Arcanas

by kippylarue

Summary

Losing his memories gives Light a new beginning, where anything is possible. Light’s development as he undergoes the challenges and blessings of the Major Arcana archetypes.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
'What am I doing here?'

This is what Light thought as he looked around the small, barren cell. He sat on the hard floor with his ankles bound, and his arms fastened behind his back. It hurt, intensively. He had been like this for quite some time, and the unchanging position of his body had become very painful. He remembered why he was here and who had agreed to his confinement. He called the name:

"Ryuzaki…"

Without waiting for acknowledgement, Light pleaded his case. Yes, it was his idea to do this and he had chosen to participate in it. However, it was pointless to continue any further. He was not Kira. There was no way he could be Kira.

His heart sank as he listened to Ryuzaki's reply, coming from a camera located high in the wall. Ryuzaki will not allow his release. He reminds Light of the promise he made to him. He would not let Light out until it was determined he was Kira or he was not. Ryuzaki emphasizes that this condition was what Light wanted as well. Light knows that. He recalls saying it. However, he is not Kira. The reasoning he used, prior to being imprisoned, was that he could be Kira and not recollect it. Even to his mind, that sounds implausible. He cannot comprehend, now, how he ever came up with such a fantastical idea.

He defends himself, eyes intently and earnestly looking at the camera; at the man behind it. Ryuzaki agrees with him that Kira has acted of his own free will. He feels a small bit of hope upon hearing the detective's concurrence. He puts forth the rest of his argument. Kira acted with full knowledge and cognizance. Therefore, lacking consciousness of such acts, Light cannot be Kira.

When Ryuzaki drops the bomb; the small bit of hope he had is instantly snuffed. The killings stopped when he, Light, was confined. He thinks furiously and desperately for a reason the murders would cease, coincidentally, upon his detention. Light feels his heart beating faster and hears his voice rising when he counters that he must have been framed. Perhaps someone on the investigation team is the real culprit. He is not lying. He tells Ryuzaki that too. However, it is all to no avail. The captivity continues.

Weeks pass. There are several more exchanges, arguments, between Light and the implacable detective. No matter what he says, Ryuzaki will not let him out. His arms no longer hurt; nor does his back, legs, or anywhere else. His body has become numb. What does hurt is Light's sense of integrity and pride. It angers and pains him to be thought of as Kira.

Light has always had a keen sense of justice. Even now he is…was…attending school to prepare to follow in his father's footsteps. His dream was to be a police investigator and, like his dad, make the world a better place for everyone. Sure, there were some people who were a threat to society. Those who broke the laws and, in the process, hurt many others. The solution, in his mind, was rehabilitation. That was why he wanted to be the one to catch them. It was essential to make the world a peaceful and safe haven for the innocent. However, it was also necessary to capture criminals and give them an opportunity to mend their ways. The prison system wasn't perfect but it gave people a chance; a possibility of redemption.

Kira's way was abhorrent to Light. The idea of executing people for committing crimes was completely wrong and unjustified. Of paramount importance was that every person, convicted or
accused of breaking the law, be given a chance to defend themselves. Every case was different just as every person was unique. To simply murder, with no thought or idea as to a person's circumstances, made Kira no better than the criminals he targeted. Kira's failure to realize this was unfathomable to Light. The relentless annihilation of criminals was evil, and created fear and dread in the world. Kira was a monster who obviously had no understanding of the sanctity of human life. That was the kind of person Ryuzaki thought Light was. Behind the fury and outrage was a much darker feeling. It was something very close to despair.

The days pass in a monotony only broken by rare conversations and disagreements with Ryuzaki, meals arriving, and sleep. Finally, one day, things change. Aizawa arrives and, upon releasing Light's legs, takes him from the room. His hands are freed and he is told to take a shower and provided with fresh clothes. He tries to ask Aizawa for information about the case, about what his fate is, but receives only silence. When his hands are cuffed behind his back, and he is led to an underground parking garage; he begins to feel trepidation. Once there, a car pulls up and he sees his father driving and Misa in the back seat. The sight reassures him and he feels his anxiety begin to abate. He climbs in and talks to Misa, all the while looking at the back of his dad's head.

His father is acting strange. Light's first thought, upon release, was that he had been vindicated. However, his dad's silence and his own cuffed hands do not give him that sense anymore. He feels dread churning in his stomach as he questions his father about what is happening. The answer is horrible. Ryuzaki has concluded that Light is Kira, and Misa is the second Kira. They both are to be executed. He tries to process this as he argues with his father. He thinks that things cannot get any worse and does not know what he has done to deserve this.

When his dad pulls off the road into an empty field, under a bridge, Light finds out things can get worse; much worse. For the first time, a gun is being held to his head. All he can see is the gun, his father's uncompromising, hard face; and death. He knows true terror and panic as the gun goes off. He waits for the sensation of pain and then nothingness to assail him. Light's brain is frozen in shock, and he cannot move or speak when all that happens is a very loud noise: the sound of a blank being fired.

"Thank God…"

He hears his dad's relief and his explanation that this pantomime act was the only way to end the confinement. When Ryuzaki speaks over a hidden camera, the rest is filled in. If Light was Kira, and Misa the second Kira, then Soichiro would have been killed before he could fire the gun. He was not and so Ryuzaki will allow them their freedom, although Misa will be put under surveillance. Light knows he should feel elation at this news. However, after being in seclusion for so long, and believing his own father was going to commit a murder-suicide; he is far too worn out to react exuberantly. Ryuzaki goes on to state that he will ensure Light and he are together, twenty-four hours a day, to work towards capturing Kira.

Light's numbness evaporates and he sits forward in his seat, eagerly. Not only does he have his freedom, he has the opportunity to join forces with Ryuzaki to apprehend a mass murderer. The suspicion he was under has hurt his pride, and his father's too. He adds that to the list of things Kira must be held accountable for. With Ryuzaki and him working together, combining their genius-level intellects, the killer will not remain free for long.

Ryuzaki must finally believe him, that he is not a murderer. For the first time in over fifty days, Light smiles.

"You got it, Ryuzaki! Let's catch Kira together!"

The smile only grows wider when he hears Ryuzaki's reply.
"Yes, I am pleased to be working with you."

**The Fool**

a beginning, a new journey, innocence, a surprising solution, purity, unpredictability, a naive and/or uncommon person who follows their heart even though their actions may appear foolish or reckless to others, an unconventional, independent, and eccentric person who affects the subject, zero is the number of pure potential, the numberless number, from which all things are possible
Clink. It was the sound of metal snapping into place.

Light was dumbfounded. When Ryuzaki had said they would be together twenty-four hours a day, he meant it literally. Light observed the length of chain connecting them, and felt the cold weight of the manacle around his left wrist. He raised questioning eyes to the detective.

"Ryuzaki, do you really need to go this far?"

"I am not doing this because I want to."

Light believed him. He also knew what it meant. When Ryuzaki had freed him, and said they would be working together; Light really, truly thought he was no longer a suspect in his eyes. As a disagreement broke out between Misa and Ryuzaki, he barely heard anything outside of his own rapidly beating heart. He did not want to feel like he did right now. The arguing voices flared in volume. He was startled out of his introspection by Ryuzaki looking at him.

"Light-kun, can you make Misa-san be quiet?"

Light turned dull eyes to peer at her.

He attempted to defuse the situation. Light reminded her that she sent the second Kira tapes. That was definitively proven. Far from being chastened, Misa replied belligerently. She felt that, since she was his girlfriend, Light should be on her side. Suddenly, he became annoyed.

"Girlfriend? All I know is that you say you fell in love with me at first sight, and now you won't leave me alone."

It was not well-received.

Misa's face reddened and she flew at him, hitting his chest with her small fists. Ryuzaki's eyes sharpened considerably at Light's words. His attention was diverted from Misa when he noted the intensity of the detective's stare. It was brought back again when Misa began clamoring, dramatically, about the kiss they had shared. This memory perplexed him. Why did he do that? Why did he kiss her? Light could not remember. He knew he was not attracted to her. He had never been. All he had felt for her was a kind of tired tolerance. She didn't know him, yet she loved him?

For some reason, at this moment, it made him feel anger. And a very old, very deep pain.

He did not know where it came from, but it served as a catalyst to help him comprehend what he was feeling about Ryuzaki. There was a similarity between these two. Misa and the detective saw in him only what they wished to see. They did not actually see the real Light, the genuine person. There was one difference though. Light did not care if Misa saw his authentic self. With Ryuzaki, it was different. He did not understand why.
When the detective began to question Misa about how she fell in love with Light, he listened with only half an ear. It was a revelation to realize how much Ryuzaki's opinion mattered. Light wanted him to accept that he was not Kira, to believe in him. Perhaps it was because Ryuzaki was the first person who had ever tried to really see him. He attempted to look beneath the image Light presented to the world.

Light shied away from this idea. Ryuzaki thought he was Kira. There was no doubt about that. Even though he looked deeper than anyone else, in the end; he still did not see what was really there.

"Then, how would you feel if Light-kun was Kira?"

Light's breath caught as he heard this loaded question from Ryuzaki, directed towards Misa.

"If Light was Kira?"

"Yes."

"That would be the best!"

Misa wore a slyly malicious expression as she proclaimed her thankfulness to Kira, for executing the man who killed her parents. It made Light clench his jaw in irritation, and he had to force himself not to shake her off his arm. Even lost in his thoughts, he had caught the gist of their conversation.

Misa had gone to Aoyama on May 22 and seen Light. It had been love at first sight, or so she said. Strangely, she did not remember how she knew his name. The second Kira had the ability to know a person's name by merely seeing their face. On that day, Light and Matsuda also went to Aoyama. It was to investigate the possible appearance of the second Kira. Everything matched up, and were he Ryuzaki; he would come to the same conclusion. Misa's admiration and wish to be useful to Kira only augmented the theory. She was the second Kira, and Light was the first.

"But according to this, there is no mistake you are the second Kira. It is actually so definitive that it makes me question it."

Upon hearing Ryuzaki's deductions, which so perfectly matched his, Light felt defeated. He did not have to elaborate on Light's role as the first Kira: it was implicit in the facts. The detective went on to explain the conditions of Misa's "surveillance". It was basically very similar to house arrest. She would be under constant supervision, even to the extent of having Matsuda act in the role of her manager. When she began to complain about Matsuda, Light again retreated to his inner thoughts. He was brought back to the present when Aizawa suddenly banged his hand loudly on a table. Light started in surprise. Truthfully, he had forgotten about the presence of the rest of the team in the room. Everyone wore the same, shocked expression he was sure he did.

Aizawa spoke in a voice of barely-controlled fury.

"Give it a rest with all this dating and kissing and Misa-Misa talk! This is the Kira case, damn it! Take it seriously!"

With that, he dragged Misa away and locked her in her room. Light knew Misa was saying something to him about a date, but he concentrated on Aizawa. He realized he was right. The Kira case was what they needed to focus all their energy on. What he needed to focus on. Light's melancholy dispersed as it was replaced by resolve.

More than anything, he wanted to track down Kira. He was definitely unsettled by this inexplicable vulnerability to Ryuzaki. However, that was subordinate to the challenge that lay ahead. He needed
to catch Kira, to end the killing. If he directed his intellect, analytical abilities, and willpower; Light was positive he would soon be closing in on the elusive vigilante. For the first time, since the handcuffs went on, Light felt strength, surety, and conviction.

He felt like himself.

That self-assurance enabled him to handle what happened next with equanimity. Ryuzaki questioned him about his seriousness towards Misa. Light informed him that it was all one-sided. He felt surprise, and a growing sense of revulsion, when Ryuzaki then detailed a plan centered on Misa's strong feelings for Light. Using her adoration, Light would manipulate information out of her.

Light responded in a controlled yet still polite manner. He stressed that he, Yagami Light, would never play with a woman's emotions like that. He may not return Misa's feelings but, to her, they were real and came from a place of benevolence. To take advantage of a person's heart like that was despicable. Ryuzaki seemed to accept this. Of course, from what he knew of the enigmatic detective, that could all be a façade.

Confirmation of that suspicion came soon enough. Ryuzaki was showing them the new headquarters on his laptop. It was then that another attempt was made to convince Light to violate his principles, with regards to Misa. He was firm again, and this time Ryuzaki's resignation was unfeigned.

With that over, he marveled at the building he would soon be residing in. It was state-of-the-art and equipped with only the most modern and advanced technology. Security would be impenetrable, but that was not what excited Light. With the information gathering tools he could access at the new location, he would be able to make incredible headway in the Kira case. As well, he did not forget the asset and formidability of having Ryuzaki as a collaborator in this venture. It was not a smooth beginning, by any means, but he was certain their joint cooperation would yield extraordinary results.

It was these thoughts that caused a feeling like fire to flicker inside him. The exalting influence of inspiration released all the energy he had unconsciously been holding in. Light could hardly wait to get started.

That excitement was somewhat diminished when, upon re-locating to the new building, he found himself sitting in Misa's room. She called it a date. He was not interested in being here but Ryuzaki had agreed to Misa's demands. Light sat stoically, with his arms crossed, and listened to their arguing. It seemed like all these two ever did was purposely antagonize one another. The present subject was cake. Ryuzaki insisted that if Misa used her head, sweets would not make her gain weight. It was...unusual...logic, but Light noticed his tone more than his words.

He sounded downcast. Every movement Ryuzaki made carried weariness and dejection. It was even in the curious way he sat; he appeared more folded in on himself than usual. Light had been intensely focusing on the Kira case: analyzing the information available, and scrupulously planning the steps required in the near future. It was because of this that he failed to notice the dramatic change in his "partner". He came up with that term shortly after the chain was attached. It had a slightly ironic twist. They were partners in the investigation, and in pretty much every other daily aspect of living; like it or not. Given that, Light decided to inquire about the detective's state of mind and general well-being.

"We have this great facility now, yet you don't seem very into it, Ryuzaki."

"Into it? Not really...I am actually kind of depressed."

"Depressed?"
"Yes. For the longest time I thought you were Kira…"

Light felt a range of emotions over what followed.

Ryuzaki still suspected him of being Kira and the handcuffs bore witness to that. Kira was capable of controlling people's actions, so it followed that Light and Misa were manipulated to make him believe they were Kiras. Under that assumption, they were both victims. Ryuzaki would have to start the investigation over from the beginning. The detective was shocked, and frustrated, that Kira may have taken an interest in Light solely because of his access to police information.

When Light heard Ryuzaki's opinion, he felt a pain in his chest. It was unfamiliar and intense. Light attempted to disregard it. He also suppressed the urge to protest his innocence yet again. Instead, he clarified what he was learning from the detective.

"Yes. I don't think there is any mistake there. You are both Kiras."

The pain in Light's chest gave way to the rising warmth of anger. It only grew as Ryuzaki continued speaking. When Light was confined, the executions stopped. Based on their resumption two weeks later, it was evident Kira's power could be passed from person to person. The second Kira's video had even mentioned that the power could be shared.

Light interjected at this point. Ryuzaki's theory, if true, would make capture of Kira difficult.

"Yes. That is why I am depressed."

Light's anger receded when he heard this. He studied the detective closely.

Ryuzaki's expression and body language carried a lethargic and dispirited quality. He had never seen him like this. Believing what the detective did, Light could understand his pessimism. The idea was that Kira could control people to kill criminals. When a person was caught, the power was removed and all memories of it lost. That would make capture impossible.

Light turned this over in his mind but, unlike Ryuzaki, his ambition to discover and stop Kira only burned brighter. There was too much they didn't know about the killer and the power he wielded. Rather than focusing on failing before he even tried; he preferred to think and act on what he could do.

Light clasped Ryuzaki's shoulder, and spoke words meant to encourage and hearten.

"There are too many things we don't understand about Kira right now. Come on, show some energy!"

He removed his hand when the detective responded listlessly.

Ryuzaki was giving up. To him, going after Kira endangered them. His countenance showed exhaustion when he lamented the numerous times he had thought he was going to die.

That was it. Light had enough.

His anger had returned ten-fold and sympathy was a distant memory. Light, his father, Misa, and countless other blameless victims had suffered at the machinations of the serial killer, Kira. The
investigation was difficult and would only become more so, but Light would not give up. Even if his life was in danger, he would persevere. There was too much at stake. The evil that had been brought into the world must be expunged. The innocent must be protected and the rights of all cherished.

Light knew he had the ability and will to stop Kira. Ryuzaki did too although he seemed to have lost this knowledge of himself. Light empathized with him, but this apathy could not continue.

Light stood, face set in a grim visage. The somber detective looked at him questioningly.

"Ryuzaki."

When Light's fist struck Ryuzaki's cheek, it was an epiphany.

*The Magician*

*focused energy, mastery of special and technical knowledge, transformation through willpower, discipline, adaptation to change, people who seem to always get what they want in life have two things: an awareness of power in their lives, and the ability to channel it where they want it to go - they understand their greatest gift is to act - not react, determination, conviction, self-confidence, an uncontainable fire within - borne of the divine - which must be released into reality*

*The Fool learns to focus his creative energy towards his goals. Through the manipulation and use of the mind, the emotions, the material, and the spirit; he manifests and achieves his desires. The Magician grants him awareness of the tools at his disposal, as well as knowledge of the power and energy flowing within. And, most importantly, the ability and desire to direct it where he wants it to go.*
Ryuzaki would not speak.

It had been two weeks since the physical clash between the two men. In that time, Light had heard less than forty words from the detective. When Light would question him about a topic, he would respond in one-word answers. He tried an experiment. On several occasions, he made inquiries that would necessitate more than a single word in reply. For example, he would say:

"Ryuzaki, I've started collecting the data and cataloguing the Kira-related homicides. We, as a group, decided to mainly focus on the ones that began when Misa and I were isolated. What else should we be looking at, based on your previous experience in this case?"

Light, having become frustrated with Ryuzaki's silence, had thought long and hard on this question. It would require more than a single word to share the detective's insight. Also, slyly and discreetly, he appealed to his ego and pride. Ryuzaki had always enjoyed giving his opinion on Kira, regardless of whether Light wanted to hear it or not. He predicted the detective would be unable to resist the opportunity to take control of the investigation, or perhaps he would advise Light to take a look at himself. After all, Ryuzaki still held on to the belief that he was or had been Kira.

Soichiro, Aizawa, and Matsuda had stopped working; and watched the detective with hopeful expectation written on their faces. They too had noticed his mute attitude. Light was sure their confusion mirrored his own when all Ryuzaki did was shake his head, and turn away.

The experiment was a failure. If more than one word was required of him, Ryuzaki would simply say nothing at all.

Light tried several more times but the response was always the same, no matter who attempted to draw out the detective. It got to the point where he started to become exasperated. That feeling, directed towards Ryuzaki, brought back the memory of the fight Light had instigated just two weeks ago. He fastened onto this. Perhaps a clue could be found in the events of that struggle. He could still feel the pure rage, and desperation, that propelled him to belt the detective.

Ryuzaki had gone flying across the room, unprepared for the force with which Light struck him. When he righted himself, his eyes had been wide with surprise and pain.

"Ouch."

With his fury boiling over, Light had advanced on him.

"Don't be ridiculous! Just because I'm not the true Kira, just because you were wrong, you want to give up?"

"I may have worded it poorly, but continuing this is not going to get us anywhere good, so maybe we should stop."

"What are you saying? Unless we chase him, there's no way we'll catch Kira! Weren't you the one who swore to send Kira to his execution?"

Light could not tolerate this. He knelt in front of Ryuzaki and grabbed him by his shirt collar. When he shouted next, it was right into his face.

"How many innocent people do you think have been victimized? You're the one who put Misa and
Light had to strain his hearing to catch Ryuzaki's softly spoken words.

"I understand that but whatever the reason, once is once."

It was Light's turn to go flying across the room when the detective's foot connected with his chin. The chain stretched taut from the force of the blow. He felt the metal bruising his wrist as Ryuzaki was dragged along behind his falling body. Upon recovery, Light kneeled, and Ryuzaki crouched; facing each other.

Ryuzaki's expression was baleful.

"It's not just that my reasoning was wrong. It's the fact that this case cannot be solved as 'Light Yagami is Kira' and 'Misa Amane is the second Kira'. So I am a little disappointed. I am human. Is that not allowed?"

"No, it's not! The way you talk, you won't be satisfied unless I'm Kira!"

Ryuzaki stared at him, vehemently. Light glared back, furiously. Both had long forgotten Misa. She had hid out of harm's way, wisely.

"Not satisfied unless you are Kira? Yes. I have just realized something. I wanted you to be Kira."

Light had heard the expression "seeing red". It was a way to indicate extreme rage. He, at that moment, went beyond an intellectual understanding of the saying.

Light lunged forward. He threw his entire weight and strength behind the next blow. It was very satisfying when his fist slammed into Ryuzaki's maddening face. However, that satisfaction was lessened when the detective was not repelled backwards. Ryuzaki's upper half was the only part of him that moved. There was a cost for his tenacity. Light could see the tremors that ran the length of his body.

Ryuzaki spoke in a low, strained voice.

"Once is once. I will have you know that I am quite strong."

Light, unlike Ryuzaki, was repelled backwards when a precisely aimed foot impacted with his head. From then on there were no words, only a ferocious exchange of punches and kicks. When the phone rang, they each had the other by the shirt front; with an arm set to deliver a vicious blow. Light was surprised when Ryuzaki immediately let go and answered the call. By the time he dropped the phone back onto its cradle, the adrenaline had fled from Light's system and exhaustion was creeping in. Despite that, he was curious about what had been said to give Ryuzaki such an annoyed look.

"What was it?"

"Nothing. Just Matsuda being an idiot again."

"Well, Matsuda is a little slow."

Finally agreeing on something, even if it was irrelevant; Light and Ryuzaki stared at one another.

Light was feeling awkward and disconcerted. He had never, in his entire life, struck another human being (well, except Sayu, but that was when they were children and all siblings inevitably hit each
other, sad but true). It wasn't that he regretted it. It was more that he had not known he was capable of such a volatile response. This, more than anything, showed his deep conviction and commitment to nullifying the Kira menace.

However, there was another realization that was unexpected, and a little disquieting.

He would not have reacted violently if someone else, say Aizawa or Matsuda, expressed what Ryuzaki had. Light had previously discovered that he wanted the detective to believe in him. That, alone, had been stunning. Now, he was discerning that he wanted Ryuzaki with him on the investigation. That desire, it would seem, also ran very deeply.

His train of thought was broken when Ryuzaki dropped his gaze. He looked down at the floor and remained silent.

Light continued to stare. He noticed the virulent red marks on his face. There would definitely be bruising.

"Are you okay, Ryuzaki? We better get some ice for that before it starts swelli…"

He had been reaching towards the injuries. Ryuzaki had looked up, and his expression was what caused Light's hand and words to halt. The detective's wariness was apparent in his countenance and posture. This mystified Light.

'Does he think I'm going to continue the fight?'

That was not his goal. It should have been obvious. Nevertheless, if he moved his hand any closer to Ryuzaki's face, Light somehow knew he would flinch away. Perhaps even bolt. Well, he would retreat the maximum distance the chain would allow for.

Acting purely on a wish to wipe that unsettling look away, Light impulsively reached for his arm. When he caught hold, just below the elbow, he heard Ryuzaki's swift intake of breath. He could also readily feel the tension in the limb he held. Ignoring that (outwardly but not inwardly), he delicately pushed up the white sleeve to reveal the metal encircling his wrist. As he suspected, there were red scrapes and bruises forming wherever the shackle had been able to reach. He could tell without looking that his own wrist would appear fairly similar. Ryuzaki had a larger range of damaged skin because his forearm was thinner, the cuff could travel further.

When he laughed softly, Ryuzaki started and Light felt some of the stiffness leave his body. He peered at the detective and was gratified to see curiosity had come to replace some of the uneasiness. Light spoke in a genial tone.

"You know, for a couple of geniuses, you'd think it would be easy to remember the 'every action has an equal and opposite reaction' component of being linked together by an unbreakable chain! My arm and shoulder feel worse than any other part of my body. It's so ridiculous that I can't help but be amused!"

Light continued chuckling quietly. It brought about a great sense of relief when Ryuzaki's face softened with a faint smile.

"Agreed, Light-kun."

Peace was restored, or so Light had assumed.

In the time between then and now, Light had come to experience a previously unseen and unknown aspect of Ryuzaki. If asked to describe him before these two weeks, he would have been able to
reply easily. Ryuzaki was bold, aggressive, and always thinking, plotting, planning. He was a master strategist with a truly unique, ferocious, and unpredictable intellect. The detective's reasoning abilities were superb, as to be expected of a prodigy. However, when Light recalled the facts and theories that Ryuzaki had divulged concerning the Kira case; it was apparent there were other elements to his character. He did not think many other people could see how creative and perceptive he was. The best example to show this was the Lind. L. Tailor trap that Ryuzaki set for Kira.

When Kira murdered the convicted criminal, who had been posing as L, it confirmed his existence and that he could kill from a distance. Just as important, it had proven that Kira would slay any person who dared to oppose him. Light remembered watching the program in his room. He had been flabbergasted as the events unfolded. The jumps in reasoning that L would have had to make to set this up, the cunning and resourcefulness he displayed, left a deep impression on Light. He had been following the Kira case, but it never occurred to him that the method of killing could be so bizarre, so uncanny.

He also recalled being livid.

That brought him to the other qualities he saw in Ryuzaki. The detective had used a criminal to set the snare, and that person died to prove his theory. To Light, it was unimportant that Tailor had been slated to be executed. If that was even true, he thought in his darker moments. Ryuzaki may have claimed so, but he was not always truthful. Light thought of the other traits he possessed.

Ryuzaki was deceitful, stubborn, ruthless, and childish. His ego brought about an immoral 'the ends justify the means' attitude. Light had rarely seen it in person, but he believed Ryuzaki had a cold and unconscionable side. It allowed him to use another person, like Tailor, in that way. That was something Light knew he could never do, and it disappointed him that Ryuzaki could. It disturbed him. It was why he had been repulsed when the detective suggested he manipulate Misa for information.

With all that Light knew about Ryuzaki, all the information he had painstakingly gathered and inspected, he thought he had a fairly good vision of him. Consequently, he was unprepared for the person he saw before him now. Ryuzaki was depressed and silent. No, that was not right. He was passive, detached, unreachable. He may have physically been in the room, but it felt like he was gone; hidden from the sight of others. The real Ryuzaki had disappeared, leaving behind only a shell that looked like him.

During the days, when the operations room was alive with activity, filled with the hum of machinery and conversation; Light was able to focus on the Kira investigation. Ryuzaki was indifferent to any mention of Kira, so Light had taken over. He directed the other men and together they combed through the multitude of deaths. Every criminal who died of a heart attack was carefully analyzed, recorded, and discussed.

It had been Light's idea to go further with this. He reasoned that every possible avenue should be explored. Therefore, they also included heart attack victims in non-criminals. This effectively doubled, even tripled, the workload. There was extensive follow-up to do in those incidents. Kira seemed to be located in Japan, or had been according to Ryuzaki's previous findings. There were relatives and co-workers to speak to, and Aizawa and Matsuda were out every day; collecting that information. Sometimes they were gone for several days when the investigation took them to areas of Japan further away.

During all this frenetic effort, Light did notice Ryuzaki quietly sitting in his seat. Sometimes he would turn on his monitor, other times he would read a book and eat his sweets and candies. Mostly he stared into space, knees pulled tightly to his chest. Or maybe it was that he stared inwards, looking
at something only he could see.

When the work day was done, and everyone had left, the silence was deafening. Light made several attempts to interact with Ryuzaki but soon gave up. It was discouraging to try and fail, over and over again. A routine was set up, devised by Light. He would continue working long after the others had departed. When his fatigue caught up to him, he would stand and address the motionless Ryuzaki.

"It's been a long day, let's get some sleep. Okay?"

Every night Light said the same thing, and every night Ryuzaki declined to answer. He would quietly follow Light to the bedroom they shared, barely making a sound. Once the door was locked electronically, the detective would release the handcuffs; and they would make their separate preparations for bed. Even in his withdrawn state, Ryuzaki seldom took his eyes off him after the chain was removed. Perhaps he was ensuring that Light had not snuck in some electronic device or even a weapon. Light often wondered about this and decided to ask for clarification.

"Ryuzaki, do you think I would sneak a cell phone or a knife in here? Is that why you're watching me?"

He hadn't really expected a response, but his pleasure at receiving one was negated by what the detective actually said.

"Yes."

Ryuzaki was sitting on his bed. His knees were huddled against his chest, and he rested his back against the headboard. Light calculated it would take him seven long strides to get over there and punch him right in the face. But it wouldn't help, and his irritation gradually gave way to resignation. Perhaps Ryuzaki was rubbing off on him.

It had now been three weeks since they moved to the new headquarters. Light and the rest of the team had made progress in the investigation. They were following Light's plan and he felt, deep within, they were headed in the right direction. Of course, it would have been far quicker progress if Ryuzaki participated…

Light caught himself and sighed heavily, the sound carrying in the noiselessness of the room.

It seemed even work would not deter his concentration on him tonight. Whether he willed it or not, when the day was done and no more distractions existed; thoughts of the detective occupied his mind. However, Light knew that his previous temper was a sure sign that no further attempts should be made to engage with Ryuzaki. At least, not at this time.

Giving him a curt look, Light turned off the lamp; and climbed into bed. Despite his weariness, sleep was elusive. There was still so much work to do on the case, so many angles to explore, but that was not what kept him awake. It was the reminder of how Ryuzaki perceived him; as a person who would smuggle in things he should not. He obviously thought Light was a dangerous and deceptive man. He fumed silently over this for awhile but then decided to let it go. It was futile to obsess over things he could not change. He felt being around the detective had taught him that, although sometimes Light forgot the lesson.

This forgetfulness was evident when he turned his thoughts to analyzing Ryuzaki, for the umpteenth time. He was still trying to figure out the reason for the change in him. The fight returned to his mind again and again, and he examined it in the minutest detail. Something told him the answer lay there but every time he almost had it, it slipped away. So, he would start the whole process over. It was irritating and it was wearing him down emotionally.
It all came down to what he wanted and could not attain, no matter what method or approach he used. Light wanted Ryuzaki involved with the investigation. He wanted to exchange ideas and insights with him. He just wanted Ryuzaki to look at him with something, anything, other than those blank eyes. Even his suspicious and calculating expressions were preferable over the nothingness he showed now.

The pain flared in his chest again. He had endured it often in the last three weeks. However, this time it struck with an unprecedented intensity. He had initially believed it was a response to being visualized as a person he could never be. It was frustrating and stressful that the detective refused to see that Light was not Kira. Still, perhaps even that was better than Ryuzaki not seeing him at all. Light honestly couldn't fathom why it bothered him so much.

Light knew that all things have a reason for existence. It was possible to find the origins of this recurring distress. But, whenever he tried, he could not get past his own reluctance and dread. He also could not understand Ryuzaki. That was when it hit him.

There really was nothing he could do.

This realization, as simple as it was, somehow felt liberating. His body relaxed and the pain receded. Perhaps, one day, he would be able to perceive where it came from. But, for now, it was too soon. He decided to relegate it to the background and stop obsessing, for real this time.

The same conclusion could be applied to Ryuzaki. Maybe Light would eventually be able to determine the genesis of his stillness. He had been trying to figure him out with the aim of "fixing" him, making him as he was. It was Light's nature to resolve problems immediately and efficiently, but that approach had proven to be ineffectual with Ryuzaki. All his reasoning, experimenting, and mental gymnastics did not make the slightest bit of difference. Light could not force Ryuzaki into what he wished him to be.

It was a hard fought battle, but Light finally came to the inherent wisdom of waiting; of patience.

That night Light slept peacefully and deeply.

*The High Priestess*

*passivity, secrets, mystery – things we do not know and things we cannot know, darkness – an area of fear within but also one of beauty, hidden issues, a period of withdrawal which allows things inside to awaken, intuitively understanding the answer to some great problem and the inability to express that answer consciously, potential – action must follow or that potential will never be realized, wisdom of the unconscious, reflection, listening to your inner voice, intuition

*Something is missing from the Magician's logic, objectivity, and ability to manipulate the material world. Through the High Priestess, the Fool comes into contact with the hidden, subjective, unconscious, and intuitive aspects of the universe. The Magician and the High Priestess are counterparts. Like the sun and the moon, they complement one another.*
Light felt like a new man.

