Ice Around My Heart

by Spunky0ne

Summary

As Toshiro recovers from the conflict with the quincies, frightening dreams hint that more was done to him than making him a zombie. And when Ywach’s body that is keeping the balance of souls begins to fade, is he to be the three worlds’ savior or their destroyer?...Yaoi, mpreg…Byakuya/Toshiro, Ichigo/Uryu, Aizen/Kisuke/Tetsuya OC, Shunsui/Ukitake, Haschwald/Bazzbee, Yoruichi/Soi Fon

The sun had already set, and darkness was setting in as Toshiro noted the completion of his unit’s efforts to clear the malevolent reiatsu from the assigned area of the Seireitei. He brushed the back of a hand over his sweaty forehead, making a face at how filthy he had gotten, but also at the fact that he was still unable to revert from his elder physical form to his younger one.

Ever since the battles in the royal realm, I’ve been stuck in this adult form. I really don’t like it. I look thin and none of my clothes fit anymore. I suppose I had to age sometime, but I liked things the way they were.

At least, if I went back to my younger form, then Matsumoto would stop teasing me. No wait, she teased me before. It’s just that she teased me about other things before. She’s so annoying!

His blue eye fell on Rangiku as she finished a final examination of the area and turned to join him. For a moment, his mind went back to a very dark moment from the war.

Things that live together should die together, Cang Du’s voice whispered in his mind.

The image shifted to a later moment, when he recalled waking briefly to see a female quincy leaning over him and speaking. But the words were garbled.

I’m glad I don’t remember that quincy girl turning us into zombies…or being a goddamned
zombie. Though…sometimes, I dream things about that, and I don’t know if what I see in those dreams is just dream, or if there is some truth to it.

God, I don’t want to know.

I want to put this war and everything associated with it behind me.

That’ll take awhile.

“Looks like we’re finished here, Captain,” Rangiku said in a weary voice, “Whew! I’m bushed. Why don’t we go to the Wolf Den Club tonight and hang out with everyone? We can relax a little after all of this work.”

He started to respond with the usual sharpness, but felt a twinge of internal distress as he saw again the image of his vice-captain lying next to him, barely alive with Cang Du standing over them.

“Yeah, fine,” he answered, “whatever. We need to eat to restore ourselves, and that way, none of us will have to cook.”

“Really?” Rangiku asked, beaming, “You’re serious? We can go? You’re gonna go too?”

Toshiro sighed and shrugged.

“Momo will probably be there if she’s knows you’re going to be. I can sit and talk to her while I eat.”

“Haha!” his excitable adjutant laughed, “I don’t think you’re going to be sitting down and talking at all. With that new, older body of yours, you’ll be dancing all night with everyone in the place!”

“I will not,” Toshiro said tersely, “I’m just going for a bite to eat, then I’m going back to the division.”

Rangiku gave him a perplexed look.

“What?” he asked crossly, “I agreed to go at least. You should be happy with that.”

“Oh, I am,” Rangiku answered, “I guess I forgot to tell you though that there was an accident while the crew was putting in the plumbing in our new headquarters. It pretty much wrecked the place. Don’t worry, though, the other divisions are making room for groups of our soldiers, and Captain Kuchiki said there was room at his place for our top ten officers.”

Toshiro tilted his head slightly, looking at her curiously.

“Kuchiki offered to do that?” he mused.

Rangiku shrugged.

“I know, right? I was surprised too, but Rukia and Renji brought the message to me, themselves.”

“They did, huh?” Toshiro said, scowling, “Nice of you to pass that on in such a timely manner.”

“So, come on,” Rangiku urged him, taking him by the arm, “Let’s go get some food, okay?”

“Not yet. We should clean up first.”

“I don’t think anyone cares,” Rangiku argued, “We’re all so tired from spending hours banishing
“Yeah, well, I don’t wanna get that muck in the food I’m eating. I want a shower first!”

“No way. We’ll just wash up at the Den!” the redhead said, pulling him along.

“Rangiku! Rangiku…ugh! You are ridiculous, you know that?”

Kisuke Urahara’s serious face and pale grey eyes glowed with the reflection of Tetsuya Kuchiki’s blue reiatsu as Byakuya Kuchiki’s cousin, the new vice-captain of the fourth division, held a healing field in place around Sosuke Aizen’s carefully restrained body and he slowly restored the heavy damage inflicted by the Quincy king. Aizen’s brown eyes watched them curiously as Tetsuya worked.

“You know, given time, the hogyoku would heal the damage,” the traitor commented, “You don’t really need to risk being this close to me to restore me. It makes me wonder why you would do that.”

