Praise Be

by PastorThomasNelson

Summary

After years of heartbreak and tragedy, Angie and the few people she cares for decide to bring the Atua religion outside of her island. However, it's less of a religion and more of a cult.
Chapter 1

Angie Yonaga had no way of knowing that her actions were a bit off.

She lived the beginning of her life on an obscure and tiny island with only about 2000 people. The island functioned much differently from most other societies. No schools, very little communication to the outside world, not even a real kind of government either. This island was extremely religious under a god named Atua. Atua was most of the time a very benevolent and forgiving god, but if you crossed him too much, there would be hell to pay, for even the gods lose their patience sometimes. Angie swore to Atua greater than anyone else on the island, even if she was only a small girl. Even if she didn't, what choice did she have? Her mother was the religious leader, and on this island, the religious leader was also the political leader. Angie was the heir to the throne, and she loved it.

The only thing that came even close to matching her love for Atua was her love for art. Another important sentiment on the island was artistic ability. From a young age, she was taught how to make all sorts of arts and crafts, for this was also island tradition. But Angie was better at it than absolutely anyone. Her paintings were phenomenal, her sculptures were extremely realistic, everything she seemed to make stunned everyone. Even in youth, she far surpassed everyone on the island. She had embraced and embodied the island’s culture more than anyone had ever seen, and everyone knew she'd be the perfect candidate to eventually surpass her mother.

But all on the island agreed that more people needed to know about Atua's important words. With so few people, they all agreed something must be done. Thus, a multi year plan was set up. Angie and her family would spend the next few years in Japan to show more people the way of Atua. Once enough people were enlightened, they would make their way back. Angie was twelve at the time, but she went along with everything. But the process in Japan was slow. Almost no one was interested at all. Who would even care about some religion from an island no one had ever heard of? Something drastic had to happen to make these people listen. Two years in, and little progress had been made. Even though the island’s people still had faith, something drastic had to happen. But the pressure wasn't true until tragedy struck. The tiny island was almost entirely wiped from existence via tsunami. No survivors, nothing left. It was the perfect time for Angie's parents to make a move, and Atua had just the idea. They were to go to one of the busier areas of the city and preach his word, and murder everyone who spoke out on it. Atua was fine with murder, as long as they weren't of his own people. Ten innocent civilians were killed before they themselves were killed by police. Angie stayed at her house and did not take part in this, although she definitely heard about it. It saddened her, how couldn't it? But she wasn't as upset as many would be, because she knew that even without them, she knew that Atua would always be there for her to look out for her. Plus, in many many years, she'd see them both again.

Eventually, authorities were contacted to the house, and she was investigated to see if she was mentally stable after her parents' massacre. As much as it pained her, she had to lie about knowing anything about Atua. She was deemed fine mentally, although they did find out she had never even been to a school before. Thus, she was given to a new foster family and began to go to high school. Yet in this new society, she was an outcast. No one had any idea that her parents had committed murder, but she simply wasn't comfortable around most people. An outcast. That was, until she met Korekiyo Shinguji. He seemed creepy to most who bore witness to him, with his mask that always covered his face and overall a vibe that made others uncomfortable. He was a loner, and that's how he thought he'd always stay, until Angie came into the picture. He didn't have many people to live with, just him and his older sister, and both worked as anthropologists. Neither him or Angie had any friends, but Angie found him rather interesting. There was something about him that was just... different. Alien, but in an strange and interesting way. She'd never seen anything or anyone like him.
Korekiyo also found Angie to be rather interesting, even before the two would meet. It was clear to him that she wasn't from Japan, but he couldn't exactly tell where she was from. If there's one thing the boy loved, it was learning about other cultures. It took a while, but Angie eventually did introduce himself to the boy. The two former loners became fast friends, finding themselves to have much in common. Korekiyo took an immediate interest in what Angie had to say about her island, her culture, and especially what she had to say about Atua. Korekiyo wasn't a religious person, but he always was eager to hear what the foreign girl had to say.

Outside of her time with Korekiyo however, Angie hated living. She was lonely anywhere else she went, for only Korekiyo understood her and her culture. Not even her foster family took His word seriously. They saw it as just a fallacy created by maniacs. She still pledged much of her work and time to Him, despite what anyone ever said to her. Despite appearing happy to those who saw her, Angie was constantly filled with sadness and homesickness. All she wanted was to go back to her island and be with the others she once loved, but the island was just a distant memory now. The only person she could go to was to Korekiyo. He seemed to be the only person in the world who truly understood who she was and what she stood for. He was the only person she could pour her heart out to and cry to, and he'd understand it all, for Korekiyo also had his home troubles. His sister was very ill, constantly in and out of the hospital, likely not to recover. Korekiyo also vented to her for his dilemmas. As the two grew to know each other, their bond strengthened. Their relationship became something more, but neither wanted to admit it.

Eventually, the inevitable happened, and Korekiyo's sister died of her illness. The anthropologist recovered the only way he could, by deciding to once again travel the world for his studies, leaving Angie alone once again. The poor girl once again had to look for friends desperately to not feel the loneliness and isolation she did when she began going to school. She'd soon turn her attention to Himiko Yumeno. Himiko was a magician, what many would consider to be a damn good one. Most people, however, knew her magic was fake, as much as she begged and pleaded to differ, constantly ridiculed by others for her claims. But Angie wasn't as skeptical as others. Just because it wasn't there didn't mean it didn't exist. Angie had no way of seeing Atua, but it was obvious to her and her culture that he had to exist. It was around this point that Angie actually began to hear Him speak to her, but she didn't want to risk telling anyone this in fear they'd think it was a sort of mental disorder. Angie would introduce herself to Himiko not too long after the exit of Korekiyo, and they also would become great friends. Himiko would often talk about her magic to Angie, and she'd listen to every word of it, even if she didn't entirely believe it. Himiko thought the same towards Angie's Atua talk, although she believed her much more.

Himiko wasn't entirely alone, however. She did have one friend that would also become close friends with Angie; Tenko Chabashira. Tenko was an Aikido martial artist, and concentrated much of her mind and spirit to her craft. She was aggressive, yet endearing to the other two girls. The overactive Tenko was a contrast to Himiko's often lazy behaviors, but she was way too obsessed with the magician, and a bit too trusting and naive as well. As such, she believed all of her magic without question. Himiko also began to believe in Angie's god the more she talked about him, and as such, Tenko did as well. The three all became very close. However, despite their relationships being as close as Angie's with Korekiyo's, Angie still felt something was missing without him. She knew her in the back of her mind that she, him, and the other two girls would be able to spread the word of Atua once more, and more successful than ever, as well.

After over a year, Korekiyo returned. Even with the thoughts of his travels, the boy had still kept Angie in the back of his mind every single day, hoping that she'd be able to forgive him for leaving. She was able to, and he joined their little friend group. Himiko was often suspicious of Korekiyo, with his creepy uniform and mask and all, but not as much as Tenko, who was always suspicious.
that men were up to no good. Regardless, the four would still become friends even to the end of their school days. But Angie still knew that she had to bring Atua’s word to a whole new people, regardless of standards, regardless of the law, regardless of anything. She had to do what she believed she was destined to do. After the four graduated from school, they were able to get enough money to buy an old warehouse. Perfect for the kind of church Angie was looking for. As such, they had established the return of Angie’s island religion in Japan.

Blissfully unaware of the pain and grief they would cause over the next several decades.
Angie had no idea of it yet, but it was already her time to die.

Angie decorated the warehouse with flowers, paintings and other sorts of crafts to remind her of the island she had missed for so long. It didn't need too much left to go until she seemed right at home. She was so concentrated to what she had been doing that she didn't even notice the boy in the mask and the hurtful eyes following her.

Korekiyo's parents had died in a car accident when he was just a young boy, around the same age Angie was when her parents were killed. However, his sister was old enough to be able to raise him on his own. The problem was that she was constantly sick, and nearly dying. She still raised Korekiyo with great intent and power, becoming the dominant force in his life. But she wasn't meant to last, and she didn't. Her final request for her younger brother was to give her one hundred admirable friends for her in the afterlife. Korekiyo not only went on his world journey to recover from the loss of the most important figure in his life, but to find her one hundred girls for him to slaughter, to keep his sister happy. At first he found the request preposterous, but if it's what she wanted, than it's what she wanted. He became effective at finding the perfect murder techniques, and hiding the bodies without evidence of him having ever been there. It's not that he wanted to kill, it's that he felt he needed to, and he had always thought to himself that Angie would be his sister's perfect friend. If anyone could fill the hole in his heart from her death, it was absolutely Angie. But he couldn't do that to her. He knew that if one girl could ever replace his older sister, it was her. She was lucky he didn't attempt to end her before he left, but her luck had seemed to have run out.

Korekiyo stood behind Angie as she stood on a stepladder, putting yellow and blue crepe paper on the walls. He was holding an old yet still effective samurai sword he had gotten on his journeys, a weapon he had commonly used for his malicious intent. All the girls he had killed he at least gotten to know somewhat, yet still killed without any hesitation, and yet... he found himself unable to move. He had to man the hell up before Angie turned around and saw what he was trying to do.

He breathed in deeply as he raised the sword above his shoulder, walking slowly towards her without making a sound. A process he had done dozens of times over the past several years. He abruptly stopped himself after only a few steps. Angie was the only one alive who really got him, and as such, he was the only one alive who really got Angie. He didn't know how to describe his relationship with her. Obviously they were friends, but was this, god forbid it, love? The only girl he had ever loved was his sister, but that was to be expected for a sibling bond. But although that's the way he should have seen it, and the way his sister saw it, Korekiyo wanted to go further, and he meant that in the most disgusting way possible. He didn't care. It was what he wanted, what he desires, yet his dreams were never to come. His sister was gone, and all he could really do for her now was get her the friends she had asked for. What the hell even is love anyway, he thought, still behind Angie with the sword raised, unmoving. It's whatever I want it to be.

He wanted to look on the bright side, even if there barely was one. She's going to be back with her parents, back with everyone she once knew. No more suffering. Of course, she'd also have to spend a lot of time with Sister, as well. Korekiyo continued to stand there conflicted, the girl in the yellow jacket entirely oblivious to what was going on. Not much time left. He'd have to do it fast and without much thought. The faster he did it, the less she'd feel of it. He continued to walk again, a bit faster this time although he stayed just as quiet. Angie continued not to notice. A tear rolls down his eye and onto his mask before falling onto the wooden boards that laced the flooring. He didn't want to do it, of course, but nothing became before Sister. What she wanted was what she got, even if it's
not what he wanted. And she definitely wanted Angie. After her, Himiko and Tenko were next. Then he'd dispose of all of them, and move on to a new era of his life. Not even he knew what was after that. Probably travel the world again, find a new place for himself and finally hit the triple figures. He finds himself just barely behind the girl, ready to swing the sword, ready to end her troubles, and yet... and yet...

Korekiyo drops the sword, making a loud clanging noise on the floor. He gets on his knees and puts his hands on his face. Angie turns around and notices her friend crying on the ground below. She climbs down the stepladder. "Korekiyo? What are you-" she tries to ask.

"What the hell is wrong with me?" the boy says, cutting her off. He raises his head from his hands, his face and eyes now red with regret. "I'm a disgusting human being."

Angie looks at him in surprise. Those aren't words she'd ever use to describe him. She didn't have a mean thing to say to him at all. "Well, I don't agree with that. Those are the last words I'd ever use to describe you! Both me and Atua appreciate what you've done for me!" she said, gleefully.

Unbeknownst to her, Atua speak was the last thing he needed right now. Even after all this time of knowing her, he still wasn't religious. But he was smart enough to not let religion get in the way of a friendship. He hesitates a bit to let out his true feelings. "You... you don't understand. I've done some horrible things, all for my sister. I'm a murderer, a murderer of many girls. And you, Angie. You were n-n-n-" He can't let out the last bit of the word. He puts his face back in his hands, his crying becoming louder.

Angie had seen Korekiyo cry plenty of times before, mostly because of his sister's condition and later death, but this was something she'd never heard before. She couldn't tell if he was lying or not, until she noticed the sword next to him. She bends over forwards, touching the crying boy's chin and lifting it out of his hands with her finger. "W-why? How many have you killed?" she asks him.

He coughs a bit before revealing to her his answer. "Because my sister wanted to have a hundred friends in the afterlife. And right now, she has... ninety three," he says, voice still shaky. He had never felt shame for killing before. After all, it is what Sister wanted. But he felt nothing but shame for this one, and he couldn't even go in for the kill on this one. He gets up for his position. "I'll see myself out. Forget about me." he says, turning around and heading towards the exit.

"Wait!" Angie yells. Korekiyo doesn't listen. She runs to him, getting in front of him and stopping him. "Just because you see yourself as a monster doesn't mean I do! It doesn't even mean Atua does!" she says.

Angie had heard plenty about his sister before. Her word was just as important to him as Atua's was to hers. She never got the opportunity to meet her, but she understood how much of a role she played in his life. Of course if she wanted him to murder a hundred people, he'd do it without question. "I understand, Korekiyo. Most people have a type of higher power they can look up to. Even when it seems wrong, they know what they're doing. Atua has told me plenty of things I don't want to do, but they've made me a better person." she says to him.

Korekiyo sighs. "Has Atua ever told you to kill a hundred people? What my sister has made me do is unforgivable, and I despise myself for it. I don't deserve to know you, or any of the friends I have made. I am a monster, Angie," he says, once again getting on his knees, beginning to breathe heavily.

Angie gets an idea. She moves her hand towards his face, grabbing his mask and pulling it down.
She had known him for so long, yet had still never seen his true face. Korekiyo doesn't even try to stop her. She didn't know what to think when she saw him wearing lipstick, most likely the lipstick his sister used to wear. "I guess I don't understand. I don't understand why, after all the time we've spent helping each other recover from our losses, you think I can just leave you, ever with the deeds you have committed. I've never gotten the opportunity to say this, Korekiyo, but... I love you. Atua knows that it's bad for him to get in the way of love. You've helped me so much from the deaths of my people, and there's no better way to show my gratitude. I love you, Korekiyo." she says.