On the surface, nothing had changed in his situation. The Kira investigation was progressing but had yet to have a decisive breakthrough. His freedom of movement was greatly restricted due to being chained to another person; one who thought him capable of being a killer. Of course, Ryuzaki did not accuse Light or set any clever, verbal traps. This was only because the detective remained uncommunicative. That had stayed the same, as well.

What had changed was Light. He had acknowledged his limitations and been able to accept them. The person he was before would have labeled his inability to resolve matters as deficient. He would have labored until a clear and concise solution was reached. That, in fact, was what he had attempted to do; especially concerning Ryuzaki. This approach had always worked when it came to intellectual dilemmas, such as school work or police cases he helped his father with. Light had often felt a sense of accomplishment and pride for his ability to unravel any mystery he was presented with. However, now he was able to perceive that he had never been truly challenged before. It is not that his achievements were diminished. It was more that they were not at the same level of complexity he faced now.

Light had a conception of the scope, and difficulty, of unmasking the covert murderer from the first time he heard of him. However, he knew now that he had underestimated the intricacy and enigma that was Kira. There were many factors that made the investigation problematic. Due to the manner of killing; there was no forensic evidence, witnesses, or precedents. He and Ryuzaki had both come up with similar theories on the psychological profile of Kira, the first Kira. Yet it soon became apparent there was more than one person committing the slayings. Sometimes it seemed that for every step forward, there were two steps taken back. Answers only spawned more questions, and very little seemed clear.

Then there was the issue of support. At this time, the total number of people devoted to bringing Kira to justice totaled four. Light could not count Ryuzaki as part of the team which left only himself, his dad, Aizawa, and Matsuda. There was a fifth person, Mogi, but he was assigned with remaining in the NPA's task force office. It was necessary that someone always be there in order to mask the true activities of the investigation team. After all, it was an established fact that Kira had access to police information. This had been Ryuzaki's stratagem. Light believed it was valid for the reason stated and also for two more that were not. Those reasons had more to do with Ryuzaki than with the investigation itself.

Ryuzaki had always been anonymous to the world. Rationally, it made sense. He was responsible for the capture of many criminals. Light did not have the details of who he had apprehended or how many they numbered. However, given the authority he wielded over the world's police forces; it was certain the detective had an incredibly successful track record. Therefore, it followed that he had many enemies. Light had no doubt that there were many people who wanted him dead; if only to remove the threat he posed or to get revenge for the criminals he had ensnared. Protecting Ryuzaki's obscurity was a matter of life and death. That was the first unstated reason.

The second reason was one which Light conceived only after actually meeting the detective. In preparation for a career in the police force, he had studied a broad range of subjects. Some of these were through school, and some had been on his personal initiative. The ability to read people was fundamental for his chosen career. Consequently, he had done a thorough study on non-verbal language. Light was blessed with an innate perceptiveness and gifted observational skills. Since he
was a child, he had been adept in deciphering whether people were lying or telling the truth, what they were feeling, and many other details; simply by discerning what their body language was expressing. His studies had only further sharpened his ability.

At present; it was Light, Soichiro, and Ryuzaki in the operations room. Light's eyes slid over to survey the detective, and silently assessed him.

'The way he sits, knees to chin, indicates fear or apprehension. His arms are around his legs, binding up his body. A normal amount of personal space is much larger. Ryuzaki's is impossibly small. Then there's the thumb to his mouth. It's self-comforting. From the way he sits to the way he walks, it's like he doesn't want to be noticed. Eye contact for him varies. It can be belligerent, direct, or evasive. It doesn't have a consistency, a set order or pattern, and is not reactive to outside events. That shows inner turmoil and, with everything else, an extreme level of self-protection. He has tried to pass off the sitting position with the logic that it increases his reasoning abilities. However, that in itself is illogical since the brain is unaffected by such superficial things. He doesn't want anyone to look at him in a deeper way, and that is a preemptive attempt to avoid it.'

It was only a few nights ago that Light had decided to discontinue his attempts to analyze Ryuzaki. He concluded that he was unreachable and incomprehensible, at least at this time. There really was nothing he could do to entice, or coerce, the detective to join the investigation. He accepted that. All Light could do was continue working with the other team members, and hope that he would come around.

In reality, Light was busy working on a project of his own. He was in the process of creating a new computer program. Its main purpose would be to increase the verity and efficiency of the information they collected. It was a system that would allow access to police, public, and media data from all over the world. It was a complicated and involved undertaking, and Light was gaining a great deal of pleasure in the difficulty and challenge it presented.

In spite of this, his attention was frequently brought back to Ryuzaki. He told himself that he was endeavoring to observe him. It was impartial information collection, not analysis. It was something he should do, considering their proximity to one another.

The way he saw it, Ryuzaki was disinclined to interact with others and had likely always been so. That was especially blatant now with his passivity, and refusal to speak or engage with anyone. It may be what the detective desired but it didn't mean it was beneficial for him. Light wondered if this was the first time Ryuzaki had ever attempted to work in a group. From the conclusions he had drawn from his body language, it was reasonably certain that it was.

Ryuzaki had once claimed that Light was his first friend. He had not been looking at him when he said it. As a result, Light initially thought there was deception in his words. Back then, he had wanted to be closer to him; to find out more about him. He supposed he was intrigued at finding someone with an intellect to match his own. Light had told him that he thought of him as a friend too. It was then that Ryuzaki had looked back, met Light's eyes, and smiled. Perhaps it had been calculated, but there was a chance it was genuine. Even if it wasn't, Light knew he did want him as a friend and decided he would act like it from now on. He didn't have to understand Ryuzaki to be kind to him.

Over the next week, many bemused looks were exchanged between Matsuda, Aizawa, and Light's dad.

Soichiro, in particular, didn't know what to think. He knew his son was a good person, with a considerate and giving nature. That nature had been sorely tested due to the eccentric detective's treatment of him. Ryuzaki had confined Light for almost two months. In that time; he had lied to the
boy, manipulated him, and even compelled Soichiro to threaten Light before finally agreeing to his release. It had not ended there. After all that, Ryuzaki had bound Light to him and then refused to lift a finger to capture Kira; leaving it all to Light, him, and the rest of the team. Light had been understandably aggravated, hostile, and even physically aggressive towards the detective. Now, however, that had all changed.

Light started with the things he knew Ryuzaki liked. He was very conscientious in ensuring he never wanted for coffee, tea, or a glass of something cool. The detective did not reject his offerings, and that was encouragement enough for Light. He had noted there were particular foods that Ryuzaki enjoyed and asked his dad to pick up a different item every day. One day it was fruit cocktails, another cake, and the day after pastries. He made numerous requests and ignored the strange looks his father gave him. He knew his behavior was unorthodox, especially compared to his former actions towards the detective, but it was effective.

It was on the sixth day, when he approached Ryuzaki with cookies, that his efforts were rewarded. His eyes focused on Light, and it seemed a small bit of life had returned to them.

"Here, Ryuzaki, these are some home-baked cookies I asked my mom to make. I thought you would like them."

There was an awkward pause as his eyes darted between the box and Light. He had no idea what kind of internal dialogue was going on in the detective, but was bolstered when he reached for the sweets. Up until now, Light had been forced to simply leave the treats due to Ryuzaki's indifference. He had eaten everything he brought and Light had thought that was allowable, if not desirable.

He watched Ryuzaki extract a cookie, handling it between two fingers as if it was made of fragile glass. Light smiled warmly and turned to go, but was stopped by a quiet voice.

"Thank you, Light-kun."

"You're welcome! Enjoy them!"

Light was exuberant as he settled in his seat. The plan was a success. The detective had willingly spoken, and it was more than one word. Where mental tactics had failed, a caring attitude had prevailed. He was already planning the next day's refreshment when he felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned to his father handing him a cell phone.

"Light, your mother is on the phone. She asked to speak to you today. She's been worried about you."

"Oh, okay. Thanks, dad."

There was a look of discomfort on Soichiro's face. From that, Light had a fairly good idea of what was coming.

"Hi, mom. Thanks for the cookies."

"Hello, dear! I was surprised when your dad told me you wanted them. If you need anything else, please let me know. It's been so long since I've seen you, how are you?"

"I'm doing good, keeping busy."

"Are you taking care of yourself? You and your father are exactly the same when you get involved with something. You don't stop to eat or sleep. I get worried when I'm not there to take care of you."

"It's okay, mom. I'm getting enough sleep and eating properly. I feel fine."

"Well, that's a relief to hear."

There was a pause, as if his mother was gathering her thoughts. Light felt his heart sink.

"So, how much longer will you be away? Your father said he couldn't tell me what case you're both working on."

"I'm not sure. There's still a lot to do. But I'm glad to do it, mom. It's something really important and I know I can help."

"Well, I'm sure you can, Light. It's just that it's August already. What about your studies? Shouldn't you be writing end of semester exams right now? Everyone has been asking me how you're doing in school, and I don't know what to say."

"I can always make up the exams later or re-take the semester. It's not an issue."

"Light, you were accepted into To-Oh, the best university in Japan. It is an issue if you're dropping out! You have your whole life to solve cases once your education is done. It's nice that you want to assist your dad but you have to get your priorities straight."

Even though he knew it was futile, Light made an effort to gain his mother's understanding.

"Mom, this is important to me."

"Oh, Light, there will be other cases. What you really need to focus on is…"

Light tuned out.

After he hung up the phone, his father gave him a sympathetic look.

"You know how mom is, Light. She just wants the best for you. We're both so proud of you for getting into To-Oh. It's understandable that she's upset that you're not attending. All her friends have been asking about how you're doing and she's been too embarrassed to tell them that you aren't going."

"I know, dad. Once Kira is behind bars and I'm cleared of all suspicion, I'll get back to my studies."

"Of course you will, son. When this is over, we'll be able to tell her the full story and she'll understand. Until then, just bear with it. I'll try to talk to her too."

"Thanks, dad."

The rest of the day was a write-off.

It was only eight in the evening when he decided to call it a night. Everyone else had already left. Light stood up.

"Come on, Ryuzaki. I can't concentrate. Let's go to bed."

Ryuzaki looked at him quizzically and did not move. Light sighed.

"Look, just…come on, all right?"

When Ryuzaki still didn't budge, he stepped forward and took his arm; firmly propelling him out of
his seat. He did not resist outwardly, but Light could feel the muscles in his arm knotted in tension. Light did not know why he did it, or the reason he kept his hold on him until the bedroom door shut and locked behind them.

He fully expected to fall asleep immediately and that was what he wanted. His chest was hurting again. It had done so since the conversation with his mother. However, once the lights were out, the darkness and silence felt smothering. Light tossed and turned for a while, but only felt more and more agitated. Ryuzaki had spoken to him today, of his own volition. Maybe he would be willing to do so again.

"Ryuzaki, are you awake?"

"Yes."

"I'm sorry if I surprised you earlier. I just wanted to go to bed but I shouldn't have grabbed your arm like that."

"Why is Light-kun upset?"

"What do you mean?"

Ryuzaki did not reply. In reality, Light was just stalling for time. He was very aware of the detective's acumen in behavior observation. There was no doubt Light's turmoil had been noted, most likely from the moment he began speaking to his mother. He did not have to respond, but now that Ryuzaki was actually speaking; Light was reluctant to be the one to disengage.

"My mom called me earlier. She doesn't know what's going on here. She just thinks I'm working on a case with my dad. She's worried about my grades and attendance at school. It's just…"

What was he doing? Was he actually talking to this man about his family? Light did not understand what was possessing him. He had never felt the need to unburden himself to anyone before. So, why here? Why now? Why Ryuzaki? Light could feel an unbearable pressure building within. The more he tried to subdue it, the greater it grew.

"Light-kun?"

Upon hearing Ryuzaki's voice, the dam broke and Light's words came out in a torrent.

"I know my mom loves me. She does a lot of things for me but…it's like she doesn't really see me. Today all she could talk about was To-Oh and how I needed to get my priorities straight. But this is really important to me. I know I can help in the investigation. This is where I'm needed and where I want to be. But it's like my wants and needs don't register with her."

"Is her concern for your future not reasonable?"

"No, that's not what I'm saying. I don't think it really is concern for me. You know, back before I met you, I came home one day after I had just received the results for the national practice exam. I attained the number one rank in Japan, but I didn't care. It was then that all the heart attacks in criminals were first being reported. I was thinking about that and was…I don't know…I was disturbed by it. It was alarming. I walked in and my mom didn't even realize how upset I was. She just smiled and held her hands out for my test results. And it's always been like that. She just doesn't notice me. All her attention goes to my grades and my rank. I'm first, I've always been first, and that's all that matters to her."

Light sat up and turned so that he was facing Ryuzaki. He could barely make out his dim outline, but
felt the need to look at him anyway.

"I don't know why I'm telling you all this. Even now you're probably calculating 'mother issues' into the percentage that I'm Kira."

Light could hear the bitterness in his own voice. He did not wish to begin a dispute, but now that his words were out; there was no taking them back. There was a pregnant pause while he waited for his confirmation. Into this lull, Ryuzaki whispered a single word.

"No."

Light was taken aback.

"Why not? It's perfect ammunition to use against me."

"No. Light-kun is my first friend. He has shared his troubles with me. I will not use that against him."

Light was struck speechless for a moment. In any number of scenarios where he had envisioned Ryuzaki interacting with him again, not a single one included what was happening now.

"Do you think I'm acting like a brat? About my mom?"

"No."

There was something in his voice. Perhaps it was because of his inability to clearly see Ryuzaki, that Light was able to identify the subtle nuance of sorrow.

"You understand, don't you? I don't mean mentally. You've experienced it too, haven't you?"

When the silence stretched between them, Light realized he would not answer. However, his reticence was an affirmation in itself. Light wanted to know the details, but was unwilling to push him to get them. It was more than enough that Ryuzaki had listened to him.

Light wondered if he had known, on some level, that Ryuzaki would understand. Was that why he had physically pulled him into the privacy of their room? It was possible that he was only reading into the situation what he wanted to, but Light didn't really think so. And either way, the pain in his chest had dissipated. He was grateful to Ryuzaki for his aid in absolving it.

Light had never been disposed to expressing things that bothered him. He didn't really see the value in it. However, he did feel better. He would not deny that, to himself or to Ryuzaki.

"Thanks for listening, Ryuzaki. It helped. Good night."

"Good night, Light-kun."

It was as Light was drifting into sleep that he grasped one other thing about what had just happened. Unlike his mother, Ryuzaki did realize he was upset. He didn't really see the value in it. However, he did feel better. He would not deny that, to himself or to Ryuzaki.

This was meaningful in ways that Light would only much later be able to truly understand.

The Empress

pure emotion, gentleness, a passionate approach, satisfaction and even understanding gained
through the emotions, creativity, productive action, conception, creation, continued growth, willingness to help others, selfless giving, abundance, healing, the mother

The Fool has learned about objective and subjective reality, light and darkness, action and instinct through the Magician and the High Priestess. These concepts are synthesized into the Empress. The Fool directly experiences the world around him by embodying the passionate and emotional approach of the Empress; unburdened by ego, personality, controls, or labels.
Light woke in a state of panic.

The room was dark, the only illumination coming from where the moon peeked through a gap in the curtains.

Light clutched the covers to his chest, gasping for air. His heart hammered furiously and perspiration covered his body, dampening the sheets and his pajamas. All was silent, and slowly, slowly he managed to calm his breathing. He glanced to the side, wondering if he had wakened Ryuzaki. The faint moonlight allowed him to see that the detective lay with his back to him. He watched him for a few moments, noting the rhythmic motion of deep, regular breaths. The proof that Ryuzaki actually did sleep managed to distract him from his own turbulent emotions for a small, blissful interval.

All too soon, his contemplation was disturbed by the chill of his cooling, sweat-soaked night clothes. Light, though still fatigued, could not sleep like this. He quietly made his bleary-eyed way to the bathroom, and removed the soiled garments. The hot spray of the shower soothed his tense muscles. It was so comforting that Light almost fell asleep, standing on his feet. It was then that the dream came back to him and he resolutely shook himself awake. This was a rare opportunity to be alone and he would use it wisely. Being a private person, he did not want anyone else to see the anxiety he felt.

Light turned his thoughts to the dream. It was a dream only in that it came upon him when he was asleep. Otherwise, it may have been more proper to call it a memory. It was not the first time that this particular recollection had visited him in the night. It had happened four times in the last week alone. In fact, the frequency increased following his exchange with Ryuzaki. A short while ago, Light had shared his problems concerning his mother. It had been a beneficial and helpful encounter.

He now wondered if, by opening up like that, he had unknowingly cleared the way for other things to come through. He wasn't a person who enjoyed psychology but had an excellent grasp of it, nonetheless. It was relevant to his chosen career so he had studied it. Furthering his analysis of the repetitive dream he pondered if, while asleep, his mental defenses were down. That was most likely correct. After all, he would never purposely re-visit the incident. It had been horrible the first time.

In the dream, the circumstances would change; but the events were exactly the same every time. This was the sixth time he had re-lived a gun being held to his head. Even now, he could still feel the terror, panic, and sense of betrayal. That was what he had experienced when his father threatened to kill him.

Light comprehended why such a harsh step was taken. It had been explained to him by Ryuzaki afterward. During the drive to the hotel, where everyone waited, Soichiro filled in what the detective had left out.

He wasn't sure how much this had to do with the dream but, in the peace and tranquility of the warm shower, Light let his mind wander where it willed.

He had learned a great deal during that short trip. During his confinement, Soichiro had also been secluded. That was his father's choice and Ryuzaki had agreed to it. Light remembered feeling dismay and rancor at this information. He had not known that his father suffered right along with him, all those days. Light admired, respected, and felt a strong sense of loyalty towards his dad. It infuriated him that such a man had been forced into those circumstances due to the detective's false allegations against Light.
He also learned the Kira-related homicides resumed just two weeks after his imprisonment. Ryuzaki had omitted telling him that crucial fact. It didn't take a genius to figure out why. Obviously he was willing to take any measures, no matter how corrupt, to incriminate Light. However, it was one thing to do this to him, and quite another to involve his father. All this had led to the last thing Light wanted; a heated argument between father and son.

"When we get there, Ryuzaki is going to apologize to you and me. I knew he could be dishonest and manipulative but this is going too far."

Light had spoken in a cold and controlled voice. It belied how angry he really was. Nevertheless, his narrowed eyes and clenched jaw stated openly what his tone did not. Misa had edged away from him, eyes wide and watchful. His father looked at him through the rearview mirror, with an expression of concern.

"Light, calm down. What's done is done. I made the choice to be confined. I couldn't trust myself. With you being in that situation, I was worried I would do something drastic if my feelings went out of control. Ryuzaki had already predicted my reaction and prepared for it. I'm grateful to him for that."

"I understand that, dad. But he still lied about the killings starting again and that's why we were confined for so long! It's one thing to play games with me, but when it affects you too...I can't forgive that! He's going to be held accountable for his actions. In fact, not only should he apologize, he deserves a beating. For all this, he should get some sort of punishment!"

Light was yelling at this point. All the fear and stress he had been under had caught up to him, at last. That alone was enough for him to lose his composure, but finding out Ryuzaki's deceptions had truly driven him over the edge. Light was so caught up in his own furor that he didn't notice Soichiro's concern change to disapproval. The car was suddenly steered to the side of the road, and stopped. His father turned in his seat and affixed him with a stern look.

"Light, you will do no such thing. Ryuzaki's done everything he has in an effort to capture Kira. He didn't make me do what I did, I chose to. That's not his fault, it's mine. I don't agree with some of his methods either, but he is in charge of this investigation. Not only that, he's dedicated to bringing Kira to justice and has already solved many difficult cases. The world's governments turn to him because he is the best detective we have and our best hope for stopping this madness. That's why I support him, no matter what."

"But, dad..."

"The important thing is we work together to stop the murders. That's all that matters. You're old enough to know that sometimes you have to put aside your feelings to get the job done. Do you understand that, Light?"

He still felt that Ryuzaki had been unscrupulous but was taken aback by his father's reprimand. He turned it over in his mind and was able to see the rationale behind it, not that he agreed with it. Soichiro regarded him strictly, waiting for an answer. Although it pained him to do it, Light stifled his outrage and said what was expected.

"Yes, dad. Don't worry, I won't say anything. We're all in this together, right?"

Soichiro had beamed at him.

"That's my son! Let's work hard from now on, and let bygones be bygones."
Light was brought back to the present with the belated recognition that the water had become cool. As he toweled himself dry, he moved in quick, sharp motions. Light, by recalling the past, had become very angry. He had done as his father insisted, and left the issue of Ryuzaki's manipulations alone. However, maybe that was why he experienced these nocturnal re-enactments of a gun being pointed at him. Quite simply, just because he had suppressed his feelings didn't mean that they had gone away. He wrapped a towel around his waist, turned off the light, and stealthily left the bathroom.

Light did not want to give Ryuzaki any warning about what was about to happen.

The room had brightened due to the rising sun. He could see Ryuzaki in the dim light, lying in the same position as earlier. He strode towards the prone form, to the side he was facing. It was unsurprising to see his eyes were half-open, but it did not deter Light. Moving quickly, before Ryuzaki could react, he sat on the bed.

He knew the detective guarded his territory closely, and so positioned himself where his side lay flush against his stomach. Light leaned over him, and placed one arm behind his back and the other against his chest. Ryuzaki was on his side and was held immobile by Light. He invaded his personal space just as his schemes had invaded Light's life. His rage drove him and he did not care when Ryuzaki's features twisted in shock and alarm.

"Ryuzaki, you are going to listen to me. I know what you did. I know all about the lies you told when I was confined. My dad told me to keep quiet about it, but I'm not going to."

Ryuzaki's eyes moved rapidly from side to side, as if looking for a way to escape.

"Look at me!"

With that, Light leaned in closer, further minimizing the distance between them. He was fully aware that this positioning was well out of Ryuzaki's comfort zone, but also knew it was a sure way to get his complete attention. He could not abide a passive response right now. He wanted a reaction.

Ryuzaki focused, although he looked at a point somewhere below Light's face; not his eyes.

"I'm not letting you go until you listen to everything I have to say. You jailed me, you lied to me, and you manipulated me. I can't believe you! You are the most arrogant person I've ever met! Not telling me the murders had resumed is unforgivable. Do you know how I felt? Do you even care how other people feel? You sure didn't care about how my dad felt! It's because of you and your...your...asinine tricks that he was locked up for that long! My dad didn't deserve that, Ryuzaki!"

By the time he finished speaking, Light was shouting.

He was about to continue when he felt Ryuzaki's legs gently touch him, and shirk away. The understanding of what that meant caused Light to pause his rant. He was trying to adopt his customary protective stance even when it was physically impossible. He doubted Ryuzaki was even conscious of his action. Light's rage dwindled as he looked at him closely.

He still stared fixedly at a point somewhere below Light's chin. His expression was indecipherable, but Light could clearly see and feel something he had never expected to happen. Ryuzaki was shaking. It was assuredly caused by Light's proximity, and he felt a pang of conscience. However, he wasn't finished and clamped down on that merciful feeling.

Still, when Light continued, it was in a softer tone.

"It's not just that. You told my dad he had to threaten me. You said it was the only way you would
let me go. So, he did. He did it for me and I don't blame him for it. You didn't give him any choice. It might have seemed like a great plan to you, but do you have any understanding of what that felt like? My own father holding a gun to my head, saying he was going to kill me and then himself."

Ryuzaki’s eyes slowly rose to meet his. Good, it looked like he had his full attention. Light needed to say this and he needed the detective to hear it.

"I dream about it, Ryuzaki. In the dream, I'm back in that situation. My dad has a gun to my head, and I know he's going to kill me. There's nothing I can say to stop him. I can't move, I can't get away. All I can do is wait for the gun to go off, wait for my own father to murder me. It's awful and I wake up barely able to breathe, covered in sweat. And it's your fault. I feel that way because you made my dad do that, all for your precious investigation."

Light stared intently. Ryuzaki averted his eyes to the side and said nothing.

"I'm not letting you up until you say something. I know you haven't wanted to talk but you have to answer me."

"Light-kun…"

Light leaned in closer upon hearing his soft voice. He wanted an apology or an explanation from him, preferably both. Ryuzaki kept his gaze to the side as he continued speaking.

"It is true that I asked Yagami-san to do that. It is also true that he agreed in order to secure Light-kun's release. It is not true that I made Light-kun feel his own father would kill him. He believed that on his own."

In an instant, Light took hold of Ryuzaki's shoulders and forced him onto his back. His grip tightened as he fought to control his rising temper. Ryuzaki did not fight back, and continued to stare at the wall; his face turned away.

"Ryuzaki, you…"

His fingers were digging deeper and deeper into his body, reflecting his escalating rage. When Ryuzaki winced, it made Light realize that he was actually hurting him.

"You make me sick."

And he let go.

Throughout the rest of the day, Light ignored Ryuzaki completely. Or so it appeared. Inside, he still brooded over all that had transpired. He keenly felt the restrictions the detective had placed on him. It was hard not to notice the most glaring example of this; the chain binding his freedom and movements. If he needed to use the restroom, or get some refreshment, he used it to spitefully pull Ryuzaki to his feet; forcing him to follow. Previously, Light had always voiced his intentions and given Ryuzaki time to willingly accompany him.

Light knew he was being petty but was uncaring about it. It seemed to him that the detective had been pushing him around since the first day they met. Ryuzaki may have been in a position of authority, and the lead investigator in the Kira case, but it was not a justification for carelessly stepping over Light's boundaries. He couldn't change the past, but he would now make it abundantly clear that further transgressions would not be tolerated.

It was a struggle, but he forced his mind back to the matter at hand. At this time, he and the rest of the team were having a meeting. His father had the floor and was outlining the progress they had
made. The work they had done was commendable, but the desired breakthrough continued to elude them. Diligence was paying off but there was only so much four people could do. This was precisely the reason why Light was creating the program, the one which would allow instant access to all available data. When completed, it would do the research and analysis they were compelled to do themselves right now. It would accomplish in minutes what would take the team weeks to achieve.

When asked, he gave an update on the status of the project.

"It's almost ready. I can finish it in a week or possibly two, at the most. I can program it to search and access public and media information, but I don't have the authority to bypass security for police records and data. To code that, I would need someone with that kind of access."

Everyone turned to look at the detective. He was sitting behind Light, with his back turned to the group. Light, alone, remained facing forward. Ryuzaki would not participate, in any manner, when it came to Kira. He cleared his throat to bring the team's attention back to him.

"Dad, I think you should talk to Watari. Tell him what we're doing and why. Maybe he can help with this."

"All right, Light. That's a good idea. I'll speak to him as soon as possible."

Soichiro smiled fondly at him, letting him know that he was pleased with the hard work and contributions Light had made to the investigation. Normally, this would have made Light's chest swell with pride. Today, it made him feel discomfited.

The meeting continued, and he watched Matsuda and Aizawa. It was apparent, from the way they looked at Soichiro, that they held him in high esteem. Both listened intently, and their respect and admiration were clear from the way they deferred to his father. Light knew the main reason they had joined in the hunt for Kira was an honest determination to see justice prevail. But, perhaps equally important, they believed in Soichiro and wished to follow his lead. Something about this bothered him.

It was only later, after the work day was done and everyone had departed, that it hit him. How different was he from Matsuda and Aizawa? He also respected and admired Soichiro, and was willing to follow his lead. However, shouldn't Light have a different status, at least in his own mind? After all, he was his father's son. There were many similarities between them. Light felt that he had inherited his best qualities from his dad. Some of the more important of these were a sense of justice, an exemplary moral code, and a hard-working attitude. He knew his father was a noble man and endeavored to follow in his footsteps, even choosing the same career path.

It all came down to what Ryuzaki had said that morning. If he knew his father so well, how had Light been able to believe he would actually kill him?

The answer was obvious, if he divorced his emotions from this contemplation and looked at it mentally. Throughout his life, Light had many memories of times at home with his mom and Sayu. His dad had often been absent due to work. Occasionally, he would be gone for days at a time when a pressing investigation demanded his attention. When he did come home, it was frequently after Light had gone to bed. In the mornings, sometimes Light would briefly see him. However, the busyness of breakfast, preparation for school, and work did not leave time for meaningful conversation. It was to be expected. They both led active, separate lives.

Spending time together was how people knew each other, even if they were family. The reason Light had believed his father would pull the trigger was because he didn't really know him. Yes, he admired his dad; and yes, he respected him. There was no question of that. He also understood his
dedication to work. In fact, Light was similar to him in that way too. Examples of this were the devotion he had displayed towards his school work, and now the investigation. However, being like his dad did not mean he was close to him.

When Light put it all together this way, he was obligated to concede that Ryuzaki had been right. He had not made Light believe his father would kill him. Light believed that all on his own. He didn't know his father well enough to realize otherwise. Ryuzaki still had culpability for the devious actions he had taken, but Light's reaction to his father's threat was not the detective's fault. It was really no one's fault, not Light's or his father's either. It was just the way it was, the way it always had been. They were family but, due to their different schedules, it was more like they had an association instead of a relationship.

It had been a difficult day. Light could not remember the last time he had felt this exhausted. His interrupted sleep the previous night was also to blame. Realizing he would be unable to do anything constructive, he decided rest was in order. When he stood, Ryuzaki got to his feet too. This was unusual. Light perceived why and felt the need to make amends, for at least two things.

"Ryuzaki, I won't apologize for what happened this morning. What you did was wrong, and I had the right to tell you that. But, you weren't wrong about one thing; what I thought of my dad is my own responsibility. I won't say it's your fault, and I won't yank the chain anymore. I was still mad earlier but I shouldn't have done that."

It was not a surprise when the detective did not respond. There was obviously going to be some sort of consequence for his earlier aggression.

It had taken quite a bit of effort to penetrate Ryuzaki's silence. Light had been patient, kind, and even used the bribery of sweets. He didn't want to think all that progress had been swept away, but observing Ryuzaki's closed expression; it would seem it was. It was the recollection of his earlier efforts that caused him to notice the box left on his father's desk. Soichiro had brought a treat, as per Light's instructions, but it had not been given to Ryuzaki. Light resolved to get back on track.

"Follow me, Ryuzaki. I forgot to give you something today. It's over there on my dad's desk."

He turned and began walking, but only when he heard the clink of the chain and Ryuzaki's shuffling footsteps coming nearer. When he had the box in hand, he offered it to him. It filled him with a sense of relief when the dessert was accepted.

"Shall we go then, to bed?"

This time he received a response, even though it was simply a mute nod. It was more than Light had expected and he inwardly mused:

'Perhaps the way to a man's heart really is through the stomach.'

It was later, as he lay in bed, that the appalling thought struck him.

'Why would I want to find a way to his heart?'

Not surprisingly, it was another restless night for Light as he berated himself for the ridiculousness of that statement. It was a leap of faith to even jokingly say the detective had a heart. He vehemently recalled all the maddening things Ryuzaki had ever said and done. This took a long time and, upon completion, he was too tired to think of anything anymore. There was another reason behind Light's fixation on Ryuzaki, but he refused to acknowledge it.

It was through focusing on Ryuzaki that he was able to ignore the sadness he felt about his father.
The Emperor

authority, the laws of society - both good and bad - and the power that enforces them, repressions, a specific person who holds great power - either objective or emotional - over the subject, the ability to defend one's territory - to create firm boundaries and vigorously maintain them, a rationalist approach to issues - one which values analysis and measurement over emotion and intuition, self-assertion, the drive for achievement, success, and respect, leadership, becoming your own person, an over-emphasis on domination in relationships - excluding sensitivity and affection, the father

The Fool, having learned to approach the world in a passionate and emotional way through the Empress, meets her polar-opposite and counterpart. The Emperor; representing dominion, authority, order, reason, power, and control introduces the rules of society. The Fool absorbs these rules, as well as society's traditions and beliefs, and (hopefully) goes beyond them to find a personal code of conduct.
Ryuzaki was unlike anyone Light had ever known.