He looked up at Tetsuya’s hazy sapphire eyes that looked down at him, but didn’t seem to really see him…or at least, if Tetsuya was seeing him, he was careful not to look directly into the former captain’s dark eyes.

“I suppose I know why Tetsuya would heal me,” he went on, looking up into Kisuke’s stern gaze, “It’s in his nature to spare what suffering he can. But you, Kisuke Urahara…”

Kisuke’s lips curved into a little smirk.

“I have my reasons,” he answered quietly, “but you don’t need to worry about that. Believe me, this is the greatest kindness and the biggest thank you that you’re going to get for not backstabbing us and for actually helping Ichigo to destroy the Quincy king. I think everyone’s aware that you only did it because it was in your interests to do it. And if you hadn’t passed out, we’d have had to deal with you all over again, wouldn’t we?”

Aizen let out a little amused breath.

“So, you don’t think that having an arm missing, a hole blown through my chest and my reiatsu taken down to that of a mouse would be enough to reduce the danger to everyone,” he chuckled, “I have to say, I’m flattered.”

“Huh,” the shopkeeper huffed softly, “All you would’ve needed was being conscious and having a flash step and you would’ve disappeared and gone somewhere to wait for the hogyoku to heal you. See, I don’t just think in the moment. I think long term.”

“Of course,” Aizen agreed, “You have a highly capable mind that even I respect. You know, I considered taking you with me to Hueco Mundo at one time.”

Kisuke gave a small, agnostic grunt.

“Is that right?” he mused, shaking his head.

“I did,” Aizen assured him, “Your high intelligence and your willingness to skirt the edges of the law to find answers through research were of particular interest to me. And, of course, you did make the first hogyoku. All of my work was based on yours.”
“So,” Kisuke said, looking into Aizen’s brown eyes, “why didn’t you?”

“Oh, I think that’s obvious,” Aizen replied matter-of-factly, “You skirted the law to a point, but when Central 46 realized what you were doing and ordered you to stop your research and turn over all of the information to them...you actually did. It was more than a little disappointing that you let them get in your way. I certainly didn’t.”

“No, you went right through them,” Kisuke recalled, “First, you snuck around, stealing what you wanted, then you murdered all of them. I have to admit, I was a little curious why after you pretty much had what you wanted and you had them under your control, you opted to slaughter them like that. You know, something like that suggests that either you’re a complete sadistic psycho or they did something to you to make you want to do that.”

“Hmm,” Aizen mused, blinking slowly, “once again, you show that intelligence I so admire in you.”

“Aw, flattery isn’t going to get you anywhere, you know,” Kisuke said, smirking, “You’re still going back into that cell.”

“I suppose. But since you and Tetsuya have been so kind, maybe I should answer your question.”

“You’re gonna tell me and Tetsuya why you slaughtered the sages and judges of Central 46? And you expect us to believe a word that you say to us?” Kisuke scoffed, shaking his head.

“Both,” Aizen said, making Kisuke pause and Tetsuya’s eyes blink and clear where they looked down at him.

The former captain smiled at their reaction.

“I will admit to being, as you called it, a psycho...although sociopath would probably be the most applicable term to describe me. But, I’m sure that both of you know that such behavior can be caused by organic factors or it can be caused by environmental ones.”

“Nature or nurture?” Tetsuya inquired, earning a look of approval from Aizen.

“Exactly,” Aizen agreed, “And you know that no physical examination ever conducted on me indicated any organic reason for me to become socially deviant.”

Kisuke gave him a guarded look, but said nothing.

“That leaves but one conclusion,” Aizen reasoned.

“Not that the why really matters, at this point,” Kisuke countered, “You are too dangerous to live in our society anymore. I won’t lose any sleep over seeing you back in Muken.”

“Of course not,” Aizen agreed, turning his dark eyes onto Tetsuya, who had dropped his gaze and continued to heal him, “There are few people who would ever think there was enough reason to forgive me.”

“You’ve got that right,” Kisuke said, glancing at his watch.

He touched Tetsuya on the shoulder and the younger man looked up at him questioningly.

“Time for us to go,” Kisuke said, “The meeting upstairs will be starting soon.”

“Of course,” Tetsuya agreed, withdrawing his hands and making the blue light around Aizen fade.
“We’ll be back,” Kisuke said cheerfully, “You’re gonna need a few more sessions. Ywach really made a mess outta you.”

“I look forward to your company,” Aizen said, smirking again.

He met Tetsuya’s blue eyes more seriously.