Those three words were ones he had wanted to say for years, but he didn't have the courage to do it. He didn't think his sister would ever approve of him loving another girl that wasn't her. Actually, come to think of it, Korekiyo had told Sister about Angie plenty of times. She didn't seem to have an issue with him. Maybe this is even what she wanted. “…maybe Atua would even be willing to help your sister. Just don’t kill me or my friends.” Angie said.

This… this may have been the compromise he had been looking for this whole time. Please his sister, and get Angie. This was actually exactly what he needed. He nods to her. “Angie, I love you too.” He says.

Angie puts her arms out and gives him a hug. Kiyo hugs her back. The two now felt much better about themselves, and their relationship.

The warehouse they now lived in had two floors. The upstairs floor had essentials like bedrooms and a kitchen. The downstairs floor was entirely a church, the church they planned to use to show the world the word of Atua. Sleeping on the front row church bench was Himiko Yumeno. She was supposed to be helping organize things downstairs with Tenko, but she had grown exhausted and fallen asleep. This wasn't at all uncommon for her, she always seemed to be tired like this. Angie walks down the warehouses' stairs and notices the sleeping magician. She walks over to the her and lightly pats on her head. She slowly opens her eyes and sees her friend staring her in the face. "Nyeh? Oh, hey Angie." she says, still a bit tired. "What are you doing here?"

Angie laughs to herself. "Weren't you supposed to be working on something down here?" she asks the smaller girl. Himiko's eyes widen as she quickly tries to rush herself awake. "Oh, I'm sorry. Let me get back on that." she said.

Angie thinks for a second. "Actually, I don't think you need to. Just stay right where you are. I'll go get Tenko." she said. As soon as she said that, Tenko ran out from one of the many other doors in the area, wiping dust off of herself. "Is there anything left?" Tenko asks Angie. She says there isn't, and to just sit next to Himiko while she got Korekiyo.

After a few minutes, Angie comes down the stairs with him, the two holding hands. The two had never actually held hands before, making this rather surprising for the two girls on the bench to see. In Korekiyo's other hand was a briefcase. "You two probably have some other things left to do for me, but I ask of you to temporarily stop in the name of Atua." she says. Korekiyo opens the briefcase. It's full of syringes. "Give your blood to Atua!" she yells happily.

"B-blood? What is wrong with you?" Tenko yells, grabbing Himiko and pulling her towards her as a way to protect her. Himiko tries to break out of her firm grip, but fails. "L-let go of me! If Atua wants my blood, then it's fine with me!" she says.

"She doesn't mean any harm, Tenko. If you want to be here, you should really just submit to His will." Korekiyo said as he slowly drew blood from himself. Tenko really did not like the situation she was in. She was only really living in this warehouse to spend more time with Himiko. She didn't
believe in Atua, she just made it seem like it to please Himiko and Angie. It didn't matter that the girl she was obsessed with did. When Angie wasn't being all religious on her, she thought she was fine. But Korekiyo... Korekiyo was a different deal entirely. Tenko never could say she liked boys, but he was a weird creep compared to other boys. But hey, maybe this was just her bias talking. He hadn't actually seen him do anything necessarily creepy and weird, she just had her suspicions. And if Himiko was going to believe in Atua, she wasn't going to have an issue with that.

Reluctantly, Tenko did go through with the blood sacrifice. After doing so, the syringes were put back in the briefcase and Angie and Korekiyo went back upstairs. Himiko began to fall asleep again, but Tenko quickly woke her up. "Do you see anything wrong with this? Are you just going to blindly follow them?" Tenko asked her.

Himiko rubs her eyes. "Not really. It's just like any other religion. Nothing wrong with that." she says. "But Himiko, I-" Tenko tried to say, but Himiko had already fallen asleep. Maybe she was the one blindly following someone instead.
Angie's most prized possession was of what she believed to be (and most likely was) the final remaining copy of the Tome of Absolution, the holy book of Atua. The book contained all the important morals and stories that were necessary to know. Even with her foster family not being supportive of her 'strange' religious ideals, she still was able to keep this, the last remaining archive of her religion's existence. It was all that was really necessary for a possible revival, but there were other beneficial artifacts that would have been nice to have.

The stage of the church was very simplistic compared to those of other, larger religions. It was simply a short long wooden structure with a podium to read the Tome of Absolution off of. Angie imagined that eventually she'd be able to give her lessons to a much larger group of people. The one church on her island was massive, being able to house the entire population. Angie hoped that eventually she'd be able to contain the two thousand people the island used to have. Right now, though, as she stood on the podium only a few hours before her near murder, it was looking almost empty. The only people attending were the three others that lived there. A humble beginning, for sure. On the front bench was Korekiyo, ready to listen to his girl intently. A bit behind her were Himiko and Tenko sitting next to each other. Angie had asked Tenko to wake Himiko up if the extremely likely event of her falling asleep occurred.

Just because there was only three people here didn't mean Angie wasn't nervous. This was the first gathering for Atua in any way in nearly five years, the first of any kind in this country. And this wasn't in front of three people who randomly decided to show up because of some posters around the town, these were her three best friends in the world. The only three people who stood with her through all of her anguish. Even then, this was the first time she had ever even attempted anything like this, not even with rehearsal, unless reading the Tome of Absolution through dozens of times over the course of years counted as rehearsal. Angie breathed in long and deep to prepare herself for the sermon, and finally, she spoke. "Most of the time, these would begin in blood sacrifices, but Atua wanted them before we got this underway today, to make more time for the readings of the book itself. This first reading won't be very long at all, but that's fine." she said, opening the book.

It had been a while since she had actually read the old thing, but it instantly brought her memories of a simpler time back home. "The two most important things Atua wants are submission and release. Submission is a term that can be defined in many ways, but how Atua sees it is that he wants us mortal people to submit to his willpower over anything and anyone else. Those who can hear him, such as I, can do this much easier than others, although hopefully you and whoever may also be attending this will also learn this kind of submission, or better yet will learn to hear him in your mind as well."

She flipped to the next page. "However, just as important to submission is release. However, like submission, release can be interpreted in different ways by different people. The way Atua asks us to see it is to release your feelings to others. Atua is all knowing and always watching over us. He knows our problems and how to fix them. Sometimes, he'll tell us ourselves, while other times, we'll need to release our emotions towards those we can physically speak to, to make everything better. Atua knows all, but he'll never in a million years say a bad thing about anyone. He may not trust some people based on old but bad decisions they have made, but he'll never criticize someone to someone else." she continued.

Angie quickly surveyed the small crowd. Korekiyo was obviously listening very closely because of his anthropology work. A great addition to the cultures he had learned about. Back a few rows, however, she could tell Tenko and especially Himiko weren't as interested. She'd seen Tenko
repeatedly wake up Himiko. Thankfully for her, Angie knew exactly how to get her attention, and that came in only the next page. "Atua is benevolent and caring most of the time, however, get on his bad side repeatedly, screw up time and time again and not learn your lesson, and you will receive his wrath. It usually depends on what infraction you continue to violate, and how much it has been done. But doing something disgusting and inhumane to someone over an extended period of time is the worst sin of them all. Severe cases of this may lead to Atua asking for a human sacrifice. We don’t need to get into human sacrifice right now, but we can save that for a time where it may be necessary."

Angie had seen many a human sacrifice, so they didn't phase her. In fact, she wanted to perform one on her own, although she never believed she'd ever get that opportunity. There were dozens of different types to choose from, but she'd still likely ask Atua for closure. She was getting to ahead of herself on the thought of killing for religious purposes, however. The sermon went on a bit longer, with Angie telling some of the beginning stories of what Atua has done to reward or discipline those who have done right or wrong for him. Atua's rewards weren't as good as his disciplinary actions were bad, though. Not even close. A guarantee in heaven didn't mean as much to those who hailed him as suffering and immediate and eternal damnation did. Any other person would have been disgusted by the Tome of Absolution, and Angie knew this well, choosing not to go into gruesome detail.

The first sermon only went about thirty minutes, but it was still enough time to get the basics down. Tomorrow, she and Korekiyo were going to go for some classic religion recruitment tactics, like putting up posters or going door to door to ask to go next week. Maybe some online recruiting would work. Angie was satisfied with the work she had done, but there was still a specific someone she wanted to talk to, though. After the sermon, Korekiyo had gone to his room and went to sleep. For him it has been an exhausting day. Most days where he at least attempted to kill a girl were tiring to him. Angie let him sleep for a bit, but she was getting restless waiting for him to get up. Atua wasn't giving her any ideas on what to do until he woke up, either. Eventually, she grew tired of waiting. "Wake up, sleepy head!" Angie yells, entering the room, the door slamming on the wall.

Korekiyo puts his head in his pillow. "Angie, now's not the time. I'm not in a good mood." he says. Angie walks to his bed, confused but curious. "Did you not like the sermon?" she asked.

Korekiyo looks up at her. She was right above him, staring him right in the eye. What he wanted to do was grab her by the back and embrace her for hours, for days on end. But it wasn't as simple as that. "No, I loved it. It's just I... I can't get it... I can't get her out of my head." he says.

Angie continues to look at him in confusion. "My sister. She speaks to me. She's not like Atua for you, where he gives you advice and tells you information you need. My sister really wanted you. She's extremely disappointed. Everywhere I go, all I hear is her telling me what to do. I used to be able to live with it, but now that she's told me to kill you, I... I can't. I thought maybe going to sleep and worrying about it some other time would work, but..."

Angie kisses him on the forehead. "I'm sorry. I just wanted to know what you thought about the sermon, but I guess you have already told me. Thanks!" she says, smiling. She turned around and almost left the room.

"Wait a minute, stop!" Korekiyo yells. Angie looks back at him. "Could you... could you come in the bed with me? I don't want to, well, you know, but..." he says. Angie thinks about this for a second. What if he was trying to do something bad now? She believed, though, that she could indeed trust the boy she desperately wanted to love. She took off her jacket and got under the covers with him.
Korekiyo hugs her with all his might, and Angie hugs back. "I never want to hurt you. I'll always be there for you, and I hope you'll always be there for me. I don't want you to think I'm crazy, I just want you to understand how I feel like this. I love you so much." he says.

The embrace stops, and Korekiyo closes his eyes, ready to sleep with his girl for the first time. "I have a question." Angie says. Korekiyo opens an eye. "I know you said before that you don't believe in a god or religion, but... why do you do it then? Why are you here doing this with me?" she asks.

Korekiyo sighs. He's tired, and Angie being there to cuddle with was making him more tired. "Your religion is a dying tradition. I love learning about other cultures. When I was gone for that year, that's what I went to do. Learning about other cultures is what makes me happy. I'd do anything to save a way of thinking like this from dying. Without it, you wouldn't be in my life. If we can be introduced like this, then I can't have an issue with preserving it." he said, yawning afterwards.

Angie continued to embrace him, a big smile on her face. Angie couldn't see it, but the man she was holding was also smiling. "I think it's best we get some sleep now. Love you, girl." Kiyo said. "I love you, too." replied Angie. This would be the first of many nights they'd sleep together.
A bit after Angie and Korekiyo had went to sleep, a different conversation had started up between the other two people in the house, and it started in a very similar way. Himiko had also gone to sleep after the sermon, despite the fact that she had fallen asleep multiple times during it, and Tenko had important things to ask her. She had actually decided to let Himiko sleep for quite a while longer than Angie let Korekiyo, despite acting much more obsessive over the smaller girl than Angie was to the one she loved. Tenko burst into Himiko's room with great force, the sleeping magician waking up immediately. "We need to talk about Angie." Tenko says.

Himiko was always tired, but since she had been sleeping for the last couple of hours, she was more tired than she had been. Her eyes were barely opened as she saw her friend on the other side of the room. "Nyeh? What about her?" Himiko asked her.

"I know I asked you this before, but I don't care! Do you actually not see anything wrong with her religion? Did you not care that she spent a large amount of time talking about human sacrifice?" the martial artist asked her. She was loud, but not as loud as she often was, knowing there were two others trying to sleep.

"Angie doesn't make the rules. If Atua ever wants a human sacrifice, he'll get one. I think we should stay quiet about this, because then we might be the ones getting sacrificed to Atua." Himiko whispered. She didn't actually believe the god would ever do that, she just wanted to warn Tenko in a way. She very much enjoyed her company most of the time, but now was the time she wanted to talk to her. She wanted nothing more than to sleep right now. Was a good nights sleep too much to ask for?

Tenko looked at Himiko dumbfounded. She still didn't believe that Atua was real, but whatever the hell was talking to Angie wouldn't ask her to kill her friend, right? She didn't dislike Angie, she disliked her ways of thinking and what she could possibly do to harm herself, Himiko and others. When Angie wasn't doing the religious schtick, she was fine. But Tenko then came to the somewhat obvious realization that the house they lived in was literally a church, and that the Atua talk would never actually end. Tenko turned on a light in the room to make Himiko wake up more and noticed a framed picture on a dresser next to her bed. It was them both alongside Angie before one of Himiko's magic shows. Why couldn't it be that simple once again?

"Tenko, I like that you worry about me, but I have barely enough MP to keep myself awake. I'm sorry, I need to sleep." Himiko says. The other girl wants to keep telling her that Atua is bad news, but she understood. She sighed. "Alright, I guess. See you in the morning." she says, turning off the lights and leaving the room, defeated for now.

What Tenko wanted to do was get herself and Himiko out of there by whatever means necessary. The problem was that she had no other place to go. This is where they lived now. Oh, the things she had done without thinking for Himiko over the years. Yeah, she was willing to admit her obsession towards her. This had gone on for years, but Himiko never seemed to have an issue with it. Most of the time, her and her magic acts had been seen as a complete joke to those around her. She wanted all the company and support she could get. Even if she felt like Tenko was being a bit much, she always enjoyed the company. Tenko could never actually pinpoint why she liked Himiko so much. Was it the fascination of magic? Was it the mystery of if the magic was real or not? She actually began to think about this as she lay in her own bed, but she began to believe it something deeper.