To the other team members, and now Light, this was an obvious finding. Some of the differences were easily discerned. The detective looked and acted unusually. It was in the way he moved, how he sat, and the peculiar way he handled things. Light still couldn't identify the reason for picking items up in that delicate, two-fingered manner. Then, there was the way he dressed. It was always the same jeans and white shirt. He eschewed shoes and wore them, grudgingly, only when necessary. Light remembered how Ryuzaki had presented himself during the entrance exams, and the opening ceremony at To-Oh.

It had caused quite a stir, in both cases.

During the exam, the detective had been admonished by the supervising teacher for sitting improperly; with his bare feet upon the desk. Then, for the opening ceremony, he had attended wearing untied shoes and no socks. He had been garbed in his standard attire. He looked, well, sloppy. In contrast, Light had worn a suit. In all social occasions, he made it a point to be conscientious about his looks. He was aware that appearance, particularly first appearances, meant a lot. Ryuzaki was intelligent and thoroughly versed on any number of subjects. He must have known how important it is to present oneself in a satisfactory way. If he knew, and still looked and acted the way he did; it meant he didn't care. This was a difficult concept for Light to comprehend. He did care what other people thought of him, perhaps too much.

He recalled some of the comments he had heard from the other team members, when it came to Ryuzaki.

"Well, that's just the way he is."

"He does things his own way."

"Even if we don't like it, he won't change."

When Light first saw Ryuzaki, he had noticed the contrasts between them; especially the surface ones. Later, there was one similarity that came to his attention. It resonated strongly, making the dissimilarities inconsequential. Giving the freshman address with him had been the catalyst. For another to be up there with him, it meant he had attained an equivalent score to Light on the entrance exams.

Intrigued.

That was the correct word for how he felt then. It was the first time someone had really interested Light. Of course, any notion of getting to know him had been banished almost instantaneously. Ryuzaki did not accuse him of being Kira immediately, but there was something strange in the way he spoke to Light. It had been as if he was testing him, trying to get a reaction. Later, it all came together when he came right out with it. He suspected Light of being Kira.

He still did. Light was not Kira. He knew he wasn't. It was possible that Kira could control people, and later remove their memories, but it didn't change his certainty. Still, the detective wouldn't take this into account. Soichiro, Aizawa, and Matsuda believed in his innocence. If a person was alone in their opinion, with no one else in accordance; wouldn't a normal reaction be to re-think their reasoning? Ryuzaki had borne the brunt of the team's and Light's anger over this issue. Didn't this
concern him? Shouldn't it? The idea of Ryuzaki steadfastly asserting his conclusions, regardless of what anyone else thought, was alien to Light. There was one other person who possibly agreed with the detective.

Light was not very familiar with Watari. He was L's assistant and served as an intermediary for him. About an hour ago, Watari had contacted Light remotely. They spoke about the program and the requirement for access to police information. Light had made his presentation, logically and concisely, and succeeded in securing his cooperation. However, before going ahead, Watari felt it necessary to run things by Ryuzaki. The conversation between the two had been public.

"Ryuzaki, what do you think of this? Shall I go ahead and assist Yagami-san?"

Just as Light expected, the detective didn't answer. After all, the program directly related to the Kira investigation. There had been a sound of exasperation from Watari.

"How long are you going to continue this behavior? I've kept my counsel until now, but this is unacceptable. It's not the first time you've acted like this and I know you have your reasons. However, it's past the time when you should have recovered. You have a job to do, young man! I suggest you remember that."

Ryuzaki's eyes narrowed.

"It's fine, Watari. Do what Light-kun asks."

"I will. Now, are you going to re-join the investigation and stop this foolishness?"

"No."

"That is enough! It's time for you to…"

"I refuse!"

Light couldn't help but jump when Ryuzaki suddenly moved. He quickly rose from his chair, reached across Light, and cut the connection.

In the ensuing silence, everyone stared at the detective. When the icon began blinking on his monitor, Light reluctantly tore his gaze away. This was an element of Ryuzaki that he had never come across before. It was one thing to understand that he could be childish, it was quite another to see it in action. Light belatedly remembered to shut his mouth. It had dropped open in shock.

He realized the source of the flashing light, and turned to the detective.

"It's Watari, Ryuzaki."

He turned his back to Light, shrugging his shoulders.

"Do you want to talk to him? I mean, shouldn't you talk to him?"

"No."

"But…"

Light didn't have the opportunity to finish his sentence. That was because the detective suddenly got up. There was no choice but to follow. Ryuzaki may have looked frail but, as Light was pulled from his seat, it was either go willingly or be dragged. Ryuzaki was deceptively strong or else he was just really, really angry. Maybe both.
They ended up on the roof. The elevator ride up had been tense. Ryuzaki had remained turned away from Light, making it clear that he would not condone any protests or questioning.

It was mid-afternoon and the sun was shining. It had been some time since Light was outdoors. It would have been more enjoyable if he wasn't feeling so apprehensive and confused. He watched Ryuzaki.

The detective, upon reaching their destination, had gone to the spot furthest away from the door. Once there, he sat with his back against the wall. His legs were tucked tightly to his chest, arms wrapped completely around them. He did not look at Light, instead burying his face in his knees. Light had never seen him so closed in on himself. It was apparent that any effort to converse would be summarily ignored.

There was nothing to do but make himself comfortable, and wait it out.

He half-expected Watari to come barreling through the door. He had seemed livid. If Light was Ryuzaki, he wouldn't have had the nerve to dismiss Watari like that. Recalling his own experiences of being reprimanded, it was evident how much he differed from the detective. When his mother would scold him, he would listen quietly. It was the same for his father. Light always gave in. It wasn't often that he was rebuked by anyone else. He had always known what to say, and how to act, in order to avoid that kind of negative attention. That's why it was so disconcerting to see Ryuzaki. Not only did he make no effort to gain the approval of those around him, he refused to accept any criticism. In the warm sunshine, Light quietly turned this over in his mind.

Why was the detective able to withstand disapproval? Wasn't it easier to accede to it? This was greatly perplexing him, but his thoughts were halted by a distressing suspicion. Should Ryuzaki look at him now, Light was sure his expression would give his uncertainty away. He laid back, arm covering his eyes. Feeling a little more secure, he returned to his inner searching.

Ryuzaki did what he wanted, wore what he wished, and thought as he liked. This, invariably, caused a negative reaction from those around him. Light remembered the whispers of ridicule at the opening ceremony. They were centered on the detective's attire. From the collected students, there was the nasty speculation that he was poor. This led to the label of being an unaware idiot. There was more, and Light had been aghast at the malice. Still, it was true that he also was bewildered by the person beside him on the stage. Who comes to an important ceremony dressed in such a disheveled way? If Light was Ryuzaki, he would have been humiliated. However, when he looked from the corner of his eye, Ryuzaki had been unperturbed. It all just rolled right off him. He kept giving the opening address as if nothing touched him. There was another example which aptly illustrated that imperviousness.

Ryuzaki had taken some drastic initiatives in the Kira investigation. Light was sure the other team members had emphatically disagreed with his more devious maneuvers. Those plans had gone ahead anyway. Light was personally aware of this since many involved him.

Light had recently voiced his displeasure regarding that. By pinning Ryuzaki down, he had assertively made his feelings known. It had been obvious that Ryuzaki was alarmed and uncomfortable. Despite that, he had not apologized. In no way had he tried to explain himself or make amends to Light. Ryuzaki would tolerate an aggressive invasion of his personal space rather than retract and regret his opinions and actions.

Light realized this was very in keeping with his character. It was unfamiliar to him, personally, but…

'I don't hate it.'
The unbidden thought was startling, and there was more.

'I don't hate him either. My initial impression was right. He is intriguing.'

Any other person might have been satisfied with that, but Light was not just any other person. He took the new direction his mind had turned in, and ran with it.

'He…attracted me. He still does.'

The afternoon had worn on, dimming the area around him. Light was unaware of the environment, though. He was focused on what he had just consciously admitted. He was intrigued by Ryuzaki. Intrigued was another way of saying attracted. Even while accepting this truth, he was trying to find justification to reject it.

They were too dissimilar. Wasn't intellect the only thing they had in common? The detective was unscrupulous, hard-headed, and difficult. He constantly did things as he saw fit, uncaring of who he offended. Light wasn't like that. He was honest, agreeable, and always sought to create the least amount of problems around him. When Ryuzaki wasn't being arrogant and calculating, he was withdrawn and uncooperative. He was cold, disruptive, and…

'He listened to me. He understood what it felt like to be unseen.'

That was when everything he had desired from Ryuzaki, all along, impacted Light. He wanted the detective to see him, to believe in him, and to work with him on the investigation. Ryuzaki was around him constantly but it wasn't enough. Light wanted Ryuzaki to be with him not just physically, but mentally and emotionally too. That's why his silence had troubled Light so much. It was also why the rare times they connected had been so meaningful.

At one time, he had been unable to find anything likeable in Ryuzaki. He recalled feeling almost constantly infuriated with him. It was still unclear what exactly had caused that distaste. The easy answer was that Ryuzaki suspected him of being Kira and had used devious tactics against him. However, the same was true now, and Light did not view him in that harsh way. Instead, he found himself drawn to him. Since they were bound together, his thoughts had become occupied with Ryuzaki on a regular basis. Perhaps that was why Light was only now seeing how unique he was.

Light did not like where this was leading.

It was credible to wish for friendship with Ryuzaki. That may be incomprehensible to others, but Light could see the good qualities in him; along with the bad. Therefore, he was willing to pursue that kind of relationship. His feelings towards him were so intense, though. Sometimes it seemed like he had been on an emotional rollercoaster ever since Ryuzaki first appeared before him. Light had never met anyone who could make him so angry, confused, awkward, and insulted. Reluctantly, he conceded that he also never met anyone who made him so calm, excited, happy, and warm. He recalled the simple pleasure he received every time Ryuzaki accepted the daily dessert. When he listened to him about his mother, Light felt peaceful in a way he never had before. The prediction that there would be more moments like this made him happy. He looked forward to getting closer to Ryuzaki, little by little.

It's just that he was aware of the presence of something else too. It was when he looked at Ryuzaki and noticed his skin. It was very pale and looked soft. Or his hair. He imagined it would feel smooth. His hands appeared fine-boned and graceful. Light would have enjoyed tracing them with his fingers. When he saw Ryuzaki huddled protectively, he wanted to embrace him; and for him to welcome it. Previously, when Light held him down, it had been due to losing his temper. Underneath all that chaotic energy, though, was that something else. His bare chest had been so near to
Ryuzaki's. If he had moved closer...the desire had been there and it excited him. These were the inclinations he had absolutely refused to acknowledge until now. Perhaps, through analyzing the detective's unorthodoxy, his own unconventionality had risen to the surface.

Light came back to himself. Through sheer will, he halted the disturbing direction his thoughts had gone in. He was honest enough to admit that his feelings were beyond what constituted friendship. However, it was not agreeable to feel that way. He held no illusions about the society he lived in. Homosexuality wasn't considered a sin in Japan, but that didn't mean it was accepted either. In some respects, it had become a more tolerated lifestyle. There was more openness about it in larger cities, compared to the country side. Light lived in such a city. In his opinion, though, there was a large contrast between being accepted and being tolerated.

There were no laws against homosexuality, and there were legal protections to prevent discrimination based on sexual identity. That meant prejudice did exist. After all, why pass policies to prevent unfair practices if they didn't occur? Even with those rules, he would estimate that unjust attitudes did prevail; behind closed doors. You could tell a person they didn't get a job, or a promotion, for any reason that was feasible. Only a fool would honestly say it was because the applicant was gay. There was likely a minority who did believe sexual orientation was irrelevant, but it was the majority who held sway. The proof of this was that Japan's civil rights code did not contain any statutes extending equal rights to homosexual people.

Light had never had the provocation to think deeply on this subject. He knew about the legal aspect because he was a learned person. Anything he was taught or studied, regarding law and human rights, had been filed away for future reference. It was pertinent, especially given his career choice. He wasn't aware of how it was in other countries. Maybe that was something to look into.

He sighed heavily.

What was the point in learning how other nations handled this issue? It wouldn't change where he lived or what he experienced in his daily life. He wasn't even sure he was gay. After all, he had formerly been interested in girls and dated many. Light had also been intimate with a few of them. Thinking back on that confused him. He had gone on a dating spree in the last year. However, since being confined, he had not made contact with any of the women he had been seeing. He wasn't interested. Was that because of all the tumult he had been undergoing? The investigation? Ryuzaki? Or had he just never really been attached to any of them in the first place? He didn't see himself as a shallow man but...this line of thought was distracting him. He needed to come to a conclusion about Ryuzaki.

Light did feel attracted to Ryuzaki and wanted to get to know him better. It was unclear where the deeper feelings came from. He could acknowledge that they existed, but was unwilling to act on them. The thought of doing so made him anxious and uncomfortable. It was not that he agreed with prejudicial attitudes towards same-sex relationships. Truthfully, he thought it was unethical to judge another person on that basis. He had an open mind, but all that meant was he was part of the aforementioned minority. Light did not want to be in that position. There was a lot he wanted to accomplish in the future. He was uninterested in giving himself a handicap just as he was starting out.

And what of Ryuzaki?

The sun had almost disappeared from the sky. He tilted his head to look over at him in the fading light.

He sat in the same position, face still hidden in his knees. He was a paradox. Bold and introverted, aggressive and passive, remote and child-like; the man was all those things. His very nature made it
almost impossible to form a bond with him. Trying to build a relationship with such a person would be problematic. If he was even interested, which was unlikely. Ryuzaki seemed to accept isolation. The present circumstances were an exception. Undoubtedly, he would return to his solitary ways as soon as they apprehended Kira. His aloneness was possibly a preference, and it certainly was a defense. Ryuzaki gave no sign of having a need to be close to anyone. It was just like at the commencement address; no one seemed to touch him.

It was with a rueful smile that Light perceived the connection. Until he met Ryuzaki, he had been the same way. There was a difference, of course. His concern for how other people viewed him had always been prominent, unlike the detective. However, just like with the girls he had been seeing, Light wasn't really interested in the people giving those opinions. It was about him, not them. Maybe that was why he only now saw the unusual qualities in Ryuzaki, the ones which were evident to everyone else from the beginning. Quite simply, he had never bothered to really look.

Light had come full circle in that matter.

The amount of time and effort he put into Ryuzaki was unfamiliar to him. Apathy and disinterest had been replaced by action and involvement. It was only with Ryuzaki that he truly cared, on more than one level. Yet for reasons he was unwilling to examine closely, Light downplayed this revelation in his own mind. The painful clenching in his chest served as a warning to stop that train of thought. Instead, he brought his attention back to the present.

It must have been hours since they came to the roof. Light's button-down shirt had become restrictive and irritating. He still insisted on dressing impeccably even though all his time was spent in this building. He thought again of Ryuzaki, wearing his same outfit day after day. It looked comfortable. Maybe that was something he could do too. He decided to ask his father to bring some of his more casual clothes from home. Appearance was important, but perhaps his personal comfort was also worth consideration. He certainly knew where the detective stood on that debate. If he could do it, why shouldn't Light?

When he sat up, Light's stomach rumbled demandingly. Breakfast had been a long time ago. Ryuzaki probably needed to eat too. With a rush of inner relief, he identified that kind of concern as acceptable. It was what a friend felt for another friend. He vowed he would continue in his efforts to befriend Ryuzaki. Any other desires would, and should, be suppressed. They would lead to a place he didn't want to go, with a person who would probably flatly reject him. It was better this way.

He stood and cautiously approached the still detective.

"Ryuzaki?"

He lifted his head and looked at Light blankly.

"Are you okay? It's getting dark and I'm hungry. I'm sure you are too. Let's go back, all right? I'll make you a hot chocolate and you can have the dessert you didn't eat earlier."

An emotion entered Ryuzaki's eyes. If Light had to label it, he would have said there was softness there; and an inexplicable sadness. Without thinking, he knelt in front of him and placed his hands on his arms. Firmly, but gently, he pulled him to his feet. Wrapping an arm around his waist, he steered him towards the door leading back inside.

"Come on, once you eat something you'll feel better, you'll see."

To Light's surprise, this contact was allowed. He kept his arm around Ryuzaki as they traveled towards the kitchen. Perhaps the disagreement with Watari had a deeper effect than Light had
anticipated. Or it could be something else entirely. He honestly didn't know. There was so much he didn't know about him. He was curious about Ryuzaki, and that feeling was also a first for him. He realized there was one thing he could declare with surety.

It was unprecedented to be allowed this much physical closeness with the aloof detective. Light couldn't help feeling a tiny bit thrilled at this development. It was warm, comfortable, and incredibly arousing all at the same time: Ryuzaki's side against his side, Light's arm pressed against his back, and his hand lightly gripping his hip. However, he didn't allow himself to dwell on how good it felt to hold him closely. It wasn't about that. It was about being there for his friend.

After all, what were friends for?

*The Hierophant*

spiritual growth, the average person is happiest following worldly pursuits - money, family, and politics – however, there are certain people who (by temperament) feel very directly the spirit that runs through all our lives, a firm tradition, orthodoxy, conformity to society's ideas and codes of behavior - as well as (more subtly) a surrender of responsibility - the Emperor symbolized the rules themselves and their official enforcers - the Hierophant indicates the subject's own inner sense of obedience, moral development, seriousness, the adoption of a social mask, the search for spiritual truth, the search for meaning

The Fool, coming from the natural world (the Empress) and society (the Emperor), enters the Hierophant. The Hierophant indicates the intellectual tradition of society, and his education in that tradition; as well as spiritual growth and direction. To really discover the divine within, the Fool must undergo some difficult confrontations with himself. Similarly, to decide what is the moral thing to do in all situations might require a constant agony of choice.
Light was utterly mortified.

'I can't believe I did that! What was I thinking? I made my choice. We're friends, that's what I decided. Only friends, just friends, nothing else.'

Light's emotions were in a jumbled mess, in tune with his frantically beating heart.

'Now, he knows. He knows! I can't take it back. I must look like a fool. I am a fool!'

It was just past midnight. The bedroom was softly illuminated by lamp light.

Light lay under the covers, feigning sleep. Ryuzaki sat on his own bed, playing solitaire on his laptop. He looked completely at ease, as if nothing untoward had happened. Suddenly, it was unbearable. How could he be so unaffected while Light lay here, thoughts racing a mile a minute?

He needed to get away, to get some distance. If Light had that, maybe he could put his mind and emotions back in order. It would have been preferable to entirely leave the company of the detective. Since that was not possible, he did the next best thing.

Taking care to appear nonchalant, he rose and made his way to the bathroom. If the uninterrupted clicking of the mouse was anything to judge by, Ryuzaki did not even spare him a glance. He paid no attention to Light. This produced a dissonance within. The combination of relief, sadness, guilt, and resentment was very close to excruciating.

When the bathroom door closed, he expelled the breath he had been holding. It was grimly amusing that this was the only sanctuary he had. He needed to process all that had occurred but there were interfering factors. First, he forced his emotions aside. They were what had led to this impasse. Next, he turned his attention to how he physically felt. Light conceded that some of the culpability lay there too. There was a different solution for that problem, though.

The amount of stress in his body was incredible. It was bordering on painful. The enticement of a hot shower, followed by a soak in the bath, was too inviting to pass up. As well, with the covering noise of the running water, he would be able to release the worst of his physical tension. That was the most pressing matter at the moment. How it had come to this could wait until later.

When he stood naked, with warm water coursing over his body, Light mechanically reached between his legs. He was not normally inclined towards this sort of self-gratification but, being a young man, sometimes the needs of the body took priority. In the past when he had been aroused it was a necessary, although enjoyable, task to assuage it.

This time was different.

From the moment he touched himself, the form of Ryuzaki filled his mind. It was only an hour ago that he had tasted him. The sensory memory of the detective's lips caused the heat in his stomach to grow. Light's hand moved faster as he recalled the feeling of soft, pale skin and hard muscle. He explored Ryuzaki's chest again in his imagination. However, unlike reality, this time Light went further. With these images he had the most intense climax of his life.

It was after, while relaxing in the steamy hot bath, that the chagrin returned. It was doubtful he would find any sleep tonight. That, coupled with a fervent need to avoid Ryuzaki, made this a timely opportunity to gather his thoughts. He had to make sense of everything that had happened in the last
few hours. Just the memory of holding the detective in his arms made him cringe. What had driven
him to act so impulsively? Perhaps it was best to start from the point when everything had begun to
change.

It was only a week ago that he came to a decision about Ryuzaki. In that one afternoon, on the roof,
he made some disconcerting discoveries about himself. However, after thinking it through, Light had
decided he was unwilling to act upon his desire for him. The reasons he identified were sensible and
rational. Light had been comfortable with the conclusion he came to. He had been. He was sure of it.
Even now those reasons seemed relevant.

It wasn't that Light thought he could turn off his feelings. They were there and, unfortunately, were
not responsive to the logic of his common sense and brain. However, he had believed
acknowledgement of them would be sufficient. He did not have to do anything with them. At that
time, he would have been unable to predict that passion could override the tenet of his conviction;
and self-control. Now, it was clear that he had been deluding himself. With a heavy sigh, Light
recalled something he had previously figured out. It was when he confronted Ryuzaki about the
confinement.

'Suppressing feelings doesn't make them go away. If anything, it distorts and intensifies them.'

So, his resolve to create a friendship with Ryuzaki had been defeated by his…his what? His desire?
His romantic attachment? Longing?

Light didn't know what to call it. Only that it was there. And it made him do stupid things. Because
of it, he took actions that made him vulnerable. Actions that were irreversible. It would be
unsurprising if Ryuzaki wanted nothing to do with him now. That…thing inside him had most likely
derailed any chance of getting closer to the detective. It had been going so well too, ever since the
afternoon on the rooftop.

After the confrontation with Watari, Ryuzaki seemed upset. That had to be why he allowed Light to
put his arm around him. When they reached the kitchen, Light made dinner. He also prepared a hot
chocolate for Ryuzaki and served him cake. Light was particularly proud of that day's dessert
selection. He knew, from experience, that the seven-layer chocolate cake was delicious. It was with
anticipation that he watched Ryuzaki take the first bite. The reaction had not been a disappointment.

Ryuzaki's face had lit up with pleasure. A rare smile graced his features when he spoke.

"Light-kun, this cake is wonderful! I have never had anything quite like it."

His animated response had temporarily struck Light speechless. Another aspect of Ryuzaki's
personality was revealed to him. It was reminiscent of Christmas ads. The ones which showed the
faces of children alight with excitement and jubilation. Ryuzaki had that expression. Light
experienced it again, a gentle and simple happiness. It came every time the offered sweets were
accepted.

He smiled and spoke in a warm voice.

"That's high praise coming from a connoisseur like yourself! I'll get it again for you sometime."

"Yes. I would enjoy that. Connoisseur?"

Light's smile widened.

"Yes, a sugar connoisseur, or maybe I should say dessert pro?"
The detective affected a distressed expression. It had been slightly ruined by the faint smile playing across his lips.

"You are teasing me," Ryuzaki stated.

"No, no! I was sincerely complimenting you."

Ryuzaki smirked, and asked:

"What do you like to eat?"

Light replied nonchalantly.

"Me? I don't know. Anything, I guess."

"You have no indulgences?"

"Not really."

"That is terribly sad," Ryuzaki observed wistfully.

Now both men wore smiles. The detective leaned forward.

"There must be something, surely?"

"You're not going to be satisfied until I tell you my weakness, are you?"

"That is correct. You know mine so a balance must be established," Ryuzaki confirmed.

"A balance of the powers, is it? Well, if you must know, I have a fondness for potato chips," Light admitted.

"Yet I have never seen you eat them."

Light raised an eyebrow.

"Maybe you did and it slipped your mind?"

"Or perhaps you were so voracious about chips that I became disturbed," Ryuzaki pronounced with exaggerated seriousness.

"Are you saying you blocked it from your memories? I had no idea you were so sensitive!" Light said with mocking sympathy.

Were they flirting? Were they really flirting?

No.

Light commanded himself to calm down. This was banter between two friends. Ryuzaki was talking to him and, unexpectedly, displaying a playful side. They were both enjoying the conversation. Even so, he could hardly believe they were joking about the surveillance. Ryuzaki had perpetuated that on him. Light had only found out about it afterward. At the time, he had been deeply affronted even while understanding the reasoning behind it. The idea that he could tease and be teased about it truly surprised him.

Ryuzaki continued.
"I am as susceptible to trauma as the next person," he said solemnly.

"I think you're the one who's teasing now!"

"There is a 99.9 percent chance that you are correct."

"And what is the .1 percent composed of?" Light asked interestedly.

"I would answer that but I must drink my hot chocolate."

"An evasion, Ryuzaki? Or is it a feint?"

"Thank you for making it."

"A tactical withdrawal. You're welcome."

Light couldn't hide his grin as he returned to his half-finished meal.

It occurred to him that this exchange, while stimulating and entertaining, highlighted how little he knew Ryuzaki. How many different sides did he have? Light's genuine interest in him, while new, was gaining momentum. Maybe now would be an opportune time to appease that curiosity.

"So…Ryuzaki?"

The detective had finished eating. He sipped the hot chocolate, resting it on his knees. A quizzical look was directed at Light.

'What is Watari to you? Why did he speak to you like a parent? Where are your parents? Do you have brothers and sisters? Where did you grow up? Where do you usually live? Were you upset because of Watari? Or was it something else?'

Those were just some of the questions that Light would have liked to ask. Each one was rapidly examined and discarded. It wasn't worth ruining the mood if Ryuzaki reacted secretively or defensively.

'Do you still think I'm Kira?'

No, definitely not.

It was strange how that worked. It was often the most important things that were left unsaid, unasked. That was how it had always been for Light. It didn't matter, though. The answer to that question was apparent for all to see. His eyes fastened on the chain.

"Light-kun?"

Wasn't there something innocuous he could ask? Something he wanted to know? Anything to focus on besides the return of the pain in his chest?

A question the enigmatic man across from him would answer.

"How old…are you older than me?"

"Why does Light-kun wish to know?"

There it was.
Light had a theory about the way Ryuzaki addressed him. He would use the third person when he was uncomfortable, or maybe it was when he was uncertain. Despite that, Light pushed ahead. He wanted to regain the sense of camaraderie of only minutes ago. With an urgency that mystified him, he needed to.

"Well, we're friends, right? And I don't know even know the most basic things about you," Light said genially.

Ryuzaki stared at him, mutely. His gaze alternated between meeting Light's and looking down, at some point below eye-level.

Light continued amiably.

"I was interested but it's really not important. Normally I could tell, but you have a youthful appearance."

Ryuzaki tilted his head to the side, and looked at him with curiosity.

"Light-kun is deploying charm in order to gather information?"

"Have you heard the saying; 'you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar'?"

"I am an insect?"

Light grinned.

"That's your interpretation, not mine. I can go along with it, if you want," he offered.

He noticed the subtle signs of relaxation in the detective. Ryuzaki's hands, which had begun to tightly clench his knees, were now lightly resting on them. Most obviously, he was making eye contact and a bit of humor had returned to his visage.

"In order to prevent any more transparent attempts to manipulate me, I will answer your question. Yes."

"There, was that so hard?"

"Yes."

Light chuckled as he stood and started gathering the dishes.

"What are the odds of you telling me your exact age?" he wondered.

"In response, I will employ a saying too."

Light paused to take in his mirthful countenance.

"There is a 'snowball's chance in hell' that I will answer that question."

Light would have been stung by Ryuzaki's refusal to answer if he had not been laughing so hard.

In the days following that pleasant encounter, Light's affection had continued to grow. There had been little further conversation between them, but that was not an issue. After all, he was extremely busy with the Kira case. Finishing the program had become of paramount importance. The murders continued at an unrelenting pace. Every day that passed increased the pressure the team felt.
On a daily basis, Light would work with Watari. His assistance was invaluable. However, as with any computer program, unforeseen problems arose. It was with a heavy heart that Light informed the others of the delay. He had underestimated the completion date of the project. It would take, at the minimum, two more weeks to finish.

Light would spend a few hours a day in contact with Watari, either by phone or computer. The rest of his time was spent collecting, analyzing, and recording any and all Kira-related information and events. However, even amongst all this toil, there were moments of enjoyment. These mostly occurred when everyone else had left.

Light had decided to make it a point to sit down and have dinner every night. It was important to give his mind and body a rest. It also allowed him to spend uninterrupted time with Ryuzaki. They would exchange few words but, to Light, these meals were rejuvenating.

There was a sense of ease that he had never felt before. The change in their relationship had been quiet. Light wondered if this subtle shift signified true friendship. All he knew was that he felt relaxed in the presence of the detective. If he chose to speak, Ryuzaki would listen. If he chose not to, Ryuzaki would not press him. It was like he had no expectations of Light. Around him, Light did not have to be "the good son", "the prodigious student", or "the accommodating young man". The liberty of discarding those masks was enlightening. All his life he had donned them, never understanding the oppressive weight they inflicted.

He was brought out of his recollections by the sounds of movement. Ryuzaki must have finally gone to bed. The absence of light from under the door supported that. The bath water had become tepid. He would have liked to get out but decided to wait a bit longer. He wanted to be sure the detective was asleep before venturing back into the bedroom. Adding more hot water, Light settled in to wait.

He was calmer now. It was challenging, but necessary, to recount this day's events.

Yesterday's events, he thought dryly.

When had he strayed from his sleeping schedule? Oh, yes. That would be since he had been chained to Ryuzaki. Light had always been a very disciplined person. However, due to Ryuzaki's influence, that self-control was slipping more and more. He wished the only thing affected was his bed time. If only it could have been that simple.

'If it was, I wouldn't be hiding out in a bath tub in the middle of the night.'

He would give it a half hour. Just enough time to analyze all that had occurred in the last nineteen hours.

The day began like any other. Light was already hard at work when the other team members filtered in. He had exchanged pleasantries with his father and thanked him for bringing in another dessert. Later, during a coffee break, he brought the treat to Ryuzaki. He had been reading, with his back towards Light. To catch his attention, he lightly seized his shoulder. When Ryuzaki turned to look up at him, his body had remained relaxed under Light's hand.

In the past week, he had begun to touch the detective more. It was always in a casual and non-invasive way. For example, he would place a hand on his back when they walked together. Until now, every time Light touched him, Ryuzaki had stiffened imperceptibly. He wasn't sure if friends casually reached for each other, but he wanted Ryuzaki to open up to him more. He hypothesized that touching would begin to create a sense of familiarity between them.

That's why he had been pleased this time. When he laid a hand on Ryuzaki's shoulder, there was no
rejection. That good mood carried through for the rest of the day. Light worked extra hard to accommodate an earlier dinner break. He was greatly heartened by the progress that had been made with the detective. Eating together was something to look forward to.

Finally, the work day was finished. It was as the team was filing out that two people came in. Light didn't have a chance to say anything before he was lying flat on his back. Misa was a small, light person. Nevertheless, when she worked up a running velocity, she could probably topple just about anyone. Now, she lay on top of him.

"Oh, Light! Misa Misa missed you so much!"

"Misa! That hurt!"

"Oh, no! Misa didn't mean to hurt her Light! It's just that it's been so long. I saved all my hugs for now!"

Light was too busy extricating himself from her to respond. It wasn't easy since she stubbornly clung to him. Once standing, he looked at Matsuda.

"What are you two doing here?"

Misa had attached herself to his arm. Light's irritation must have shown on his face. Matsuda took a step back and awkwardly rubbed the nape of his neck.

"Misa Misa just came from a shoot. Since we finished early, I texted Ryuzaki to see if we could drop by. She's been talking about you non-stop. She really misses you."

"It's true, Light! Misa hasn't had a date with you since we moved here. I know you've been busy but Ryuzaki said it was okay. So, here I am! Let's have dinner, just the two of us!"

Light looked down at her entreatying face.

He sighed.

He didn't really understand the affection she displayed for him. It had no basis. After all, they barely knew each other. Still, it wasn't like he hated her.

"All right, Misa. Since you're already here, we can have dinner. But it will be Ryuzaki too."