“Thank you for the comfort, Tetsuya Kuchiki.”

Tetsuya looked back at him silently for a moment, then turned away without answering. He paused by the door to the cell and looked back at the prisoner.

“I don’t like to see anyone suffer unnecessarily…not even you,” he answered softly.

“You are an angel, Tetsuya,” Aizen said approvingly, “The noble clans don’t deserve you.”

“Come on,” Kisuke urged Tetsuya, touching him lightly on the arm, “Time to go.”

The two exchanged few words until they had left the prison and were well on the way back to Kuchiki Manor.

“He didn’t get to you too much, did he?” Kisuke asked, “He likes to mess with people’s heads.”

“I am aware,” Tetsuya assured him, “Although, he did make me curious to know what could have happened before.”

“Yeah,” the shopkeeper agreed, “Have to admit, even though I know better than to go down that road, I’m kinda curious too. But, you know, it’s better to just let it go. After all, what does it matter? Whatever happened or didn’t happen, the guy is dangerously deranged now. No going back, even if we knew there was a cause.”

“Right,” Tetsuya said softly, “there is no going back.”

“Now, let’s put that out of our heads, all right? I heard there’s going to be a get together at the Wolf Den Tavern. I’m sure it will be fun. You want to go with me to have some dinner after all of that healing you did?”

“W-well,” Tetsuya said uncertainly, his face flushing slightly.

“C’mon, a little food, a drink or two. I promise I’ll be a perfect gentleman.”

“Ah, I suppose I should eat something,” Tetsuya reasoned, “B-but, I can’t really drink. I’m very reactive to alcohol.”

“That’s okay,” Kisuke snickered, “I’ll drink mine and yours too. Come on.”

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Ichigo stood silently on the bank of the river near his home in Karakura Town, his golden brown eyes quiet and tranquil as he watched the water rush by. He breathed slowly, enjoying the swish of the wind in the trees and the general feeling of peace all around him.

_The war is really over_, he mused inwardly, _There are, of course, choices I still have to make, but right now, it’s quiet and things feel safe again._

He looked up into the blue sky, watching the puffy clouds that drifted by.
Of course, I don’t really like that Ywach’s dead body is what’s holding everything in balance, but...I guess it’s kind of right that his punishment for trying to destroy everything is for him to now be the thing that holds it all together.

It’s ironic.

“I thought I’d find you out here, sulking,” Uryu’s voice said from just behind him.

Ichigo turned and gave the quincy youth a disapproving frown.

“I’m not sulking,” he argued, “I was just enjoying the peace and quiet.”

“You don’t look like you’re enjoying anything,” Uryu answered.

“Well, you’re annoying me,” Ichigo snapped, “And why did you think I’d be sulking anyway?”

“Well,” Uryu said, tilting his head and giving Ichigo an appraising look, “I know you weren’t happy about what happened with Ywach.”

“I wasn’t,” Ichigo admitted, “but I guess it’s what he deserves for trying to destroy everything, right? Now, it’s his dead body that holds everything together?”

“Does it?” Uryu asked pointedly.

Ichigo’s frown deepened.

“That’s what they said...the captains of Squad Zero,” he answered, “What? Do you think different? Did you hear something?”

“I didn’t hear anything,” Uryu assured him, “It’s just that I don’t simply believe what I’m told...and I know that Kisuke’s not sure that Squad Zero’s right in thinking it’ll be thousands of years before they need to worry about replacing him.”

“Well,” Ichigo said flippantly, “Yoruichi said if the king dies, they just make another one, so why would it matter?”

“I wonder if they really have that much control of the situation,” Uryu said in a worried tone.

“Man, you really wanna ruin my day, don’t you?” Ichigo sighed, shaking his head, “Uryu, I thought you said that you’d had enough of everything. I heard that you refuse to move to the shadows to lead the surviving quincies.”

“I don’t want to lead them,” Uryu said, frowning, “I just want a normal life. Isn’t that why you’re here and not in the Seireitei, being the Shiba heir right now?”

“I didn’t know you knew about that,” Ichigo chuckled.

Uryu gave him a derisive look.

“Well, you’re not being king of the quincies,” Ichigo reasoned, “Maybe I just don’t want to rush going to Soul Society. I’ll die and go there eventually. I can think about it then. Maybe I just want a normal life too.”

He looked out over the water, a twinge of uncertainty nagging his insides.

“But Uryu...sometimes I feel something inside saying...that just might not be possible.”
“Yeah,” Uryu agreed, his blue eyes following Ichigo’s out over the water, “I feel that too.”

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