LOOKING GLASS

by P5soleilnoir

Summary

After his defeat in the engine room, Goro finds himself back to Shibuya again – only to fall down the rabbit hole into a strange, upside down Tokyo where masks seem to rule all around. Very soon, things start to get very complicated for Goro... starting with a masked figure whose tricks Goro could really do without. Like turning him into a young child, for one... or summoning a grotesque-looking moon that will annihilate the world in three days. Now it's up to Goro to save this mysterious world, before he disappears along with it in a sea of flames.

Notes

Here is Day 4 of Goro Week: Alternate Universe / Crossover / Canon Divergence! Unlike the other stories, this one is going to be multi-chapter! It was an idea I had long before I decided to participate in Goro Week, but one of its themes coincided perfectly with my initial ideas, so here I am! Majora's Mask... Probably my favorite game ever. This game resounds with me even nearly twenty years later, so what better way to celebrate than by throwing Goro into Majora's Mask's so wonderful, so bizarre universe? This one is going to be a ride, but I hope you'll have as much fun accompanying Goro through this journey as I'll have writing it!
Everywhere around, all he could see was pure, immaculate white.

A peaceful stillness floated all around him, punctuated by the gentle rocking of his body as it kept drifting across an endless sea. He didn't know whether he would reach a land anytime soon, nor if one even existed in the first place, but he didn't particularly care. Transparent water lapped at the edges of his face, neither cold nor warm, making him experience some kind of weightlessness unlike anything he ever did before. His body felt light, so very light, to the point that it didn't seem to belong to him anymore. He was but a mere spectator now, enjoying the tranquility of it all, sensing very slight ripples undulate across the surface of the water, which was otherwise smooth as glass.

His vision, uneven through the thin red slit on the right side of his mask and the complete absence of it on the left side, was able to capture nothing – nothing, save for the infinite white. Briefly, a curious thought breached its way through his leaden mind, distantly wondering whether this is what being in limbo felt like. A world of oblivion where the lost, the forgotten and the unwanted were cast aside, relegated to the shadows like he certainly had been… An unknown intermediate place in between two extremes, just like he was surely experiencing… A strange feeling that only someone who didn’t know whether they were alive or dead might sense.

Was he dead? …Or alive?

Gradually, the dormant lights within his mind began to flicker again, bobbing to the surface like tiny fireflies glowing upon a dark river. His eyes, open at half-mast, blinked slowly before widening again, though they remained heavy-lidded. Perhaps it was this curious question swirling inside his head that finally stirred his brain into action, as though motivated by some mysterious purpose. Over the white horizon clouding his senses, he could see vague shapes floating around, the blur of them taking a sharper edge as he reached out to them in his mind.

One of those silhouettes… It looked like Joker’s frame.

Once again, his eyes shut in slow-motion before opening slightly. He remembered… he remembered everything that transpired back then. For better or worse.


This is where it all began. And this is where it all ended.

Afterwards, nothing.

With what felt like an awful effort, he dragged his eyes down to observe his body. His skintight suit sported various tears and gashes here and there, courtesy of the Phantom Thieves. But they weren’t the ones to blame for the gaping wound at his side, from which drops of blood escaped and dissolved into the water like a swirling crimson smoke.
Even so, he no longer felt pain. He no longer felt… anything.

Except that his mind began to drift away.

The immense torpor taking possession of him inexorably made its advance again, numbing his senses, paralyzing his core. As he saw the darkness fast approaching, every thought still occupying his brain slowly but surely dimmed away, leaving room for only one last face. Ren's.

In his mind, he relived it all – the raw outrage consuming him followed by sheer, unrestrained insanity. The urge to crush, to destroy, to tear apart, to break in half, to annihilate. The flood of quips and verbal abuse he had spewed at them, not to mention each blow he threw meant to kill. A complete beast was what he had become, devoid of reason, only driven by feral bloodlust.

But despite it all, he couldn't remember one instance where Joker – Ren – had looked down on him for this sad display. If anything, he had appeared… troubled. And rather than triumph or indifference, he was certain it was absolute shock that had flickered across Ren's eyes as the shutter rose and separated them forever.

What did that mean?

He didn't know. He didn't care. Because it was all over. Racking his brains over it was pointless. The time when it would still have been relevant was long gone.

“Time…”

The word was spoken so softly that even he wasn't sure it left his own lips.