"What? Misa wants to spend time alone with you!"

She turned towards Ryuzaki.

"Are you still being a pervert? Let Light…"

Light interrupted.

"That's enough, Misa! You wanted to come here and this is how it is. If you want to spend time together then it's going to be all three of us."

Misa had looked crestfallen.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I'll go make dinner. I brought lots of yummy things to eat."

Once she was gone, there was an awkward silence. Matsuda was looking at him in surprise. Ryuzaki was also examining him. Light had the sense they disapproved of the way he spoke to Misa. This
annoyed him. He hadn't asked for her to come here. Ryuzaki and Matsuda had arranged that. And now he was the bad guy? Because he wasn't overjoyed? Because he stopped Misa's rant towards Ryuzaki?

Matsuda had excused himself and left.

When he and Ryuzaki arrived at the kitchen, Misa had been busy preparing enough food for ten people. She chattered to Light as she bustled around. He listened with half an ear, responding only when necessary. Ryuzaki said nothing at all.

There was a selection of dishes to be had. It turned out Misa was a fairly good cook. Unfortunately, several foods were ones that Light disliked. He ate them anyway, not wanting to offend her. As the meal dragged on, Light was becoming more and more uncomfortable. His chest was squeezed so tightly that it felt like a vice was gripping it. He couldn't grasp the reason for it. At least not while simultaneously listening to Misa's barrage of prattle.

It was only after she had left, amid a flurry of hugs and drama, that the answer struck him. It was the knowledge of what she saw in him. Misa perceived Light how she wished to see him. She had no idea what was really there. The proof was in preparing foods he didn't like. How hard was it to ask him what he preferred to eat? It was also in how she barged in tonight. For the past month he had continually made excuses to avoid seeing her. Yet she came anyway, uncaring of his wants and plans.

Misa claimed she loved him. What a ridiculous thing to say. What did she love? Who did she love? She had obviously built up some sort of fantasy regarding Light. Perhaps another man would have been delighted to be the recipient of that blind devotion. She was an attractive and charming woman. He could see that. It was just that being on the receiving end of her…obsession was disturbing. It reminded him of all the other people who did not really see him. His parents, his teachers, and his friends were all like that too. It made him feel empty inside. And sad, angry, confused. All those divergent emotions melded together until it felt like they could crush him.

He turned to look at Ryuzaki. They were back in the operations room. The detective sat quietly, staring into space. He wanted to ask him why he had allowed Misa to visit. He knew Light was avoiding her. After all, he had always been in hearing range when Misa called. Light's evasive maneuvers should have been obvious to Ryuzaki. He should have known what they meant.

Light turned away, staring blankly at his computer screen.

That was the crux of it, wasn't it? Of all the people Light had ever known, the detective was the one who saw him. He really, genuinely saw the person beneath the facades he presented to everyone else. Or so Light thought. Had he made a big mistake?

The hard smile that curved Light's mouth had nothing to do with humor.

Could it be that he was just like Misa? Perhaps he had built up a fantasy in his head about Ryuzaki. What if he had been giving the detective attributes and qualities that had nothing to do with who he really was? If that was true, Light would feel pathetic. It would make him a person so desperate for companionship that he would lie to himself. It would also obliterate any and all hopes he had begun to tentatively hold.

To find someone who truly intrigued him had never seemed likely. Then he met Ryuzaki. The closeness Light felt towards him was still fragile. Nonetheless, it had been the spark for a profound discovery. Light, who was indifferent to everyone, had harbored a wish to connect with another person. It seemed possible with Ryuzaki. And because of that, he experienced a previously unknown
feeling. It had been hope. And now it was like it was being taken away.

Light couldn't stand it. It was intolerable.

It was getting late. There was no point in trying to work any longer. He hadn't touched his keyboard since he sat down.

"I'm tired," Light said shortly.

He stood and walked towards the elevator. Ryuzaki followed. The ride down had been tense and silent.

They were almost to the bedroom when Light had suddenly rounded on the detective.

"Ryuzaki, I want to ask you something."

Light had stepped towards him. Ryuzaki had retreated. Seeing this was going nowhere, Light curved his arm around him; backing him into the wall. He used his other arm to box him in.

"You heard me making excuses not to see Misa?"

Ryuzaki did not meet his gaze.

"Fine. Don't answer me. I already know that you did. So, why did you say she could come here tonight?"

The detective was slouched over, as usual. Light moved closer, causing him to straighten up. Their faces were now inches apart. A random, out of place thought struck Light.

'We're the same height, more or less.'

Giving himself an internal shake, he continued speaking.

"I don't hate her. I just don't like her romantically. That's why I don't see her unless I have to. You allowed her to come here. And you did it behind my back. Why did you do that?"

Light's hands balled into fists at his continued silence.

"Answer me, Ryuzaki. We can stay here all night until you do."

The detective spoke softly.

"Misa Misa wanted to see Light-kun."

"Don't adopt that, it sounds stupid. It's Misa or Amane. You've now stated the obvious while not answering my question at all."

Ryuzaki's eyes narrowed. The faint clenching of his jaw indicated the beginnings of anger.

"Light-kun and Misa Misa had been dating. Why would he not wish to spend time with her?"

"Are you serious?"

All the rage in Light suddenly deflated.

"Yes."
Light just stared at him. Ryuzaki kept speaking.

"Misa Misa is devoted to Light-kun. A person who adores him is Light-kun's type."

A terribly dark feeling was manifesting in Light. His breath was heavy as he sought to draw air through his constricted chest. A single thought repeated itself over and over in his stricken mind.

'I can't stand this.'

He dropped his hands onto Ryuzaki's shoulders.

"My type? You know my type?"

Ryuzaki's eyes darted between Light's hands. He looked apprehensive. Light knew he should walk away.

'I just can't stand this.'

"Release me, Light-k…"

He was cut off when Light moved forward, pressing their lips together. His hand gripped the back of Ryuzaki's neck. His other arm encircled his waist, drawing him closer.

The detective's mouth had been open and Light wasted no time. His tongue delved in, exploring and tasting. His hand moved from Ryuzaki's neck to run through his hair.

How he had longed to do that.

Light's eyes were open and, even at this range, he could clearly see Ryuzaki's shocked expression. The detective had probably never predicted this would happen. Neither had Light and, in that moment, it didn't matter. Light was intoxicated with the feel and smell of the person before him.

He moved away from his mouth to kiss his neck. It was then that Ryuzaki shuddered. His hands reached up to clasp Light's shoulders. He wasn't pushing him away nor was he drawing him nearer. Light took this as a sign to keep going. The excitement caused him to become rushed, aggressive.

He freed his hands and ran them down Ryuzaki's chest. Light reached under his shirt and eager fingers wandered over smooth skin. He rapidly, almost frantically, explored the length of his back, the curves of his ribs, and the hollow of his stomach. Light discovered that, despite his thinness, he had a fair amount of toned muscle. His pace slowed as he kneaded it. Light's lips and tongue traced a path up his neck. Ryuzaki's hands tightened on his shoulders.

Ryuzaki's breathing was becoming labored. Light felt hot gushes of air trickling over his face. It, along with everything else, aroused him with an intensity he had never experienced before. He covered Ryuzaki's mouth with his own, and swallowed his breath.

All of Light's previous anger and pain had been forgotten. He wanted to consume Ryuzaki. Touching him, kissing him was beyond all his expectations. He wanted more. He wanted everything.

He slipped his knee between his legs and thrust his hips forward, pinning him to the wall. Light pressed their bodies together and kissed him deeply. One hand brushed his nipple and the other slid down his side. Light's fingers had just begun to slip beneath the waist of his loose jeans when Ryuzaki suddenly gasped.

"S-stop!"
With that one word, the spell was broken. Light came back to himself and really looked at him. Ryuzaki's cheeks were flushed. His eyes were huge and the pupils dilated. They stared at one another, both breathing heavily.

Ryuzaki had pushed Light off with surprising strength. He had not said a word, simply turning away and heading for the bedroom. Once there, he released the handcuffs and quickly exited the room. This left Light alone to feel the rising tide of embarrassment and humiliation within. Despite that, his body remained aroused to an uncomfortable degree. It was the first time passion had ever overwhelmed his reason. Light was in a state of shock and disbelief.

The detective had returned shortly afterward. Unable to face him, Light pretended to sleep. And there ended the day's happenings.

Back in the present, Light drained the bath water. The room was dark and quiet as he climbed into bed. He could faintly see Ryuzaki. He lay with his back to Light, appearing to be asleep. For that, he was grateful. He really didn't have it in him to speak to the detective right now.

It was four in the morning. All the tumult of the day finally caught up with Light. His body felt heavy with fatigue. It was too bad his mind was still wide-awake.

He didn't feel he had really resolved anything. He still didn't know what he would say to Ryuzaki, how to explain himself. All that had happened regarding Misa still chafed. However, there was one thing he was sure of now. The realization came through recalling the encounter between them.

When he looked at it simply for what it was, he could not truly regret it. He liked Ryuzaki and he wanted to touch him. So, he had. He acted on something he sincerely wished for. He had been so concerned about whether it was acceptable. Now, he could see that other people weren't the only ones who disregarded his true self. Light was guilty of the same thing.

He turned to look at Ryuzaki. What was it about him that caused this reaction? Light had been through so many highs and lows since he entered his life. Did Light have an impact on him too? It was hard to tell with the detective. He played his cards so very close to his chest. Still, there was one thing that encouraged Light.

When he held Ryuzaki, there had been a response. It was subtle and, yes, he had eventually been pushed away. That may have had more to do with Ryuzaki's self-protective nature than Light. He doubted anything like that had ever happened to him before. No, he was certain about it. Light was the first person who had ever kissed and touched him in that way. It was possible he would never be allowed to do so again. The fact that he had been able to at all, however, made Light happy.

Finding a positive element helped ease the chaotic emotions rampaging within, finally allowing Light to fall into a deep slumber.

*The Lovers*

*a major choice - for example, between the outer path where a person's life is laid out for him and the inner path which can lead to a confrontation with his hidden desires, a major crisis, the first real choice a person makes independently - until sexual desire rouses itself most people are content to act out their parents' expectations of them - however, desire points a person where it wants them to go, reason controls and contains while passion breaks down all limits, a particular relationship has been or will become very important to a person - leading him to a new understanding of life,*
sharing, a need for healing, a relationship with a trial or choice involved, the subject is put to the test before he can enter the next stage of his development. preoccupation with the progress of an important relationship

The Fool has been shaped by the great forces of nature, society, and parents (the Empress, the Emperor, the Hierophant). In the Lovers, the individual emerges: a true personality with its own ideas and purposes, able to make its own choices based on its own assessment of desires and responsibilities. The Fool is now ready to learn about temptation, decision, attraction, choice, friendship, union with a significant other, sexual adjustment, and romantic relationships.
Light woke to bright sunshine cheerfully streaming through the bedroom windows, accompanied by silence.

It was peaceful. Consequently, it took a moment for the realization to hit. If the sun was high in the sky then it meant the day was well underway. A quick look at the clock confirmed this. It was almost noon. Light went from sleepy grogginess to charged alertness in an instant. He was late; really, really late.

He hastily rose from bed and headed for the bathroom. Light had no idea how he slept through the alarm or what he was going to tell the rest of the team. He was a very punctual person at all times, and was already feeling acutely embarrassed and stressed over this lapse. He would take ten minutes, no, five minutes to get ready. He would tell the team he had a late night and that was why he overslept. Also, he would make up the missed time and…

Light's frantic thoughts stilled as new information was presented. The bathroom door was closed. He carefully tried the knob. It was locked too.

Ryuzaki.

The memory of last night's events suddenly returned. He had been unable to ascertain the best way to approach Ryuzaki, regarding what occurred in the hallway. Sleeping on it, unfortunately, had not yielded any insight. This indecisiveness held Light briefly immobile, hesitant and unsure.

'What do I say to him? Should I tell him the truth? That I'm…No, I can't think properly right now. I'm late. I have to get to work. I'll deal with this later.'

He briskly rapped on the door.

"Ryuzaki?"

The only answer was the sound of the shower being turned on.

In the ensuing interval of time, there were many things that ran through Light's thoughts. First and foremost was Ryuzaki. He mentally constructed various scenarios in an effort to determine how to speak and act towards him. However, nothing seemed like the right way. The correct actions and words eluded him.

He eventually gave up on this fruitless exercise in view of two factors. Firstly, he would need to assess Ryuzaki's mood and response towards him. That information was vital in order to know how to proceed. Secondly, it had been thirty minutes and the shower was still going.

At this point, Light was sitting on his bed; watching the clock. Right now, the team would be eating their lunches and wondering where he and Ryuzaki were. It wasn't like he could call and let them know what was happening. There was no phone in the room. He couldn't even leave without the detective accompanying him.

'How long does it take to have a shower?'

As the minutes continued to tick by, Light's nervousness began to fade. It was slowly being replaced by irritation.
Ryuzaki showered every day and it always took around ten minutes. He also tended to be done in the bathroom before Light was even out of bed. Had he changed his routine due to Light's late rising? Even so, taking so much time was inconsiderate. They were both really behind schedule.

The detective knew that work began at seven in the morning. That was why, daily, the alarm went off at six-fifteen. Thinking on this caused Light's tension to escalate. It had now been forty-five minutes. It was taking all he had not to go and pound on the bathroom door. That was not how he wanted to greet Ryuzaki this morning. Nevertheless, Light grit his teeth as irritation intensified to anger.

Taking deep breaths, Light attempted to gain equilibrium. It wasn't Ryuzaki's fault that he had overslept. It was strange though. An examination of the alarm clock revealed the correct time was set. However, it also revealed that it had not been turned on. It was possible that Light turned it off in his sleep. No, that was improbable. Maybe he forgot to turn it on? No, he distinctly remembered doing so.

Which left…Ryuzaki?

He was, thankfully, distracted from that line of thought by the sound of the door opening. Light looked up to see the detective standing still, watching him.

Ryuzaki wore no discernible expression. His cheeks were flushed, and damp hair clung to his head and face. It made him appear softer, more approachable, as the warm sunlight illuminated his pale features. Light was struck with how attractive he found this person. He forgot his anger and simply stared.

When Ryuzaki started rubbing one foot over the other and dropped his gaze; Light perceived the silence had stretched too long. It was obvious that he was disconcerted, uncomfortable. This was unknown territory for them both. Watching his fidgeting caused the insight Light had been desperately seeking to manifest. If this was hard for him, it was most likely overwhelming for Ryuzaki.

Suddenly, Light knew exactly how to handle the situation.

Confidently.

"Good morning, Ryuzaki."

"Good afternoon, Light-kun."

"Ah, yes, about that…I didn't hear the alarm."

Light stood and started moving towards him. Disappointingly, Ryuzaki turned away to walk to the other side of the room. So, that's how it was going to be. He pressed on.

"Did you?"

Ryuzaki paused.

"Hear the alarm, I mean," Light clarified.

His back was to Light. He did not turn around when he replied.

"No," he said softly.
"Oh. So, you waited all this time for me to wake up? You must be hungry. Just give me five minutes to get ready."

"It's fine. I am not hungry."

"Okay, well, that's...good then. Look, if this happens again, you can go ahead and wake me up."

Ryuzaki turned to look at him. For the briefest moment, Light saw coldness in his eyes. It was a flicker, almost immediately replaced by blankness.

"Yes, Light-kun," he answered tonelessly.

True to his word, Light was ready in five minutes. Ryuzaki quietly followed as he made his way towards the operations room. He pondered what he had seen in his expression.

'What I thought I saw. He's still talking to me so that's not going to be an issue. Maybe it was my imagination? Or it could be he...'

He was startled out of his thoughts by his father's voice.

"Light! Where have you been? Is everything all right?"

Light carefully schooled his features, erasing all signs of confusion and doubt. He raised his head to meet Soichiro's worried countenance.

"Good afternoon, dad, everyone. Everything's fine. I just overslept," he said calmly.

"Whoa! Are we on candid camera? Or is it April Fool's Day? You're never late!"

This came from Matsuda. Everyone, except for Light and Ryuzaki, chuckled at the good-natured jibe. Light forced a cheerful smile before replying.

"I know. I'm really sorry and it won't happen again."

"Don't worry about it, son. We all know you've been working the hardest of any of us on the case. It's to be expected that you might need to sleep in once in awhile. Watari's been trying to contact you about the project. Do you want to talk to him right away or do you need breakfast?"

"No, I'm fine. I'll contact Watari."

Soichiro leaned around him to speak to the detective.

"How about you, Ryuzaki? Can I get you anything?"

There was a small silence until Light stepped in.

"He's not hungry, dad. Thanks, though."

For the next half hour, Light worked with Watari. They were making progress with the program. He hoped Watari would be able to spend the rest of the day with him, ironing out the kinks. He liked collaborating with him. They shared the same diligent, intelligent approach to professional matters.

Light was interrupted by a faint tug on the chain. He glanced at the detective.

"What is it, Ryuzaki?"
"I'm hungry."

Light paused, focusing his attention on him.

"I thought you said you weren't."

"I did not have breakfast or lunch. I'm hungry now."

Light felt a stab of guilt.

"Sorry. Just let me sign off with Watari and then we can go to the kitchen."

"That is unnecessary. Light-kun is busy. I will bring something to eat so he may continue his work," Ryuzaki said helpfully.

"So, we'll be a couple minutes?"

"Yes."

"Fine. I'll tell Watari to hang on."

It was almost an hour later when Light finally returned to his desk. He was dismayed to find a message from Watari, explaining he was unable to wait. The reason was that he had to run an errand for Ryuzaki. Light read that line twice.

An errand for Ryuzaki.

The same Ryuzaki who couldn't decide what he wanted to eat; finally, eventually choosing pancakes. Who burned his food and had to re-make it, then dropping it on the floor and needing to re-make it yet again. Ryuzaki, who had to go to the bathroom twice. All of the above was why it had taken Light so long to come back. The shower, the food, the errand; what interesting timing.

He turned to the detective.

"Did you send Watari on an errand today?"

"Yes."

Ryuzaki looked towards the ceiling, as if considering something. Seeming to come to a conclusion, he met Light's eyes.

"No," he said.

Light sat back in his chair, struggling to appear relaxed. He stared intently.

"Which is it? Yes or no?"

"No."

'Is he lying right to my face?'

Light resolved to get to the bottom of this.

"Watari wrote that you sent him on an errand. Could it be that he made a mistake? Perhaps he was in a rush, and made an error?" Light speculated.

"No."
Light valiantly tried to quell the exasperation rising within.

"What does that mean, Ryuzaki?" he asked tersely.

The detective shrugged.

"It is unimportant," he answered in a bored voice.

Light moved his chair closer to him. He leaned forward and rested his elbows on his knees.

"No, I really want to know," he said quietly.

When he did not respond, Light moved closer still; until his legs were touching his chair. The effect was immediate. Ryuzaki hugged his knees tightly to his chest and looked away. Light did not want to use this method, but challenging physical boundaries was a proven way to get a reaction.

He was so focused on Ryuzaki that he failed to notice everyone had stopped working. All eyes were fastened on this tense exchange.

Light spoke again, even more quietly.

"So, tell me," he ordered.

He scowled when Ryuzaki's face took on a mulish quality.

"Every week Watari departs to purchase necessities for me."

"He went to do an errand for you. How, exactly, is that not you sending him to do it?" Light said impatiently.

"Light-kun asked if I sent Watari today. I did not specifically ask him that."

Light was just about to respond, caustically, when he felt a hand on his shoulder. He looked up at his father.

"Now, now, you two. Settle down."

Aizawa stood beside Soichiro. He addressed Light when he spoke.

"It sounds like Ryuzaki is saying Watari does this as part of a regular duty. It's his job, and not a specific request every time."

Aizawa looked at the detective, a question on his face. Ryuzaki nodded once in affirmation. He still had not actually spoken to the other team members. Not once, in all this time.

Soichiro's hand briefly tightened on Light's shoulder; attempting to draw his attention away from the stubborn, infuriating, confusing,…

Light caught himself. He did not want this. He used the full force of his will to withdraw from Ryuzaki, who was obviously provoking him. It was true that there were many scathing comments on the tip of his tongue, but…

'That is not how this is going to go.'

Tearing himself away from the detective, Light looked at his father.
"Well, since you have to wait for Watari to return, maybe we could put our heads together on the most recent heart attack victims," Soichiro said genially.

Matsuda had approached and now spoke up.

"Yeah, we could really use your help!"

Light looked back at Ryuzaki as the assenting voices of Soichiro and Aizawa washed over him. This time, it was more than a flicker. The chill in Ryuzaki's eyes was very apparent. It might have disturbed Light on any other occasion. However, right now, he was sure his eyes were searing into the detective with a furious glow of their own.

The rest of the day passed amid a rush of activity. Matsuda and Aizawa had recently returned from an information gathering trip. It had been undertaken in response to a suspicious death in another non-criminal. A middle-aged man, with no family history of heart disease, had died of a heart attack. Questioning of the man's relatives revealed he had lived a healthy lifestyle. He had worked for one of Japan's multi-national corporations.

This victim was not the first one they had found. Relatively healthy men, working for one of the big companies, who had died of heart attacks. There was certainly a possibility that the men died naturally. After all, even without a family history of heart disease, there were many other factors that could cause illness. For example, stress and overworking. However, given Kira's power, it was also possible that the deaths were unnatural. It gave Light an uneasy feeling. If what he was beginning to suspect was true, the case would become only more difficult to solve. It would take longer and more people would die in the interim. He mentally reviewed Kira's psychological profile.

Kira claimed he killed for justice. Therefore, the slaying of criminals was a simplistic progression from that reasoning and ideology. Their profile labeled him as a megalomaniac. He thought he was improving the world by mass-murdering criminals, and that he had the right to do so. Initially, he likely believed he was guided by Providence. However, when he killed law enforcement agents, it was evident he had moved beyond that. He felt the laws and rules of society, of humanity, did not apply to him. He was no longer representing divine will; he was a deity himself. An insane human with a God complex.

The company men who had died did not fit the profile of Kira and his victims. Of course, it was not definite that they were murdered by the vigilante. Still, it raised a red flag. Light was nothing if not thorough. Watari did not contact him again so he devoted all his attention to this matter.

He was trying to find a link between these seemingly unrelated men, a commonality that would cause them to be a target. This involved a great deal of research and time. Once again, he rued the lack of progress on the computer program. No matter how intelligent he was, or hard-working, he could only move at a human's pace. Plus, there was some protected information he could not access.

He knew Ryuzaki could. He also knew his aid would be invaluable. The rest of the team were more than pulling their weight, but they lacked the detective's intellect, creativity, and ingenuity. Light was certain he would have been able to add to the developing theories, and contribute some of his own. Unfortunately, there was no compromise on that issue. Ryuzaki would not involve himself in the Kira investigation. Light was able to push or cajole him in other areas, but he was intractable about the case.

It was extremely frustrating.

Light leaned back in his chair. When he started to feel like this, it was time to take a break. It gave him the opportunity to analyze recent events. His goal was to obtain rational comprehension and,
from there, a clear direction to move forward in. Ambiguity was uncomfortable for a person like Light. It impaired his logic and distracted him.

There were two people who were getting to him; Ryuzaki and Kira. In some ways there was a similarity between them, at least for Light. He felt a little unsettled. Even if it was only in his own mind, he did not like putting the detective in the same category as a psychopath. However, he couldn't deny that they had a few things in common.

First, they were full of contradictions. Just when he thought he understood their mind-set, it would randomly change. Kira became another person, or a second Kira. It could be there was now a third Kira, although it was still too early to be certain about that. It was even possible that there was only one Kira all along and, over time, he had simply expanded his list of targets.

And then there was Ryuzaki. The man embodied incongruity. He was anti-social and yet chose, of his own free will, to chain another person to him. He was a world-class detective, but would not participate in the capture of one of the worst serial killers in history. He interacted with Light and then ignored him. Today, after speaking in a soft voice, he watched Light with icy eyes. That particular inconsistency really bothered him. He could admit this, to himself. He wasn't exactly sure why, though. Maybe it was because it had happened only hours ago. He thought for a bit. Yes, that was probably it. Light moved on.

Second, they caused a great deal of conflict. There was already a divide between those who supported Kira and those who condemned him. On a personal level, Light's whole world had been turned upside down because of Kira. If not for him; he would be living a normal life, going to school, and working towards his future. Outwardly, Light was stoic about his situation. Inwardly though, he often felt intense pressure.

Directly relating to that followed Ryuzaki. He suspected, likely believed, Light was Kira. He was no longer imprisoning him in a cell but the present circumstances were a confinement, nonetheless. The detective, at one time or another, had infuriated everyone on the team. Even Light, normally calm and good-natured, had succumbed. Today, when Ryuzaki antagonized him, had been a close call. He was thankful the others had intervened. It gave him the opportunity to regain control. After last night, he sincerely wished to avoid fighting with Ryuzaki.

Third, he was drawn to them both. He was going to capture Kira. No one was forcing Light to participate in the case. It was of his own volition to work as hard as he was. It was important to him, on many levels. He wanted to stop an evil force. He believed the rights of all people, criminal or innocent, deserved to be protected. He wanted to clear his name. Those were all reasons that readily came to mind.

There was something else too, but he couldn't identify it. It was on such a deep level that he was unable to decipher it. A force that drove him to never give up on the investigation, no matter what obstacles barred his path. It was vague, indistinct...Light gave himself a mental shake. If it was truly important then it would have been apparent. It wasn't so Light dismissed it. He already had enough motivation to apprehend Kira.

Kira occupied his thoughts during the work day. At any other time, it was Ryuzaki. He attracted Light, on many levels. His intellect was stimulating, outstanding. Light didn't think he could ever be bored in his company. The complexity of his brain captivated Light even while challenging him.

His personality was an endless source of mystery, anxiety, irritation, happiness, and; above all, fascination. Light had never been faced with someone he could not easily classify. He was unused to being confounded by the actions and words of another person. Unexpectedly, he did not dislike it. It kept him on his toes and he enjoyed that. He wanted to see all the different sides Ryuzaki had,
especially the ones he had never shown anyone before.

When he clutched Light's shoulders the previous night, Ryuzaki had displayed sensuality. He would probably never admit it but that, and his quivering breath, indicated pleasure. That was one side Light wished to experience again, and soon. It pleased him that he was the first to hold him. Now that he had, he didn't want anyone else to.

'When did I become a possessive person?'

The thought was baffling. It did not fit in with his self-image but existed anyways. Perhaps it had been latent, waiting for a catalyst in order to emerge. All this time spent with Ryuzaki, having him all to himself, the conversations they shared, the way he would not speak to the rest of the team; only to Light. These were all part of it. Mostly though, it was through touching him. Casually at first, and then in passion. It was already more progress than he could have hoped for and it wasn't enough. Not after last night.

What he desired was everything. To have Ryuzaki naked beside him, to explore and taste every inch of his body, to know him, to take him;

Everything.

In relation to that, there was one other thing he wanted from Ryuzaki. It was the most important element and also the one most difficult to attain. He needed him to be willing, to wish for Light to touch him. That, in itself, was the biggest contradiction of all. Hoping the aloof detective, who eschewed contact and connection, would welcome him. Light recognized the opposition in himself too. There were any number of willing partners he could have, yet he chose this person.

The Untouchable Man.

Who thought he was Kira, or one of them.

Who had regarded him with Arctic-level iciness only today.

Far from relaxing Light, this internal dialogue was introducing more complexity and doubt. He was discovering needs and wishes he had never expected to have. And hope, that inexplicable and tenuous feeling. What he wanted with Ryuzaki sprang from it. So naive and unrealistic. Yet he couldn't discard it. No matter what.

Light felt a headache beginning to pinch his forehead. Abandoning his thoughts, he concentrated on massaging the pain above his brow. Thankfully, everyone had left and it was quiet. He was avoiding looking at Ryuzaki. He had no desire to be pinned with those cold eyes again.

That was why he jumped a little when a hesitant voice came from beside him.

"Is Light-kun in...pain?"

When he looked at him, Light was greeted with a concerned expression. It was so surprising that he took a few seconds to answer.

"I just have a headache. It's nothing, really."

"Light-kun should take some medicine. It is imperative to treat headaches as soon as the symptoms appear."

Ryuzaki stood.
"Please follow me."

"It's really not necessary. I'm probably just tired."

This was said to the detective's back as he led them towards the elevator. A button was pressed for a lower floor, one Light had never been to. They walked until they arrived at an open door. It was a small restroom.

"This is where medications are stored," Ryuzaki explained.

He glanced at Light.

"Does Light-kun require aspirin or acetaminophen?"

He had the medicine cabinet open and was inspecting the various bottles. Light moved closer to peer over his shoulder.

"I usually take aspirin. That brand, the one furthest to the left."

Ryuzaki took the bottle from the shelf and started to turn around. He immediately collided with Light, who had missed his cue to step back. The ever-increasing pain of the headache delayed his reactions. Therefore, he was still standing directly behind him, at an angle to the door. Ryuzaki clearly had meant to exit the room, but was now blocked. They stood, unmoving; bodies touching at several points.

Awkwardness prevailed.

Light was so close to him that, looking down, he could detect a flush beginning to encompass his fair skin. It was an unexpected development that proved Ryuzaki did respond to him. This knowledge, and the warmth he felt rising in his own body, made Light want to pull him into his arms. He resolutely stifled the impulse.

'No. It's too soon. We haven't talked about last night, nothing's resolved.'

"Sorry, I'm in your way," Light said courteously.

He moved back and deferentially allowed Ryuzaki to precede him into the hallway. Light inwardly mused over the color that had appeared on his cheeks. He recalled Ryuzaki's face had also been reddened that morning. At the time, he assumed it was generated by the heat of his abnormally long shower. A small smile played across his lips as he thought of the other possibility.

When they entered the elevator, the detective pushed the floor for their quarters.

Once they reached the room, he brought a bottle of water and delicately placed two pills into Light's hand.

"Light-kun should go to sleep now. I will leave the medicine on the nightstand in case he requires more."

Light, though bemused by this abrupt change, was also touched.

"Thank you."

Ryuzaki nodded and headed for the bathroom.

Watching his retreating figure, Light called out:
"You're very kind, aren't you?"

The detective stopped. When he turned to face Light, a faint smile curved his lips.

"No. I really am not."

'What does that mean?'

"Good night, Light-kun," he said softly.

"...Good night, Ryuzaki."

The next morning, Light woke to a dim room. There was a slight glow directly in front of the closed curtains. His eyes fastened on Ryuzaki, who sat reading by the muted light.

It was peaceful. His headache was gone, but he was still a little tired. Wondering what time it was, he glanced at the clock. It was ten in the morning. Light went from lazy relaxation to heart-pounding wakefulness in an instant. He was late. Not as late as yesterday, but mortifyingly tardy nonetheless.

"Ryuzaki! It's ten in the morning!"

The detective looked up from his novel.

"Yes."

Light was on his feet and already in motion, heading for the shower.

"Why didn't you wake me? I said you could."

He paused, waiting for a response.

"Light-kun was ill. It is important for recovery to have a proper rest," Ryuzaki said firmly.

"Well, that is true, but…"

"Do not worry. I informed Watari of the situation."

Light peered at him closely, trying to read him.

And giving up.

"Thanks, Ryuzaki. That's very...considerate of you."

"I'm sure Light-kun would do the same for me. Is the headache still present?"

"...No, it's gone. I'll be about ten minutes and then we can go."

"Light-kun may take his time. There is no rush," he said airily.

Light, true to his word, was ready in ten minutes. He was anxious to get to work, feeling the stress of being late for the second day in a row. He supposed Ryuzaki had meant well, allowing him to sleep in. Light couldn't fault him for looking out for his health. If anything, the detective showing concern for him was a reason to celebrate.

It was.

A vigorous and sincere attempt to convince himself failed miserably.
'What is going on here?'

When they arrived, everyone crowded around Light; radiating sympathy and concern. It had taken a bit longer to get there than usual. Ryuzaki forgot his book so they had to turn back to retrieve it. Next, when they were already on the moving elevator, he suddenly remembered he left his cell phone in yesterday's pants. After backtracking one more time, they finally made it to the operations room.