Did she love Himiko and not realize it? Tenko didn't think she understood love, but maybe, maybe she did. She'd go through hell and back for her if she asked her to. She'd be shocked if Himiko didn't
at least appreciate her efforts. How had she never thought of the concept of love towards her before? Was she really head over heels over this girl? At least it wasn't one of those degenerate males. She really wanted to tell Himiko, but that would have to wait in the morning. Even then, what if this was just her overthinking something because she can't sleep? She doubted that last option. What concerned her more was the prospect of confessing her love and her not feeling the same way. What if she embarrassed herself? The prospect of that sounded just as bad as keeping it in. Maybe now wasn't the best time to think about this. She chose to sleep on it and consider the options again in the morning.

"Hello, Angie. Have you seen my- what are you doing with my hat?"

"Nyahaha! I'm wearing it, silly! What did you think I was doing?"

Korekiyo thought Angie looked really cute in his hat as she made pancakes for breakfast, but he had been worried about it. The hat, hell, the entire outfit she wore meant a lot to him. It was all made by his sister special for him. But he wasn't going to deny how cute she looked in it. Even if she was going to take his stuff without telling him, he loved this girl. "Look at me! I'm Korekiyo! Grrr, I'm gonna kill Angie!" she said with a smile.

Well, that hit him where it hurt. Korekiyo knew that was meant as a joke, but oof. It's only been a day. "Maybe a bit too soon, don't you think?" he asks.

Angie laughs. "It's just a joke! Don't take it too seriously." she says. Korekiyo smiles under his mask. Kind of a sick sense of humor, but Korekiyo saw nothing wrong with that.

Tenko didn't have the best sleep the night before, as she kept concentrating on the Himiko issue. Hopefully, some pancakes from Angie would be able to make her wake up more. She couldn't deny that Angie was a good cook. It wouldn't be too long before she was up as well, and the four pleasantly had breakfast together. Tenko made the smart decision to not bring up her feelings about Himiko while Angie and Korekiyo spoke about how they planned on spending their day, that of course being handing out fliers to advertise. It wasn't too long before they were gone. It was going to be a long day for all of them, although not for reasons they believed.

Himiko was still tired from her relatively well nights sleep. She was always tired, but not as much as last night. "So, what was it you were trying to tell me?" Himiko asked Tenko as she slowly ate her pancakes.

Oh, good. She remembered. Now the problem was trying to get all of her thoughts and emotions out in an understandable way. "Alright, Himiko. I still think we need to get out of this place before it's too late! I don't trust Angie and I especially don't trust Korekiyo!" she yelled, successfully avoiding bringing up what she wanted to bring up.

Himiko hated the confliction between her two best friends. Why couldn't they just get along? She felt as if she was being pulled apart by the two forces. It wasn't easy picking between the two, and that's why she wasn't going to. "Tenko, all you have to do to not get asked to be sacrificed is stay on Atua's good side. I don't think it sounds hard, but I could be wrong though." Himiko said.

The smaller girl might have actually had a point. She'd been worrying so much for herself and Himiko that she hadn't even really considered just following Atua's ways, as demented as they were. If the church and everything else in the building was Atua's house, then it only made sense to follow Atua's rules. It was proper etiquette. But still, Atua... wasn't real. He couldn't have been real. No way. No way would any supreme and divine being ask for the deaths of those who disagreed with him. Angie had to have some sort of mental disorder that made her hear things. But did this mean
everyone on the island had this disorder? That didn't make any sense.

Tenko's head was spinning. Nothing made any sense anymore. Everything was backwards. She didn't know who was right and who was wrong. "I... I guess I have been overthinking this. I guess I do just have to accept this." she said.

Himiko nodded. Wait, there was still something else Tenko had to bring up. Why didn't she confess the feelings before? She was visibly sweating now. Why could she not just make the correct decisions when they mattered? "Tenko, are you okay?" Himiko asked.

"Y-yeah, I'm fine! Just thinking about... some stuff." she responded. Guess her feelings had to wait another day.
The Men in the White Suits

The rest of the week wasn't that interesting. Angie and Korekiyo continued to put up flyers and even did a bit of online advertising. Meanwhile, Tenko still wasn't able to confess her feelings toward Himiko. She had, however, finally decided once and for all to just accept the ways of Atua. She had come to the realization that fighting against him would do more harm than good, so there wasn't a reason to do it anymore. Korekiyo wasn't as enthusiastic about advertising the religion as Angie was, not because he wasn't into it but because Angie insisted they put up flyers almost all day. It didn't feel like it took that long, though. Not with Angie there. Korekiyo would talk to her about other cultures he had exposed himself to, and Angie would continue to educate him about her own as they walked down the cities, both fascinated by what they had to say as they walked down the streets of the city. The hours and hours of advertisement seemed to paid off. The next week, more people showed up to the second sermon. However, something was a bit off about many of the people who showed up.

About thirty people showed up. A good ten of them were in matching white suits and black and white checkerboard scarves, all acting strangely. They all sat motionless not saying anything with the same stare at Angie, who was quite confused and even a bit intimidated. Who were these people? Were they try to destroy her way of living? They didn't act like they had any ulterior motives, there was just something off about them. The sermon was mostly repeating a lot of the last one, which was understandable because of the amount of new people in the church. The mysterious group of people seemed to have no issue with what she was saying, and had no problems taking part in the mandatory blood sacrifice. It was still a successful sermon with everything going according to plan. The final person to leave the church was one of the suited men, who dropped a single card before exiting.

Angie picked up the card and examined it. The crude writing on it read 'Tomorrow. Time doesn't matter. Meet me. K.O.', followed by an address. She showed the card to Korekiyo, who was suspicious, but still believed it a good idea to at least go and investigate. If whoever or whatever K.O. was was willing to come this way to attend or make someone working for him attend, then they might as well. After a nice dinner with the other two girls, another great sleep, and a good morning's breakfast, the two set out to the address listed.

The address was to a mansion not far outside of town. They weren't too surprised by the size of the house because of the amount of people in the suit and scarf combinations at the sermon. Angie rang the doorbell, and soon noticed the amount of security cameras around the mansion. The door was opened by a lady who was dressed to be a maid of some sort. "You two must be Angie Yonaga and Korekiyo Shinguji, yes?" the lady asked.

"Yes, that's us!" Angie excitedly exclaimed.

"Perfect. Follow me to the boss's room." she said, keeping the door open as she let the couple in.

Almost immediately in front of them was a large staircase, which they were led up to. At the top were several rooms, although the one they were lead up to simply read 'K.O.' The maid once again opened the door, leading them to who seemed to be the leader of the suited men. He was wearing the same kind of suit on scarf, sitting behind a desk with two chairs in front of it. "Angie, Korekiyo. What a pleasure. Sit down, if you could." he said. The two obliged to his request.

"My name is Kokichi Oma, and the lady that's been serving you for the last couple of minutes is my mother." he said. Angie and Korekiyo looked at the girl, she didn't look to be that old. That couldn't have been true. She rolled her eyes. "He does this every time. I'm just his maid. Name's Kirumi Tojo, by the way." she said, giving the both of them a handshake.
"Good to meet you two," Korekiyo said. "Now, me and Angie have been wondering why you had so many people at yesterday's service. Was this even organized by you?" he asks.

Kokichi laughs to himself. "Oh, how little you seem to know. You see, I run this little organization called DICE. There's a good thousand of us. We do a lot of things. Mostly medium scale prankings ranging from perfectly legal to somewhere on the borderline, but there's enough of us that we do a lot of what we call general inspections. I like to know what's going on, and when I see dozens of posters for a nearly extinct religion from who knows where, that kinda shit attracts me like a damn magnet. I had reservations that day, however, and a bunch of people volunteered to go in my place. DICE is very loyal to me. I love it." he replies.

"Well, did they like it, at least?" Angie asks. Unexpectedly, and rather quickly as well, Kokichi climbed on his desk and put his hand around Angie's neck. It wasn't necessarily a grab, as he wasn't applying any pressure to her, but it was still enough to make her a bit uncomfortable. Kokichi smirked. "You're cute. I like you." he said. Korekiyo was late to react to this, getting up from his chair and attempting to get him to unhand Angie, but he did that himself by getting back on the chair behind his desk.

Korekiyo was angry, but Kirumi calmed him down by telling him he did this to almost every girl that came his way, including herself a couple of times. Angie was still a bit uncomfortable, but not angry. After Kirumi calmed him down, Kokichi spoke. "They didn't see anything wrong with it at all. Except the blood sacrifices, they didn't like that very much. The syringes weren't reused, correct?"

"Atua asked for blood, and that's what I'm gonna give him! There's nothing I can do about that! And no, the syringes were brand new." Angie yelled. Kokichi laughed once more, leaning back on his chair, putting his hands behind his head and his legs on the desk.

"Phew! That's a relief. Didn't want anyone working for me getting any tropical diseases. Say, do you guys do any weird rituals? Speaking to the dead and shit like that?" he asked with a sarcastic tone of voice.

Angie was the one laughing now. "Of course there are, but I'll only do it if Atua allows me! There's plenty of things like that, especially human sacrifice! We'd be willing to do any of those without a second thought!" she said.

Kokichi was intrigued. "Human sacrifice you say? Well, I can't say me or other members of DICE have killed anyone, at least I don't think so, heh heh. I like that you have no issue with ending a life, as long as the right person tells you to. It's an admirable trait. Exploitable, too." he said.

It was obvious that Korekiyo didn't like how Kokichi was talking to the girl he loved. Angie didn't seem to take any issue with it, but Korekiyo was. "I still don't believe you understand. Atua isn't a person, He's a god. He's our way of life. I don't believe you respect that." he said.

"I've never cared for religion, really. Call me rebellious all you want, I don't care. But you know something, I think that your religion is actually rather interesting. The people at DICE thought the same way. Hell, some of them said they're coming back next week not just to observe. And judging by this conversation we have just had, I like you two. I don't think the gimp over here likes me, but I don't care. I like you two. I don't think I'll ever believe in this religion like you two do, but consider me an ally and a friend. I'll even help you recruit people, if necessary. That sound cool?" Kokichi asked. Angie nodded. Korekiyo was annoyed by the gimp comment, but he nodded too. Didn't seem like anything was too wrong with him.

Angie and Korekiyo left the house as Kokichi stayed at his desk. Kirumi decided to ask him a question. "Were you actually being honest with them? I've known you for years, and yet I still can
never tell with you." she asked.

Kokichi yawned, even though it was still relatively early. "I'm usually a lying man, I can't deny that, but that was all honest. I was curious. I'm glad that went well." he said.

Angie and Korekiyo began their walk back home to the church. This walk was more quiet than other walks they had putting up fliers, until Angie asked a question. "I don't have a problem with this, but I noticed that you were a bit... overprotective of me there. Was this on purpose?"

Korekiyo sighed. He knew this question was going to come up eventually. "I never want to see another person I love as much as my sister go ever again. I can't go through with that again. I want to protect you with all my might and power. Let me be the only person to have ever tried to kill you." he said. Angie understood. She could tell he was still not over his attempted murder from several days ago.

Angie did what she always did in situations like these: she hugged him. "You don't have to feel ashamed anymore. You have already been forgiven by Atua. I know you don't trust Kokichi, but I don't think he'll do any harm." she whispered in his ear.

"But did you not see how he grabbed you by the neck? That bothered me." he said. It didn't feel right for him to say that anything bothered him anymore, considering he had ended the lives of dozens of people in the last couple of years.

"It's fine. It's all fine. He seems like a nice guy, just a bit weird but nice. I'll never let you leave me either. I love you." said Angie, her tight grip still applied to the anthropologist.

He felt like he should have before, but Korekiyo finally began to feel better about his appalling attempt to kill the girl he loved, after all this time. Sure, that didn't mean he didn't want to complete the goal his sister had given to him, and he still believed he could, but it was going to be a lot harder with the remorse he now felt because of Angie and Atua. He really loved her. There was no way of changing that. Unexpectedly, Korekiyo lowered his mask, showing her his actual face for only the second time ever. He no longer had any lipstick on. He looked Angie right in the eyes. "Thank you, Angie. I love you too." he said.

He grabbed Angie by her neck and pulled her closer to him, kissing her on the lips. Their first kiss. Angie joined in on it as well. The two fell to the ground and kissed for what felt like an angelic few hours. After what was really only a couple of minutes, the kiss stopped and Korekiyo put his mask back on. The two both still lay on the ground. "We still need to get back to the church!" said Angie.

Korekiyo laughed. "Haha! I guess we do!" he said. He had completely forgot that they were still in a public area. But now, after the kiss, he had regained confidence in himself. He didn't think it would happen for a longer time afterwards, but he always knew that of all the people that would make him feel better about the deeds he had done that Angie would be the one.
"Yeah, my suspicions were dying down. But with the last sermon and the weird people that were there, I'm kinda freaked out again." Tenko said to Himiko. The two sat together at the table in the warehouse's kitchen, with Angie and Korekiyo still gone. There was nothing she wanted more than to be less unsure about the situation she had found herself in. She still couldn't tell if she was incorrectly suspecting the two of anything, or if something was legitimately up. As soon as she thought she had figured everything out, those suited men made everything more complicated for her. She had actually seen them before, and she knew well that they weren't any good. If these were the kinds of people that Atua was attracting, then she wanted nothing to do with it.

Himiko thought about this. "Yeah, I understand. It still hasn't been that long here though. I want you to stay," she said. Tenko didn't really have anywhere else to go anyways, so that was still not an option, not even as a backup plan.