While he knew just how ludicrous the idea was, fantasizing about what could have been had its appeal. Just like one might wish they had had the guts to fight back against a bully or come up with a particularly witty remark toward a rude passerby, imagining scenarios in which the impossible could be granted to him was cathartic.

He wished he had had the time to tell him.

Tell him he did enjoy fighting by his side and share those precious moments they spent together, despite all. Tell him he wouldn't have minded becoming his friend, despite all. In fact, this was what he had wanted from the bottom of his heart. But now, his time was up.

His eyelids felt heavy.

He wondered what Ren thought when he disappeared behind the shutter. Did he feel relieved? Glad to be rid of him? Or perhaps… upset?

He didn't know how to tell wishful thinking from fact anymore. But that was fine. Because nothing mattered anymore.

At long last, his lids succumbed to his exhaustion, and they slowly fluttered closed. He could feel his face drop beneath surface level, but making an effort to keep his head above water was beyond his capabilities. His body wouldn't respond, too worn down to comply even with the easiest of
commands.

Even so, he saw it.

His mind instinctively sensed a presence above, driving him to muster the last ounces left of his strength and open his eyes a crack. The water twisted and distorted it into something unrecognizable, although he was able to tell the silhouette was human. But this was the last conclusion his brain would be able to conjure.

Because mere moments later, the water finished filling up his lungs, and Akechi Goro's mind finally winked out.

“Ah, Akechi-kun, perfect timing. I need your opinion on this case I’m working on.”

“Something about this deal feels off. Just to be on the safe side, you will investigate his Palace immediately, see if there isn’t some information you can glean…”

“I’ve been having trouble with the notion we saw in biology last week… Do you think you could lend me a hand?”

“Oho, did I hear that right? Just like the Detective Prince will surely catch the Phantom Thieves, it seems he is already on his way to catch everyone’s hearts as well!”

“Here you go. Your favorite blend.”

Sae-san…? Shidou…? And…

Ren…?

Voices echoed on and off within Goro’s head, sending ripples across the nothingness permeating his mind. He tried to focus, to hear more of those voices, as if clinging to a time where nothing had been irrevocable yet, where his fate hadn’t been sealed—

“Hey, kid! Don’t space out in the middle of the flow!”

…The voices vanished instantaneously. Goro jolted, yanked to his senses with so little ceremony that even his heart did a somersault. Snapping his eyes open revealed the picture of a very dense, very busy Shibuya in the background – for the foreground was occupied by a veritable mountain of a passerby.

Goro blinked. He was back.

“You’re lucky I didn’t spill my drink!” the man barked on, although he didn’t seem to realize that his dramatic gestures threatened to do exactly that and worse than if he had collided into the teenager, given how his coffee cup tipped dangerously in his grasp. “Who the hell raises those kids…”

With one last mutter of disapproval, the man stomped off, determined to let his outrage speak even through his gait. Moments later, he was swallowed within the tide of the crowd, leaving a
somewhat bewildered Goro behind. It took him several instants before he finally got his bearings and, after taking care to step aside from the human sea, he gave a weary sigh.

*What’s going on…?*

Nobody around had an answer for him. The hypnotic ebb and flow of the crowd was akin to a tireless sea, always coming and going in a predictable pattern while showing no sign of breaking the perpetual motion at all. His mind, confused like it had rarely been before, couldn’t make head or tail of whatever was unfolding before his eyes – one moment, he was drowning, the next moment, he was back in Tokyo.

But no matter how long he would observe the crowd, not a single explanation would dawn on him, let alone a clue.

Perhaps because getting a move on would give him the illusion he was in control of the situation, he found himself melding into the crowd again, his legs carrying him wherever they felt like going. He wandered around aimlessly, still trying to make sense of those past minutes, only to come up blank. Each question tore at his brain like a bullet, lodging themselves in and well-decided not to clear out anytime soon. Just what happened while he was gone? How did he get back in Tokyo? Why did none of his wounds ache anymore? How long had it been since his confrontation with the Phantom Thieves in the engine room? What even was today’s da—

Goro’s eyes opened wide, and his frame came to an abrupt stop. Hadn’t his mind been completely monopolized in that instant, he would have noticed he stood at the entrance of Shibuya’s Central Street, which was teeming with life. Of course… Why didn’t he think of it sooner? The answer to two of his most crucial questions was there, right inside his pocket…

Without thinking anymore, Goro plunged his hand into his pocket and retrieved his cell phone, then immediately slid the screen to unlock it. His eyes then widened.