"Are you sure you're all right, Light?" Soichiro asked worriedly.

"It wasn't a bad headache, dad. I took some medicine and it's gone now."

"It's been a while since you had one of those, hasn't it? You used to get them a lot when you were a child. Maybe you need to take a day off."

Light couldn't help but notice the way Matsuda and Aizawa perked up with interest. They had all been working seven days a week for a long time now.

"There's no time for that. I missed Watari yesterday so I need to work with him as much as I can," Light said firmly.

Matsuda piped up.

"Well, you can't work with him right now. He called to say he was going on another errand for Ryuzaki."

Light rounded on Ryuzaki. He had his side to him, thumb to his mouth. He was just opening his mouth to speak when he felt Soichiro's hand on his arm.

"Before you start working today, I want you to have a good breakfast. Watari will be back later. In the meantime, you need to take better care of yourself," he said sternly.

Light smoothed the glare from his features before turning back. He nodded a grudging assent.

Ryuzaki followed as he led the way to the kitchen. Light was hungry but would have preferred to get to work immediately. However, it was clear that his father would not be dissuaded. Being the center of this kind of attention was not agreeable. He felt like a child being told what to do because he couldn't be trusted to do it for himself. The lateness only made it worse. And Ryuzaki...

"He's doing this on purpose. I know it. I know he is!"

Light, by this point, was putting bread in the toaster. He thought furiously on what his next move should be. It was becoming increasingly obvious that Ryuzaki was spoiling for a fight. So be it. Light would give...No, he would not give it to him. Forcing his confusion and anger aside, he spoke calmly.

"Do you want something too? I can make you whatever you want."

"I'm not hungry."

'But I bet you will be in a half an hour or so. Just about the time I'm getting fully involved in whatever I'm doing.'

"All right, Ryuzaki. But I have a lot to do today and won't be able to take a break until dinner. So, I'll prepare some fruit and tea that you can have at your desk. And there's the dessert my dad brought
too. Is that okay?"

The detective's eyes hardened. When he spoke, his conciliatory tone did not match his expression. Just like Light.

"Thank you, Light-kun."

"You're welcome, Ryuzaki."

Light moved a little closer to him.

"It's strange that Watari went on another errand today," he remarked.

Ryuzaki looked aside and remained silent.

"It's going to take a bit longer for the tea. Why don't we sit down so I can eat my toast?"

With that, he quickly surged forward. Taking his arm, he steered him towards the table. Light placed his plate down without releasing him. Pulling a chair out, he guided Ryuzaki into it and then moved his own chair until it was only inches from his. He slid his hand down to clasp his wrist, and sat.

He watched as Ryuzaki drew his legs to his chest, taking care not to touch Light's. He felt the tension in the wrist he had secured. Taking a leisurely bite of his breakfast, Light smiled warmly.

"Is it that sometimes Watari has to do errands for you more than once a week?"

Ryuzaki was looking to the side, fingers of his free hand tapping his knee in an agitated manner.

'I wonder what you're going to say.'

"No. He..."

He was trying to pull his arm away. Light tightened his grip and leaned forward. Ryuzaki's arm went limp.

"Yes? He what?" Light asked interestedly.

"I asked him to purchase more medicine for Light-kun. In case he is afflicted with another headache," he answered sullenly.

A picture of the almost full bottle of aspirin swam into Light's mind.

He let go and leaned back.

"Why, that's very thoughtful of you. Thank you, Ryuzaki."

The detective was rubbing his wrist where Light had gripped it. His only answer was an icy glare.

Light finished his toast, and then got up to wash and prepare the fruit. He put the finished product in a covered bowl, and grabbed the teapot and sugar. It was quite the balancing act. Of course, Ryuzaki did not offer to help out.

The rest of the day was busy. He was able to liaison with Watari and they spent several hours in communication. Once Watari had signed off, Light looked over the latest Kira victims. He compensated for his recent lateness by working well into the night.
Lying in bed later, he concluded it had been a productive day. There had been some interruptions. There were the almost hourly bathroom trips that Ryuzaki absolutely had to take. Then there had been the need to take various other jaunts. The detective wanted another book, or to take a little walk. Because, of course, his legs were a bit cramped. Through it all, Light had responded in an amiable and cooperative fashion.

As he drifted off to sleep, he wondered what else Ryuzaki was going to do. And how much longer he could accommodate this behavior before exploding.

He woke to grey light coming from an overcast sky.

The sound of the shower was the only noise in the room. He rolled over to check the time. The numbers on the alarm clock were flashing. Ah, it was a power outage this time. Checking his watch, he saw it was eight in the morning. Late again, he thought with grim resignation. Rain began to splatter against the windows.

Light's headache was back. He sluggishly rose from bed and sat facing the bathroom door. Last night, Ryuzaki had brought his laptop to the room. It lay on the table. He suspected the detective had access to all the building's functions on that computer. Like say, the electricity. The shower stopped.

He held his head in his hands, kneading the painful area. He hadn't been able to predict that Ryuzaki would go this far. A morbid fascination gripped Light as he waited for him to emerge.

'I wonder how he'll act.'

When the door opened, Light stayed where he was and pleasantly called out:

"Good morning, Ryuzaki."

He stopped and fixed Light with a blank gaze. When he spoke, his voice was emotionless.

"Good morning, Light-kun."

"Did the power go out?"

"Yes."

"Was it the whole city?"

"No."

"Just this building?"

"Yes."

'Naturally. '

"Maybe you should get somebody to look into that," Light suggested.

"Yes."

Light stood up. Ryuzaki stepped back.

"Give me half an hour and I'll be ready. I need to take a shower," Light said.

The detective nodded and retreated a few more paces as Light walked by him, into the bathroom.
The warm water of the shower was soothing. Light stood, motionless, beneath the spray for quite some time. Normally, he would have rushed. However, what did it matter?

*I'm already late. He's made sure of that.*

Light might have become angry if he had the energy. The sharp pain stabbing at his temples was dulling his senses. Thankfully, it would probably do so for the rest of the day. Any aid, even this, to help him keep his composure. He suspected reacting strongly to Ryuzaki's sabotages would only cause them to increase. In this foggy state of mind, he was unable to imagine what else he could do. However, it was safe to rely on the detective's resourcefulness to think of many, many more ways to spite Light. A myriad of ways.

When they arrived at the operations room, it was to another flurry of concern and worry for Light. When Soichiro noticed his headache, it was decided that the next day would be a vacation day. Aizawa wanted to spend time with his family, and everyone was feeling a little fatigued.

Light would have protested but the stormy weather, and pulsing pain of the headache, made him lethargic and quiet. As well, Watari was out of town for the next three days to attend some event, representing L.

*Yes, of course he is.*

For the rest of the day he did what work he could, tolerating Ryuzaki's frequent interruptions. Everyone departed a little earlier than usual, anticipating tomorrow's day off. His father took a moment to admonish Light to rest. Rather than making him defensive as it normally did, Soichiro's concern warmed him.

He decided to take his dad's advice and have an early night. Ryuzaki followed as he led them to the bedroom. Not a word was exchanged and that was fine with Light. He prepared for bed as did the detective.

It was relaxing. He lay in the darkness listening to the gentle patter of rain on the windows. Ryuzaki's shifting drew his attention. Light spoke softly.

"Has anyone ever told you that you're an extreme person?"

A quiet voice answered.

"What does Light-kun mean?"

*Extremely childish.*

"You put your all into the things you do."

"My all?"

*Extremely passive-aggressive.*

"Yeah."

There was a lengthy silence.

"Yes. I have been told that," Ryuzaki said.

Light chuckled.
"I'm not surprised. Good night."

"...Good night, Light-kun."

In the fifteen minutes it took for Light to fall asleep, he came to a resolution. He had all day tomorrow. It was just going to be him and Ryuzaki.

It was time to clear the air.

The Chariot

determination, being able to carry on, courage, great effort, self-control, inner struggle, steering a middle course, balancing conflicting emotions, the subject is successfully controlling some situation through the force of his personality, a situation contains some contradictions and these have not been resolved but are simply held under control, success, the personality in charge of the world around it, powerful will, the triumphant ego which controls rather than resolves the basic conflicts of life, the persona - as the subject has grown he has created a kind of mask to deal with the outside world - however, he can too easily confuse this successful persona with the true self, the outer personality, the ego is limited and so is speech - by forming a description of the world, by giving everything a label - the subject erects a barrier between himself and experience - by relying too much on rational speech - he ignores the experiences that cannot be expressed in words

Having learned through the Lovers about duality, choice, light and dark; the Fool must now learn to control and balance opposing forces to run a steady course. The Chariot shows the developed ego. The Fool has absorbed the lessons of the earlier archetypes (the Magician, the High Priestess, etc.) and the adolescent period of searching and self-creation has been passed. Now, the adult emerges; successful, admired by others, confident, able to control his feelings, and above all, to direct his will. His strong character alone controls the opposing forces in life.
The rain continued through the night.

Light slept restlessly due to his tenacious headache. He woke up on three separate occasions. He was able to return to sleep easily, but not before observing a motionless figure in the gloom. It was Ryuzaki, quietly sitting at the table in front of the windows.

When morning came, he remained there; unearthly still.

He paid no attention as Light rose from bed.

"Good morning, Ryuzaki."

He had his knees drawn to his chest, chin resting on them. He did not, in any way, acknowledge that Light had spoken. There was not even a flicker in his eyes. Light's brow wrinkled in consternation. He tried again.

"Did you have trouble sleeping?"

Nothing.

He went and drew back the curtains. The defused light of the overcast sky enabled a close scrutiny of the detective. What he saw was disturbing. Without another word, Light headed for the shower.

Standing under the warm spray gave him time to shed the last vestiges of slumber. He was thankful the pain in his head had eased a little over the night. It allowed him to think clearly. He would need all his faculties today. The goal was to clear the air with Ryuzaki. Light sincerely wished to end the hostility he had been displaying towards him. However, that one look at the detective indicated the chances of success were far from good.

It had been like looking at a blank space, where a person should have existed. No movement, no reaction, no emotion, no thought; only a physical body that looked like Ryuzaki. It reminded him of when the detective had first stopped speaking. Back then, his passivity had greatly troubled Light. He had not known why he would not talk and struggled to change it. Finally, when faced with an impassivity he could not surmount, he had been forced to concede defeat.

It was like they were back there again. Light felt the anxiety welling up in his chest. How could he settle things with the detective like this? It was hopeless. It takes two to have a conversation. If one person would not engage then…

Light paused. He was toweling himself dry and caught a slight sound. Leaning to press his ear to the door, he could faintly pick up the murmur of Ryuzaki's voice. He was on his cell phone. The name "Watari" was heard. In a flash of inspiration, it hit him. Ryuzaki had been acting in a passive-aggressive manner for the last few days. All of his sabotages had been specifically designed to confuse and impede Light. To aggravate him.

Wrapping a towel around his waist, he acted quickly.

Exiting the bathroom, he practically ran towards him. Ryuzaki had his back turned, and was unable to react before Light took the phone from his fingers.

"Watari?"
"Yagami-kun?"

"Good morning. I'm sorry to interrupt."

He could end up looking like an idiot but Light took a stab in the dark.

"About today…I have a headache. So, I don't think I'm up to having any visitors."

"I'm sorry to hear that. Shall I go ahead and tell Amane-san that you are unable to see her?"

Or he could end up being a genius who took a stab in the dark.

"Yes, I would really appreciate that. I'd like to spend the day quietly. Relax and get some sleep."

"Do you need anything? I can call and have it delivered to you," Watari offered.

"No, I'm fine. Just…no visitors would really help me recover. I want to be in good shape when we get back to work tomorrow."

"That's a very commendable attitude. Take care of yourself today, then."

"Thanks, Watari. I'll talk to you when you return from your trip."

He pressed the 'disconnect' button and offered the phone. The detective, turned sideways, simply held out an outstretched palm. When he placed the device, Light curved his fingers around the hand. Ryuzaki immediately tried to jerk away, but was not allowed. Truthfully, Light was struggling with himself. To say he was furious was an understatement. He did not trust himself to speak and knelt on his haunches, cradling his head with his other hand. The headache had suddenly intensified. The pain lanced him in sickening harmony with his jagged, volatile rage.

They made a strange picture. One sitting on a chair and one crouched on the floor, joined arms engaged in a subtle but vehement tug of war; each with their eyes turned away from the other. Light thought of many things he wished to say.

'What are you doing?'

'Stop.'

'Why are you acting like this?'

'Just stop.'

'Don't you ever invite Misa to see me again.'

'Stop it!'

Ryuzaki's arm went slack. It made Light realize that he had begun to grip his hand with excessive force. He watched him tighten his knees to his chest, and turn his head away. Fury withered as it was supplanted by remorse. Light recalled his previous insight.

'If this situation is hard for me, then it's probably overwhelming for a person like him.'

He loosened his hold. Light used his thumb to gently caress the back of Ryuzaki's hand, an unspoken apology. In a mollifying tone, he said:

"Let's get some breakfast. I'll make you pancakes because, you know,…"
It wouldn't hurt to try.

"…you're pretty bad at doing it yourself. Incompetent, actually."

That got a reaction.

They were almost at the kitchen and Light was still thinking about it. How bizarre it was. One indignant look from Ryuzaki was all it had taken to blow away his pessimism. A far from friendly response had brought a grin to his lips. One that he still wore now. He supposed any reaction was better than no reaction. It was a wry thought.

'My standards are just getting lower and lower.'

Light prepared breakfast for two. All the while, he calmly examined the dilemma before him.

It was hard to know the exact reason or reasons why Ryuzaki had launched this cold war. He could easily figure out the genesis of it, of course. It started the morning after Light kissed and caressed him. It was the fallout from that. But, what was the reasoning? Was he trying to drive Light away? Make him angry? For what purpose? What were his motives?

It was possible, though he didn't really want to admit it, that this was a rejection. Light felt his heart sink. Not wishing to fall back into a defeated frame of mind, he determinedly rallied. The detective, when he held him, had responded. In the days since, he had spoken to Light. More than ever, actually. It occurred to him that perhaps a true rejection from Ryuzaki would look different.

Ryuzaki was bold and passive. He could, perversely, be either one at any given time. Therefore, perhaps a rejection from him would come in one of two forms. He would either directly tell Light he was uninterested, or he would ignore him utterly. He had done neither. An attempt to shut him out this morning had been handled successfully with a small joke. He discreetly watched Ryuzaki. He was placidly eating the pancakes Light had made. They swam in a lake of syrup. It brought to mind what had finally broken his silence in the past.

It had been when Light began to bring him sweets. There was no question the man enjoyed desserts, but that wasn't what changed their dynamic. Maybe it had been the action of giving itself. Light had selflessly and kindly offered the confections. His only motivation had been to befriend Ryuzaki, even after analyzing what his body language meant.

Ryuzaki guarded himself constantly. He had hypothesized the detective was unfamiliar with being in a group. What he unconsciously transmitted was apprehension and inner turmoil. So, tacitly, he told others to stay away.

And everyone did.

Aizawa, Matsuda, and Soichiro all kept their distance. Even Watari, more or less, left Ryuzaki alone. The only one who hadn't was Light. He had steadfastly challenged his boundaries through word and deed. Eventually, he had surpassed them completely when he embraced him. When put together like this, the detective's following actions started to become comprehensible. An extremely closed-off person would react strongly when someone, in a sense, tried to open them up.

Then there was Ryuzaki's suspicious nature. He had been tense and distrustful when faced with an inquiry about his age. Something so ordinary and guileless had produced wariness. Moving well beyond personal questions, Light had kissed and stroked his bare skin. Seen this way, it was obvious there would be a dramatic response. It surprised Light that he had not made the connection sooner. Maybe that was because it had been taking all his energy to handle Ryuzaki's passive-aggressive
onslaught.

There was also the Kira issue. However, Light chose to leave that out of this examination. The detective may suspect he was Kira but Light knew he had never been. It was only a matter of time before Ryuzaki was convinced too. The truth would come out. At hand were his doubts about Light, not Kira. It was likely that he had many misgivings about the motives behind Light's sudden passion. A person like Ryuzaki, unfamiliar with such things and distrusting by nature, would be incapable of seeing it for what it was.

Genuine.

Light was on his second cup of tea. Despite all the conflict of the last few days and this morning, he was relaxed. Ryuzaki was being quiet and undemanding and, as before, it made Light feel at ease. This was beneficial because it was an inner shock to really understand the depth of his feelings. He had been so focused on Ryuzaki that he had failed to take into account his own rapidly changing emotions, actions, and intentions.

Sure, this was overwhelming for the anti-social detective. However, it was also difficult for Light. In the space of a very short time, he had confronted many unforeseen things about himself. There had been the realization that he was attracted to Ryuzaki, a man. Then, rejection of that longing because it was socially unacceptable. Light had believed the matter settled and gone on to make every effort to get closer to him, to be friends. Finally, it all culminated in acting on his yearning and explicitly showing Ryuzaki how he really felt. In the process, Light had become aware of his own true desires and needs. It was self-knowledge he was unable to banish. Despite his best efforts.

He couldn't deny it. He had tried and failed. But now…now…

'I won't deny it.'

Light liked Ryuzaki. Spending time with him, conversing, touching, and just…slowly getting to know him. It's true that he would have preferred a faster pace, especially given how physically attracted he felt. However, this was Ryuzaki. If it happened at all, it would be at a speed the detective was comfortable with. There was no other way. And that was acceptable to Light simply because he did care. Really, truly cared for the person sitting across from him.

Light smiled ruefully.

'From complete denial to total acceptance, if that's what this is. All in approximately two weeks. Unbelievable.'

He had no idea what the future would bring. It could be he was about to make a complete fool of himself. A bigger fool than he already had. Light had long ago stopped taking risks with other people. Disappointment had been heaped upon disappointment until he no longer bothered. No one ever truly saw him, and the pain in his chest had grown and grown throughout the years. He had moved in the world surrounded by others, yet always alone.


To think he was about to throw it all away. It was beyond foolish.

These thoughts did not cause the expected constriction in his chest. Instead, he was aware of a soothing peacefulness and confidence. A long, painful, and direct confrontation with his fears, ambivalence, and confusion had led to the birth of inner strength. It had taken many weeks to achieve and was a new state of being for Light. It was reminiscent of the ease he sometimes felt with
Ryuzaki, only magnified many times over. Maybe that was because it came from within, not without.

Into this expansive space, an innate wisdom quietly materialized. The pain in his chest had almost consumed him. If he had not met Ryuzaki, if he had not done that, it would have eventually swallowed Light. He glanced up at the detective.

And then looked harder.

Light was taken aback. In the fluorescent lighting, Ryuzaki appeared…haggard. He seemed paler than normal, almost sickly. The dark circles under his eyes had lightened over the preceding weeks due to a regular sleeping cycle. After all, he was not working on the Kira or any other case. But, today, the smudges were almost black. They were like great bruises smearing his paper-white complexion. How long had it been since he slept? Certainly he had not rested last night. It struck Light again.

'This is probably overwhelming for a person like Ryuzaki.'

An idea came as he stood to gather the breakfast dishes.

"Ryuzaki, let's take it easy today. Misa told me last time that there's an extensive digital catalogue of movies here. So, let's do that. Relax and watch a film."

The detective regarded him from the corner of his eye. Light was undeterred by the lack of verbal response.

"Is there anything you want to see? Your choice," he asked in a friendly voice.

Ryuzaki turned his head to look Light squarely in the face.

"Red Dragon*," he said flatly.

"Oh, yes, I've seen that movie. It's about a…"

Light's head was still mildly aching. Consequently, it took him a few seconds to grasp the snipe. There was a silence as they stared at one another. And then…

Ryuzaki actually smirked.

Light forcefully restrained his sudden ire.

"Sure, I haven't seen it in a while. It's one of my favorites," he said stiffly.

Not wishing the detective to see his disgruntled expression, Light turned away.

"I'll get us some snacks."

It was evident that Ryuzaki was not going let up. The…taunt about the movie, and the sneaky attempt to invite Misa over were proof. Light was able to handle it, but did not want to. It was enough. This tense, antagonistic atmosphere was a source of bewilderment and stress. He thought of Ryuzaki's frail, unwell countenance. Something needed to change.

Light made sure to gather a variety of foods and beverages to take with them. He sought to anticipate Ryuzaki. Once the movie started, he would assuredly start with the interruptions. There were some Light could predict and this was one of them.

They had arrived at a room five floors down. There was a couch, chair, and television. Light laid the
provisions on the coffee table. There was chocolate, pastries, fruit, and drinks. Everything Ryuzaki could have wanted. Taking in the layout, he opted to sit on the couch. Now, it was a matter of maneuvering the detective to join him. The chair was an obstacle. One that Ryuzaki was already moving towards.

Light reached and angled it to use as a foot rest.

Thwarted, Ryuzaki turned back. He crouched on the other end of the sofa.

Shortly afterward, the film started. It was background noise to Light. He was intensely focused on the plan.

It was useless to merely attempt an honest conversation with Ryuzaki. The man played with words as a child did toys. Or he refused to engage at all. However, there was one method to ensure a response. It was tried and true, and Light would use it again today. A combination of speech and contact was the only way.

All the introspection over breakfast had not been in vain. Light perceived that, as with the desserts, his actions and words had to come from a place of honesty and kindness. Or rather, he needed to make it clear that was the impetus. He had touched Ryuzaki recently but always in an angry fashion. This time would be quite different.

Now, all he needed was an opening.

Ryuzaki, in his unending quest to annoy Light, would surely provide one.

'It'll be just around the climax of the movie. He'll find some reason to get up and disrupt it.'

And he did.

And Light was ready.

The dramatic, long-awaited confrontation between killer and FBI agent had just begun to unfold. The detective was half-way up when Light closed in. A hand on Ryuzaki's arm arrested his movement. Off-balance as he was, it was easy to guide him back onto the couch. They were inches apart. Light did not remove his hand.

The tension was palpable. Light spoke mildly.

"Where are you going?"

Ryuzaki shrugged. He did not meet Light's eyes.

'He can't use the food or drink excuse. We're watching a movie so the book one is out. That leaves the bathroom or the need to stretch his legs.'

"Are your legs cramping again?" he guessed.

This was the one that Light was banking on. He was not disappointed.

"Yes," Ryuzaki said.

Light used the element of surprise.

He reached and pulled the detective's right leg out from underneath him. With an audible gasp, Ryuzaki fell into a seated position. In pre-planned movements, Light clasped his ankle and used his
free arm to shift Ryuzaki's body so it was facing him. Once accomplished, he retreated back to his end of the couch; still holding onto the leg. In a stunning feat of efficiency, this all took less than ten seconds.

Light turned back to the television. With his left hand, he secured Ryuzaki's ankle. With his right, he began to slowly knead the foot resting in his lap. When the pulling started, he firmly held on. He adopted a dispassionate expression and waited.

He could feel the detective's eyes boring into him and hear his quickened breathing.

For once, it was Ryuzaki who broke the stalemate.

"What is Light-kun doing?"

Light calmly moved to his heel.

"He needs to stop."

He trailed his fingers over the arch.

"This is not agreeable, Light-kun. I do not require it," he declared with noticeable agitation.

Light continued to massage, eyes never leaving the screen. He spoke quietly.

"I'm doing this because I want to."

"It is not necessary!" the detective retorted loudly.

"Your legs are cramping. I think this will help you feel better."

"I don't need it!" Ryuzaki insisted.

"I want to do it. Just like the other night."

All the while Ryuzaki had been trying to tug his leg away. Suddenly, that motion halted. It was replaced by a steely rigidity. Light could even feel it in the foot he was rubbing. He had the detective's complete attention. It was what he had been patiently waiting for. However, now that the time was upon him, Light was uncertain. The words lodged in his throat and would not come out.

Light, outwardly composed, was undergoing yet another confrontation with his fears, doubts, and insecurities. If he continued this, he may wind up looking ridiculous. He would appear a fool in Ryuzaki's eyes. Light despised the very idea of it.

The ache swelled in his chest.

For a few, almost unbearable moments; he was overtaken by the rapidly expanding malaise. It was all he felt, all he could feel.

It happened then. What wisdom had whispered really sunk in.

It would consume. The pain would devour him. Just like it was doing now. And when it did, he would not be afraid of Ryuzaki's reaction to his honest feelings. He would not care about him at all. In fact, he would not be concerned about any other person again. Only himself. Alone and safe, forever and ever.

Hopeless and empty.
Faced with the alternative, Light gathered his courage. And took an enormous risk.

"I…I kissed you because I wanted to. I touched you because I'm attracted to you."

Light could feel his heart hammering in his ribs. Still not looking at Ryuzaki, he continued softly.

"I don't have any other motive."

A flustered voice answered.

"Light-kun is a liar."

"I'm not lying."

"Light-kun is trying to..."

"Get closer to you, get to know you," Light broke in.

There was silence.

The movie had ended. Without releasing Ryuzaki's ankle, he reached for the remote control. After selecting the next film, he resumed his ministrations.

Light watched the opening credits and explained:

"Your legs are probably cramping because you haven't been sleeping. Your whole body is fatigued. This will help you feel better."

Ryuzaki's leg was still rigid, imprisoned across Light's thighs. Consequently, he was unable to draw his knees to his chest. He imagined the detective was feeling very exposed and vulnerable. Light would not halt the foot rub, but there was an alternative he could offer him. Another way to feel more secure.

He interchanged his hands and reached to the back of the couch. There was a blanket laying there. He gathered it up and pressed it to Ryuzaki's chest, only letting go when hands came up to grasp it.

"Cover yourself and lie back. You're tired and you need to sleep. I'll rub your feet, we'll watch a movie, and relax. Okay?" Light said.

It filled him with relief when, after a few minutes, the detective followed instructions. He turned on his side and pulled the cover until his face was hidden. They watched the television, neither speaking.

Light was trying to decide if he should say anything else when he felt it. Ryuzaki's leg was slowly relaxing, becoming heavier in his grip. It was an acceptance of Light's touch. No, he shouldn't jump to conclusions. It was probably that he was falling asleep. That was all. But hope held on ferociously. It *was* possible…

His inner monologue was interrupted when Ryuzaki began pushing against Light's leg with his other foot. It was a feeble motion. He would press a little bit, stop, and then press again.

"What is it, Ryuzaki?"

A hushed voice emerged from the blanket.

"I do not like this, Light-kun."
The foot stopped and rested against Light's thigh. Toes faintly curled and uncurled, prodding him.

For the first time, in four days, an unaffected smile brightened Light's face.

"I know you don't. Now, give me your other foot."

He did and Light went to work on it.

After five minutes, the detective spoke in a slurred voice.

"Light-kun ignores what I say."

"Not always."

"He is trying to confound me."

"That's not true. You're tired and cranky. Go to sleep."

"He is…"

Light interjected.

"Have a good rest, Ryuzaki. Good night," he bid gently.

A pause, and then:

"Good night, Light-kun."

Light watched the movie. Ryuzaki slept.

In this tranquil atmosphere, he reflected on what had transpired.

He had done it. He had successfully calmed the acrimony between them. The evidence was not in what Ryuzaki had said. If Light relied only on what he communicated, he would be disheartened. Sometimes, it was what a person did. Their actions signified the truth, not their words. Light's actions matched what he had verbalized. Ryuzaki's had not.

Even while demanding that he desist, he had allowed the massage to continue. Ryuzaki, unlike Light, was not physically assertive. Still, if he had really tried, he could have pulled back his leg. He was stronger than he looked and very persistent when he chose to be. Instead, only a half-hearted effort had been made. Towards the end he had even, almost timidly, shown that Light's touch was welcome.

The movie ended and stillness hung in the air. There was a window behind the couch. It was late afternoon and the rain had finally stopped. Sunlight began to filter through the remaining clouds. It cast a luminous radiance to the surroundings.

Light turned the television off.

It would probably be some time before Ryuzaki awakened. He surmised that he had not really rested in the last few nights. Not since Light had kissed him. He started to recall it, and then stopped. To his amazement, he lacked the inclination to analyze Ryuzaki and the complexities of their relationship. He did not feel the need to predict what may happen or what his next move should be. It was enough to relax and experience what was happening right now. Light realized he wanted to stretch out on the couch too.
Light carefully moved so he was facing the prone detective. He slightly lifted Ryuzaki's legs, and placed his own underneath. Mildly disturbed, Ryuzaki rolled over onto his back. Light held his breath. It was not his intention to disrupt his slumber.

Thankfully, he settled down and Light heard the resumption of deep, regular breaths. Ryuzaki's shifting had caused their legs to become intertwined. Light lay back, shoulders braced against the armrest, and tentatively pulled the blanket. Just enough to reveal Ryuzaki's face.

He wanted to look at him.

He continued softly caressing his feet and watched his sleeping visage. Ryuzaki's peaceful countenance eventually caused Light to begin feeling lethargic. His headache was gone and last night's disturbed rest was catching up to him. It was hard to keep his eyes open.

Drowsily, he wondered if the headache had been healed when the rain stopped. Inclement weather caused pressure to form in the atmosphere. For some people, the result was migraines and other painful afflictions. Or maybe it was through addressing the strain between him and Ryuzaki. It was likely the latter. No, it was definitely that.

He could admit, now, that the detective's schemes had been having a severe effect. Light had been on very shaky ground following his sexual advances on him. He did not regret it, but was unused to this newly discovered aspect of himself. It made him vulnerable and introduced the potential of rejection. After all, if he never let on that he was drawn to him, he would have no reason to fear being turned away. However, he had expressed his desire, and potentially paved the way for repudiation. So, in truth, Ryuzaki's coldness and devious manipulations had perturbed him. They had been…injurious.

Ryuzaki shuffled. His knee bent so that his free foot could burrow under Light's leg. Most likely seeking warmth, Light thought. An untroubled smile came to his lips.

This scenario, right now, made him happy. The disquiet he felt over Ryuzaki's covert hostility had been real. It deeply disturbed him. That was unarguably true. But that disappointment, as powerful as it had been, was proving to be transient.

Now, he felt…hope. It was beyond foolish. He knew that. It was possible the detective would only continue striking out against Light. He was such a difficult man, so contrary and puzzling. Light had taken an immense risk today. In order to reach Ryuzaki, he had laid his honest feelings on the table. It was conceivable that Ryuzaki would never return his affection. Light, however, brimming with newfound confidence; refused to seriously entertain that idea.

He recognized that he had been carrying a great deal of sorrow, pain, and loneliness all his life. It was a constant, insidious companion. Now, through Ryuzaki, he was aware of it. But also through Ryuzaki, even stronger feelings were present. Hope, absurd and reckless, would not let him give up. It had helped him find the inner strength to confront himself and the detective. It brought about this solace. A sense of wonder engulfed Light.

'I won't regret this. Ever.'

He rested his hands lightly on the sleeping detective's calves. He felt the warmth through Ryuzaki's jeans and gazed at him, until his eyes closed.

Light slept.

Serenity filled the air.
Strength

patience, wisdom, gentle force, ability to overcome problems, healing, gentleness, reconciliation, slowness, softness, the ability to face life - and particularly some difficult problem or time of change with hope and eagerness, a person strong from within - experiencing life passionately yet peacefully - without being carried away by those passions, the finding of strength to continue some difficult project despite fear and emotional strain, the confrontation of the self - calmly and bravely - results in the dismantling of the persona, the ego has suppressed feelings, desires, confusions, and fears in an attempt to control life - now the subject finds the inner strength to face himself as a first step to going beyond that, the whole force of the personality - usually smoothed over by the demands of civilized life - is released, a sense of peace, confidence, the release of the subject's deepest emotions requires great courage and strength, the energy of the strongest feelings are released and directed

In Strength, the Fool learns to trust himself; to develop self-confidence and inner strength. The Chariot symbolized force, willpower, and the outer personality. The Fool combines the Chariot and Strength. The result is a person who acts powerfully but with a sense of calm.