"If you're gonna stay, then I'll stay! Not much makes me happier than being with you!" Tenko said. Himiko laughed to herself. Wait, did she say too much? Probably not, but Tenko still wanted to get the feeling she felt towards Himiko out of her system as soon as possible. There wasn't a better time than now with Angie and Korekiyo still gone, and the girl right there. Thinking about this again made her anxious, but it didn't take her long to calm herself down. "Could I talk to you about something? It's not about Angie, it's not about Atua, but it's serious," she said.

Himiko was surprised by this question, but wasn't going to reject it. When Tenko had something serious, she always made sure to listen. She wasn't serious much of the time, unless it was when worrying for her, which she didn't really want her to do. Just because she had a friend who cared for her an awful lot doesn't mean she liked it all the time. But if this wasn't about Angie or Korekiyo or Atua or anything like that, then this must have actually been serious. "What's going on?" she said after a few moments of thought.

Tenko heavily breathed in one last time before. "I've never gotten the opportunity to say this, and I've thought about this for a little while, but-"

"Yoohoo! We're back!" Angie yells as she happily skipped into the room, unknowingly destroying Tenko's train of thought. She was followed closely behind by Korekiyo. "I won, I won!" she said to him.

"You never said anything about this being a race, but there's no point arguing about it." Korekiyo said, smiling underneath his mask. He had no idea how she always seemed to make him happy.

"Nyeh? Oh, hey Angie. Good to see you!" Himiko said to her, with Angie saying hello back. Tenko was annoyed at the sudden arrival of the two, but maybe this was a good thing. It was still probably too early to confess. The fear of being rejected by Himiko currently scared her more than the fear of Atua's wrath.

"I'm going to make some coffee for us. It's still early, ya know!" Angie said with a smile on her face. Korekiyo shook his head. "Actually, I'll make it for you." he said. Angie liked his sudden volunteering because it gave her time to talk to Himiko and Tenko. She had spent most of her time the last few days with her boyfriend instead of the other two people in the house, which wasn't necessarily an issue, she just wanted to spend a bit more time with her other friends. They did live...
"Sooooo, you two liked the sermons, riiiiight?" Angie asked in a way only she really could. She looked intently at the girls, in a way that somewhat unsettled Tenko. Then again, everything she did was beginning to unsettle her.

"Of course I like them! I know I don't show much interest at them themselves, but I've always thought the words of Atua are interesting and helpful." Himiko said. Angie smiled. That's exactly what she wanted to hear, albeit what she also expected to hear. She knew Himiko was always interested, she just wasn't usually engaged because of how tired and lazy she always was. Angie knew her well enough to know that was the case.

"And how about you, Tenko? Hmmmmmmm?" she then asked, bending over a bit to look at her right in the eyes. The way she looked at her was equal parts cute, equal parts creepy. It was like she was staring into her soul, and that she might do something maniacal if she were to answer the question incorrectly. But even with the suspicious nature of them all, the sermons weren't actually bad in her eyes. They were just creepy, and they were probably only going to get worse.

"Well... yeah. What Himiko said." Tenko nervously replied. Angie smiled once again. She had passed this test, but she could only hope about the others that were to come.

It wouldn't be long Korekiyo finished making the coffee, and the four enjoyed it together in the kitchen. Korekiyo looked rather out of place compared to the three much smaller girls, but it didn't matter that much to any of them. "Tenko, weren't you trying to tell me something before they came in?" Himiko asked. Tenko was surprised by the question, but it seemed to have gotten the attention of Angie and Korekiyo. Now she was even more nervous. She did realize that she never said anything about wanting to keep this private. Looks like she had to say something now, and in front of everyone else.

She changed her mind. It could wait. "I'd prefer if we just kept this as private business, does that make sense?" Tenko requested.

"Private business? Sounds sketchy! If it is, I'll be hearing about that from Atua! But I trust that it won't be, nyaha!" Angie said. Tenko rolled her eyes. If by the slim chance Atua actually was real, he definitely wouldn't have an issue with it.

"I think there's some private business I have to talk to you about, as well. We'll save it for after the coffee." Korekiyo whispered in Angie's ear. She had no idea what he could be talking about, but this intrigued her. She nodded to show her understanding.

The four continued to drink their coffee some more until Korekiyo asked Angie to go into the anthropologist's room (although now was moreso a room for the both of them) for their private talk. "So, what is it you have to talk to me about?" Angie asked.

"It's about Tenko. Have you thought about how she's been acting a bit opposed to your religion? This concerns you, right?" Korekiyo asked. Angie thought about this for a second. "Nnnnno, I can't say I've noticed."

Korekiyo sighed. "Oh, Angie. You're a very smart girl, but I'd be lying if I said you weren't oblivious to a lot of what was going on around you." he said. Now Angie was concerned. What was he implying here? She knew she was often oblivious to some things, but she didn't know the full extent of it.

"So, what exactly have you noticed?" Angie asked. Now that she knew that something might be up...
with Tenko, she was worried. She didn't want any of her friends to leave her or Atua. If she did, she knew there would be hell to pay. It would have actually excited her if it wasn't someone she trusted like Tenko. "You noticed how a bit before the very first sermon, she was adamant against the blood sacrifice, right?" he asked.

"Well, of course I noticed that, but I understand that, at least! And she actually did the sacrifice!" Angie pleaded. Korekiyo realized she actually made a decent point, she likely still wouldn't have given her blood to Atua if she was legitimately conspiring against them. But he wasn't done yet.

"I hadn't thought much of that either until today, when Tenko was acting nervous when you asked about the sermons as a whole, with her nervous response. And what's the private business she wants to talk to Himiko about? Is she trying to convince her that Atua is not the way for her?" Korekiyo asked.

She hadn't even thought about what Tenko's business with Himiko was, and that could be an easy guess. But Angie didn't really think that could be the case. "If it's too bad, Atua would have probably already told me. And I trust Tenko to not do something like that to me! I think you're just overthinking things, Kiyo." she said, smugly.

Korekiyo had been told before that he commonly overthought things to occasionally almost absurd levels. He thought about his own overthinking. Could it already be taking a toll on those around him? Korekiyo sat on the room's bed, waiting for a good idea to do or say to pop up for him. "I think I know the perfect way to get your mind off it." Angie cooed as she removed her jacket.

He was startled by the sudden removal of clothes, even if it was just the jacket. "Angie, I don't think now is the time for-"

"Oh, no! We're not doing that, silly!" she playfully interrupted with. Within a few seconds, she had sat herself upon Korekiyo's lap. He didn't know what to expect from here, but he was absolutely wasn't complaining.

Angie leaned back, the back of her head resting on her lover's shoulder. She looked at Korekiyo, closed her eyes, and smiled. In return, he gently grabbed her by the stomach. Suddenly, Angie began moving. Her hips slowly began to sway back and forth as she rubbed her behind against his crotch. His breathing became more rapid as her lap dance continued. "Betcha didn't expect that, huh?" she asked as she continued. Korekiyo simply nodded as he felt more pleasure than he had in a long time. His eyes were wide open and his head was leaning back.

After several minutes, she stopped. Korekiyo fell back on the bed, the lower halves of his legs leaning off it. Angie deviously grinned as she crawled onto the boy, pinning his arms down. "Glad I could help!" she whispered. Although she was quiet, she still sounded excited.

"I think now would be the time for that, correct?!" Angie asked, pulling down Korekiyo's mask in the process. The smirk on his face made the answer clear to her.

Chapter End Notes

I apologize for not posting a chapter for longer than usual, although I've kinda found myself in a hole with this. I'm not stressed in anyway, I'm just having trouble. The way I wrote my last fic was that I thought about how to creatively get from point A to point B without real problem or issue, but this is different. I don't have any disinterest in writing
this in any way, I've just been having issues thinking up stuff between now and scenes I plan coming up soon. If you want to help me, I would absolutely love that. My discord account is PastorThomasNelson#0669, and if you were to add me and suggest any ideas then I'd really love and appreciate that.
Tenko paced back and forth in front of Himiko's room. No more excuses. No more interruptions. She had to tell her how she felt. The only thing stopping her now was herself, but her own fear of rejection was a strong will. Am I too much for her, she wondered to herself. There was a possibility that she was, but it wasn't a high one. Just because she followed her everywhere and lived together didn't mean she was always necessarily interested. Much of the time, it felt as if Himiko would rather take a rest than spend time with her. Then again, most of the time Himiko just wanted to sleep. But even with all the time they spent together, Tenko still thought the other girl may not consider it enough. Plus, Tenko still believed that Angie was malicious, and even though she didn't entirely trust her, Himiko did. Hell, Himiko might have trusted Angie more than her, and that was not something she was willing to accept. Tenko thought about this possibility specifically. It angered her, but there was no way of knowing if it was true. But her own anger turned into motivation, and she began to feel less nervous. She finally makes progress and opened the door.

On top of the bed was Himiko, thankfully fully clothed, hat by her side, arms and legs spread out across it. She opens one eye and sees who it is. "Tenko? What are you doing?" she said quietly, although not a whisper.

Tenko slowly walked up to the bed as the smaller girl woke herself up. Slowly she breathed in as she readied herself. "You know, the last couple of days I've been trying to tell you something... important, but due to interruptions by Angie or Korekiyo, I haven't been able to, you know, express my feelings. Does what I'm saying make sense?" she asked.

Himiko sighed as she rubbed her eyes. "This isn't about Atua, is it?" she asks, almost annoyed.

Tenko rapidly shook her head and put her hands up. "Oh, no no no no no! Not now! I fully trust Angie!" she exclaimed. Of course, this obviously wasn't the truth, but it's what the girl she loved wanted to hear.

"Now what I really have to say is... is..." she stalls her own speaking and behind to sweat. Not this again. Every single time she felt like she was making progress, it fell flat on its face with anxiety. The hardest part is always getting it over with, and Tenko could never advance past that. She hates it that she can't confess. She hates it more than anything. But she had to do it.

If anything could make her overcome her own distress, it was her love for the small, cute, redheaded magician. When she was with Himiko, everything felt better, and she didn't quite know why. Was it her magic, or was it something more simple, like her just being cute? If she couldn't answer this, than what reason would Himiko even have to accept her offer? These thoughts fueled her desires even more. She closed her eyes and began to gnash her teeth. Her short breaths weren't helping nor harming her.

Himiko looked at her in confusion. Tenko opened her eyes. "Himiko, I can't believe I've never gotten the opportunity to tell you this but I love you! I really really love you! I know you probably don't feel the same, but please! I want you to be my girlfriend!" she yelled. Once she finished speaking, she closed her eyes and began to breathe heavily.

Himiko's eyes widened. Everything made sense for her now. Even when almost everyone else thought her and her magic was a joke, Tenko was always there, and she never showed real
appreciation for it, even though in the back of her mind she always did. Angie always showed interest as well, but no one ever did to the extreme lengths as Tenko. She felt nothing but guilt now. She gave her all, and she gave her nothing in return. "I accept. I'm sorry for not really showing any real affection before, if you understand what I mean. Please, forgive me." she asked of her.

Tenko's scared face turned into a loving smile. She immediately embraced Himiko with all the force she could possibly muster, kissing her several times on the cheek. "I forgive you! I do forgive you! Thank you!" she rejoiced. Himiko felt like she was going to suffocate under the force of Tenko's hug, but it would all be worth it. The aikido master cried tears of joy as her new girlfriend hugged back. It was the happiest she had felt in years. She was lucky to have done it when she did as well, for what happened next wasn't as pleasant.

The two hugged for a little while longer, when the bedroom door opened. The two looked to see Korekiyo, who was looking down on the two. "What do you want right now?" Tenko asked.

"I have reason to believe that you're conspiring against Angie." he said sternly. Even with her telling him not to worry about it, and asking he don't via sexual favor, he was still not convinced. Korekiyo obviously didn't have the same type of bias towards Tenko as Angie did. They were never friends, they never even knew each other before his own lover introduced them. The same applied to Himiko, but she never once seemed suspicious. She always seemed invested. Even if it's not what she wanted, Korekiyo wanted nothing more than to protect and help the girl he loved so much.

"Me? Conspiring against Angie? You've got something wrong, I know you do!" Tenko yelled at him while pushing Himiko back with one of her hands. She wasn't going to admit it, but she knew what Korekiyo meant. She didn't actually know how to get out of this.

"Where is Angie? Did she make you do this?" Tenko asked the tall boy. He shook his head. "Angie is asleep. I did this on my own." he responds.

How in the world was she going to get herself out of this one? She couldn't think of anything. She quickly looked back at Himiko, she could have some ideas but she didn't seem to have one. "Could you at least tell me why you think this?" Tenko asks, now almost as nervous as she was before.

"You've always acted nervous during sermons, and I believe I've overheard you telling Himiko you find Angie suspicious before. Was I wrong, or should I call you an enemy?" Korekiyo asks. If there's anything Tenko didn't want to be right now, it was an enemy. She just wanted to snuggle with her new girlfriend and call it a night, and he was making it harder than it really should have been.

But help always seems to come at the best time in the most unexpected ways. "I think I can prove you wrong, Korekiyo." Himiko said, somewhat pushing Tenko's hand away and getting off the bed. She looked up at him, the height difference very noticeable. Korekiyo didn't speak, although he was very intrigued by what she had to say.

"Atua says that people are innocent until proven guilty, and that those who falsely accuse others of wrongdoing knowingly are sinners. Of course, I shouldn't have to tell you this, as Angie told it to you at the same sermon. But I don't think that I listen to the sermons more than you do, right?" Himiko said, surprising both Tenko and Korekiyo with how articulate and knowledgeable her speech was. She was one hundred percent correct, too.

"Well, I guess you're right. I'll be on my way now. I apologize for the disturbance." Korekiyo said before leaving the room. Himiko got back on the bed as Tenko continued to look at her. "How... how did you do that?" she asked.

"Ever since we moved in here, I've felt... connected to Atua. I don't know what it is, maybe it's the
environment, but I've wanted to learn more. I feel invested in a way I never had been when Angie told me about Him before." she said. This once worried Tenko, although not too much. She knew that Himiko loved her, if she didn't she would have said so. But if someone as lazy, unmotivated and seemingly uninterested as her could get into a religion like this, anyone could. Maybe she could find a way to believe too?