Branded in their depths was the bright reflections of something he didn’t understand. Two tiny rectangles of light that left him completely confused.

“What is this…?”

He brought his phone closer to his face, his sight sending signals at too tremendous a pace for his leaden brain to keep up. Several long seconds went by before the beginning of realization opened a small door within his mind, but before the light could properly flood through and let it all dawn on him… somebody brusquely shoved Goro aside.

“Oh!” he gasped, nearly losing his balance and having to swing his arms to retrieve it. “Watch it —”

The rest of his protest was cut off by an exclamation of surprise that came from his own throat. In his hand, where his phone had been mere moments before, there was now nothing to grasp at but empty air – it had been snatched from him. The telltale sound of rushing footsteps ensued, prompting Goro to whip his head forward and notice a hooded figure sprinting away as fast as their legs could carry them.

“No way… Get back here!” he yelled as he immediately gave chase, launching himself like he were a human bullet across the street. But the crowd was dense and his target had too much of a head start, a gap that only widened as Goro had to make a conscious effort not to collide into a
passerby. As he very narrowly dodged a couple and bit his lip at the flow of verbal abuse they threw at his back, he managed to catch a glimpse of the figure make a sharp left turn. Goro followed, changing direction so fast he had to throw a hand to the concrete to steady himself and avoid crashing down. The alleyway he found himself in was dark and completely deserted, a stark contrast to the lively street standing only a few feet away, but the thought was gone from his mind as quickly as it crossed it. Because he had caught up to his target at last.

At the end of the alley was a door, a solitary door which was open only a crack. The hooded figure’s head was peeking out of it – a mask, Goro noticed, they were wearing a mask –, staring right into his direction as if waiting for him. Goro, taken aback at first, felt a surge of adrenaline take over him at this obvious taunt and dashed even faster toward the door, his expression strained with effort and outrage. The figure let out what sounded very much like a chuckle and slammed the door shut on him just as Goro was about to swing it open, but that didn’t put a damper on his determination; it only heightened it. With a cry of indignation, Goro grabbed the handle and pushed using all the strength of his body, finding the door give way much more easily than expected. He leapt through it, his eyes darting everywhere for the figure, intent on grabbing them and giving them a piece of his mind—

“Huh…? Ah!”

…except that all he found was a void where everything was pitch-black. Not a soul, not a sound, nothing. No floor either.

Driven by the momentum of his race, there was no stopping in time. A great gust of wind blowing from underneath was the first announcer, followed by the sensation of solid ground suddenly gone. The initial, absurd thought that flashed across his mind was that he was flying, but the grim reality didn’t take long to overpower what could have been a much more comfortable lie. Goro screamed, screamed, screamed until needles tore at his throat, and then screamed some more. Through his stupefied eyes, he saw them. He could see those colorful shapes swirling all around him while they accompanied his fall, bright like neons and prompting an edge of confusion to wriggle its way into the layers of his terror-clad mind even as the wind kept rising high.

Those shapes… They reminded him of faces.

The last of those faces had a twisted grin to it that barely seemed human.

Chapter End Notes

Take a look at my Twitter account if you're interested in my fanfic updates, sneak peeks of future stories, chatting with me, or otherwise seeing 99% of Goro pictures and content!

My profile is regularly updated in accordance with my current and future projects, so feel free to check it out every now and then!
Mask 1 - PASSAGE

Chapter Notes

Ghost Pepper on Twitter kindly drew art for this chapter!! Thank you so, so much, I don't know what to say!! ;_; Please follow them for more great art!!

Where Goro had expected a hard, spine-breaking crash, there was only ice-cold water.

He hit it all with a loud splash akin to a human cannonball, sinking deep in stunned incomprehension before instinct took over his limbs. Flailing like a desperate animal, Goro pushed himself above the surface, hacking and sputtering away the water that had inadvertently rushed through his throat the second his face made contact with air. Even as shock and bewilderment still overloaded his brain, he laboriously dragged his body toward the end of the pond he had apparently fallen into, panting with difficulty while he heaved himself onto solid ground – the hard material of which being exactly like that of a mirror.

His legs still halfway in the water, it took quite a while for his breathing to steady and his disoriented senses to fall back in place. Only when his pulse returned to a somewhat normal rate did he finally attempt to climb onto wobbly knees and palms, but just as he was caught into a coughing fit again—

“Jeez, you look like hell.”