*'Red Dragon' is a 2002 film starring Anthony Hopkins, Ralph Fiennes, and Edward Norton. It is part of the Hannibal Lecter series. In it, Edward Norton plays a retired FBI agent. Through a previous series of events, he was responsible for the capture of Hannibal. He comes out of retirement to track down a murderer, at the request of an old colleague. To solve the case, he must collaborate with the confined Hannibal. So, the good guy must work with a serial killer (who he apprehended) in order to capture another serial killer. This mirrors the situation Ryuzaki and Light are in, with regards to Kira. That is the gist of Ryuzaki's dig at Light. I thought I should explain the reference for those who have not seen the movie. Btw, it's an excellent film! Check it out if you're interested!
Ryuzaki had begun to peer at Light strangely.

It was noticeable to Light because it was an expression he seldom received from him. It was not only the detective. When they thought he wasn't paying attention, he witnessed confused looks from the rest of the team. This had been going on for the last three days.

There was a reason for their bewilderment. Light had become quiet, withdrawn. It had started immediately following the vacation day. When everyone returned to work they were met with this new, different Light. One who would answer, briefly, when addressed. Otherwise, he was silent. No one knew what to make of it. Furthermore, Light's aloofness and detachment did not invite questioning. It was a marked departure from his normal bearing and, consequently, unsettling.

Light did observe their reactions. It wasn't that he was oblivious. It was more that it was of secondary importance to what he was undergoing. In the past, he would have made the effort to act like 'himself'. Being the object of worry and speculation was not something he cultivated. However, Light could not find it in himself to truly care. He was unconcerned with how he came across.

It was jarring.

Light had always invested a great deal in the manufactured image he presented to others. It was a portrayal, a caricature, so seamless that he had believed it was who he really was. He was Yagami Light; an intelligent, polite, talented, and earnest young man. That was how everyone saw him. It was what Light let them see. There had only been one exception. Ryuzaki saw and was allowed to see things in Light that no one else did.

At present, he and Ryuzaki were eating dinner. It was early in the evening. Soichiro, Matsuda, and Aizawa were still in the operations room. Half an hour ago, Light determined that he did not have the mental focus to continue working. Without a word of explanation, he had gone over to the detective and pulled him to his feet. No one said anything as they watched them leave. Light's hand had been on the small of Ryuzaki's back the whole time, firmly propelling him forward.

His dad and the others were still toiling on the Kira case while Light was absent. It should have galled him. It should have made him feel guilty. Here he was, taking it easy, while a mass murderer ran free and unobstructed.

'I have been working on the case. Just not as much as I usually do. What's changed?'

If he had to identify a starting point, he supposed it would have been the day he told Ryuzaki how he felt. Or maybe it was what he realized about himself in the process. Light had seen a vision of who he had been and a possibility of the person he could become. He acknowledged that he had been lonely and unhappy for most of his life. It should have ended there, but had not. Since then, it dominated his thoughts. He was being forced to concede that, maybe, he did not yet have full comprehension. It was possible there was more than one level to truly understanding the issue.

He reasoned that he had reached the first and second level. Light had chosen to categorize it in this manner. It was the only way to make sense of it.

'I know what it is, that's the first part. And I know where it will lead to. That's the second part. What else is there?'

It was apparent the matter was more complex. And much, much deeper.
It was mystifying. It was also something he felt very reluctant to explore. It reminded him of that night, many weeks ago. Ryuzaki's indifference and passivity had brought Light to a breaking point. It caused the pain in his chest to strike with an unprecedented intensity. He had, in the end, declined to examine the roots of that wound. He backed off because he was unprepared. It was too soon.

Now, he was divided. On one hand, he didn't want to know. On the other, he did. It was impossible to reconcile these two opposing viewpoints. The struggle occupied him, causing him to be silent and remote. He didn't know what to do despite thinking on it continuously.

Maybe it was an idea to break down the information he did have. That was what he had already been doing, but if he organized it into more concise sections; he could extract…

Light sighed.

'Enough.'

He stood and walked around the table to Ryuzaki. He decided the dishes could wait until the morning. Light took his arm, tugging him to his feet. They were almost out the door when the detective stopped. Light regarded him quizzically.

"I would like some coffee," Ryuzaki explained.

Light just stared, mutely. The detective reached and caught his wrist. He pulled Light's hand off his arm and continued speaking.

"Will Light-kun make it for me? I want dessert too."

He still held his wrist. Light started, realizing an answer was expected.

"Sure. I can do that."

Ten minutes later, they were back at the table. Light sipped his coffee and watched Ryuzaki enjoying his cookies. It would seem he had only wanted his sweet fix. There was no other motive.

Ryuzaki stopped eating and looked at him with piercing eyes.

Or maybe there was.

"Light-kun, I would like to clarify something with you."

Light felt his heart speed up. He had been expecting something like this. It was the other question that loomed in his mind. In the interim following his…confession to Ryuzaki, he had been waiting. Ready for him to say he did or did not feel the same way. It could be the moment had arrived. Light could hear the tension in his own voice when he asked:

"What is it?"

Ryuzaki picked up his coffee and placed it on his knees, like a shield. He also tightened his legs even further to his chest.

'Not a good sign.'

Ryuzaki started hesitantly.

"It is about…"
He faltered as if searching for words. Light felt the anxiety in his chest. He crossed his arms, like a shield. He also sat back in his chair, further increasing the distance between them. It took considerable strength to speak calmly.

"About what?"

At his prompt, Ryuzaki continued in a quiet, clear voice.

"In the past three days, Light-kun has stopped speaking to me. I would assume that means he does not wish to interact..."

"That's not true!" Light interrupted.

Ryuzaki ignored him in favor of finishing his sentence.

"…except he is always touching me. Why?"

That was not what Light had been anticipating. His confusion was mirrored in his response.

"I don't know."

"If you want to leave the kitchen, why do you not inform me?"

"I…I don't know."

"Why do you take my arm and pull me? Or put your arm around me to direct where I walk?"

Light, unfamiliar with such bluntness, was off-balance. Nevertheless, he quickly rallied.

"I told you before. Because I want to."

"Yes. However, that is not my question."

Light was perplexed.

"Are you saying you don't want me to?"

It was Ryuzaki's turn to be off-balance.

"I…am not sure," he said slowly.

"It bothers you?"

"…I don't know."

Either he was playing a game by mimicking Light's answers or he was genuinely uncertain. Light put his arms on the table and leaned forward.

"When people like someone they tend to touch them. I wasn't lying when I said I was attracted to you. But, if you say you don't want me to, I won't," he said in a neutral voice.

Ryuzaki broke eye contact to look down. Light could see the reddening in his cheeks. As the silence stretched, he resisted the urge to speak again. The only visible sign of Light's stress was his whitened knuckles, caused from the pressure of pressing his fingers into the table. Finally, Ryuzaki responded.

"Light-kun misunderstands me. I comprehend his actions."
Light's hands relaxed.
"Then…"

He thought furiously.
"…you're asking why I do that but don't say anything?"
"Yes."

Light considered this. In truth, until now, he had not realized he was acting that way. It warranted examination. However, he was unwilling to explore his motivations with Ryuzaki. He was also averse to saying; "I don't know" yet again. What he preferred was to not answer at all. Light calculated a way to get out of this uncomfortable dilemma.

"You did the same thing. You stopped talking."

The detective's eyes whipped up.
"Yes."
"Care to elaborate?"

Wariness and irritation warred in Ryuzaki's countenance. Irritation won.
"No," he snapped.

Light's eyes narrowed.
"Well, neither do I."

Ryuzaki looked away. He turned so he was sitting sideways, effectively cutting off and dismissing Light.

After a brief internal struggle, Light rose and approached him. When he put his hand on Ryuzaki's back, he was met with tense resistance. He remained in his seat but edged away. He was standing slightly behind the detective and could not see his expression. Which was probably a good thing.

This was leaving a very sour taste in Light's mouth. It was not his aim to create a hostile environment between them. He needed to say or do something to restore equanimity. No, he needed to say and do something. That had proven, time and again, to be the winning combination.

He began running his hand up and down Ryuzaki's back: a soft motion designed to pacify. He did not pull away, likely because he was already hunched forward as far as possible. It was miraculous he had not already fallen to the floor. He could have walked away. Instead, he remained where he was and allowed Light to caress him, eyes turned away.

'Another partial acceptance.'

Light was fumbling for words. It took another two minutes before he was able to find them. By that time, he was gently massaging the back of Ryuzaki's neck. Coming to a decision, he seized his shoulder to turn his body towards him. When their eyes met, Light spoke honestly.

"I didn't realize I was doing that. I didn't know until you pointed it out right now. That's why I can't explain it."
Ryuzaki's shoulder relaxed under his hand. Light asked:

"Are you done your coffee?"

"Yes."

"Let's go, then. Okay?"

In lieu of verbally responding, Ryuzaki stood up. He did not shirk away when Light tentatively placed an arm around his waist. For that, Light was immensely relieved.

Later, Light sat at the table in the bedroom. Ryuzaki was across from him, reading a book. It was quiet and peaceful. An ideal venue in which to analyze whatever crossed his mind. He was struck again with how the detective made very few demands on him. Well, as long as Light didn't count the days following his advances on him.

A smile curved Light's lips.

Now that had been a sight to behold. Ryuzaki, the singly most passive-aggressive person Light had ever met. But he had handled it. He held it all under control and refused to react belligerently. Instead, he kept his own anger and puzzlement under wraps and sought a solution to the problem.

In the midst of all this self-congratulating, it crept up on him. Memory, stealthy and merciless, invaded his stream of consciousness. The knowledge it brought shocked him. It was apt and resonated strongly with what had transpired between he and Ryuzaki.

It had happened before. Ryuzaki was only the most recent person to act towards Light in an insidiously hostile way. There had been others. Many, many others. There had been people, for as long as he could remember, who said one thing and did another. Light attempted to ignore the growing uneasiness pervading his body. Instead, he focused on this new information and categorized it.

'This must be another layer of comprehension. Why it exists, where it came from.'

Apparently, without his conscious assent, a decision had been made. Light would contemplate this in an in-depth way. Perhaps it was because of Ryuzaki's questions. They had illustrated there was a discrepancy in his recent behavior, compared to before. What had shaken Light was not that observation.

It had been his inability to answer Ryuzaki.

He really didn't know why he was acting the way he was. He had refrained from conversing with everyone equally, speaking only when required. But why was he putting himself in physical contact with Ryuzaki as much as possible? Reaching for him constantly, barely even looking at him while he did so.

The easy answer was that he touched Ryuzaki because he wanted to. That was correct, but there was more to it. The difficult answer lay further within. In his memories and experiences of the past. He would have to seek them out.

The uneasiness was no longer suppressible. Light's stomach lurchered. Nausea meshed with his rapidly constricting chest. They fed off each other in a repellent symbiosis. He used all his self-control to keep the discord from showing, to keep his breathing slow and even. It wasn't long before he realized it was a battle he could not win.
Light needed to be alone.

Taking the one option that was available, he went to the bathroom. Once the door was closed, he undressed and stepped into the shower. After a quick scrub, the bath was filled. He sunk into the hot water. All the while, he resolutely kept his mind in check. Now, under these private and comforting conditions, he let it go.

He started with an impartial accumulation of the obvious facts. He was intelligent, a genius. Therefore, he had always been the top of his class. While others struggled, Light achieved perfect grades. It earned admiration and respect from everyone around him. And envy.

He was attractive. The sheer number of love letters he had received throughout his school years could probably fill a room. Valentine's Day consistently left him with more chocolate than he could possibly eat. Amidst the back-slapping and teasing from the other students, he often sensed it. A malice behind the friendly faces. Envy again.

It went further than that. All the way back for as far as he could recall. Even when he was a small child. At the park, the other mothers would crowd around. They would fawn at him, gushing compliments to Sachiko about her "perfect son". His mom would respond by praising their children in turn, but Light could tell she was pleased to be the recipient of such attention. Maybe that was why he was the only one who noticed the tightened fists and hard eyes of the other parents. It was also likely why he had been proficient at reading body language since a young age. He had learned, maybe too early, that what people said was often in direct contrast to what they actually thought or felt.

He couldn't really blame anyone in this arrangement. Not his mom or the other parents. It was the society they lived in. Light had all the qualities that were most lauded. He did work for his grades but it was easier for him than most people. In fact, even if they worked harder than him, it was impossible for the majority of the other students to match his academic results. They did not have the intellectual capacity. Same with looks. He was, by accepted standards, quite handsome. However, it was something he was born with, and could not help.

At one time, when he was a child, he had been confused and hurt by all the conflicting messages around him. He would hear whichever friend's parent say to their child:

"Why can't you be more like Light-chan?"

or

"Light-chan is the smartest in the class. Maybe if you studied like him you would have placed higher."

And on and on it went. Light-chan was so polite, a perfect little gentleman. He never dirtied his clothes, playing in the park. He didn't throw a tantrum and cry, embarrassing his parents. There were many variations of the same theme. However, it all ended the same way.

Inevitably, the other kids started to distance themselves from him. Light could understand their reasoning. Who would want to be around someone who constantly casts you in a bad view? It was natural for the other children to reject that kind of scenario. Unfortunately for Light, what it manifested as was a rejection of him.

Back in the present, Light rolled his eyes and pulled the plug to drain the water.

This was not helping. Light remembered these events and was getting nowhere. Instead, he was
becoming agitated and annoyed. What was the point? So, other people had envied him. So, even though they spoke nicely, he could perceive the thinly-veiled resentment in their eyes.

So what?

It was irrelevant. That was then and this was now.

It didn't affect him anymore. He had learned to ignore that kind of animosity. He expected it and declined to let it impact him. Light refused to diminish himself in order to be accepted and included. If someone had a problem with it, that was their issue. It had nothing to do with Light.

Light was dressing in the clothes he had worn earlier. He had intended to don pajamas but changed his mind. There was no way he could sleep. He was too aggravated. His hands shook as he buttoned his pants. When he opened the door, the force caused it to slam against the wall. Ryuzaki jumped and regarded him with alarm. Light barely noticed.

He strode towards the detective, stopping in front of him. He was already reaching for his arms when he said:

"Come on, Ryuzaki. Put the handcuffs on and let's go to the roof. I want to go outside."

Light, before even finishing his words, had already pulled him to his feet. He made it clear that he would not tolerate any protest. Ryuzaki gave him another one of those strange looks, and then silently complied.

When they reached the roof, Light stood at the edge. He leaned on his elbows and watched the city lights below. Down there, so many things were happening. People were living their lives; fighting, laughing, loving, hating. There were countless variations of what they were going through. Light felt completely removed from it all.

Above it, beyond it, excluded from it.

He tightly gripped the railing and ignored the pain it caused in his hands. When he spoke to Ryuzaki, it was through clenched teeth.

"I'm good at sports. Do you know that?"

"Yes."

Ryuzaki was sitting behind him. He was quite close. When Light released his arm, he had not moved away.

He looked back and down, to ensure the detective was listening.

"It's not just tennis. I'm good at all of them. I've excelled at every sport I've ever tried."

He turned his eyes back to the cityscape. His tone made it clear the next question was rhetorical.

"Do you want to know why I started playing sports?"

Ryuzaki answered anyway.

"Yes."

"I was around ten. My friends would get together to play soccer. I didn't know about it at first because they never invited me. When I found out, I wanted to play too. So, I asked them."
Light turned around. He leaned his elbows on the ledge and stared down at the detective. In a hardened voice, he asked:

"Can you guess what they said?"

Ryuzaki was cast in pale moonlight. Light easily read the discomfort in his features.

"Did they say Light-kun was unwelcome?"

Light laughed. It was a harsh and discordant sound.

"Of course they didn't say that, that would have been honest! That's a little much to expect from most people, don't you think? … No, it was nothing like that. What they said was they were afraid I might get hurt. The game can get rough and if they were involved in causing me any injury, their parents would be mad at them."

"That sounds…reasonable."

"It does, doesn't it? To you and me now. But not to a ten-year old kid. I argued with them. I said I would be careful and make sure I didn't get injured. And that's when a whole bunch of other stuff came out. They didn't think I had time to play because I was studying. They didn't think I wanted to play because I liked to read and work on my computer. I told them that I did want to play. That's why I was asking them."

He hesitated.

'How stupid. I must look ridiculous.'

This conversation was useless. There was no point to it. Light could not fathom why he was telling this old story to Ryuzaki. He had kept it to himself all these years. There was no reason to continue sharing it. He should stop talking.

'I never should have started.'

He moved to turn away but was halted by Ryuzaki's voice.

"What did they say next?"

Light turned back. He slid down the wall, and crouched. The ledge obstructed the light of the moon, forming a shadow. He used that darkness to obscure his features from the detective. Light hid himself in order to feel more secure. The rancor was gone from his tone when he responded.

"One kid finally spoke up. He was my next door neighbor. We always played together when we were growing up. I thought he was my closest friend. He said I probably wouldn't be any good at soccer. You know, because I was only good at getting high grades."

"That is illogical. Did you argue the point with him?"

"No," Light answered softly.

"Why not? You have never hesitated to argue with me."

Light smiled.

"Well, you're different. You see, it wasn't that they really felt I wouldn't be good at it. They just didn't want me to play."
The detective's features wrinkled in consternation. He opened his mouth and then closed it. Light watched comprehension dawn.

"I see," Ryuzaki stated.

Light settled into a seated position, with his back resting against the wall. He splayed his legs so they reached Ryuzaki, one to each side of him. When he pressed them into contact, he was not rebuffed. It took a minute or so for Light to feel the detective's warmth seeping into his calves. It was a soothing contrast to the chill night air. It comforted him. He continued the story.

"So, after that, I decided to learn every sport I could. My mom signed me up for teams and lessons and I joined sports clubs at school. Those were my after-school activities. I won several titles, including junior high champion in tennis, and then I quit. I guess I could have made a career out of any one of those, but that's not where my interests lie," Light said nonchalantly.

The detective looked to the side.

"Light-kun made great efforts to prove the other children were wrong."

"I suppose that's one way of looking at it."

Ryuzaki rested his chin on his knees, and watched him.

"You must have felt very alienated," he said quietly.

Light froze.

'What?'

He decided the conversation had gone on long enough. It was over.

Light pushed himself to his feet, and extended a hand to Ryuzaki.

"It's getting late. Let's go back inside."

When the detective grabbed hold, he pulled him up.

As they re-entered the building, for some reason, Light did not release Ryuzaki's hand. He held on.

And, for some reason, Ryuzaki let him.

It took a long time for Light to fall asleep that night.

He was restless and his mind erratic.

However, the stillness and quiet of the darkened room had a sedating effect. Eventually, Light settled. Only then was he able to examine Ryuzaki's observation in a neutral manner. It was fortunate he had not even attempted to respond at the time.

It had been so very difficult not to recoil. Or just start laughing hysterically.

What was Ryuzaki thinking? Light had not been alienated. He wondered if the detective had missed the entire theme of the story. He had participated in many sports and outclassed...no, been superior to everyone else. That was the point. Ryuzaki was extremely perceptive. Why didn't he see such a simple thing?
It was true that Light had been surrounded by people and always felt alone. But that had been his decision. It was his choice. He didn't really see any reason to make the effort to connect with other people. It was unrewarding when they only saw what they wanted to see. It was futile.

No, there was no validity in what Ryuzaki said.

'He's wrong.'

There was no doubt about it. And with that, Light's internal world was restored to order.

He drifted off to sleep, quickly and easily.

The next morning, he woke before the alarm went off.

Something had disturbed him, broken his slumber. There were fleeting images in his mind. Light tried to grasp them but they slipped away.

'A dream?'

It must have been. One he could not remember.

It had not been a pleasant experience. What he was feeling now was proof. Still, it was strange. He always remembered his dreams. They came in many forms, for example; mundane, bizarre, exciting. Normally, they didn't interest him. But this one did and, for the first time, he couldn't recall it. He needed to know.

What kind of dream left a sorrow like this in its wake?

The feeling was familiar. Perhaps it had been unwise to dig up the past. He did not want to experience this again. He had enough when he was younger. Rather than giving in, he had overcome it. Left it back there; where it belonged, where it should have stayed. Ryuzaki's words floated into his mind.

"You must have felt very alienated."

Light tried to summon the scorn required to dismiss that statement. It wouldn't come. Nothing would. Try as he might, there was no way to disrupt the bleakness encompassing him. It was like his inner world was turning grey, as order was overturned by desolation. He would not endure this again.

Light rose from bed. It was like he was in a trance; behaving like someone else.

Ryuzaki's eyes were already opening when he sat down. He was on his side, and Light put his body flush with his stomach. He did not lean over him as he once had. Instead, he placed one hand on his hip and silently watched him.

He could feel Ryuzaki's body slowly tensing. He remembered the earlier questions about why he touched him but did not speak. Queries that had served to highlight Ryuzaki's confusion.

And Light's too.

He spoke.

"I'm going to kiss you. If you don't want me to, then say it."

Light's free hand cupped Ryuzaki's cheek as he leaned forward. This kiss was not like the previous ones. He took his lips slowly and gently. When he slightly pressed back, Light was consoled. He
would have liked to linger longer but the heat rising in his body was a sign. As tempting as it was to slip his tongue in the half-opened mouth under his, he did not want to push Ryuzaki. He wouldn't make the same mistake twice.

He broke the kiss but did not move away. Light caressed his back with small, soft motions. He lightly rested his forehead on Ryuzaki's, and closed his eyes. The rigidity in the detective's body had abated. With his other hand, Light touched his hair; trailing smooth locks through his fingers.

Light held on and Ryuzaki let him. It allowed him to finally understand why he had been driven to seek contact with him. Now, and in the preceding days.

Peacefulness filled him, chasing away sorrow and disquiet.

Light, through touching Ryuzaki, was reassured.

\textit{The Hermit}

- contemplation, self-discovery, keeping to yourself, patience, prudent reflection, deliberation, attention to details, inner guidance, self-examination, reassessment, discovery, the process of searching for deeper truths, inner understanding, withdrawal from the outer world in order to awaken the inner self, the wish to bring knowledge to light, those in a period of preparation, transition, the subject must - in some sense - leave the outer world in order to work on himself, the inner transfer of attention from worldly activities to a person’s inner needs, a required withdrawal from other people and activities once thought to be all-important, a deliberate purpose of withdrawing to work on self-development, maturity, a knowledge of what really matters in a person’s life, assistance from a person who will help the subject in his self-discoveries

\textit{The Fool} learns to look within, to reflect, and to trust his inner guidance. Through \textit{Strength}, he has developed the inner fortitude to follow the path laid out by the \textit{Hermit}. The concept of the \textit{Hermit}'s withdrawal is related to the \textit{High Priestess}. However, unlike the passivity of the \textit{High Priestess}, the \textit{Hermit} symbolizes a deliberate mental effort. This takes the \textit{Fool} beyond the locked-up intuition of the \textit{High Priestess}, although it is not yet fully released. The result is self-awareness, wisdom, and knowledge.
Light was, and always had been, a difficult person to surprise.

That is not to say he couldn't be caught off-guard at all. For example, a slamming door or a sudden clap of thunder startled him just as it would anyone else. It was people who seldom managed to catch him unawares. Perhaps it was due to his observant and analytical nature which, essentially, allowed him to accurately predict the behavior of others. Or maybe it was because of his indifference. He had not been emotionally invested in other people enough to care, much less be surprised by their actions. Not for a long, long time.

It was just after lunch. Light was pretending to read the words on the monitor in front of him. He was leaning forward and rested his head on one hand. In this way, his face was partially obscured. There was a design to this positioning. He endeavored to hide his expression from Ryuzaki. He did not have to worry about the rest of the team since his back was to them. He probably didn't really need to worry about Ryuzaki either. The detective was lost in his thoughts, staring into space, with his body angled away from Light.

'But you never can tell with him and I won't presume anything.'

He thought for a few seconds.

'Again. I won't presume anything again.'

Just this morning, he had experienced the aftereffects of a disturbing dream. Only hours ago he went to Ryuzaki and kissed and held him. Doing so had been reassuring. It calmed him. It also made him happy. The detective allowed that closeness. He responded to the kiss and made no move to push Light away afterward. He was receptive and, to Light, that justified the risk he had taken.

He knew that he had to be careful with Ryuzaki. If he pushed him, if he tried to take too much too soon; it would bring about an adverse reaction. Light had no desire to deal with his coldness and passive-aggressiveness again. The detective had proven he was willing to go all out if he felt threatened. Therefore, Light had to balance what he wanted with what Ryuzaki could accept. It put him in the challenging position of trying to accurately assess the moods and mindset of a person who rarely spoke. Adding an element of further complexity, Ryuzaki never approached Light.

It had been that way all along. Light initiated a physical action; a punch, a touch, a caress, or a kiss. In response; Ryuzaki retaliated, tolerated it, accepted, or declined. It was unbalanced, but not unexpected when it came to the aloof and quiet detective. Light assumed it would continue to be that way. He held that presumption right up until the moment Ryuzaki kissed him.

He checked the clock. It was thirty-seven minutes ago that it happened. He was sure his confusion was still plainly evident on his face. That was why he sought to shield his expression from observation. Being caught off-guard was disconcerting enough on its own. He did not wish to expose his vulnerability to Ryuzaki, his dad, or anyone else in the room. He also did not wish to remain at a standstill for much longer. There was too much work to do. Perhaps it would be prudent to examine what had transpired. Evaluation would, potentially, lead to comprehension. Then, he could get on with actually reading the document he had been staring at for the past twenty minutes.
When the noon break approached, Light had decided that he and Ryuzaki would eat in the kitchen. Usually everyone ate at their desks in order to continue working. However, Light was still feeling vaguely unsettled by the dream. He suspected spending time alone with Ryuzaki would lessen the remaining anxiety he felt. Perhaps even eradicate it totally. And it turned out he was correct. The meal had been passed in companionable silence, engendering a sense of tranquility within Light.

That was soon to change. It happened right after they were finished eating.

He had gone and stood by the detective's chair. When he rose, Light began to turn to lead them back to the operations room. He was brought to a halt by a hand placed on his shoulder. Ryuzaki’s hold had been light, but firm. Their eyes met and Light waited for him to say something. The silence stretched until, finally, Light felt the need to break it.

"What is it?"

His only response had been to place his other hand on the back of Light's neck. Light's brow wrinkled in puzzlement.

"Ryuzaki?"

His eyes never wavering, Ryuzaki straightened to his full height and started to draw their bodies close together. Light, by now completely bewildered, put his hands on his arms and held him still. He didn't understand what was happening. His mind worked quickly to analyze the man in front of him. If he was reading the situation correctly, then that would mean his assessment of Ryuzaki had been considerably flawed. Which would mean...

His flow of thought was abruptly cut off when Ryuzaki used the hand, at the back of his neck, to bring his head forward. The movement was slow, careful, and somewhat hesitant. When the final few inches between them were closed, he slid that hand down to rest on Light's shoulder. Then, unbelievably, he pressed his lips to Light's.

The kiss was delicate, fleeting, and...

'warm.'

Light had been too stunned to respond.

Afterward; he had stepped back, shaken free of Light's grip, and exited the room. Light, dumbfounded, had simply followed.

Light slowly sat back in his chair. Now that he recalled it...

'There is no problem here. There's nothing wrong at all.'

In fact, Ryuzaki's actions were a good sign. He couldn't really say he had expected it. Or even hoped for it. The detective, while responsive to Light, had seemed disinterested in initiating any contact. Based on his analysis thus far, that was in keeping with his character. He had taken into account the various traits that made up Ryuzaki, for example: his body language, his silence, inexperience, and wariness. All those factors caused Light to conclude there was virtually no chance he would make any physical advances. They also made getting closer to him very exacting. There was always an element of trial and error.

A good example was one of the first times Light reached for him. It had been after their fight. When Light attempted to touch his bruised cheek, Ryuzaki reacted negatively. His apprehension and distrust had been clear. Despite that; Light took his arm and, with a wry observation, sought to
alleviate his uneasiness. Now, he could perceive that one encounter had set the tone for all the exchanges that followed. Light initiated and Ryuzaki reacted.

Light did not mind that dynamic. In truth, in some ways he preferred it. It was always easier to act appropriately when he knew what to expect. Perhaps that's why he was so taken aback by Ryuzaki's kiss. It had been unpredictable.

'But it doesn't have to be a problem.'

Now that he knew the possibility was there, it was a simple matter to add it to his ongoing study of the detective. What's more, it was a positive development. It showed Ryuzaki's interest in him. It also brought Light one step closer to what he ultimately wanted.

He smiled softly. His hand was no longer covering his face and rested lightly on his knee.

There it was again. Hope. His ally and his foil.

The last of Light's confusion was overshadowed as he contemplated the future implications of this new development. Perhaps, just perhaps, sex was not as out of reach as he had projected. This was a pleasing thought, and kept his mind and imagination busy for much of the rest of the day. It also allowed him to brush away the last vestiges of bafflement and discomfort. He reasoned they were due to being caught unawares. That was all. Therefore, they did not merit any more of his attention.

Light worked well into the night. When it came to the case, he was meticulous and diligent. Thinking about Ryuzaki had caused his mind to be scattered throughout the afternoon. So, he made up for the lapse by putting more time in than he normally did. As a result, he exhausted himself. It was a welcome relief to fall into bed.

However, once there, he found he was unable to sleep. He kept thinking about what had happened at lunch.

The bedroom was quiet and dark. He focused on that and willed himself to rest. After a half an hour, he gave up. He was too edgy and, as it turned out, it was becoming difficult (again) to view Ryuzaki's uncharacteristic behavior with equanimity. He believed he had resolved the issue that afternoon. However, in the dark, it was far easier to see his reasoning for what it was.

'It's a positive sign. I should be happy. It's a step forward.'

Those were all platitudes. Things he told himself to suppress the awkwardness and…intrusiveness of Ryuzaki kissing him. It just…it felt wrong. It came out of nowhere. There were no signs that would have enabled Light to foresee it. And then there was the way he did it. So cautiously and slowly. Light had been given ample time to back away. What was he thinking? What were the detective's motives?

'Was he testing me? Or was he establishing his own position in the relationship? He has the right to initiate things too. Was he showing me that?'

Light kicked off the covers and swung his legs over the side of the bed. He held his head in his hands.

'I'm the one with experience. I know what I'm doing. He doesn't. He must realize that.'

Would this be a trend for the future? He really couldn't fathom Ryuzaki's behavior. If he didn't comprehend his motivations, then…
"I don't like it."

He turned on the lamp. Ryuzaki was on his side, facing Light. He started and his eyes slowly opened. Light was leaning forward, elbows on his knees, with his chin resting in his hands. He stared intently and spoke quietly.

"I can't sleep. Will you stay up with me?"

The detective sat up. One hand wearily rubbed at his eyes. His voice was slurred when he answered.

"Yes."

He pushed the covers aside, and started to move towards the other side of the bed. The one furthest away from Light. He didn't get far before he was stopped. Light, in a flash, moved forward and grasped his arm. He had one knee on Ryuzaki's bed and one foot on the floor. Ryuzaki looked at him confusedly.

"Light-kun?"

"Where are you going?"

"I'm thirsty."

"I'll get you some water. Stay there."

Ryuzaki nodded once. Satisfied, Light released his arm and went to the closet. Bottles of water were kept on the top shelf. He took two and returned. In the minuscule amount of time it took him to complete the errand, the detective had moved. He now sat at the end of his bed with the blanket draped over his shoulders. Light handed him one of the bottles, and then grabbed a chair. He pulled it to within a few feet of Ryuzaki, and sat.

Light observed him closely. He had not drawn his knees to his chest. It was probably unnecessary since he had the blanket wrapped around him. His bare feet were visible. As the awkward silence stretched, Light watched one foot begin to rub over the other.

He couldn't see Ryuzaki's expression. The lamp provided little illumination and the detective was looking down, shoulders hunched forward. If not for the feet, he would have suspected he was asleep.

Light leaned back and crossed his arms. He stretched his legs in front of him until his bare feet were almost touching Ryuzaki's. The detective stopped fidgeting and looked up. Their eyes met and held. Light refused to look away first. After a full minute, Ryuzaki sighed and turned his head aside.

"Why can't Light-kun sleep?" he asked resignedly.

Without any hesitation, Light lied.

"It's the case. It's been almost two months since I started working on it full-time and I don't have a solid lead yet."

Ryuzaki's head whipped back. Light did not have to see his visage to know what it would contain. Most likely a combination of irritation and coldness. He blithely carried on.

