the dark-haired boy gives a soft grunt and utters a long, low groan into his nape as the large, vaguely ovular mass finally pushes past the tip of the centipede’s shaft to deposit itself inside Hide’s womb with a heavy plop.

They both moan loudly as Kaneki’s first egg settles inside him, neither of them able to do much of anything besides panting and sighing softly into one another’s skin for a few moments. But soon the centipede’s cock is shuddering to life inside him again, and Kaneki groans into Hide’s neck as his next spermatophore slides down into the base of his shaft.

The rest of Kaneki’s eggs come surprisingly easy after that, sliding home inside him one after another in quick succession, until soon Hide’s soft gasps and moans fill the clearing and his belly swells heavy and round with the centipede’s offerings. Once the last orb rolls heavily into place inside him, the alpha gives a soft grunt as his shaft shudders and convulses again, pulsing vehemently as his base begins to swell, until soon a thick, hardened knot punctuates the root of the centipede’s cock. Hide sobbs loudly as the alpha thrusts the base of his shaft up against his swollen, abused little pucker, demanding entrance—the centipede’s erection is already impossibly thick, and although the memory of taking both the dark-haired boy’s cocks at once is still fresh in the bee hybrid’s mind, he is sure that even another centimeter of girth will kill him. Nevertheless, the young neo-hybrid continues to grind the swollen heat of his knot up against the bee hybrid’s entrance insistently, and soon Hide gives a loud yelp as the centipede’s massive swell surges past his rim with a sharp, wet pop.

A loud groan slips past Hide’s lips as the centipede’s thick knot finally slides into place, plugging his entrance and sealing him up tight, and a moment later, Kaneki is moaning heavily into his release as another white-hot geyser of thick, syrupy cum erupts from the tip of his hybrid shaft, spurting directly into the wall of Hide’s womb as the omega gasps and shudders into his shoulder. The bee hybrid trembles as, impossibly, Kaneki sends him even deeper than before, smearing the gushing tip of his cock up against the lining of the omega’s uterus as he shoots load after load of steaming hot centipede cum directly into the omega’s womb. Thick ropes of Kaneki’s hot, sticky ejaculate splatter heavily across the tops of his eggs as the alpha continues to spray what feels like litres’ worth of his potent seed up into Hide’s belly, until soon the bee hybrid’s stomach roils slightly with inertia.

“Ah! Nnh…! K-Kane…kiiiii…” a wanton moan parts Hide’s lips as Kaneki’s heavy spermatophores roll tightly against each other in his womb, destabilized by the further addition of the centipede’s thick, gelatinous cum. He cries out desperately into the alpha’s skin as Kaneki continues to pump his stomach full of gloppy, white-hot semen, heedless to his trembling mate’s cries as he loses himself completely to the intensity of his blood rut.

Hide has lost count of how many times the centipede has seeded him by the time he finally feels the
base of the other boy’s cock begin to lose its fervor inside him. The prolonged torture of the neo-
hybrid’s vehement release carries on for what seems like forever before the centipede’s low moans
finally begin to grow reedy and strained in his ear. A thin trail of drool slides down the side of the
beehybrid’s chin, mouth hanging open slightly and eyes glazing over a bit at the sensation of
Kaneki’s thick seed and heavy eggs churning softly in his belly, as the alpha’s lips finally come away
from his nape, just long enough to reposition themselves over his mouth. As the centipede tongues
and bites at his lips hungrily, Hide whimpers helplessly into the dark-haired boy’s mouth, steeling
himself for what he knows is probably coming next.

The alpha’s supple lips tremble softly as they move over his, and for just a moment Kaneki’s eyes are
that of the timid, gentle little boy from his memories.

And then the centipede’s eyebrows are knitting up on his forehead, eyes narrowing into a look of
genuine anguish and confusion as he slowly opens his mouth wide over the bee hybrid’s.

‘Everything’s alright, Kaneki...I understand now.’

He doesn’t register the first bite until he tastes his own blood on his tongue.

“Hide...HideHideHideHideHIDE.”