More than the two spotlights suddenly blinding him and forcing him to shield his eyes behind the crook of his arm, it was this cold, eerie voice that snapped Goro to full attention. As if yanked upward, his gaze jumped to that figure addressing him – and Goro couldn’t help but gasp.

The one detail that immediately caught his eye was the mask they were wearing. It concealed whatever expression they might be showing, but Goro didn’t need to see it to make out the contempt and disdain oozing through their manner alone. They stood tall and straight, arms crossed and legs standing apart, a telltale sign that he was little more than an unpleasant cockroach in their eyes. Tuffs and locks of curly black hair escaped from their hood and rested upon that mask, a terrifying thing that chilled Goro’s very soul. It covered their entire face and was made of a dark, glass-like material upon which was seared a demonic set of flaming eyes and teeth – as if that face was actually grinning devilishly at him. A pair of strange and long tendrils jutted out on either side just like a snail, and more of those crimson brandings ran along their lengths, reminiscent of scorching veins.

“Ren…?”

Goro’s heart was pounding fast. This figure, this mask, this voice…

They were all too familiar.

“How? What are you mumbling about?” the figure groaned, twirling one strand of hair around their index finger in supreme indifference. “Did you catch what he said?”
For a moment, Goro was utterly confused as to whom they were addressing, but his answer came to him nearly in parallel to his question. A small cat he hadn’t noticed before was perched atop the figure’s shoulder, its furry tail swinging from side to side, triangular ears perked up and alert, and bright blue eyes that seemed to pierce Goro’s very core. His heart gave a small leap of recognition before going into a race again.

“Hey, why are you staring like that? You’re awfully rude, you know?” the figure taunted, their wicked smirk showing through their voice. “To be frank, that look of yours is pissing me off. I’ll do you a favor… I’ll wipe it off for you…”

“What…?” Goro muttered, gaze narrowing in wariness as a single trickle of sweat mingled with the droplets of water across his face. The figure answered with a snicker – and then raised their hand.

The first, insane thought Goro had was that childish giggles popped right there within his mind, as if coming from inside. But as he peered all around him cautiously, he realized it wasn’t a figment of his imagination… This laughter was real.

Goro blinked, unable to make heads or tails of whatever was going on – the world had turned to a dark expanse, inky blackness that had swallowed everything in its path. Yet, sound had not succumbed; in fact, it was echoing louder and louder, so close it seemed as though someone was there, right beside him…

The realization had scarcely made its way to his brain when a heavy weight crashed into him from behind, hard, and Goro was knocked off-balance to the ground. Groaning in pain, he shook his head to chase away the stars dancing in front of his eyesight, but as he crawled with difficulty onto his knees—

“God, you’re in the way again, aren’t you, slowpoke?”

For a moment, Goro swore he had misheard; he couldn’t believe his ears, he couldn’t. What was first announced by a shiver took on the shape of raw fear, a mixture of despair and dread he hadn’t experienced in years. Yet, the intensity of it hadn’t seemed to dull even after all this time… Its grip was just as powerful, just as incapacitating as the chokehold he had felt back then.

“Guys, look! Akechi’s licking the floor again!”

“He is? Oh, eww!”

“Gross!”

A burst of laughter exploded all around – hundreds of voices ringing in unison, each of them one more nail pounded into his heart. Goro looked up to find himself nose to nose with a person; nose to nose because even while he was on his knees and they weren’t, their frame was noticeably small enough that they were barely taller than him. The absolute contempt etched across their face was foreign, almost impossible – it seemed inconceivable that the features of a child could bear the canvas of such a terrible expression.

Goro stared wide-eyed, entirely paralyzed by astonishment as much as terror. Memories of a distant but painfully vivid past surged back from the very furthest depths of his mind, branding themselves into each recess, scorching every last cell, carving all fibers that created his structure anew; a once dormant feeling which rocked his very core again, no matter how difficult it was to acknowledge it.
“Stop…” he found himself saying as he pressed his hands against his ears, desperate to drown out the growing laughter that boomed all around. He could sense more and more presences around him, multiplying, joining in the fun. “Stop it…”

The snickers and chortles, however, wouldn’t relent.

Goro could take no more. Jumping to his feet, he whirled around and ran, ran as fast as his legs could carry him. Ran like a wounded animal, ran like he had done so many years earlier—

…But with history repeating itself, it was no use. Dozens of hands grabbed him and pinned him down, trapping him exactly like before, making him helpless and powerless no matter how much he thrashed and writhed. A cry of frustration rose in his throat only to die out. He wanted to kick and scream, yearned to yell at them to get off of him, but his voice seemed gone.