"I understand. Maybe sometime, you and Angie could teach me how to be with Atua more. Please?" Tenko asked. Himiko yawned as she nodded, and said "I think I'm going to go to sleep now. Good night, Tenko."

Tenko smiled as she once again hugged her, the smaller girl falling asleep in only a few seconds in her arms. "I love you." she whispered in the sleeping girl's ear before she too fell victim to slumber.

Chapter End Notes

It's been a long time, hasn't it? I've been pretty busy over the last couple of weeks but I've kept this in the back of my mind for that time as well, coming up with new ideas and often times asking people to help me think of some. I hope over the summer to go back to the old format of one or two chapters a week, one on a Wednesday and one on a weekend. This is nowhere near dead, we aren't even at the good part yet. Also, this is going to be the last of the fluff for a long time, so appreciate it while you still can.
"There are many sins that Atua will forgive, if it's an accident or done with good intentions. But there are others that are unforgivable. Sins toward your fellow person are forgivable and forgettable. Sins towards Atua are often not, depending on severity. It is asked of us all to respect the ways of Atua, and listen when He asks us to. Back on my island, I'd seen many a human sacrifice due to their own denial to succumb to Him, and constant lying that they had. These were people me, or my family, or my friends loved, yet we felt nothing as they were killed. All respect would be gone. We might as well have not known them." Angie said as she stood on the church's podium, the Tome of Absolution in front of her.

Three years had passed, and the church of Atua had been very successful. Although there still weren't as many people as there were on the island, over one hundred fifty people still came in weekly, almost all recruited through the same methods as before as well as word of mouth from the newer recruits. Angie was very pleased with her results, and the one that pleased her the most was Himiko. Personality wise Himiko was still the same person, but no one seemed to be more dedicated to Atua than her, excluding Angie of course. She'd often pray to Atua for help with her magic or whatever was needed, she would sometimes read out of the Tome of Absolution in her spare time, and could even have smart conversations about the religion with Angie or whoever asked for it.

Although she still loved him, Angie still believed Korekiyo needed some... work. She knew that he didn't believe in a god, and she didn't have an issue with that. He was being polite about it, he never expressed issues with being involved. In fact, he loved it. He loved preserving Angie's way of life, and wanted to continue doing it, even if he didn't believe in Atua. But Angie wanted more. Angie wanted him fully invested, the way Himiko was. She still loved him, absolutely nothing was ever going to change that, not even the will of Atua, though not like He had a problem with it. There was no doubt in her mind that she’d get him to believe.

But Korekiyo always cared. Korekiyo always went along with what Angie said. At a first glance, most would assume he was one of Atua's most devout followers. The same sentiment couldn't be said about Tenko. Always worrying, never seeming convinced about anything, consistently showing a lack of will to take part in religious activity, yet always claiming she believed when she obviously did. For her, Tenko's living conditions were a double edge sword. The price for getting the girl she always wanted was living with a religious fanatic and her unsettling lover, and her becoming increasingly more religious as well. It was a price that was all worth it. Angie knew she could convert Tenko properly, even though it would be a lot more difficult.

After a while the sermon ended and the four ate dinner in the upstairs area. Angie was in her cheery mood as always, asking everyone if they thought the sermon was good, which everyone agreed it was. "Do you have anything to say for yourself, Himiko? I'm always interested in what you have to say!" Angie said to the smaller girl.

"I've never thought about this, but does Atua supports my magic? I'd hope..." she asked.

Angie laughed to herself. "Of course He does! Atua supports everything you do!" she said with complete certainty. Himiko nodded, she believed this is what the answer would be but just wanted to make sure.

"I'm glad Atua benefits you. He finds a way to benefit us all." Korekiyo said. Tenko sighed. No he didn't. He didn't benefit her, or at least she didn't know how. She knew that she should have thought this through when she moved in years ago. This was just life now. She was used to it. If Angie did something drastic, something shocking in the name of Atua, then she could get the authorities
involved and get her and Himiko the hell out of there. But the problem with that was Himiko wouldn't like that, and Tenko wanted her to be as happy as possible.

"Is something wrong?" Himiko asked her girlfriend. The flustered Tenko stammered a bit before saying "No! Nothing wrong!"

"You know, saying that only makes it seem like something's wrong." Himiko added. Tenko groaned. "I'll talk to you about it later, maybe." she said.

Himiko put her hand on Tenko's shoulder. "Atua always requests you release your feelings to others, whether that be to Him or to others." she said. Great. She was turning into Angie. A smaller, cuter, more lovable Angie. Even though she had occasionally quoted the Tomb of Absolution or even Atua himself to make a point, she hadn't done it nearly as much until recently. She still loved her, but it seemed as if she cared about her own god more. Tenko shook her head and wondered if she could have prevented this.

Angie's eyes widened as she had a realization. "Atua knows what's wrong! He just told me that you aren't as close to Him as you would like!" she gleefully yelled. "Luckily, there's plenty of rituals to fix that right up! I just have to figure out the right one!"

A ritual sounded a bit frightening, but if it could bring her closer to Himiko then she didn't see an issue with it. Angie thought for a minute before it came to her. "Kiyo, Atua told me you have some kind of fascination with rope. Is this correct?"

What the hell? Why did she know that? Was it actually a god or was he just bad at hiding it? Neither of those seemed plausible and it made him a tad nervous. "I suppose that could be said about me, sure." he said, his face turning a bit red.

Angie smiled. "Wonderful! I know exactly what ritual we're gonna do! This'll take a couple of minutes to prepare but you won't regret it!" she said to Tenko. She felt a bit more confident now, knowing the ritual could get her on Himiko on the same page.

In private, Angie explained the ritual to Korekiyo while Tenko allowed Himiko to rest her head on her lap. Once Angie's explanation was done, it was time for Tenko to come closer to Him. The four traveled to the church's bathroom, where Atua requested the ritual take place. "The first thing Atua wants is for you to take off all of your clothes!" Angie said in her usual happy and somewhat loud tone.

Tenko was startled and instantly began to feel uncomfortable. "This isn't anything lewd... right?" she asked, anxiety in her voice.

"Nyahaha! Of course not, although I understand how you could see it that way." Angie said, laughing. Tenko didn't know whether to trust her or not, but for the time being she chose to.

Tenko removed her clothes and threw them to the side. Korekiyo abruptly attempted to grab her hand, but she quickly slapped it away. She looked at him and noticed the red rope in his hands. "No no, he needs to grab your hand. He's going to tie your hands behind your back with the rope." Angie said calmly.

Now she was even more uncomfortable. "You're absolutely sure this isn't anything lewd, right?" she asked.

"One hundred percent!"

Tenko sighed as she allowed Korekiyo to tie her hands behind her back. This was humiliating, but at
least Himiko, who was watching from a distance, was looking at her naked. Maybe she'd be able to see her naked next. But that's not what mattered right now, what mattered was Atua. Korekiyo helped Tenko climb into the bathtub, where she was gently laid face down. It was uncomfortable, sure, but if it could make her believe in Atua then it was fine. "Close your eyes. Don't move. Don't speak. Relax. Forget all your worries for the time being. Think of pleasure, fun, excitement, happiness. Think of Atua. Cleanse all negative thoughts from your being." Angie said in a soothing manner.

Tenko thought of Himiko and... mostly just Himiko, but it seemed to be working. She was actually feeling relaxed. She even felt like she could fall asleep in this cold, awkward predicament if given the chance. She felt close to Atua. Abruptly, warm water was slowly poured onto her back. Not boiling hot, but still rather hot. She couldn't see what the water was being contained in, but it was clearly Korekiyo pouring it on her. "You may be wondering why I don't just turn the bathtub on. With your face down like that, it could drown you, and none of us want that." she said reassuringly.

The small pool of warm water around her added to her comfort. "Complete tranquility. Just what Atua wants us all to have. Atua is demanding, but He never wants us to feel too much misery or stress." Angie said, once again calmly. While Tenko didn't these feelings of comfort would make her religious on their own, they felt close. Angie was surprised it had been going this well as she prepared for the second phase of the ritual.

"For the next part of this ritual, there will be a bit of pain inflicted on you. Although minimal movement and opening eyes is okay, we still ask you stay silent." Angie said. That was not the turn Tenko expected, but as a martial artist she knew she could take pain well. It couldn't be too much, right?

"What are you doing with that?" Himiko asked quietly. Tenko didn't know what it was, but once again, she didn't think it would be all that much.

"Shhhhhh. Nothing bad will come of this." Angie assured her as she handed what she was holding to Korekiyo. The room stayed silent for a bit. What followed was the worst pain Tenko had ever felt. She didn't know what caused at the moment, but she felt a sharp pain in her upper back. She squeezed her eyes shut as she began to panic to herself, although not a single noise came from her mouth as she still honored the ritual as well as she could. She wanted to run out of the tub and find out what hurt her, but that was impossible because of her hands being tied behind her back. What had happened was Korekiyo had slashed Tenko's back with a knife Angie had secretly kept with her. The cut was next to her right shoulder blade, and went about six inches downwards. It wasn't a deep cut, but she was still bleeding heavily.

Although Tenko herself wasn't making any noises, it was still rather loud as she rustled naked in the bathtub, rolling around, trying to get her hands free, kicking the bottom of the tub. Korekiyo held Himiko back as Tenko continued to struggle, with Angie watching it like nothing wrong was happening. "Be careful! The more you move, the more blood you'll lose!" she said, still as happy as ever.

Eventually her struggles began to get slower and slower until she inevitably passed out due to blood loss. After she did, she got out a roll of medical tape she had put in her jacket. She turned to look at the unphased Korekiyo and the horrified Himiko. "So far, this seems to be a complete success!" Angie said before giving the tape to Korekiyo.

A few hours later, Tenko woke up in her bed, with Angie and Himiko looking down on her. "Everything turned out perfect!" Angie yelled.
Tenko was much drowsier than usual, entirely forgetting the last part of it, although she could feel the large cut on her back. "What did you do to me?" she asked.

"The way the ritual works is that if you don't trust Atua enough, you die due to the blood loss. Thankfully, you trusted him! In the ritual, you put your life in Atua's hands and it paid off!" Angie said. Tenko looked at her like she was some kind of maniac, and Angie didn't even notice. She left as Tenko thought about what she had just heard.

Tenko's back was still in pain, but at least Himiko was here. "I know you hurt, but do you at least feel better spiritually?" she asked.

Tenko was very unhappy. The large cut on her back was likely going to become a scar, and all possible trust with Angie was completely gone, and she didn't want to do anything about it because that would upset Himiko. But she felt she had to, and she had to get the girl she loved out of this as well. That one sounded a lot harder but she still felt she could do it. Tenko didn't like lying to appease the people she liked, but she knew it was the only option now. "I... believe. Thank you, Angie. Thank you, Himiko." she said softly to the delight of the other girls.
Tenko had lost a lot of blood to a god she didn't even believe in. Too much, in fact. Of course, there was already the mandatory blood sacrifice that came with every sermon, but now there was the massive scar on her back which hindered her movement. She didn't know the exact amount of blood someone had to lose to fall completely unconscious, but it had to be a lot. Something had to be done about the maniacal tendencies of Angie Yonaga, but she didn't know what.

Due to the pain she was in, she was unable to sleep that night, even with Himiko at her side. She glanced at the alarm clock next to her bed. One in the morning. Wonderful. If she couldn't sleep, she could try to get police involved in the cult business. Even at an inconvenient hour like this, the police station was still open just in case of a late night crime. As quietly and carefully as she could, she got out of the bed and put on her clothes. It was very dark in the church, but she could still see the exit. Nothing was stopping her anymore, she walked towards the exit and-

"What are you doing up at this time?"

Tenko looked behind her in surprise, the figure of Angie standing right in front of her.

"Atua told me to wake up and come down here because something would happen. He never said what, but I guess I know now!"

Tenko stammered in only the way she could. She was not good at lying, ironic considering the lie she had gotten herself into for the last three years. "I was just going for a little jog! Gotta keep myself physically fit, you know!" she said after several seconds of nonsense.

Angie gasped. "Not with that scar, you shouldn't! You should be getting a good sleep! A good night's sleep means less pain in the morning!" she said, grabbing Tenko's shoulders.

Tenko wanted to push her off, but she didn't want to be seen as some sort of sinner. She quickly considered her options. "I guess you're right. I'll head back to bed." Tenko said.

Angie let go of her. "Good! I don't really want to see you get hurt, you know! Good night, praise be to Atua!" she yelled, waving goodbye as the other girl went back to her bedroom.

There couldn't have been a god telling her to wake up from her own good night's sleep to go downstairs and tell someone else to go to bed. It didn't make sense. Tenko thought she must have been too loud and woke her up sometime in the process. She tried not to worry as she attempted to drift back to sleep. Recently she had realized that even though she was in a living situation she didn't want to be in, she was actually relaxing better than she ever had. She then realized that the reason for this was because of Angie's own methods to calm herself and others in the name of Atua. Realizing this annoyed her. Her life was being consumed by Angie, her creepy boyfriend and their nonexistent god and she hated it. The only reason she was even here was Himiko and she was slowly being dragged away from her. It was starting to no longer be worth it.

Two hours of peaceful sleep passed before she woke up to the burning pain of the scar again. It hurt more than it did earlier in the night, but of course not as much as it did when it was first cut. With rest no longer on her mind, she chose to take action. But before she went to the authorities, maybe there was someone else she could turn to, someone who knew the inner workings of the church, knew the way Angie operating things and could even convince her to stop being malicious? It would be a lot easier than getting the police involved. She didn't really know any connections Angie had. But then she remembered a sermon from nearly the very beginning, a sermon that would help her case
tremendously. It was a long shot, but it just might work.