"But I have a theory I'm working on. At first I thought the executions of non-criminals would complicate the investigation. But, now I think it may be exactly the clue we've been looking for. All I
have to do is find the link between those victims…"

"Light-kun," Ryuzaki interrupted. His voice was low and tense.

Light ignored him.

"A killer can be any class or race, male or female, young or old. But no matter the surface differences, there are motivations that are common to all murderers. There's financial gain, rage and hostility towards a certain person or group of people, ideology, criminal enterprise, for power, or maybe the person is psychotic. Of course, those are just a small sampling but you see where I'm going."

He paused to give Ryuzaki a chance to respond. He wasn't expecting any helpful insight or intelligent observations from the detective. And, frankly, that wasn't what he was looking for.

"Stop it, Light-kun."

"Stop what, Ryuzaki?" he asked with feigned innocence.

"I do not want to talk about Kira."

"So? I do. After all, isn't that why I'm here? Why we're chained together?"

He did not answer. Light pressed on.

"Come on, Ryuzaki! What is your problem? What possible reason could you have to act like this?"

In the dim light, he could see Ryuzaki's hands. They clasped his knees tightly, the fingers of one hand tapping rapidly. That, and his clenched feet, showed agitation and impatience. Light smiled slightly and continued in a cordial tone.

"I remember Watari said something about it. That you acted like this before and you had your reasons. Remember? It was the day you had that argument with him and we spent the afternoon on the roof. Tell me, what are your reasons? Because I have to say, as far as coping mechanisms go, this is…"

Ryuzaki started to get up. Light lifted his leg, the one between the detective and the door, and pressed it against his calf. He narrowed his eyes and spoke in a hard tone, all pretension of geniality gone.

"Don't bother. You owe me some answers so sit back down."

There were a few moments when it looked like he was going to brush him off. Light tensed, anticipating a potential struggle. However, Ryuzaki chose the passive route and resumed his position on the bed. Light did not know if he was relieved or disappointed. Maybe he was both.

He moved the chair closer, bent his knees, and braced his feet on the bed; one to either side of the detective. There was purpose to his action. He would not allow Ryuzaki to retreat or withdraw. Now that this topic was out in the open, Light discovered he really did want some answers. What had begun as an attempt to provoke him had changed into something a little more authentic. Light would not let Ryuzaki avoid or run away from it.

"So? Why won't you work on the investigation?"

The detective mumbled a reply.
"I'm not interested in it."

Light leaned forward and placed his hands on Ryuzaki's rising knees. Firmly, he pushed them back down. He did not remove his hands. Ryuzaki turned his head aside and crossed his arms over his chest. Light spoke determinedly.

"If you truly weren't interested, you would have left two months ago. Care to try again? I'm asking you seriously. I really want to know," he said earnestly.

They were so close together that Light was able to clearly see him. He still faced away, but peered from the corner of his eye. His narrowed eye, Light noted.

"That is incorrect," Ryuzaki stated in an annoyed fashion.

"What?"

"Light-kun does not really want to know," he mocked, in perfect mimicry of Light's tone and inflection.

Light's eyes widened. It took an immense amount of self-control to prevent his fingers from digging into the knees he held. It was also a challenge to not grab Ryuzaki's shoulders and shake him. With all his strength allocated elsewhere, there was none left to modulate his tone. His anger was apparent in his too-loud voice.

"Is that so? Well then, in your expert opinion, what am I really asking you?"

The detective turned his head and looked at him with cold eyes. In contrast to Light's heated outburst, he spoke quietly.

"Light-kun is not asking anything."

Light rolled his eyes. Ryuzaki continued.

"He is a controlling person and, right now, he is attempting to control me."

Light's mouth dropped open. It took a few moments to form a reply.

"What…are…you talking about? How did you come to that conclusion?" he asked incredulously.

Ryuzaki frowned and looked down, declining to answer. Light was shocked by the turn this confrontation had taken. He was still mad but…

'Does he really think that?'

He suddenly felt the need to defend himself. His words came out in a rush.

"I don't know why you would say that. And it's not true! Look at it from my perspective, Ryuzaki. You accuse me of being Kira and you won't believe that I'm not. It was your idea to be handcuffed together so we could work on the case. That's the reason you gave but I know it's because you…you really believe I'm a serial ki…"

He couldn't say it. He wouldn't say it. He could feel his chest beginning to constrict. It was painful. In an attempt to stave it off, he tried a different tactic.

"Watari said it was past the time you should have recovered. What was he talking about? I want your help in the Kira case but I'm also concerned about you."
Ryuzaki did not look up when he spoke. His voice was hushed.

"Light-kun is very skilled at rationalizing his control issues," he said peevishly.

Light's anger, which had been slowly ebbing away, surged right back.

"I don't have control issues, Ryuzaki. You're not going to distract me anymore. Why won't you participate in the case?"

When he refused to answer, or even raise his head, Light felt something snap within. Rising quickly from the chair, he parted his knees and put one of his between them. Light ignored Ryuzaki's gasp of dismay as he placed his hands on his arms, forcing him to lie back. He hovered over him, stopping short of actually lying on top. Light slid his hands up to firmly hold his shoulders. Firmly, but not punishingly. Despite his outrage, he had no desire to inflict pain on Ryuzaki. All he wanted was an answer. An honest answer.

'And if I have to go this far to get it, then I will.'

Light's face was poised above Ryuzaki's.

"Will you answer me?" Light asked softly.

"No. Will you let me up?" Ryuzaki replied in a strained voice.

"No. I want you to answer my question."

"I don't want to. I want Light-kun to release me."

"I don't want to. Not until you answer me."

The detective looked away while his hands slowly came up. It was surprising when he grasped Light's forearms. It was less surprising when he attempted to pull Light's grip away from his shoulders. A silent struggle ensued. Eventually, Ryuzaki stilled. He made a sound of exasperation and looked at Light. His voice was tense when he observed:

"Light-kun fails to see the incongruity in his actions."

"What are you…"

"You are holding me down after insisting you are not a controlling person."

Light thought this over.

"You're right. I don't see the incongruity because I don't agree with your assessment," he said coldly.

His fingers began to rapidly drum against Light's arms. He had no idea what was going through Ryuzaki's mind, though it was certain he was uncomfortable and angry. But so was Light, and the unfortunate result was a deadlock.

Truthfully, he had not meant for things to go so far. However, now that they had…

'I'm not backing down. I can't.'

"Let me go," Ryuzaki entreated softly.

'I can't.'
"No."

Ryuzaki turned his head away. His fingers stopped moving and his body relaxed under Light's hands. His voice was muffled when he spoke.

"I lost my motivation to capture Kira."

"Because you were wrong?"

Ryuzaki shrugged. He let go of Light and placed his arms along his sides.

Light stared. He recognized what lay before him: an impassivity he could not surmount. Ryuzaki would not speak again, no matter what Light said or did. His frustration was reflected in his voice when he said:

"You're so unreasonable. I can't stand it sometimes."

He released him and moved away. He paused to switch off the lamp before climbing into bed. Darkness and silence covered the room. Into it, Light whispered:

"I really can't, Ryuzaki."

Unsurprisingly, he did not receive a response.

The next day came and went in a flurry of activity. Light focused all his attention and energy on the investigation. His meals were eaten at his desk. He told himself that he did not wish to interrupt his flow of productivity. It seemed like everything was falling into place. He and Watari had almost completed the program. All the Kira-related data was collected and organized. He even had a working theory on how they would be able to track down the killer. All that remained was to collate and verify it with the program. That was only days away.

It was a time of anticipation and excitement for the team. A cheerful mood pervaded the operations room and Light shared in it. They had worked so hard to get to this point. Now that the elusive breakthrough was in sight, Light felt his motivation soaring. He gladly continued working well after the others left.

He told himself that he did not want to halt his momentum. He checked and re-read documents that had already been looked over. He was being conscientious and thorough. It was an ideal time to do such work. There were no distractions from the detective.

Ryuzaki ignored Light utterly. That was fine. Light had more important things to do than humor a stubborn child. Ryuzaki could be as difficult as he wished. Light had better things to do than involve himself in such foolishness.

That was what he told himself.

The next day came and went in much the same way. Well, there was one key distinction. Light's enthusiasm had diminished a little bit. This was mostly because of the headache that suddenly began around mid-afternoon. It wasn't too bad; just a minor annoyance, really. Certainly not enough to distract him from the job at hand.

It was true that the last headache had been tied to a conflict he was having with the detective. He could admit that, to himself. But this time was different. There were no legitimate problems between him and Ryuzaki. It was just Ryuzaki being unfair, irrational, and perverse. Light would not validate his absurdity with time or attention. It would only prove that such tactics were effective with him.
And they weren't. Absolutely not.

That was what he told himself.

The next day came and crawled; painfully and slowly. Light made it all the way to early afternoon through sheer will alone. However, the intense headache, the too-bright light of the computer screen, and the noisy background finally defeated him. He made his excuses to the rest of the team. Watari assured him that he would be able to continue working on the program without Light. His father and the others expressed sympathy and concern. No one had a problem with his early retirement.

He and Ryuzaki departed. When they arrived at the bedroom, the detective released the handcuffs and left the room. In the much-needed quiet; Light changed into his pajamas, closed the curtains, and tumbled into bed. He slung one arm over his eyes to block out the faint light.

He remembered visiting doctors when he was a child. They sent him for many tests in an effort to determine the cause of his frequent headaches. In the end, nothing had been found. There was no physical condition or anomaly responsible for the problem. All his parents could do was manage his headaches when they appeared.

They had stopped when he was around ten or eleven. It was assumed he had grown out of them. Now, however, it was obvious that was inaccurate.

'Maybe they were always caused by stress?'

Yes, that seemed likely. Considering what had been going on for the last two months. There was, as always, so much pressure and work to do on the Kira case. There were his unnatural living conditions. He rarely went outdoors and was confined to this building. And, last but not least, there was Ryuzaki.

Light was reluctant to admit it but…

'It bothers me a little…that he's ignoring me.'

He thought for a few seconds.

'All right, I can't stand it.'

Ryuzaki had not so much as looked at him since their confrontation. Not that Light made any effort either. He had been far too livid. But now, in the peace of the darkened room, he discovered his fury had dispersed.

Maybe it was because of the headache. It certainly deprived him of focus and energy. Darkness and quiet were infinitely more desirable than turbulent emotions when he was like this.

Maybe it was because of the way Ryuzaki looked today. When Light surreptitiously observed him; the signs of severe fatigue had been unmistakable. Perhaps, while Light endured headaches, the detective handled stress by not sleeping. If allowed to continue, it would eventually sicken him. Light did not want to watch that occur.

Or maybe it was because Ryuzaki had not been entirely wrong. Without the interference and shield of his anger, Light could see that he had gone too far. It was always trial and error with Ryuzaki. He had erred. By bringing up the Kira investigation, by attempting to force an answer out of the detective; Light had pushed him well beyond what he could tolerate. Or accept.

He turned on his side and kneaded his forehead.
He would have to make amends. If he didn't, then this stalemate would continue indefinitely. He didn't want that. He wanted Ryuzaki speaking to him again. He missed eating together and his quiet companionship. He wanted to touch him again.

That was when it struck him.

That was it. It felt like he...needed Ryuzaki. When he woke from that troubling dream, the first thing he did was go to him. It wasn't just then either. Light had, unconsciously, been putting himself in frequent physical contact with Ryuzaki. It was only after the dream that he became aware of the purpose behind his actions.

He had been seeking reassurance, and received it. Ryuzaki, inexplicably, possessed the ability to do that for Light. And, on some level, it was disturbing.

'It's too one-sided. It makes me vulnerable.'

With that kind of disparity, the balance of power seemed to be shifting towards Ryuzaki. When the detective took the initiative and kissed him, it was a confirmation of that suspicion. That's how it appeared to Light. So, he had sought to re-establish equilibrium. Unfortunately, his method had been too extreme.

That was all. It wasn't about being controlling. He was sure of that.

'I'm not that kind of person.'

He thought for a second.

'No, definitely not.'

Of course, he could perceive why the detective had made that assumption. He recalled holding him down and demanding answers.

Light cringed and groaned softly.

It was going to take a great deal of effort to reconcile with Ryuzaki. There was no possibility that he would make the first move. Light would have to take the initiative. He was one hundred percent certain of that.

He was just beginning to map out a plan on how to proceed, when the door opened. It was Ryuzaki.

In the dim light, he silently approached. By the time he arrived, Light was sitting up. He had expected the detective to disappear for the rest of the day. To take the opportunity of Light's indisposition to avoid him completely.

When Ryuzaki stood beside him, and placed aspirin and a bottle of water on the night stand; Light was caught perfectly off-guard. His mouth dropped open in shock, literally.

Ryuzaki stared down at him for a few seconds, and then turned to leave.

Light acted without thinking. He caught his hand and stopped him. Ryuzaki's back was to him. He did not try to pull his hand away, but did not turn around either. Light's hold was loose and gentle.

"Will you sit and talk with me?" he asked tentatively.

The detective shrugged. Light released his hand and shifted over. He breathed an inner sigh of relief when Ryuzaki slowly moved towards him. Once he had settled next to Light, he braced his back
against the headboard and drew his knees up. He busied himself with extracting two pills from the bottle. When he handed them over, along with the water, Light was already lying back down.

Light took the medicine and passed the water back.

"Thank you," he said quietly.

Ryuzaki nodded, but did not look at him. Instead, he stared straight ahead. Light noted how his hand tightly gripped his knee. In a split second, he came to a decision.

He propped himself up on one elbow, and took his hand. Ryuzaki tolerated it, but looked down at him with a wary and guarded expression. Light smiled reassuringly. His voice was low and soothing.

"I'm sorry," he said truthfully.

Ryuzaki's surprise was evident. His eyes widened and his mouth opened slightly. He recovered quickly and, unbelievably, gifted Light with a faint smile. This, in turn, caused all the tension within Light to finally release. For the first time, in many days, he relaxed. He felt his chest expand as anxiety and agitation were replaced by relief, gratitude, and…hope.

The ease within allowed him to justify taking yet another risk.

"I need to sleep. Will you stay?"

Ryuzaki took a minute to think it over. Light held his hand and traced it softly with his fingers. He waited patiently and calmly. Finally, the detective responded.

"Yes."

Light's smile was genuine as he lifted the covers to allow him to slip in. Ryuzaki turned on his side, facing away from him. After a brief internal struggle, Light edged up to him. He hesitantly placed his arm around his waist and fitted his chest to his back. He was not pushed away. Ryuzaki accepted his embrace.

He breathed in the clean scent of his hair, and felt the warmth of his body. This made Light happy and…'

'content.'

"Good night, Ryuzaki."

"Good night, Light-kun."

Light and Ryuzaki slept.

The next morning, Light woke up alone. He could hear the shower. It would have been nice to wake up with Ryuzaki in his arms but, in a way, this was better.

There was one last thing he needed to clear up with the detective. A few minutes solitude would allow him the space to work out what he wanted to say. It helped that the headache was gone and the acrimony between them had been dispelled.

He ran through many simulations in his mind. He thought of what he would say and then estimated Ryuzaki's probable response. After many variations and adjustments, he was satisfied.

When the door to the bathroom opened, he was ready. Nervous, but ready, nonetheless.
"Good morning, Ryuzaki."

"Good morning, Light-kun."

It was now or never.

"About the case…"

Light faltered when Ryuzaki abruptly stopped moving and stared at him. It almost made him lose his nerve. Almost, but not quite. He held up his hands in a placating motion and spoke quickly.

"I won't ask you to talk about it. I also won't ask you to listen. But, I have a proposition for you."

The detective frowned. However, he kept listening. Light, taking this as a good sign, detailed the rest of his proposal. Exactly like the multiple times he had mentally rehearsed it.

"I'll find a solid lead on who Kira is. Once I do that, it's possible you'll feel motivated again. When that happens, would you consider working on the case with me?"

Ryuzaki looked down and did not reply immediately. Light was tense as he waited.

'Trial and error. I hope this wasn't another mistake.'

Finally, the detective looked up and met Light's eyes. He spoke in a clear voice.

"Yes. I would consider it."

Light smiled warmly.

"Thanks, Ryuzaki. I'll be ready in fifteen minutes and then we can go."

When they arrived at the operations room, it was to more good news. Watari had been able to resolve the last of the bugs in the program. It was complete. There was much celebration and joviality. Everyone crowded around Light and expressed congratulations. He accepted their praise but ensured Watari was also included. If not for his hard work and help, they would not have been able to get to this point.

The rest of the day was extremely busy. All hands, except Ryuzaki, worked to input the necessary data. Light barely stopped to eat. As midnight approached, their numbers dwindled. Soichiro and Aizawa retired at eleven. Surprisingly, Matsuda stayed right until the end. It was two in the morning when they finished.

It would not take long for the results to come in, but Light realized he needed to sleep. The program would analyze the data and provide information. However, he would still need to evaluate and interpret the results. For that, he needed a rested mind. After bidding goodnight to Watari and Matsuda, he and Ryuzaki departed.

When they reached the bedroom, he did consider inviting the detective to sleep with him again. But his mind was fatigued. He was unable to calculate the best way to approach him in order to ensure success.

'There are just too many random variables with him. I can't properly account for them when I'm this tired.'

Still, the air between them was amicable and clear. It was a marked change from the last few days and made Light happy. And calm.
Maybe that was why his excitement over the investigation did not keep him awake. He easily fell into a deep slumber that night.

The next morning, he awoke alert and refreshed. He could barely wait to get to work and hurried Ryuzaki along. They arrived before anyone else and Light immediately set to work. There were pages and pages of results to go over. He felt a sense of pride. The program worked exactly as he had envisioned it would. Now all that remained was to find the pattern he knew was there. The commonality that linked all the non-criminal victims.

It was mid-morning when he finally found it.

He looked over at Ryuzaki. He was crouched with his back to Light, idly swiveling his chair from side to side. Light spoke in a serious tone.

"Ryuzaki, I know you're not into this, but come over here for a second."

The detective regarded him with bored, bleary eyes but came anyways. He wheeled his chair behind Light and peered over his shoulder. Light pointed to the pertinent data on the monitor.

"Take a look at this. Look at the change here…"

He indicated a column of numbers.

"…and look at this sudden growth."

He brought up the appropriate graph.

For a few seconds, Ryuzaki did not react. Then, he suddenly clasped Light's shoulder and leaned forward.

"Light-kun!" he exclaimed.

Light was startled by the hand on his shoulder. However, when he looked at him, he was due for an even greater surprise. The listlessness of moments ago had been transformed into excitement. Ryuzaki's lips were curved into a wide smile. Light couldn't help but grin when he asked:

"How about now? Are you ready to get to work?"

While he waited for him to answer, he acknowledged the detective had managed to catch him off-guard yet again. He had expected interest from Ryuzaki, but his actual reaction exceeded anything he could have predicted. He was animated in a way Light had never seen him before.

Light's eyes softened and his smile grew even broader. He became aware of a change and new understanding within.

Perhaps, when it came to Ryuzaki, Light could adapt to being surprised once in a while.

**Wheel of Fortune**

advancement, important developments, the end of one phase and the start of a new one, forces in motion stimulate change and growth, a turning point, an element of random interference or sudden and unpredictable change in the subject's life, possibilities, surprises, becoming more aware, a vision or realization that strikes with great force, unexpected encounters, the Wheel of Fortune often suggests wheel-like actions - changes in direction, repeating cycles, and rapid movement - when the
energy of the Wheel arrives - the subject will feel life speed up, a person cannot control all the events in his life - however, he can control how he reacts to them, positive upheaval, some changes in the circumstances of the subject's life - he would likely not understand what has caused this change and is likely not to be responsible in any normal sense of the word, adaptation, the subject has controlled life with a strong ego (the Chariot) - now the unconscious has begun to wake - the ego loves the light just as the unconscious loves the dark - in light the ego can occupy itself with sense impressions from the outer world while in the dark the unconscious stirs (which is why children see monsters at night) - that is why the subject makes his outer personality so strong (so he will not have to face demons every time the lights go out) - however, if he wishes to go beyond the Chariot - he must face those terrors, fate, destiny

The Fool, coming from the solitude and introspection of the Hermit, feels ready for movement and action again. His perspective is wider and his sense of purpose is restored. Through the Wheel of Fortune he learns much of life is random and unpredictable. He comes to appreciate the workings of fate – that there are forces beyond his control – and of karma. Before the Hermit, the Fool only saw the events immediately before and behind him; the daily concerns his ego found so important. When he withdrew he was able to see a pattern, psychologically, of where his life had gone and where it is going. On a deeper level, the vision remains mysterious and symbolic: he can see what he's made of his life but fate is a mystery, the light of the unconscious remains veiled.

Chapter End Notes

Canon events will be in the upcoming chapters. Therefore, at times, I will use dialogue from the manga (as was done at the end of this chapter). This was also done in the first chapters of this fic. Like then, I will try to keep it to a minimum. However, some conversations are important to the plot of this story. I have chosen not to paraphrase them because I really don't think I can improve upon the source material. Just thought I'd give an explanation so it's not too jarring.

Thank you for reading!
Light noticed it.

He and Ryuzaki were discussing the case. Specifically, the recent findings and how they related to Kira. The detective had observed that punishing criminals may not be the true goal of this Kira.

Of this Kira, Light thought. He moved on.

"It's possible that punishing criminals is camouflage while he kills for monetary reasons," Light speculated.

Ryuzaki, who had been leaning into him, shifted back. He kept his hand on Light's shoulder, and spoke in a thoughtful manner.

"Light-kun once said if an adult had this power, he would use it for his own benefit or to make money. This would fit that. Though, since Kira and the second Kira existed at the same time, this could be an entirely new Kira from the one who was killing criminals."

Light noticed it. Kira and the second Kira, he thought. He looked away from the detective, towards his monitor.

"Very impressive research, Light-kun," Ryuzaki said.

"Thanks."

Matsuda, who had been hovering nearby, spoke up.

"I helped a lot with this too, Ryuzaki."

For the next few minutes, Light explained his reasoning. Why he had decided to look at non-criminal heart attack victims, and why he focused his search within Japan. Ryuzaki listened silently. Matsuda approached and spoke again.

"I helped a lot on this, Ryuzaki."

The detective ignored him, as did Light.

Light detailed the suspicious cases he had found. There were three men, all in important positions in the Japanese business world, who had died of heart attacks. They were from different companies, so he had researched each one. One company's stock had been steadily rising.

"So, then Light-kun did further research into deaths involving people in the business world?" Ryuzaki asked.

"Yes, and look…"

Light brought up a graph on his computer. It showed a time frame of three months and the deaths that had occurred.

"…thirteen deaths that were beneficial to Yotsuba in only three months. From the other companies' point of view, only two or three were beneficial. Besides those earlier three victims, the rest died in accidents or by disease. One committed suicide, and two were killed this week by Kira; after being indicted for corruption."
Ryuzaki stared intently at the screen.
"These three months are after Light-kun was put in confinement and the killings stopped, and then resumed. That intrigues me."
"That's true," Light agreed.

He looked at the detective from the corner of his eye.
"What do you think? I have to conclude that Kira is supporting Yotsuba," Light said.
"But if that is the case…"
"Kira can kill in ways other than heart attacks."

Ryuzaki's expression clearly illustrated his surprise. Light imagined his own face had looked similar when he initially made the discovery. They had all believed Kira was restricted to killing by heart attacks. Now, it appeared that was incorrect. To Light, it was an important development but also a warning. It would be unwise to make presumptions about Kira. Yes, the information they had was likely reliable. However, it may not be the whole truth. Finding out Kira could kill in other ways proved that. He turned to the detective.
"I think we need to keep an open mind about Kira. I mean, it's possible this is a third Kira; but it's also possible it's not. Maybe there's only been one Kira all along."

Ryuzaki looked at him curiously. Light continued.
"We can move forward based on what we have, but we should keep in mind there's a lot we don't know."

The detective's expression was speculative when he replied.
"Yes, and if Kira really is connected to Yotsuba, we will learn more about him. I wish to settle the matter of the first and second Kiras."

'Settle.'
"I will examine all the information, Light-kun. I must familiarize myself with the case, as it is now."
"Sure, I have some more research to do, as well," Light answered quietly.

For the next two hours, Ryuzaki focused on bringing himself up to speed. Light spent some time explaining and discussing the latest developments with the other team members. Then, he concentrated on further research. When his attention began to lapse, he realized he needed to eat. In the excitement of that morning, he and Ryuzaki had skipped breakfast. Light stood up.
"Come on, Ryuzaki. Let's go get some lunch."

The detective did not turn away from his monitor.
"I'm busy. Can Light-kun wait?"

Light stepped forward.
"No."
"Perhaps someone could bring him something to eat?"

Light moved closer and put a hand on his shoulder. Ryuzaki looked up at him.

"No. I need a break."

The detective opened his mouth to speak. Light did not give him the chance.

"I insist," he said firmly.

Ryuzaki frowned and stood up. He followed as Light led the way to the kitchen.

Once there, Light made sandwiches for them both. He used deli meat, cheese, lettuce, and tomatoes. He passed a plate to Ryuzaki and then watched him pick out the tomato, and place it to the side.

"You don't like tomatoes?"

"I do not like them in my sandwiches. I will eat it separately."

Light nodded and took a bite of his meal. In the time it took him to chew and swallow, he came to a decision.

"This is an amazing breakthrough on the case, isn't it?" Light said casually.

"Yes."

"With this, we could even catch Kira."

"Yes. We will need to accumulate more evidence, though."

Light put his sandwich down, and sat back.

"That's true. But, let's just say Kira is involved with Yotsuba. And let's predict that we apprehend him. What would happen to him?"

"He would be examined and interrogated. He would be forced to reveal…"

Light interrupted.

"That's not what I mean. I understand all that. I'm talking about what his sentence would be."

Ryuzaki regarded him quizzically.

"Then Light-kun should also understand that Kira will receive the death penalty."

Light crossed his arms. He spoke in a purposely mild voice.

"What do you think of that?"

"What is Light-kun trying to find out?" Ryuzaki asked slowly.

The detective had stopped eating. He crossed one arm over his chest. The hand of that arm gripped his other arm tightly.

'This is not going well.'

"Well, what is your opinion on that?" Light asked calmly.
When Ryuzaki did not answer, Light clarified.

"I understand that Kira will be executed. But, is that…"

He searched for the correct word.

"…the right thing to do?"

"It is the law," the detective answered flatly.

There was a small silence as Light carefully considered his next words.

"You're right. It is the law. It is what will happen. But, is it just?"

Ryuzaki answered without hesitation.

"Yes."

"Why? It's killing a person for killing other people."

"Light-kun thinks Kira should be given a lesser sentence?" Ryuzaki asked incredulously.

"No, not necessarily. I'm asking what you think of the concept of capital punishment. Is it right? Is it wrong? There's a certain balance in killing someone who has killed other people. But, on the other hand, it's hypocritical. If killing is morally wrong, and against the law, then why is it acceptable to legally execute someone?"

Ryuzaki took a moment to answer.

"Why is Light-kun asking me this?"

This is what Light thought:

'Because you think I'm the first Kira. You obviously haven't changed your mind on that. I'm not, so I'm not worried about being executed. You don't share my certainty. Therefore, at this time, you believe I will be killed as the first Kira. And you seem to be just fine with that.'

This is what he said:

"No reason, in particular. I'm just interested in the idea of justice. In an abstract, intellectual way. That's all."

"I see. Light-kun has made some valid points. However, unlike him, I am not interested in the idea of justice."

"Then why are you a detective? You solve criminal cases and are responsible for catching people who break the law."

'Don't tell me…'

"Is it for the challenge? Maybe it's a puzzle for you to solve. Or do you look at it as a contest? Between you and the suspect?"

"Yes. To both," Ryuzaki said.

Light stared for a few moments. Then, he picked up his sandwich and began eating. He did not look
at the detective and struggled to keep his face impassive.

"Is Light-kun disappointed in me?" Ryuzaki asked softly.

'I don't want to fight with him, but...'

"Honestly, Ryuzaki? Yes, I am."
The detective smiled.

"Light-kun is very devoted to the idea of justice."

"And you don't care about justice at all!" Light snapped.

"That is incorrect. I merely said I was uninterested in the idea of justice."

Light frowned.

"Okay, Ryuzaki. Just this once, could you speak simply and clearly?"

Ryuzaki's grin widened.

"Yes, just this once, I will."
The smile faded away. The detective's expression was pensive when he said:

"I am interested in the reality of justice. I will use Kira as an example. He is a childish killer who is playing at divine retribution. His actions are beyond unjust. They are evil. I will catch him for that reason. And also because it is a puzzle and a contest. I do not know if it is morally correct to execute him, and I do not care."

Light thought this over. There were many countering arguments that came to mind. For example, he could bring up mitigating circumstances. The detective had admitted to the possibility that the first two Kiras were controlled. He also concluded that would make them victims. Was it still acceptable to execute them? From what Ryuzaki had just said, he did not care what their fate would be.

Also, Ryuzaki had a fixed opinion on the kind of person Kira was. However, Kira obviously didn't see himself that way. Neither did the people who supported him. Misa had even expressed gratitude to Kira, for killing the criminal who murdered her parents. It wasn't that Light agreed with Kira and what he was doing. He emphatically did not. It was more about the principle of judgment. Judging a person, fairly, required knowledge of all the factors and circumstances. Ryuzaki did not have all the facts about Kira, made a judgment anyway, and acted on it. He also assumed his judgment was the correct one. The only one.

Finally, the detective used methods that were illegal. He had bugged and set up cameras in Light's home. He and Misa had been confined without legal representation. Yes, Kira's crimes were on a different and much more severe level. That was undoubtedly true. Still, if he looked at it simplistically; Kira and Ryuzaki both engaged in illegal activities. Didn't the "reality" of justice cover that too?

According to Light's reasoning, there were many more flaws with Ryuzaki's position. However, he decided against debating the detective's stance. He realized something quite important. Perhaps Ryuzaki didn't appreciate all the considerations behind the choices he made. Or, more likely, he just didn't care. But, it was possible that Light did not comprehend Ryuzaki's perspective completely either. Instead of disagreement, he chose understanding.
"So, is it a sense of responsibility for you?"

"No. I do not think I have to capture criminals," Ryuzaki said seriously.

"Then, you do it because you want to?"

"Yes. I only take on cases I am interested in."

Light paused. There were so many things wrong with that statement, and it genuinely irritated him. Nevertheless, he re-attained and reinforced the mindset he wished to have. His voice and expression were neutral when he said:

"And because you do that, you've succeeded in solving extremely difficult cases. Ones that no one else could."

Ryuzaki nodded.

"Have you ever failed to solve a case?" Light asked.

"No."

Light, in an objective manner, was attempting to establish the validity of Ryuzaki's position. He was actively seeking the detective's good points. In this way, he could weigh that information against the negative conclusions he had initially drawn. Maybe it wasn't that Ryuzaki did not care about the idea of justice, but more that he had a different perspective on what it was. However, Light's attempts to come to a middle ground were founded on an intellectual basis. And because of that, he was not taking into account subjective elements. If he had been, he would have refrained from asking the next question. He really would have.

"Have you ever been wrong about a person? A suspect?"

Ryuzaki immediately withdrew. Light watched as he wrapped his arms tightly around his legs, and broke eye contact. His face and voice were blank when he spoke.

"Is Light-kun almost done eating?"

Light could not think of any way to salvage the situation, so he simply said:

"Yes, just give me a few minutes."

That atmosphere was tense. Light did not taste his food as he ate. He noted the half sandwich and tomato left on the detective's plate.

"Ryuzaki, I'm sorry I didn't ask what you like in your sandwiches."

There was no response.

"I should have paid more attention," Light said quietly.

Ryuzaki looked down, and spoke in a soft voice.

"Thank you for making it, Light-kun."

Light stood up.

"Anytime. Let's get back to work."
Ryuzaki nodded and rose from his chair. Light followed as he led the way back to the operations room.

For the rest of the day, Light researched Yotsuba. He also examined the other companies that had been affected by the thirteen deaths. Ryuzaki was mostly silent as he went over the case. He would occasionally ask Light a question or for clarification on a point. His manner, when he did, was calm and thoughtful. This caused Light to feel a sense of relief.