And then, all sound ceased. The world was back to an empty, silent one.

Struggling to catch his breath, Goro very slowly picked himself off the ground. His body was heavy, his movements sluggish. He couldn't remember the last time he felt this awful.

“Hah, you should see that dumbfounded look on your face! It's just hilarious!”

The masked figure had doubled over, clutching their sides in obvious mirth. Their sudden acknowledgment had the effect of a shout. As if startled awake, Goro yanked himself back to the present, his mind suddenly entirely clear. Then, he instinctively looked down at the ground, where floor was mirror and mirror was floor – and felt his stomach contract.

“Ah... Ahh...”

Goro tried to scream, but all he managed was a strangled croak. The short-lived torpor overtaking him was already gone, replaced instead by a massive pulse pounding throughout his body and sending jolts of panic throughout with every single pump. He gaped at his reflection, his expression frozen somewhere between stupefaction and raw disbelief, foreign but familiar, recognizable but completely alien, his speech gone beyond any coherence and projecting as mere babbling instead.

He brought a trembling hand to his face, cupping it, feeling the warm flesh against his palm. It was real. It was there. Those big, round eyes were incontestably his. This shade of maroon was the same. His hair was still brushing his shoulders, brown locks framing the sides of his face, long bangs reaching the bridge of his nose. But the way he was swimming in his uniform, the way his gloves had slid off, the way his shoes were much too big and hanging loosely, it all told a tale too unbelievable to be true, too surreal to be comprehended, too insane to be accepted...

“Well, that was fun,” he heard the figure say, prompting him to dart his head back up. They were stretching their arms, as if already bored of the show. “Run along now—like the little brat you are!”

With one last chuckle, the figure simply up and paced toward the very back of the room where a large door awaited, and disappeared behind it. Goro jolted and sprang to his feet, determined not to let them go, burning to just grab them and force them to turn him back to normal, but just as he was shooting forward, he tripped against a shadowy silhouette and crashed down to the hard floor again. Blinking once, then twice, Goro watched in bewilderment as the cat from before seemed
to laugh at him, as much as an animal could actually laugh at a human being out of sheer malice. Meanwhile, the figure was nowhere to be seen anymore, long gone on their merry way.

It was the sound of the door groaning shut behind them with an appalling sense of finality that caused the cat to freeze on the spot. The next moment, it was dashing toward the end of the room, pawing at the door furiously.

“Ah! Hey, come on, I’m still behind! Don’t leave me behind!”

All it got for an answer was utter silence and a door that wouldn’t budge. Fur bristling, the cat hissed and rounded on Goro again, a glare flaring within its blue, familiar eyes.

“You! See what you did?” it spat, its nose only inches away from Goro’s face. “Because of you, I’ve been separated from my partner! You got a lot of nerve, you know that?!”

There were so many things wrong with this accusation that Goro couldn’t find it in him to be surprised a cat was actually talking to him, though this might be chalked up to the lack of novelty of the entire experience. The injustice of it all, however, was like the straw breaking the camel’s back, and when Goro burst out, his outrage came in a high-pitched, disturbingly foreign voice.

“I got a lot of nerve? I got a lot of nerve?!” he echoed, straightening his back to its full height. “You’re the one who stayed behind just to make me trip, you stupid cat! What’s wrong with you, anyway?! There’s no way I can go around looking like this forever! Turn me back right now!”

Like a cruel reminder, his eyes met with his reflection beneath him again. He immediately averted his gaze as if witnessing something obscene — or as if ignoring the truth might undo it, although he was all too aware this was a bit too comfortable of a notion.

“Heh. Sorry to burst your bubble, but…”

Goro raised a feral scowl. It was infuriating how supremely unconcerned the cat looked. It might as well have dug some earwax out of its ear and flicked it into the darkness if it had been able. “Even if I wanted to, I couldn’t return you to normal. Looks like you’re going to be stuck like this quite a while, kiddo.”

“You must be joking…” Goro growled, his temper rising to dangerous levels.

“Nope. My partner’s the trickster, you see.”

The cat stretched and yawned, in such a dramatic fashion Goro was certain it was deliberate. Even so, his fury was less ardent at that final remark, slightly overshadowed by a hint of confusion. “Trickster…?”