After a painful few seconds of getting off the bed and a bit of searching online for where said person might live, she set out to find them. Tenko soon realized as she walked down the dark three in the morning streets that Angie didn't come for her this time. If Atua was real, she would have gotten up again and told her to go to bed so the scar would hurt less, yet she was nowhere to be seen this time around. Tenko was happy with herself that she was much quieter this time. She could use this to convince Himiko that there was no Atua.

After about a forty five minute walk, she arrived to her destination and rang the doorbell. The door opened not to who she expected, but to a maid she was unfamiliar with. "This is where Kokichi Oma lives, correct?" Tenko asked her.

"Yeah, and I hate to inform you of this but he's asleep right now. Unless this is something urgent, I recommend waiting until morning to ask him about anything. My name is Kirumi Tojo, by the way." she said, giving Tenko a handshake as well as a small bow.

It was urgent to Tenko, but it wasn't urgent to anyone else. Nevertheless, she still believed she wouldn't get another opportunity like this. "Yeah, I need to talk to him right now." she said.

"That's fine with me, but I'm not sure about him. It's obviously late, he's asleep and he's not going to be happy." she said. She didn't seem tired at all, which Tenko hadn't thought about before but now caught her off guard. "That's a risk I'm willing to take." Tenko said. Kirumi nodded and led her inside.

After a few minutes of waiting on a couch downstairs, Kirumi led her to Kokichi's office where he was slowly waking up. When Tenko entered the office, she was met by the tired and messy haired Kokichi struggling to stay awake, but still willing to have this talk. "Jesus fucking christ, who in their right god damn mind would want to meet up with me at this time? This better be something good." he rudely muttered.

"Uhhh, hello, I'm Tenko Chabashira and I'm forced to be in the Atua religion I'm sure you've heard of. You know Angie and Korekiyo, right?" Tenko asked.

Kokichi was still trying to wake up, but her reminder as to who lead it helped him out a bit. "Yeah, I've talked to them a few times. Some people in DICE are into that shit and because of that I give them money every once in a while. Angie's a real cutie, Korekiyo is a creepy bastard." he said. She couldn't have agreed more.

"I'm going to attempt to wake myself up more, but while I do that, you should tell me more about your shit to see if it's good enough for me to care about." he said, Kirumi beginning to brush his hair to make him seem presentable to her.

"Well, Angie recently did a ritual towards me to get me closer to Atua, but what she did was she cut my back open! There's a giant slash through my back and it's going to become a scar soon! This was the last straw for me, now I need to get out of here." Tenko said. Kokichi thought about this for a little bit as Kirumi continued to brush his hair.

"Show me the scar. I want to see it." he said, curiosity clearly in his voice. The confused Tenko obliged, turning around and lifting up her shirt to show the scar. Kokichi pondered it for a second and considered how much blood she could have lost from it. But thinking logically at a time so early in the morning wasn't doing him any favors.

Abruptly, he moved his hands to her sides and grabbed her breasts, which were still being covered
by her shirt. "God damn, you have a nice body. And a massive rack, too!" he said.

Without even a second thought, Tenko turned around and backhanded him in the face. "Degenerate male! I knew I should have never trusted someone like you!" Tenko yelled at him before storming off.

Kirumi sighed. This seemed to happen almost every time he did business with a girl with a large chest region. Usually it was actions less perverted, but this time he just found just the right opportunity. "Are you gonna tell Angie and Korekiyo or no?" she asked.

"I'll think about it in the morning. I want to go back to sleep and grope her tits again in my dreams. Wait, I didn't say that out loud, did I?"

Without anymore options, Tenko finally did what she should have done earlier. She went to the police station and planned to ask to get police involved. But then she thought that maybe this wasn't too serious of a deal for police. This was serious enough to arrest someone over, but it wasn't going to go anywhere without any investigation. Maybe it would be better to hire some kind of detective? That's what she figured. Once she got to the station, she went to the front desk and requested a detective, preferably a female one. The man at the counter said that the latter wasn't possible, however he could give her a number to call in the morning. She took the sheet of paper with the detectives name and phone number on it and headed back to the church, where she slept surprisingly well.

When she woke up in the morning, the first thing she did was call the number. After a few seconds, the call was picked up. "Hello, who is this?" the man on the other line said.

"Is this the number of Shuichi Saihara?"

"Yeah, that's me. You're the girl my boss was talking about who came in really late at night last night, yeah?"

"Yeah! I did do that! My name is Tenko Chabashira, by the way. So should I just tell you my situation, or..."

"Nice to meet you, Tenko. And I apologize sincerely for this, but I don't really have time right now, however if you come to my house in a couple of hours, I'll let you explain. That alright with you?"

"I'll see what I can do."

Shuichi gave Tenko his address and told her to come over in about seven hours. After a normal day with the three people she lived with, she left at the right time to head out to the house of the man he'd be working with. Angie knew she was heading off somewhere, albeit thinking she was going for a run and nothing else, and allowed her to as she had gotten the sleep she had requested she get earlier. She ran to Shuichi's house which was only about fifteen minutes away. She rang the doorbell of the house and there he was. "Alright, glad to see you've arrived. Good to meet you!" he said, shaking her hand. "What's the kind of issue that would require me?"

Tenko walked into the house and sat on the couch. Shuichi got her a quick cup of coffee as the girl prepared to tell him about Angie. "I'm going to assume you've heard of the religion of Atua, right?" Tenko asked.

"Yeah, I have. I've seen posters and flyers up for it."

"They're a cult! I don't know what they're trying to do but they're a cult! I live in their church
because my girlfriend is a great friend of Angie, the girl who brought the religion here. Recently, they cut my back open to help me become closer with Atua but that did nothing, and it's going to scar and be there for the rest of my life! They're a cult!" Tenko yelled passionately.

Shuichi put his hands up. "Woah, woah. No need to yell. Do you want to show me the scar or would that make you uncomfortable?" he asked. Tenko shook her head. Shuichi understood.

A different girl walked in from another room. "I heard yelling, is everything alright in here?" she asked.

Shuichi got up and hugged her, kissing her on the cheek. He then looked at Tenko. "This is Kaede, my wife and occasional partner in investigations. And this was the girl that was calling me earlier today." Shuichi said.

Kaede and Tenko shook hands as Shuichi explained Tenko's story thus far. Tenko elaborated on other aspects, such as the weekly blood sacrifices. Both weren't necessarily horrified, but wanted to help her. "I think if you introduced me to Angie tomorrow and later I go to a sermon, that would be great so I could understand it all. Does this work for you?" Shuichi asked.

"That's great. Thanks!" Tenko replied. She shook hands with Shuichi and Kaede again before leaving, happy that there were now people on her side to trust.
Dinner with a Detective

After the conversation with Shuichi, Tenko returned to the church to talk to Angie. "I know you say I don't give enough to Atua as you would like, but I've actually convinced one of my friends to come to the weekly sermons!" she told her.

Even though Korekiyo would occasionally tell Angie she should keep an eye on Tenko, Atua never did, so she paid no mind to it. Even if Tenko was less involved with the religion than, say, Himiko, she still was one of them and it was absolutely great that she got someone interested. "Really? That's great! Who is it?" she asked enthusiastically.

While she walked back to the church, she had thought of ways to explain why Shuichi was in her life. Obviously she couldn't say that he was a detective looking for suspicious behavior, so she had to make something up. "His name is Shuichi. He's an old family friend. Never went to the same school as us, but I've known him for years. He asked if he could come over sometime tomorrow." she said.

Angie was somewhat surprised that the friend was a boy considering Tenko's normal dislike for so called degenerate males, but that didn't matter much to her. A follower of Atua was a follower of Atua. And meeting him tomorrow sounded swell as well! "It would be great for him to come over! A friend of Tenko's is a friend of mine, and a friend of mine is a friend of Atua's!" she yelled.

Tenko was happy with her advancements, but now she was curious if she and Shuichi could stop Himiko from becoming a religious zealot like Angie. It didn't seem likely considering the influence of the girl who ran the church, but considering their relationship it was always a possibility. Just because Himiko paid less attention to Tenko than she wanted didn't mean they weren't girlfriends. Either way, it was very nice knowing that authorities now had ways of knowing what went on in the church.

Afterwards, Angie went to tell Korekiyo of the accomplishment. "Tenko got one of her friends to join the religion, and he's going to come over tomorrow!" she said in the way only she could.

For a couple of seconds, Korekiyo believed that the ritual they had performed just days before had worked, even if it did involve brutality and permanent damage. But then he remembered that this was Tenko. Even after all this time, Korekiyo still suspected her to be up to something not good, but never said anything about it because at best Angie would brush it off like it was nothing, or at worst she'd get angry at him. Since Angie repeatedly said that she showed no remorse towards those who sinned against Atua, yet Tenko had done nothing directly to sin against Him, there wasn't a reason to really say anything. He decided to take the safer route, but then still slightly bring it up. "I'm glad to see Tenko is contributing to the cause you've gotten her into." he said, smiling underneath the mask.

Angie laughed. "She contributes more than you!" she said cheekily.

Korekiyo gave her a surprised and almost angry look, and followed it with a double take. Angie still smiled at him. "It's true! I teach all the people here the true ways of life, and you help out and barely listen to what I say! You don't even believe! You have no reason of being here! I have my two best friends in the religion, and I don't even think I know any of your friends? Do you have any friends, Kiyo?"

Korekiyo nervously looked around. "Yes, but I don't keep close contact with them. And I always listen, and although I may not believe, I still want to carry on your ways." he said.

"Am I nothing more than a culture to you?" Angie asked, still acting happy. "Do you love me not for
who I am but for what I represent? Do you even love me?"

"Of course I love you, Angie. You're such a happy, cute, benevolent, caring woman who got me through hard times even without your religion. I'm glad to have you in my life." he said.

There was more Angie wanted to say, but she was glad that Korekiyo was reassuring her. She still had one last thing to say, however. "I'm going to get you to believe in Atua. Just you wait." she said, winking.

Korekiyo chuckled. "I think you're going to find that very hard to achieve, but I'm not going to stop you from trying." he said in an almost smug manner.

Angie knew the whole time that he loved her. That was obvious, she just liked messing with him. What's a relationship without a little bit of messing around, she thought. But there was no way that she couldn't get him to believe in Atua. He already did everything she asked him to for him, what if he already believed and just didn't want to admit it? She still felt like she knew too little about him, even after years of knowing him. Yet she was so glad that their extremely unlikely paths crossed. She didn't know what life would be like without him, but there was no way it could be good. Himiko and Tenko, as well. She was very satisfied with her current life and hoped nothing would change in it.

The next afternoon, Shuichi arrived at the church for the first time, Tenko there to greet him even before Angie was. "So, what's the plan? I told them already that we're family friends." she asked.

"Don't worry about it. We'll make things up as we go." he confidently responded.

A bit after his response, Angie arrived from the upstairs area to introduce herself. "You must be Tenko's friend! I am Angie Yonaga, the overseer of the church and I'm closer to Atua than anyone!" she said, taking Shuichi's hand and rapidly and abruptly shaking it. He chuckled to himself afterwards, he liked her energetic ways.

Angie quickly gave Shuichi a tour around the church while lecturing him on Atua and the history of her island. Whenever on a case, the detective made sure to take as many important photos as possible, and this was no different. "I can take pictures in here, right?" he asked Angie during the tour, grabbing out his phone in preparation of a positive answer.

The religious artist put her hand on his phone and lowered it. "No no! Atua does not want pictures taken in the church! He believes that the only way these grounds can be witnessed is in person, and anything else is lesser and unimportant!" she said sternly yet politely. Shuichi was surprised. No one had ever said no to him when it came to taking pictures in investigative areas with dead bodies or other crimes. Why wouldn't she allow images to be taken in a church?

He observed the church as she showed it to him. There didn't seem to be anything wrong with the church itself, and so far Angie just acted like a regular, extremely religious girl. There's obviously more than there is on the surface, he thought. Eventually, the church tour ended and Shuichi was introduced to Korekiyo. His initial thoughts were about the same as almost everyone's, creepy but not a bad person. Obviously he didn't know about the amount of girls he had killed, but almost no one did. The only person who knew about that was Angie, and she didn't even care. So far, relations were well. Perfect. "I don't believe I've ever heard Tenko talk about you, actually. You know she doesn't necessarily like men, yet she seems to trust you well." Korekiyo told him.

Shuichi didn't like lying, but in a situation like this it was inevitable. He was damn good at it, too. "Yeah, she's always been like that. But she's always been more comfortable around me. Our mothers are great friends, and we'd often see each other. I'm not even sure as to why she doesn't like other
boys. As to why she hasn't talked about me, that's her problem, heh." he replied. Korekiyo nodded.

He soon realized that he hadn't actually seen Tenko since the beginning of his tour. This changed only a few seconds after his realization, as she soon entered with Himiko at her side. "This is Himiko, my girlfriend I was telling you about!" she said, energetically. Just like Tenko said, she was a cute girl.

"You didn't introduce me right. I'm Himiko Yumeno, the greatest mage who ever lived!" she announced to the delight of Shuichi. He laughed to himself. She didn't seem like the religious type as of yet, but he had only known her for a couple of seconds.

Shuichi felt a hand on his back. Startled, he turned around to see Angie once again. "Looks like you've met everyone here! Korekiyo is making dinner. Shrimp with avocado, just like back home!" she yelled. Sounded like a good dinner. Shuichi nodded in approval.

Angie went to the kitchen to talk to Korekiyo, who was making the dinner. "I hope this tastes just as good as it did on the island." he said, cooking the shrimp in a pan on the stove.

Angie laughed the way she always did. "You're a good cook, but I'm not sure if you're that good. I hope you are though!" she said, smiling.

Korekiyo didn't care for her messing with him, but didn't want to ask her to stop. He found it cute, even if there was a bit of truth to it. He put the pan down and abruptly removed his mask. "It likely won't, although I believe the love I put into this for you, while it won't directly impacting the taste of the shrimp, will make up for it." he said before kissing Angie on the forehead. Angie looked at him surprised as he put the mask back on and continued to cook.