'I wasn’t there for you when you needed me…I left you.'

“Mnngh...S-s’okay...K-Kaneki...I’m s-sorry...c-couldn’t...c-can’t...a-ah...Nn!”

'Some friend I am, huh? Even after I’d finally found you, I couldn’t even remember you properly.’

Stamina finally drained by the energy demands of sustained ejaculation, Kaneki moves on to his chin
and neck, blindly seeking to replenish his lost strength so that he can reinitiate their mating session.
The centipede is almost tender as he strips away the remaining flesh from Hide’s jaw. The searing
pain that screamed at the bumblebee from his lips, chin and throat at first has grown faint, like waves
crashing on a distant shore, by the time the other boy moves down to his shoulder, effortlessly
crushing Hide’s collar bone between his powerful jaws in one bite.

'Haha, maybe the stupid prophecy was right after all. Maybe this is how it was meant to be.’

“Hn-aaaah! Agh!! Ah!...Angh!...K-Kane-....Aghhh! Ahh! Ahhh! A-Aagghhhhhh!”
'Maybe...maybe this really was the only way I could ever be of any use to you.'

'Something warm and moist drips onto Hide's cheek, sliding down his face into his eye, and the bee hybrid's heart clenches in his chest at the sight of the hot tears that slowly stream down the dark-haired boy's face as he tears into the omega's flesh. Hide gurgles and wheezes wetly through the exposed flesh of his vocal chords as he tries to reassure the other boy, but by now his ruined face muscles won't obey him anymore.'

'It's okay, Kaneki. I'm here now.'

'Ah...?'

As the corners of his vision fade and his fingers and toes begin to tingle with the cold, Hide can feel the centipede's nose, wet with tears, press into what's left of the skin of his cheek ever so softly.

And somehow he knows, with absolute certainty, exactly what it is that the other boy is trying to convey.

'A smile that will never reach his lips crinkles the corners of the bumblebee's eyes as he closes tender arms around the dark-haired boy's trembling shoulders.'

"Me too."
Grotesque, slurping, gnashing noises fill the area by the time the two of them descend on the scene from the trees above. The centipede is so lost to his rut fervor that he fails to register their arrival at all as he gorges himself on the warm flesh of the lifeless hybrid beneath him, even when the taller of the two interlopers approaches him from behind, weapon in hand. A loud, cracking, splattering noise resounds throughout the clearing then, as the tip of the bespectacled hybrid's blade explodes through the back of Kaneki's skull, bursting out of his right eye socket from behind in a rush of blood and bits of shattered bone, and sending the neo-hybrid twisting and wailing in agony as his body reflexively responds to the pain.

“Uh-oh...” observes the tarantula, looking on in amusement as the wasp casually kicks the screaming, writhing centipede out of the way and bends to retrieve the swiftly cooling body that lies motionless atop the pile of corpses.

"Looks like your little baby brother’s bleeding out, Kishou."

Chapter End Notes

I have nothing much to say about this chapter in particular, other than that it was bitch to write and I had to rewrite it twice (ugh). Also I'm really not satisfied with how most of the non-smut parts came out, and I will probably be editing some parts heavily later.

But yay, sex and violence! That's what the kids are into these days, right?

As usual, deepest apologies to those of you who were waiting forever for this one. Honestly, this chapter was supposed to be posted around Halloween, but I've been having a bunch of health issues. Unfortunately I had to be hospitalized a few weeks ago for a pulmonary embolism and ended up having to stay in for quite a while for observation and recovery, which pushed things back even more. On the other hand, if I hadn't gone in when I did I could have died, which would have been very very...not good (Still alive bitchez!).

On the up side, since I was hellified bored all day every day while I was laid up, I got into some new fandoms and came up with a few new fic ideas! Strangely enough the whole incident forced me to finally take a much-needed break and think about my life and stuff, and I am now bound and determined to finish all the writing projects I can before I bite it. I can now say with certainty that I will be posting a couple new TG fics and a BNHA fic in the relatively near future, so please look out for those!
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!