For a moment, none of them spoke. Goro’s wary features deepened as he continued, his voice full of spite. “…Yeah, right. Attic trash’s more like it. What’s gotten into him, anyway? And you, for that matter! You both are acting completely weird! And how the hell did he turn me into—into that? Just, just what’s going on?!”

While the cat’s nonchalant expression remained, it did fade a bit. A noticeable hint of wariness bled into its entire manner; it seemed it was caught off-guard.

“Wait, slow down a bit—first of all, attic trash? You mean my partner?” it asked, disbelief entirely
unrestrained. “Why are you talking like you know him? Or myself?”

“Huh…?” Goro muttered darkly, this time the one to feel a drop of confusion before his annoyance came back in full force. “Stop playing dumb. We were in Shidou’s Palace only a little while ago! When I—when I tried to…”

His voice trailed off. He couldn’t bring himself to say it.

“Shidou’s Palace?”

…The memory of the engine room was quickly discarded to the back of his mind. Goro stared, eyes narrow and lips parted. Either the cat was genuinely ignorant or simply wasting his time out of spite, but it didn’t seem like it was putting up an act…

“You mean… You don’t remember? You don’t remember what happened, Morgana…?”

Much to his surprise, the cat’s attitude did a sharp turn. Its eyes twinkled, and its chest swelled with pride.

“Hah, looks like my reputation precedes me!” it said, and, noticing Goro’s increasing astonishment, “that’s why you know me, huh? You’re right, my name’s Morgana. The famous gentleman thief! …Though for you, I’d appreciate it if you called me Mister Morgana.”

“What?!” Goro snapped, hoping very much for the cat’s sake that he wasn’t serious.

“See, that’s why I don’t like nobodies—they don’t know their place at all,” Morgana continued, deaf to Goro’s dangerous growl. “Even in the body of a six or seven-year-old or whatever, you keep barking. Take it down a notch already, will you?”

Goro would have exploded right here and there if something else didn’t rank higher in the list of his numerous concerns at the moment. A nobody…?

“Anyway, how long are you going to stand there? You might be stuck in a kid’s body, but you know how to open a door, right? So… Get on with it!”

Goro’s glower was akin to a whip cracking the air. Morgana seemed to shrink before letting an awkward laugh, and immediately jumped strategies. “A-Ah, of course, I’m asking you for your sake… I mean, you want to catch up with my partner, right? Who knows—he might be willing to return you to normal if you managed to get your hands on him… That sure would be nice, wouldn’t it?”

A silence fell over the room. Goro contemplated the animal for several instants, eyes sharp and narrow. It was obvious what Morgana was playing at, so lacking in subtlety even the most oblivious of people would have noticed. That certainly was a far cry from the other cat he knew, always honest to a fault, never beating around the bush even when his own interests were at stake. It seemed impossible, completely insane, and yet…

“You definitely aren’t the Morgana I know, that’s for sure…” Goro couldn’t help but mumble. “But if you’re not him, then… who are you…? Just, what’s going on…?”

Morgana, however, was already at the door again, exhaling his impatience away. Repressing a sigh of his own while telling himself he would only walk in circles if he insisted, Goro resigned himself
to accept the completely absurd for the time being and stood up, took a couple of steps forward, only to stumble again. His pants were resolutely much too big for him, making any sort of movement an ordeal in and of itself.

“Do you want me to put up a tent for you or something? Hurry it up!”

It seemed Morgana had reached past his faculty to contain his impatience, if he had even bothered doing so before. When Goro replied, it was through gritted teeth. “I’d like to see you try when your clothes keep getting in the way…”

“What are you even saying? Just leave them, for heaven’s sake!”

“Huh…?” Goro muttered, unsure he properly heard. Morgana shook his head, as though he couldn’t believe this matter deserved explaining.

“You heard me. Just get rid of whatever prevents you from moving normally. You won’t look any more ridiculous than you already do, I assure you.”

Goro wasn’t really certain he liked the way it was phrased, but he soon had to admit it – Morgana had a point. If he had to look entirely stupid either way, he might as well choose whatever option allowed him unrestrained movement and free control of his body… in hopes of something better soon.

Gingerly, Goro toed his loose shoes off and slid out of his pants. His blazer and tie were next to go, leaving him in nothing but his shirt (which was now long enough to reach his thighs) and his socks. Goro looked at himself, imbued with embarrassment at the idea to move about in this gear, but also relief – it definitely felt more comfortable this way, even despite his new body feeling awkward still. He wasn't planning, however, on getting accustomed to it anytime soon. He would find that person – that trickster – and make them turn him back to normal, no matter what it took.