After a few minutes, the dinner was finished and everyone sat down to eat. Shuichi thought the food tasted good, but he was consistently bothered by how Korekiyo was eating with his mask on, although he didn't bother to ask how. He was more focused on other matters. "What interested you in joining, besides of course Tenko?" Angie asked.

It was a good question for him, as he had thought over the answer earlier in the day. "I have a lovely wife at home and plenty of friends, but I've always felt like there was something missing there, although I didn't know what at the time. But when Tenko told me she was in a religion, it hit me. I needed a higher power of some sort to believe in to make myself feel complete. Because Tenko is someone close to me that I trust and I'd like to see her more often, it only made sense." he explained.

Angie was satisfied by this response. "A common answer, but a good one. Many feel lost before they are subjected to the ways of Atua. I'm glad you can join them." she said.

Shuichi liked Angie thus far, but he wanted to know more about the kind of sacrifices that Tenko had described. "Tenko told me they do blood sacrifices here, is this correct?" he asked.

Korekiyo chuckled before saying "Every week, although it's nothing to be afraid of. Just a clean syringe to the shoulder or wherever you're comfortable. We have a lot of syringes, kehehe." he laughed.

Korekiyo being weird, this was going to become a theme, wasn't it? This in particular seemed suspicious. Not much was said for a little while as they continued to eat the dinner. Shuichi noticed that Himiko hadn't really said anything yet, so he decided to ask her a question. "Is Tenko a good girlfriend?"

Himiko was half asleep holding a fork with shrimp on it in her hand. After hearing the question...
aimed towards her, she yawned and stretched. "Yeah, I like her. She can be a bit too much sometimes, but I like her." she said.

"A bit too much? I’d say I’m not enough!" the annoyed Tenko yelled. Himiko groaned, this seemed to happen a lot. She wondered if she was even ready for a romantic relationship, three years too late.

The dinner finished and Shuichi headed back home with mental notes on the actions of everyone there. At his house waiting for him was Kaede. "How was it?" she asked, curiously.

"Weird bunch of people. I kinda like them." Shuichi simply said, giving his wife a hug.

"I'll have to go with you some time. Seems like... well, I don't think fun would be the right word to describe it." Kaede said, laughing.

She gave her husband a cup of tea and sat on the couch with him, holding hands. "Anything weird in particular?" she asked. She was always eager to hear about Shuichi’s investigations and discoveries.

"Weekly blood sacrifices, they said. Not a big deal. Didn't even mention the scar on Tenko's back." he said. Shuichi yawned and put his head on Kaede's thighs. She put her hand on his resting head and yawned shortly after.

It had been a good day for Shuichi, with the new advancements in the investigation of the church, and he felt he deserved to sleep with the girl he loved more than anything, which is exactly what he did. Although none of the horrors Tenko had described where there, he thought that he'd see them soon enough, and he was prepared as he ever could have been.
"Shhhhh. Let me concentrate. Atua is speaking to me." Angie said quietly to Korekiyo, who was just in front of their bedroom door.

Angie was going back to what she knew: the arts. With the typical business of the church and her new love life with Korekiyo, it became hard for her to draw or paint or sculpt or anything like that. Although there were times where she wanted to, Atua had other plans in mind. But there was no better time than now, and she was painting on a canvas that stood upon an easel while she sat cross legged on the bedroom floor, paintbrush in hand. She felt like she was in heaven. Korekiyo nodded and exited the room. He hadn't seen her paint much, but he knew that she preferred to be left alone during that time. He knew it'd be beautiful, that was a guarantee. Just like her.

A couple of hours passed and Angie emerged from the room, the painting carefully in her hands. She hangs it up in the center of the church area so that it could be easily seen during all sermons. After hanging it up, she calls upon Korekiyo, Himiko and Tenko to look at the creation. It's of them. Angie as well. On the left of the painting was Angie and Korekiyo hugging lovingly. On the right was Tenko and Himiko doing the same. The background was a somewhat convoluted mix of yellows, light blues and oranges. On the very top was a white semicircle taking up the top sixth or so of the painting. "I... I love it. Thank you Angie." Korekiyo says, a smile underneath his mask.

"It's really good, as usual." Himiko said, although in the same bored tone of voice she often spoke in. Tenko didn't say anything, although she did admire it.

"Actually, I do have a question. What's the white on top supposed to mean?" Korekiyo curiously asked.

Angie expected this question and was glad it was asked, especially by Korekiyo. "It's light of Atua, shining down on us all." she said.

Angie was satisfied with the result, especially with how long it had been since she had done art at all. It had been about a month since the dinner with Shuichi and everything had been going well at the church, even if nothing had really changed at all for her. On the other hand, Tenko felt more comfortable knowing that Shuichi was investigating. So far, nothing of particular note had happened, other than the obvious weekly blood sacrifices. Tenko knew that eventually something horrible and violent had to happen. That was just the way Angie operated. That would be when Shuichi understood it all. That's when it would all make sense to him.

Often times, Tenko would visit Shuichi or call him whenever she felt less safe around Angie or Korekiyo. Because she often called about more minor altercations that usually wouldn't mean much, Shuichi would always assure her that everything would be fine. He trusted everything that she said, but he had no real way of knowing it was all true. The only way he could know is by witnessing it first hand.

Nothing interesting or fun had happened in the church walls, at least that's what Tenko thought. Maybe there was something fun to do today with Himiko. It was nice outside, warm and sunny. Tenko considered her options before thinking of a considerably pleasant one. How about the park? Whenever the option was there, Tenko liked to walk to the park, but she never had the chance to take Himiko. She saw her talking to Angie, and ran towards her. "Hey Himiko, do you want to walk to the park with me?" she asked, as energetically as ever.

Himiko sighed. "No thanks. Me and Angie were going to have a private lesson about some Atua
stuff that hasn’t been discussed yet. Plus, walking all the way to the park kinda sounds like a pain.” she said in her common tired tone of voice.

Tenko tried to maintain a smile. Her eye twitched. "Okay. Tell me if you change your mind." she said, walking away slowly.

Tenko had a problem she never wanted to admit. This was barely even a relationship. It was incredibly likely that she was the only person who even considered it one. This wasn't the first time something like this had happened, this was one of many. The only thing an actual couple would do that they did was sleep in the same bed. Any time she wanted to do anything with the magician, she chose not to for some Atua related reason. Angie this, Atua that. Angie might as well could have been her girlfriend. This has happened a variety of different times over the years, most of the time minor. This was the final straw though, the one that finally got to her. It was such a nice day, why the hell would she choose a phony god over who was supposed to be her girlfriend?

Tenko walked to her room, distraught. The one time she thought she'd do something for her. She really thought when she got her feelings out oh so long ago, things would have changed by now, but all was the same. She lay on her bed, the sounds of her quiet sobs filling the room. She always knew Himiko didn't love her close to as much as she did, but she ignored it because she believed the day would come where she would. It had been years and the day still hadn't come. Tenko had finally given up. She wanted to tell Himiko about how she felt ignored, but there was a possibility she'd say something more hurtful. An unlikely one, but it was possible. Why did she have to delude herself into thinking that she was loved? Why did she have to make this mistake for this long, too? Who was she to turn to? There was only one person she could think of, and she had to release her feelings to him fast.

Shuichi answered the door to see the visibly less positive and enthusiastic Tenko standing in front of him, her eyes welling with tears ready to release at any moment. "Tenko? What's wrong?" Shuichi asked.

She sniffled. "Every day I lie to myself. Every day I tell myself I'm loved and it's not true. Angie tells me Atua loves me and it's not true. Not even my girlfriend cares about me." she said solemnly, getting on her hands and knees.

Shuichi put his hand on her shoulder. "I'm here to help you, Tenko. I've been through some bad times too, and I've learned they don't last. Come on in, I'll try to help you." he said, helping her up.

She grabbed his shirt. "You don't understand. I've been telling myself this for years now and nothing has changed. You're probably the only person who can even come close to changing something. The girl I love is being taken away from me, and I won't allow this to happen." she said quickly.

Shuichi was surprised by this sudden reaction, but wasn't entirely sure how to react now. This was until Kaede showed up at the door. "Tenko. Calm down. I've heard everything you've been saying, and he's right. I'm here to help as well!" she said.

Tenko and Kaede had become acquainted since the former had met Shuichi. Tenko admired Kaede's dedications to piano music and, of course, Shuichi himself. But her attempts to calm her weren't helping, they were making things worse. Tenko began to shake. "I live in hell! I live in hell and I hate it!" she shouted, tears running down her eyes more than ever.

She put her hands on her face as Shuichi and Kaede brought her into their house and sat her on the living room couch, getting her a box of tissues. "What's been going on recently? You haven't actually said what happened yet." Shuichi asked.
Tenko blew her nose into a tissue. "Himiko doesn't love me and I don't think she ever did. I'm not important to who I thought was my girlfriend! Not important as Angie. I need to get out of the church, but I have nowhere else to go!" she wailed.

Kaede gave a quick glance to Shuichi, who glanced back. She nodded, and Shuichi nodded back. "We have a spare room, I think you're able to come and live here for a few months," she said calmly, putting her arm on Tenko's shoulder.

Tenko wiped a tear off her face. "You really mean it? We haven't known each other for long, you know." she said.

Shuichi nodded. "We really do."

Her breaths became less frantic after this offer. If this was the way that she could get her life back on track then she'd do it in a heart beat. She calmed down a bit more and headed back off to the church to grab her belongings and go back to Shuichi's. Before she went back, she had borrowed a suitcase from the two so she could pack her possessions more efficiently. She rushed to her and Himiko's room to grab all her stuff. Only a bit before she started, she was interrupted.

"What are you doing? Are you leaving?" Himiko asked from behind her.

Tenko looked to see who she once believed to be her girlfriend looking at her, somewhat sternly. "Yeah, I'm moving out. I can't handle it anymore. I'm moving in with Shuichi for a little while. You understand, right?" Tenko asked.

Himiko sighed. "Atua's not gonna like this." she said.

Tenko groaned. She had to be careful with her words, if she said that she thought Atua was fake then it would upset, and that was the very last thing she wanted right now. "I-I'm sure Atua will be fine with it-"

"Fine with what?" Angie said, having overheard the conversation as she walked by the room. "If you have a question for Atua, I'm always the one to ask!"

Tenko looked at her, teeth clenched, eyes wide open. Was it Atua's will that made her show up at the most inopportune of times? But... Atua wasn't real. Atua couldn't be real.

She quickly turned her head to Himiko. "Tenko said she's leaving the church and moving in with Shuichi. Said she couldn't handle it anymore. I don't know what she's referring to." the smaller girl said.

Angie gasped. This was not news she ever expected to hear. "Moving out? Why would you ever want to do that?" she asked.

Tenko began to sweat. "I don't feel comfortable here anymore!" she shouted. She wanted to yell more, but thought that could prove to be negatively consequential.

Angie did something that Tenko didn't expect at all. She actually thought about what she said. Angie could see why someone like Tenko could find things such as the rituals or the blood sacrifices uncomfortable, as she obviously wasn't as familiar with the island customs as she was. But on the other hand, why was she so passionate about wanting to leave? She'd never seen Tenko like this before. There was one final question Atua had for her to ask. "You're still going to go to the sermons every week, right?" she said in a calmer tone of voice.

Tenko noticed Himiko stating a hole through her, giving an almost angry or disgusted look. "Yes?"
She nervously answered.

Angie clearly noticed her nervous tone, and thought about it for a second before getting the words from Atua that she needed. "Atua says you haven't been one hundred percent honest with us." she said.

There were a few seconds of complete silence from all sides to digest what had just been said. Then Tenko began to panic. She got on her knees, clasped her hands and looked up at Angie. "Please don't kill me! I don't deserve this!" she yelled, her eyes beginning to well up with more tears.

Angie looked at her oddly before smiling. "Nyahaha! Of course not I'm not gonna kill you, silly! Not for something like this, at least. Atua demands you stay here, however, and if you fail to do that, then you'll have to pay the consequences. He'd absolutely hate it if someone who had lived in his own divine grounds suddenly decided to no longer show up. He'd consider it betrayal. I'm glad to see you're not fighting it anymore." she said, once again calmly.

Tenko nodded and Angie left. She thought it was a miracle that she got out of that the way she did. However, she came to other realizations. She knew she'd been lying to herself that everything was fine and that Himiko loved her and that she was safe, as well as just forgetting or ignoring other problems. But was she also lying to herself about Atua's existence in general? There was obviously no way to know for sure if He was or wasn't real, but if an entire island is believing in him, there has to be some kind of a chance. She didn't think she had anything left to worry about, unless mistakes were made.
Shuichi had been acquainted with Maki Harukawa in high school because she was good friends with Kaede and even dated and later married another of his good friends, Kaito Momota. However, it was at work where the two started to become good friends. Since Maki was a cop, the two often worked together and could now consider themselves friends. Although the two usually didn't work on the same cases, it was still common of them to talk about what was going on in their specific work. "I heard you were working on some cult activity." Maki said, pouring herself a cup of coffee in the early morning hours of the day.

Maki sat down with her coffee before he could speak. "Yeah, but nothing really noteworthy has happened yet, besides a murder threat. Wouldn't really count that as anything due to a variety of reasons I believe you already know. The girl there who hired me really trusts me to help her. I like her, but I'm afraid I'm running out of things to do." said Shuichi.

Maki looked at him surprised and confused. "You've been investigating a cult for what now, three months? Three months of nothing interesting in a cult " she said, almost annoyed.

Shuichi sighed. "It's not even really a cult, it's just a religion a lot of people are in to from a long washed away island that their leader is from. It's not a cult at all. The only thing remotely cultish is the girl who got me into this telling me a scar she got on her back was from some kind of ritual, and I can't even prove that. The weekly blood sacrifices, too." he said.

Maki got another cup of coffee and gave it to Shuichi. "Just do what I do. Get a gun, put it to their leader's head and threaten to shoot unless they tell their secrets." she said.

Shuichi knew her well enough to know that that wasn't a joke. "That's too aggressive. She may not even have any secrets."

She smirked before saying "You never know with cults."

"I'm telling you, it's not a cult." said Shuichi, who was starting to get annoyed.

"Cult, religion, organization, company, any group of more than eight or so people. They all have their secrets, some malicious, most meaningless. Usually, I'd suggest to not worry about them, but this is definitely a situation where you should. I recommend you learn much as you can before it's too late."

Shuichi still thought in the back of his mind that nothing would happen, however, the chance of something happening was steadily rising. "Alright. I'll keep this in mind." he said, a bit unsurely.

Maki smirked once again. "Glad I could be of help. Remember, if you need me for anything, I'm always willing."

The detective didn't think he'd need her with anything on this case but was glad to know there was someone there to be backup. He nodded as the two left to deal with other business.
"It's been weeks and I still don't understand why she'd do it. I thought she was progressing very well!" Angie yelled, annoyed.

Angie didn't get annoyed or frustrated by very much at all but when someone broke her trust, it would not go over well with her, especially if it involved breaking the trust of Atua as well. "I know I was suspicious of Tenko years ago, but I thought she had changed as well. I guess no one can be trusted," Korekiyo added. Although he preferred she acted like her normal self, he wouldn't lie that this mildly riled up Angie was kinda cute.

"No one can be trusted? I wouldn't say that. I trust Himiko, and of course, I trust you!" she said assuredly.

He laughed. "Well, some people can be. Tenko is not one of those people."

Angie put her finger to her bottom lip before saying "I don't actually think Tenko can do any harm to us right now. Atua tells me that she's learned her lesson."

Korekiyo nodded. "I trust Atua then."

She looked at him in surprise, her eyes lightened up and she had a big smile on her face. "Does this mean that you finally believe in Him?" she asked enthusiastically.

The masked man contemplated the question for a little while. It troubled him. He didn't have an answer. All his time spent in the church made him think that it wasn't just him trying to help revive a dying religion with a girl he somehow loved more than his sister. He thought he was beginning to feel a spiritual connection to these holy grounds of Atua. What's even the point of living in a church if you aren't going to worship their god, he thought. "I'm waiting!" Angie said, impatiently yet happily.

Korekiyo had blanked out due to his thoughts. He looked at Angie, she was still grinning at him. "I'm not sure anymore." he said.

She smiled, this was a much better answer than she was used to from him. "That's a yes, right?" she asked, hugging him tightly by his arms and pulling them to his sides.

He wanted to shake her off as her hugging grip was oddly tight this time, but at the same time, it was comforting. "I don't know. If I knew, I'd give you the answer. Please, though, let go of me." he asked her.

Angie let go of him and, to her surprise, he actually turned around and hugged her right back. Korekiyo wasn't strong, far from it, but Angie was small and light enough to pick up, and that's exactly what he did. He lifted her up with a hug that she couldn't have seen coming, her chin resting on his shoulder. "No matter my opinions of Atua, I still love you more than anything." he whispered in her ear.

She began to hug back. "You too! I love you more!"

He laughed as he leaned over to put her back on the ground, the girl still hugging him. "I don't think that's true at all."

She gave him a kiss on the cheek while he continued to lean over. "Actually, there's something I'd like to say as well." she said, somewhat nervously.

Korekiyo looked at her in intrigue, easily noticing the nervousness in her voice. "Do tell." he said.
The dark skinned girl began to heavily blush. "Well, I feel like we together need something more. I want to get closer with you, and this will impact us forever, but..." she began to say, before realizing that now wasn't the time to bring this up. Atua agreed with this. "Atua asks of me not to continue. He thinks we're not ready for what I was going to suggest. I don't know why I brought it up either, I shouldn't have."

He nodded, he understood that an important decision like the one she could have been uncomfortable to let out. What he didn't understand is the scale of what Angie wanted. She was right when she said that it would impact them forever, but now wasn't the time for such a big decision.

Angie hugged Korekiyo one more time before leaving the room to check on Himiko and Tenko. Talking to Himiko was always a good way to calm herself during more difficult and troubling times. Now was a good time to do that, as the first thing she saw when she entered her room surprised her in the best possible way. "Himiko, are you-" she began to say before realizing now was a bad time to yell.

In the center of the room's bed was Himiko, eyes closed, legs crossed, hat in her lap, arms out with her index fingers and thumbs making a circle with both hands. It was obvious to her what she was doing; meditating in the name of Atua. Angie was delighted to see this but decided to keep quiet so she could concentrate. Instead, she looked around the room, finding Tenko in the corner. "She's been doing this for thirty minutes." said Tenko, also keeping quiet.

"Thirty minutes? That's not too long at all! Beginners should meditate for two hours at least." Angie whispered, continuing to admire Himiko's religious deeds.

Tenko rolled her eyes as Angie got closer to Himiko. She was somewhat surprised to see that the magician hadn't fallen asleep during the process, considering she had her eyes closed and hadn't been saying a thing. "You should lower your arms a small bit. Other than that, you're doing great." Angie said soothingly in her ear. Himiko's acknowledgment of her suggestion was a small nod, followed by her taking the advice.

"Atua gives you permission to speak to me while you meditate, although quietly." Angie said a tiny bit louder, although barely noticeable. "But try your hardest not to move and don't open your eyes."

Himiko slightly nodded again. "I want to be able to hear Atua like you can. How long did it take you?" she asked.

The dark skinned girl rubbed Himiko's arm as a way to comfort her a bit. "It takes most until they become their own person. When one needs Atua to make decisions for them, He arrives to speak to someone. It usually takes most to reach that at the age of eighteen, but He first started talking to me when I was fourteen because I was the only one of my people left. I believe you can reach that level soon." she said.

Angie decided to leave Himiko to her meditation and turned to Tenko. "Aren't you going to join her?" she asked.

She looked around for a few seconds, looking if there was a place to run. Ever since the incident where she tried to leave, she had been scared of Angie. She tried to talk to her as little as possible, only when necessary. This was one of those times where it was necessary. "What'll happen if I say no?" Tenko asked worriedly.

"Oh, nothing will! Just a recommendation! I guess that means no, so I'm just gonna leave now! Byeonara!" Angie said, exiting the room without an issue.
Tenko looked at the unmoving Himiko, the sound of her breathing, while not very loud, was amplified by the general lack of sound in the room. "W-what did I do, Himiko? Where did I go wrong?" Tenko asked. Himiko didn't even hear her question, nor the soft sobbing of her girlfriend only in name.

Chapter End Notes

Shit's going down soon.
Days turned into weeks. Weeks turned into months. The religion of Atua grew larger and Angie loved it more than anyone. But she still wanted more, whether that be people in the religion or from Korekiyo herself. She still loved Korekiyo as much as she could, but there was still that massive secret that she had kept from him because Atua didn't think it was the time to tell it, the secret that would give her what she wanted.

But that wasn't the only thing she had grown to love recently. In the nine months that had passed since her first try, Himiko had been meditating more than ever, sometimes up to five hours a day in the name of Atua. She'd take part in many rituals that would cause her pain or misfortune, but if it was for Atua, then all was fine. Anything was fine if He wanted it.

Meanwhile, Tenko was on a complete mental downward spiral. She was now constantly isolating herself from everyone in the church at almost all times, except to eat. She still slept in the same bed as Himiko every night, but it meant nothing when she barely cared for her. Whenever she could, Tenko would go to Shuichi's to vent or relax with him and Kaede, often times spending all day there. Angie was fine with it, as she still believed he was also a follower of Atua, but Tenko still couldn't move out or else she'd feel the wrath of a god. When in the church, she felt uncomfortable, scared, constantly paranoid that at any moment Angie or Korekiyo would stab her in the back, yet at Shuichi's, she felt as safe as possible.

It seemed like this would be the way out for months, until one week Shuichi surprisingly began to stop showing up to the sermons. There one week, gone the next without even a warning. For a long while, Tenko was too scared to ask him why he left. Was it something she said, or something deeper and more concerning? Her largely gone troubles began to spring back up because of this. He wouldn't just turn his back on her in her time of need, right? It just didn't seem like him to suddenly stop showing up and not explain why.

With Angie's power and Tenko's despair both at all-time highs, the contrast made both somewhat concerned over the months, although neither questioned the other. It was likely for the best this way. Tenko wasn't the same person she was nine months ago. Now, she was an emotional wreck who cried nearly every day due to her own regrets about Himiko and the religion and Shuichi and other things. No longer with the same energy she always had, she was a husk of her former self. Every night she'd ask herself what she did wrong and what she did to deserve this and every night she wouldn't find either answer. She never thought she would.

The only option she could see was to talk to Shuichi herself. Would he even allow her to talk to him? There were too many questions she needed answers to, but this easily could've been a matter of life and death. Everything she felt she had to do wasn't out of desperation but was necessary for her own survival. After a long day of struggling with Himiko and Angie, she got herself out of the church and walked over to Shuichi's house.

The doorbell rang as Shuichi saw the girl he should've been helping. Tenko looked at him angrily, no sadness (although it was there in her mind) but pure anger. If this was any other time and to any other person, she would have thrown him against a wall and beaten him into a pulp. But the last thing she wanted right now was to make potential relations with him worse.

Shuichi sighed when she saw her. "Is this about-"
"Yes. It is."

He sighed a second time. "Come on in. I'll explain," he said, opening the door for her.

The two sat on the living room couch to tell their sides. Tenko began to sob, a common sight for Shuichi and the others that knew her well. "What did I do? I don't know what I did to deserve any of this. I thought that you would be the one to make everything better for me. You're the only boy I've ever trusted and now I don't even know if I can now. I'm scared and alone." she said.

Shuichi smiled at the small compliment of being the only boy she ever trusted, but that's not what mattered to him right now. "It's not your fault. None of this is your fault. Don't blame yourself. Please, that's the last thing you need right now." he said calmly.

She wiped the tears off of her face. "Then why did you stop coming to the sermons?" she asked.

"My boss wanted me to move on to a different case. Nearly a year of nothing more noteworthy than weekly blood sacrifices isn't interesting to the people above me. I never personally witnessed any of the bad things you've described, but that doesn't mean I don't believe you. I do. They just want me to move on. I'm so sorry that I've hurt you this way." Shuichi said in a comforting tone of voice.

Kaede had been listening from the house's kitchen and decided to join in on helping her. "There's no reason to look down on yourself, Tenko! None at all! He's right when he says none of this is your fault, we just want to help you! Take as much time as you need." she said.

Tenko slowly nodded. "I understand now. I forgive you. But I definitely could have done something about Himiko. I just don't know what, and it hurts me that I haven't learned yet. I hate this all so much." she said, sniffing a bit afterward.

Kaede put her hand on Tenko's back and said "Bad times don't last forever. Shuichi's definitely going to help you put a stop to this soon. And hopefully, Himiko will understand too! We'll get through it, we'll all get through it! I promise!" she said in the optimistic way only she could.

Everyone who knew her knew that there was nothing really like Kaede's motivation. She could easily make the impossible seem possible with the right words. It was just what Tenko needed to hear in her time of need. "Thank you so much, both of you. I wish I could stay here for a while like you said I could, but I still don't know what Angie would do to me if I did. I'm still scared, but I think I'm doing better because of you both." she said, already acting more like her usual self.

Shuichi smiled, it was nice to see this Tenko again. "Remember, if you're having troubles like this again, always tell me or Kaede or anyone else." he requested.

"No problem! I'm more pumped than I have been in weeks!" said Tenko.

Neither Shuichi, Tenko or Kaede expected her to cheer up this quickly, yet all were happy with the progress made. Tenko stayed over for a while and even ate dinner with them, and all had a fun time. Eventually, Tenko had to leave back to the place that had caused her so much trouble for the last couple of years and she did with a newfound optimism. Everything was going to be alright for her.

The first person she saw when she got back was Angie, who was cleaning the church area of the house. She immediately noticed her, it was hard for her to not. "Tenko! You usually aren't gone this long! Glad to see you're back!" she said in a manner only she could.

Just because she didn't like Angie didn't mean that she was going to ignore her or act rude in any sort of way to her, that wouldn't have been good in any way, shape or form. "Yeah, good to see you too!" Tenko said, her returning enthusiasm and confidence oozing from her voice.
Angie never really noticed that Tenko had been acting differently the last few weeks, she was more caught up in other church-related business, and that's why she didn't immediately note it. "Where's Himiko?" Tenko asked.

"She's been meditating for a couple of hours now. Knowing her, she should be done in fifteen minutes or so. Make sure not to disturb her!"

This was just the norm now, a sad one but one she had to deal with. "I'm still surprised you have yet to meditate with her. I think she'd appreciate that." Angie continued not so subtly.

"Uh, yeah. I think she would too. Sometime soon, I will." said Tenko. She was lying, but she thought that eventually, she could pretend to.

Angie nodded, still not suspecting anything from her. Tenko rushed to her bedroom, despite Angie's request that she not disturb Himiko. She probably won't hear anything from her if she does try to talk to her because of how deep in thought she must be, she thought. She continued her cleaning until she heard an odd noise from the door, followed by two knocks. Not the one to be impolite, she opened the door only to find no one there. Puzzled, she closed the door only to find a note between her feet. Seeing the style of how this was sent could only mean it was sent by one person, but she didn't know what he would have wanted in this instance. Obviously, the only way she could know was by reading the note itself.

"To Angie 'Female Manson' Yonaga and Korekiyo 'No One Cared Who I Was Until I Put On The Mask' Shinguji -

How about dinner tomorrow?

K.O."

Chapter End Notes

I have no idea how I got this chapter done as quickly as I did. The next two chapters are going to be the last two of what I'll consider to be this arc of the story. They'll also contrast the last two in that they'll be rather long in comparison to these ones. Thanks for reading up to this point!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!