“Are you done? Gee, about time…” Morgana muttered under his breath as Goro finally scuttled toward him, mustering every ounce of his willpower to ignore the bite to his tone. Opening the door revealed a maze of dark galleries lit only thanks to the spotlights embedded in the walls. The smell of humidity and dampness permeated the atmosphere; far ahead in the distance, Goro could hear the sound of water dripping.

“The subway?” Goro asked to himself upon taking a couple of steps. Sure enough, four sets of rails spread all over the ground, each leading to a different tunnel. “No, wait… Could this be Mementos…?”

“Mementos? What’s that?” Morgana wondered, and figuring that explaining would be more trouble than it was worth, Goro simply shook his head.

“…Nothing important. Anyway, this is where your, ah… partner went, right? But how do we know which way he took?”

“Oh, you don’t need to worry about that. All paths will lead us to him eventually.”

Morgana hopped forward with a spring to his step, prompting Goro to follow. “C’mon, let’s go already!”

It seemed like eons passed while they made their way through the mysterious underground tunnel.
Goro took care to hug the wall just in case a train came their way, but this concern ended up unjustified, for there wasn’t a single sign of life in that entire time they spent navigating the darkness. It was difficult to keep up with Morgana’s swiftness, especially because it would be so easy to lose him given the lack of light, forcing Goro to rely more on his hearing (“What are you doing? I’m right here!”) than his sight.

“Hey, Morgana…” he asked after what felt like the hundredth escalator they climbed, his fatigue starting to take a toll on him. “Are we—are we there yet…?”

“Just a little longer now… See!”

Sure enough, the vivid green of the word ‘EXIT’ greeted them from the very end of the tunnel as they turned around the corner. A large double door awaited, tall and heavy-looking; ornate carvings were engraved in it. It looked rather ominous and uninviting, but that did not matter to Goro right now…

Because the door itself wasn’t really special – that is, compared to the fact that it stood upside down. The entire passage was twisted, spotlights curving strangely, rails creeping from the ground to the wall and then the ceiling, defying gravity in a way that was mesmerizing.

Even so, not a single reaction flickered across his eyes – no surprise, no confusion, nothing. The laws binding the world he had known to the last ends of rationality were being violated right before his eyes, but he simply, merely stared. Then, as if he was being led by the hand and passively complying, he made his way across the passage, his feet remaining solidly planted onto the rails whether they were on the floor or wall. And there, at the end, where the entire hallway had twisted along with him and the ceiling had become floor… the door stood.

Goro paused the space of an instant, then pushed it open. Beyond stretched an area that seemed nowhere near in continuity with the strange underground. It looked closer to…

…He drew a blank. The room – the chamber – resembled nothing he had encountered so far even in his oldest memories. A complex machinery of water wheels turned gently across a man-made river, the eternal splashing of which lulling anyone who would care to listen to tranquility. It appeared as though nobody had set foot in there in forever, given that everywhere Goro looked, every single surface had been reclaimed by nature. Anything made of stone, from the curving flights of stairs nearby to the large ramps, were covered in a thick layer of moss. Tall, wild grass sprouted from the ground in between each slab, while vines and ivy crept up the walls. Sunlight, however, was nowhere to be seen.

Lost in the contemplation of it all, Goro didn’t immediately notice Morgana had skittered up the staircase; he had to be once again verbally reminded of the present moment before he broke free from his trance. At the top of the stairs was some sort of balcony, the epicenter of which remarkable for the large pole that spun in place and seemed connected to the machinery below. And finally, at the top of five or six steps, was what could only be the exit, or so Goro assumed. With as many precautions one would take upon handling something dangerous, he crept toward the door, reached out a hand, and…

“How are you having quite the bad day, aren’t you?”

Goro jumped about a foot in the air, and judging from Morgana’s gasp beside him, he hadn’t been the only one. Whirling around so fast he nearly lost his balance, Goro’s eyes fell down to find those of a newcomer – and if his heart hadn’t been already hurling itself against his ribs, then it now
certainly was.

Because that just couldn’t be. Because that was simply impossible. Because there had to be some rational explanation for what he was seeing.

Shidou Masayoshi was giving him a friendly smile from the middle of the room. If Goro didn’t know any better, he might have thought it a joke.

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