It seemed he was not holding a grudge over what happened at lunch. Sometimes Light was amazed at the things that could set Ryuzaki off. For example; an inquiry into his age or why he wouldn't work on the investigation. As well, the idea that he could make an error about something or someone. Light was not accusing Ryuzaki of being wrong about a suspect. He had been asking him. That's when it struck him.

'Maybe he isn't positive there was a first and second Kira. Or maybe he isn't entirely sure I was the first Kira.'

Light smiled.

He had been operating under the assumption that Ryuzaki did not doubt his guilt. When the detective had spoken of "this Kira" and "the first and second Kiras"; it brought that issue to the forefront. At least, it had for Light. That was mainly why he began that conversation at lunch. He was glad he did now. It was reassuring to realize that Ryuzaki wasn't convinced about his role as the first Kira.

Still, there had been Light's unthinking question. It had caused a negative reaction in the detective. Then, there was the recent incident where he had held him down. Whether he wanted to or not, Light kept saying and doing things that had an adverse effect. And it perplexed him. He never had any problems getting along with people before. In fact, he was generally well-liked and admired. That was because Light knew how to act, and what to say, in order to gain trust and approval. As well, he definitely knew what not to say and do.

That was the problem. He also knew what he should not say to Ryuzaki. Well, most of the time. At the very least, he could make a reasonable guess. Still, despite that, Light continued to put him on the defensive. Of course, there were some things that needed to be said. The detective's previous refusal to work on the investigation was indicative of a serious crisis. That was why Light had brought it up. He paused.

'No, that's not true. That's only part of it.'

If he was absolutely honest, there was another element that came into this. Every time he had pushed Ryuzaki, there was something else going on within Light. Today, he had started that conversation with him for many reasons. However, the main one was because it bothered him that Ryuzaki thought he was the first Kira.

The same issue was present when he pinned him during their fight. Light eventually concluded that his own sense of vulnerability had contributed to his behavior. The balance of power seemed to be shifting towards Ryuzaki. So, he had sought to re-establish equilibrium. But…that didn't really make sense. It was not possible to establish balance by using force on another person. He hated to admit it, but that was a way to establish…

'Control.'

The afternoon had worn on. Light continued steadily working as he analyzed and reflected upon these recent events. When the constriction in his chest began, there was no change in his outward
activity. To the casual observer, he appeared engrossed in his research. Inside, it was a completely
different story.

Light was extremely agitated. He really didn't see himself as a controlling person. Yet there was no
denying his behavior towards Ryuzaki had been controlling. It was in his refusal to drop a subject
that Ryuzaki did not want to talk about. It was in the way Light would not allow him to withdraw or
retreat. Finally, it was blatantly obvious when he forced him onto his back, and held him there. Light
was aghast.

'Why didn't I stop then? Why did I keep going?'

Light had not let Ryuzaki go until he answered. The answer had been uninformative and, essentially,
meaningless. Actually, that still kind of bothered…Light felt a hand on his shoulder. He looked up at
his father.

"You've been working hard all day. Come on over and have something to eat with the rest of us,"
Soichiro said. He smiled at Light.

"Sure, dad. That's a good idea."

He turned to the detective.

"Come on, Ryuzaki. It's time to eat."

"I'm busy," he replied, without looking away from his screen.

Light sighed. He grabbed a binder.

"These are hard copies of some of the documents relating to the case. You can read this," he said.

With that, he took hold of the back of Ryuzaki's chair and pulled it along with him; to where
everyone waited.

It was a pleasant meal. The detective studied the information in the binder, and Light chatted with the
others.

When Light returned to his desk, he was in a much calmer frame of mind. This was beneficial since
it allowed him to continue his previous examination with equanimity. He started over.

He was not a controlling person. However, sometimes he acted towards Ryuzaki in a controlling
manner. Or he said and did things that produced a negative reaction. He had apologized for his
behavior when he held him down. Ryuzaki had accepted his apology. It was finished. There was no
point in going over it ad nauseam.

What it all came down to was Light's motivations. Every time he had started a conflict with Ryuzaki,
there was another matter going on underneath. There was some…thing within Light that caused that
behavior. He did not want to continue mindlessly instigating conflicts between him and the detective.
Therefore, he needed to figure out what the problem was.

And that was when Light hit a wall.

Over the course of the next few hours, he scrutinized the issue from every conceivable angle. He was
just beginning to feel very frustrated, when he felt a slight tug on the chain. He looked at Ryuzaki.

"What is it?"
He glanced at Light for a second, and then turned back to his monitor.

"I'm hungry," he said.

Light called out to Soichiro.

"Dad, can you bring over the cake you brought today?"

Once Light had the box in hand, he opened it and placed it beside him. Ryuzaki slid it over and started eating. He did not look at Light or say "thank you".

Light shook his head, and turned back to his work.

'I wouldn't do stuff like this for anyone else.'

And that was when Light broke through the wall.

Light did not do nice things for other people. Well, not in an authentic way. Everything he said and everything he did was affected. A sort of act. And that was because he was indifferent to everyone. He had made a decision, long ago, that making the effort to connect with others was futile. People did not really see him, and often treated him in a covertly hostile way. He had lived many years in that detached state.

Now, he was making a different choice. He was attempting to get closer to Ryuzaki. Light remembered his conclusion about him. An extremely closed-off person would react strongly if someone, in a sense, tried to open him up. That was the observation he made about Ryuzaki. However, it was also true for Light. The difference was that he was putting himself through that process. And, just like with Ryuzaki, there was a dramatic response. Not all the time, but sometimes.

When he was a child, he had believed that people did not see him. They did not care to perceive the genuine person below the surface. They only saw what they wanted to see. And, because he had qualities that were very much admired, he was the target of envy. Along with that came animosity from others, usually hidden under a smiling veneer. This had confused and hurt him. Eventually, it led to Light being excluded. So, he had made a choice.

He would not try anymore. He would not concern himself with other people ever again.

The detective had been right. Light was alienated. That did happen. However, meeting Ryuzaki had caused Light to become aware of a wish to connect with another person. He had not felt that desire for many years and, consequently, it was very stressful at times. He did like Ryuzaki, and he did want to be closer to him. Nevertheless, sometimes it was too big a departure from his former attitude. This internal conflict would produce a volatile reaction within Light. What he was doing, when he pushed Ryuzaki, was acting on those clashing feelings.

There were two things that Light came to. First, it was true that he had been alienated. It was a difficult and unwelcome admission. He had believed, uncompromisingly, that he made a choice to detach from other people. He had not felt that desire for many years and, consequently, it was very stressful at times. He did like Ryuzaki, and he did want to be closer to him. Nevertheless, sometimes it was too big a departure from his former attitude. This internal conflict would produce a volatile reaction within Light. What he was doing, when he pushed Ryuzaki, was acting on those clashing feelings.

Second, he was bringing this into how he treated Ryuzaki. He felt he wasn't seen when he was younger. So, he wanted Ryuzaki to see him. He had been vulnerable as a child when those events occurred. Consequently, he had trouble with being vulnerable around Ryuzaki. He did not like feeling exposed. Instead of acknowledging this within himself, he took it out on him. It wasn't fair.
Ryuzaki was not even around when all that had happened.

The only thing that he could attribute to Ryuzaki was the Kira issue. The detective suspected he was the first Kira. It was, indeed, good news that he seemed to have some doubts. However, Light was not completely in the clear. Otherwise, the chain would be gone. That did bother Light, far more than he was normally willing to admit. Still, if he was really honest, he had some responsibility in that too.

He had written in his diary that he might be Kira. Light had told Ryuzaki that he could be Kira and not remember it. He did not understand why he had done that now. It made no sense, no matter how hard he thought on it. Nevertheless, that was what he had done. Actually said he could be Kira, to a detective who already suspected him. A detective like Ryuzaki, no less. Light was not prepared to take complete responsibility for his current situation. However, now he could concede that he did have some.

Light was brought out of his internal dialogue by the presence of Soichoro, Matsuda, and Aizawa. It had become quite late and they were about to depart.

"Good night, everyone. I'll see you tomorrow," Light said.

Once they were gone, he spoke to the detective.

"It's getting late."

"I'm almost done, Light-kun," Ryuzaki replied absently.

Light settled back in his seat.

"Sure, I can wait."

It was another hour before Ryuzaki stood up. They made their way to the bedroom. Light used the bathroom first, and then Ryuzaki did. In the time it took him to emerge, Light made a decision. Normally, when attempting to make such a choice, he would analyze and weigh many variables. This time, he did not. He would act on something he wanted, simply and directly. Instead of predicting the possibility of success or failure, he would see what happened.

Light was sitting on his bed. He heard the bathroom door open and Ryuzaki's quiet footfalls approaching. He waited until he was lying down, and then spoke.

"Ryuzaki, I want to sleep with you," he said honestly.

The detective had his back to Light. He slowly turned over and looked at him.

"What does Light-kun mean?"

Light carefully chose his words.

"I liked sleeping with you. I found it comfortable."

Ryuzaki tilted his head to the side, and regarded him with a puzzled expression.

"Is Light-kun asking me?"

"Well…yes, I guess I am," Light admitted slowly.

"We have already done so, on two separate occasions. I do not mind or I would have already declined."
'Oh, I didn't...know that.'

Light smiled.

"I just wanted to make sure."

He turned off the lamp and climbed into Ryuzaki's bed. The detective was lying on his back. He moved until their bodies were touching. Light noted that he did not stiffen or try to retreat. Given that, he made another choice.

Light was on his side. He leaned over Ryuzaki and paused. He gave him a chance to react. When he did not, Light slowly moved forward.

When their lips met, Light's hand traveled down to clasp Ryuzaki's hip. At the same time, the detective's hand rose to lightly hold the nape of his neck. It was a surprise when he felt Ryuzaki's tongue slip into his mouth. Unexpected, and very arousing.

Light leaned in closer, pressing his weight into him, and slid his hand under his shirt. He had just reached his chest when he felt Ryuzaki tense. He withdrew his lips from Light's, and laid back.

Light took a moment to calm his breathing. He cautiously chose his words.

"You're not really sure about this, are you?"

There was a short silence.

"No," Ryuzaki answered quietly.

'I want to ask him why, but…'

"But, you like kissing? And sleeping together?"

"I do not mind those things."

Light thought for a bit. He was fairly certain that he wouldn't get an answer to this next question, but asked it anyway.

"Have you ever done anything like this before?"

"That is not any of Light-kun's business," Ryuzaki replied quickly.

Light could have become offended or indignant at that response. Instead, he decided to see the humor in it.

"Ryuzaki. We're lying in bed together, and we've just been kissing. I have my hand up your shirt. When does it become my business?" he said in a jesting manner.

There was a pause, and then:

"Light-kun is gaining amusement at my expense," Ryuzaki said stiffly.

Light chuckled.

"Well, yeah. It is kind of funny. But, you know what? You can tell me sometime if you want to, okay?"
It was dark, but Light was still able to make out his nod. He moved his hand until it rested it on Ryuzaki's stomach. His voice, when he spoke, was thoughtful.

"So, Ryuzaki? I've been wondering about something. Why do you speak to me that way?"

"What does Light-kun mean?"

"I'm asking why Ryuzaki-kun speaks to me the way he does. It's a little…"

'distancing.'

"…different."

"There is no reason," Ryuzaki said mildly.

'I doubt that.'

"Does it bother you, Light-kun?"

"No, I'm used to it. I was just curious," Light replied amicably.

Ryuzaki shifted over onto his side. Light lifted his arm out of the way. When he had settled, Light pressed against his back and placed his arm against his chest. He used it to gather Ryuzaki closer. There was a period of silence. Light wondered if he was falling asleep.

That question was answered when the detective said:

"What does Light-kun do in his spare time?"

"I mostly study."

"Light-kun is boring," Ryuzaki said in a teasing voice.

Light's tone reflected his mirth.

"Thank you, Ryuzaki. That's very kind of you to say."

Light continued.

"I like to read, watch television, do stuff on my computer, and see movies."

"Light-kun is still boring," Ryuzaki deadpanned.

"Oh, really? Well, what do you like to do?"

"I like to read, watch television, and work on my computer. I do not mind movies, but am not greatly interested in them."

Light laughed.

"Well, I'd say you're pretty boring too. So, what kinds of books do you like to read?" he asked interestedly.

"I like…"

And that was how Light and Ryuzaki spent the next few hours, until they fell asleep.
Trading questions and answers, equally, back and forth.

**Justice**

balance, impartiality, neutrality, resolve, choice, until now - when the subject involved himself in the outer world – he held the illusion he was living life on the active principle – he confused "doing things" with action – real action, as opposed to pointless movement, brings value and meaning to his life – such action comes out of understanding – otherwise, he remains a passive machine with no understanding of what causes him to do the things he does – the true purpose of Strength, the Hermit, and the Wheel of Fortune was to awaken the active principle, truth, responsibility, examination of conscience, absolute honesty, the subject can only get loose from the past by becoming conscious of it – otherwise, he will constantly repeat past behavior, the ego may only be a persona (a kind of mask) but the mask can control the subject as long as he will not admit to having forged it himself; fairness, equilibrium, the right choice, carefully considered choices, even-mindedness, straightforwardness, legal matters, powers that enforce justice, equality, harmony.

The principle of social justice belongs to the Emperor. Card eleven introduces the psychic laws of Justice. The Fool's journey, up to and including the Wheel of Fortune, gave him a vision of his life. For example; the events, who he is, and what he's made of himself. Justice brings about an understanding of that vision. The way to understanding lies in responsibility. As long as he believes that his past just happens, that he does not bring his self into existence with everything he does, then the past remains a mystery; and the future an endlessly turning wheel, empty of meaning. Justice requires absolute honesty, fairness, accountability, admission, and congruence. When he accepts that every event in his life has helped to form his character, and that in the future he will continue to create himself through his actions, then his intellect and wisdom will cut through the mystery.

Furthermore, Justice indicates events have worked out the way they were "meant" to. What is happening to the Fool comes from decisions and situations in the past. He has what he deserves. It also indicates a need and a possibility for seeing the truth of this outcome. Finally, it shows the Fool's actions in the future can be changed by a lesson learned in the present.
There were many things that interested Light.

When he found a subject that drew him, he would study it. He tended towards academic pursuits. He was attracted to, for example; law, legal issues, and the principle of justice. For these, he gave great amounts of effort. They were in his coursework at school, which was only fitting considering his career choice and aspiration to emulate his father.

However, Light went above and beyond that.

He read books on his own time, researched over the internet, and spent countless hours in silent contemplation of these matters. It was in his nature. If something warranted his interest, then it also warranted his absolute focus and energy. Some people might have identified this mindset as obsessive. Light saw it as being thorough. It reflected his sincere wish to gain comprehension and knowledge.

It was not until he was an adolescent that such weighty topics had begun to preoccupy him. By then, he was no longer really involved with other people. At least, not in any sort of meaningful way. They did not interest him and so did not deserve his attention. As well, Light felt he already knew all that he needed to anyways. However, that attitude had changed, little by little, in the last two months. It would not be inaccurate to say that, now, it had undergone a reversal.

There was one person that interested Light.

When he found a person that drew him, he would study him. He was attracted to Ryuzaki; mentally, physically, and emotionally. For him, he gave great amounts of effort. There was their collaboration on the Kira case, which was only fitting considering Light's predicament and his aspiration to see justice prevail.

However, Light went above and beyond that.

He ensured that he spent private time with Ryuzaki, engaged him in regular conversation, and spent countless hours in silent contemplation of him. It was in his nature. If someone warranted his interest, then he also warranted Light's absolute focus and energy. Some people might have identified this mindset as obsessive. Light saw it as being thorough. It reflected his sincere wish to gain comprehension and knowledge of Ryuzaki.

At present; Light, Ryuzaki, Matsuda, and Aizawa were holding a meeting. They were discussing the latest developments in the case. Ryuzaki was detailing his suspicions to the other men. He was, more or less, reiterating what Light had told them the previous day. His purpose was most likely to receive input from Matsuda and Aizawa.

Light didn't really see the point.

There was no doubt that Matsuda and Aizawa were hard workers. For example; they did the legwork for the inquiries into the non-criminal heart attack victims, and had found data which pointed towards Yotsuba's link with Kira. However, their contributions were solely of a practical value, or could be accomplished by anyone with average reading comprehension skills. That was because they were intellectually limited. When it came to momentous steps forward…

'Ryuzaki and I have that covered.'
Therefore, Light was not actively participating. Instead, he quietly listened. This was beneficial since it allowed him to take particular note of three things that Ryuzaki said.

The first was his response when Aizawa asked:

"Ryuzaki, you're thinking this is Kira's work?"

"It's three cases of heart attack, so it is possible. Though my reasoning can be wrong, so you should not put much faith in me," the detective said diffidently.

'Interesting.'

The conversation continued.

"So, Yotsuba has hired Kira to help them?" Aizawa asked.

"Kira being hired is unthinkable," Ryuzaki stated.

"Why?"

"Because that would mean a company was able to find Kira before I could. That is not possible."

'Very interesting.'

Aizawa's expression was incredulous.

"You just said not to put faith in your reasoning, yet now you're super confident. Which is it?"

"I was just sulking earlier," Ryuzaki answered carelessly.

'Even more interesting.'

The idea was put forth that they should infiltrate Yotsuba. On that note, the meeting ended. As they returned to their desks, Ryuzaki said:

"Yagami-san should be back from the National Police Agency soon. We can decide how to attack then. For now, let's see what else we can do."

Light said:

"I'll see if I can hack into Yotsuba's main computer."

Aizawa said:

"I'll look into how Yotsuba is organized."

Matsuda said:

"Uh…I will…"

Shortly afterward, Soichiro returned. He was accompanied by Mogi. The news they brought with them was unexpected. In the aftermath of what followed, they were down by one team member. However, the loss of Aizawa was compensated for by the presence of Mogi. There was no longer a need for him to remain at the NPA headquarters. That was because the Japanese police were pulling out of the hunt for Kira.

Soichiro revealed that Kira was responsible. He was putting pressure on the government. So, the
police were ordered to withdraw. The situation was to be kept a secret from the general public. When faced with this ultimatum; Soichiro, Matsuda, and Mogi chose to quit and remain with the investigation. They were now a completely independent unit.

Light was unconcerned with this new development. The loss of the police was not significant. In reality, they had always been ineffectual when it came to Kira. It was painfully clear that he was in no danger from them. Of course, given the threats and bribes that Kira had made to government officials; it was apparent he held a different viewpoint. This troubled Light.

He genuinely wanted to believe that there was only one Kira all along. But, when he examined the behavior of the alleged Kiras, he had to admit there were marked differences. The first Kira targeted major criminals. He only executed law enforcement officials who directly went after him. He seemed to hold ideals of a just world. His method was designed to introduce those ideals, and have them gradually influence society.

The second Kira targeted civilians and police officers. That was what he had done in the Sakura TV incident. He also killed minor criminals, ones the first Kira would not. He seemed to hold ideals of a just world too. However, his method was designed to force his viewpoint on others. If the police, the government, and ordinary civilians refused to cooperate; he was willing to kill until they did. That was a way to create a totalitarian regime based on fear.

Finally, the third Kira targeted major criminals, civilians, politicians, and white-collar criminals. This Kira seemed to hold no ideals at all. If anything, the executions of criminals were a feint while he killed for monetary reasons. He, like the second Kira, appeared to lack the intelligence of the first Kira. He had, after all, left clues for Light to find. Maybe that was also why he made the absurd move of demanding the removal of the police. What use was such a maneuver? It was extraneous.

It was not yet certain that there were three Kiras. However, given what he had learned today, Light was leaning more towards that theory. Therefore, it was no longer possible to seriously suggest there had only been one Kira. If he did, it would only be wishful thinking. Light was disinclined to indulge in such frivolity. His rationality and logic would not allow for it. And neither would Ryuzaki’s. That was glaringly obvious when, earlier today, the detective had said:

"I haven't given up on the theory that Light-kun is the first Kira."

At this time, Light and Ryuzaki were seated at the table in the bedroom. The detective was working on his laptop, while Light read over some files. It was still fairly early in the evening. The other team members had left soon after the ugly confrontation between Ryuzaki and Aizawa. They tried to hide it, but their resentment towards the detective had been unmistakable.

Light was also feeling resentful towards Ryuzaki. However, it was for a different reason. It was because of his "theory". That was why, after dinner, he had insisted on retiring. A change of scenery might enable him to restore inner equanimity. At the very least, it couldn't hurt. Two hours had passed since then.

In that time, he had reflected upon and analyzed Kira; while simultaneously going over related data. Despite that, his thoughts inevitably turned to Ryuzaki.

Light put down the folder he had been reading, and turned his chair to face the window. He crossed his arms and stared at the night sky outside.

Trying to ignore or avoid it was useless. He was irritated with Ryuzaki right now. Still, silently fuming would not accomplish anything. It was a waste of valuable time. There was really only one viable solution. Simply incorporate Ryuzaki into his previous line of thought. Satisfied, Light moved
There was another reason for Light's indifference towards the removal of the police. As long as Ryuzaki was willing to remain on the case, they would have all the support they needed. He had access to vast resources, monetary and otherwise. Still, it was only yesterday that he had re-joined the investigation.

Truthfully, Light was pleased that Ryuzaki was working with him again. Nevertheless, it didn't erase his refusal to involve himself for two whole months. If it happened once, it could happen again. Light did not want that to occur. If Ryuzaki permanently quit the case; it would be a fatal blow to the investigation. This was especially urgent now that the police and government had given up.

'I have to identify what his problem is, once and for all. Or rather, confirm that my observations are correct.'

Recently, he had begun reflecting on the physical fight they had. In spite of the months that had passed; Light easily recalled what Ryuzaki said and how he acted. In the stillness of the quiet room, he combined that information with statements the detective made today. Finally, he factored in his overall deductions about Ryuzaki and Kira.

He smiled as the last pieces of the plan fell into place.

Light had, all along, intended to get to the bottom of this issue. Unfortunately, his previous attempt to confront Ryuzaki was an unparalleled failure. It started with Light directly asking him why he would not work on the case. It ended with Ryuzaki ignoring him for three days, and the need for Light to apologize.

In fact, any mention of this issue resulted in a negative reaction from Ryuzaki. It was extremely frustrating, mostly because Light was unused to failure. Nevertheless, he refused to give up. After all, this wasn't the first time he had initially failed in achieving his goals. The key word was "initially". If he did not succeed immediately, he would mentally dissect the event. This allowed him to learn from it and develop a better strategy for next time.

He had learned from his experiences with the detective. Now, all he had to do was apply that knowledge.

It was possible to get information out of Ryuzaki, but it was unrealistic to expect him to be verbally forthcoming with it. Fortunately, that was not necessarily a huge hindrance. It would be for most people, but not for Light. He had a fairly good idea about what Ryuzaki's problem was. Confirmation could be attained by assessing his reactions and behavior.

He took one other lesson from his past dealings with Ryuzaki. It was clear, when it came to this issue, that a direct attack was inadvisable. So, he needed to approach from a different angle; find a new way in.

Happily, today's incident between Ryuzaki and Aizawa gave him one.

When Light was interested in someone, he would study him. He sought to gain complete comprehension and knowledge. His approach and methods were only as limited as his intellect, which was not limited at all. Some people might have identified this mindset as relentless. Light saw it as being determined. It reflected his ambition to expose the truth, and abolish all confusion and contradictions.

Light turned and faced the detective.
"It's great that my dad and the others are staying on the investigation, isn't it?" he said genially.

Ryuzaki did not look up from his screen.

"Yes."

"It's admirable that they decided before they knew about the arrangement for their financial futures."

The detective nodded.

"Still, it's too bad about Aizawa."

Ryuzaki looked up.

"It was obvious that he wanted to stay," Light said sympathetically.

"Then he should have," Ryuzaki replied dismissively.

Light assumed an earnest expression.

"It's not like he can help having a family, Ryuzaki. He wasn't in a position to sacrifice his income to continue working with us. He needed to keep his job."

"I am aware of that, Light-kun. That is why I arranged finan…"

Light interjected.

"Yes, you did. But, you didn't tell anyone about it. Watari did. Even then, it was only after Aizawa said he was going back to the police."

The detective's eyes hardened.

"Does Light-kun have a point or is he…"

Light spoke over him.

"Actually, I do. You said you were testing Aizawa because you wanted to see which side he would choose. That's why you didn't mention the financial provisions. But, it was clear that he chose the investigation. Except, because of his responsibilities, it was impossible for him to follow through on that choice. I think you were testing his dedication and, in that, he doesn't have any fault. It was obvious from what he said today and all the effort he's put into the case."

Ryuzaki's face softened. This was due to the sly smile that played across his lips when he asked:

"Light-kun believes I was unfair to Aizawa-san?"

"No, I don't believe it. I know you were."

The detective's amusement was apparent in his voice.

"I did not realize Light-kun thought Aizawa-san's presence was crucial to solving this case. He never gave any indication of that."

Ryuzaki's smile widened.

"Perhaps he has held Aizawa-san in the highest esteem all along. And, for his own reasons, chose not to make that obvious."
His smile changed into a smirk. Light smiled back.

"That's an interesting observation, Ryuzaki. Unfortunately, it has nothing to do with my point. Since you seem to have completely missed it, why don't I spell it out for you?" he said condescendingly.

The detective stopped smirking. Light continued.

"Your test was designed to evaluate Aizawa's devotion to the cause, to catching Kira. The problem is you didn't take into account his personal circumstances, which were different from everyone else's. He is dedicated, so he should have passed. The reason he didn't was because the parameters of your test were flawed. It also didn't fulfill its basic purpose. All it did was put Aizawa in a no-win situation."

There was a small silence. It was broken when Ryuzaki tersely said:

"So, Light-kun's point is that I compelled Aizawa-san to leave."

Light did not respond. Instead, he waited.

'He can't stand to lose so…'

It did not take long for the detective to speak again.

"Light-kun is certainly entitled to his opinion. However, he has failed to take into account one point."

Light leaned forward and placed his elbows on the table. He rested his chin in his hands and affected a curious expression.

"Aizawa-san was informed about the financial arrangements and still quit. If he was truly dedicated to catching Kira, he would have taken the offer. The one obstacle before him was removed, yet he did not reverse his decision. From that, I conclude my test did serve its purpose," Ryuzaki said confidently.

His visage was smug. Light spoke determinedly.

"No, that's not right. One of the main conditions of the test was that no one involved knew about the financial arrangements. As soon as they found out, your test was compromised. In other words, it was over. Attempting to validate it beyond that point is irrational. Re-defining the conditions of the test, like you are doing now, only serves to highlight…"

Light faltered. Ryuzaki's smug look had melted away. It was replaced by an expression Light had never received from him before. Frankly, it was…

'venomous.'

Light was taken aback. Nevertheless, he pressed on.

"…that you were wrong. You made a mistake and you know it."

The detective's voice was low and angry.

"Are you actually attempting to reprimand me? Surely you are not obtuse enough to believe you can. What is your point, Light-kun?"

"I just made it, Ryuzaki. You were wrong. You made an erro…”
Ryuzaki stood up.

"Light-kun is being tedious," he said coldly.

He turned and walked towards the door. Light stifled the urge to physically stop him. Instead, he called out:

"When you challenged Kira back in that television broadcast, I thought you were very bold. Even though neither of you could see the other, it took a lot of courage to do that."

Ryuzaki slowed.

"I find it interesting that you could be like that with him, but run away from a confrontation with me," Light said matter-of-factly.

Ryuzaki stopped.

Light refrained from speaking, and the detective did not turn around. Silence permeated the room. It was heavy and oppressive.

Light suddenly felt ambivalent. His main objective was to confirm his observations about Ryuzaki. He did a quick mental review.

'His theory about Kira was disproved when I was put into confinement. He can't stand to lose or be wrong. To him, that situation was both those things.'

Since a direct approach was not an option, he used the incident with Aizawa. He found another way in. However, Ryuzaki's reaction was stronger than Light had anticipated. It wasn't his attempt to leave. He had predicted that and planned for it. He used words to stop Ryuzaki, not force. It was just…

'I've never seen him get angry like this before.'

Should he push ahead? Or should he back off?

Ryuzaki turned around. His expression was baleful. Light had seen it only once before. It was during their physical fight.

'That's how he looked when he told me he wanted me to be Kira.'

The memory of this caused a change in Light's internal state. Uncertainty was instantly eclipsed by irritation.

He pushed ahead.

"I think you can't tolerate the idea that you make mistakes. I draw this conclusion from the fact that…"

His voice trailed off when Ryuzaki suddenly moved. He rapidly advanced on Light, until he stood right in front of him. He was not hunched over and stared down from his full height. His eyes were vicious when he said:

"Please continue, Light-kun. I anxiously await your profound insights into my character."

Light's hands balled into fists.
"Do you really mean that, Ryuzaki?"

"Yes. I am sure they will be riveting," he answered mockingly.

Light's eyes narrowed.

'Fine. You asked for it.'

"Your ego and arrogance won't allow you to see yourself as a person who can be wrong. Consequently, when you make errors; you can't handle it. That's why you wouldn't work on the case before," he said harshly.

"That is incorrect. I haven't given up on the idea that you are the first Kira."

He smiled, derisively. Light smiled back.

"Yes, I actually did hear you when you said that earlier. It was surprisingly easy considering I was standing right next to you. But, that really has nothing to do with my point. Since you seem unable to grasp it, why don't you let me explain it? I'll try to make it simple enough for you to catch on," he said patronizingly.

Ryuzaki stopped smiling. Light continued.

"You theorized that I was Kira. You may have said the probability was a low percentage, but you were lying. In reality, you were almost or completely at one hundred percent in your sureness. When the second Kira came along, you found evidence that incriminated Misa. You investigated her because you discovered I was dating her. The first Kira was extremely intelligent, and the second one wasn't very bright. So, you concluded I was the mastermind and she was following my orders."

Light paused. When Ryuzaki did not respond, he carried on.

"So, under that conclusion, you confined us. According to your theory, the killings should have stopped. And they did, but only for two weeks. When they started again, it proved that you were wrong."

The detective spoke rapidly.

"I told Light-kun there was no mistake that he was a Kira. I conceded to the possibility that he may have been controlled. The only correct course of action was to limit his freedom, which I have done."

"You only came to that later. It doesn't change the fact that your initial theory was incorrect. Also, you did say that about me. But, what you said today was that you haven't given up, not that there's no mistake. This implies you're no longer certain. Now it's more about not wanting to relinquish your theory about me. That's because you know you might be mistaken. You're just too stubborn to admit it."

"It may yet be proven that Light-kun was the first Kira. It is also possible…"

Light interrupted.

"I'm not talking about vague possibilities or what could be. And if you were thinking rationally, you wouldn't be either. I'm specifically talking about what was. Attempting to validate your theory, without any evidence, proves that you realize you made an error."
The detective broke eye contact, and looked to the side. When he slid one foot backward, Light was ready. He quickly sat forward and placed his hands on Ryuzaki's hips. He pulled him back to his previous position, and held him there.

"It's true that it may eventually be proven I was the first Kira. I know I wasn't, but I can understand your reasoning in suspecting me. But, that's not really the point. It's that you thought I was the mastermind behind all the killings. When you realized you made an error, you didn't want to work on the case anymore. You wanted to give up."

Ryuzaki did not look at him.

"I already said I was a little disappointed. That is a normal reaction, Light-kun."

"Yes, and you also said you were shocked and frustrated. And, you're right, those are normal reactions. What isn't normal is getting depressed and wanting to quit because you made a mistake."

"No. I wanted to give up because I was tired. There were many times when I thought I was going to die. I said going after Kira put us in danger," Ryuzaki said softly.

He still looked away. Light drew him closer.

"If that was really true, you would have quit the case. You also wouldn't be working on it now. It has nothing to do with it, although I'm sure you really did feel that way," he said quietly.

Ryuzaki's hands slowly came up. Light tensed. He expected an attempt to make him release his hold or to be pushed away. That was why he was caught off-guard; when all Ryuzaki did was simply place his hands on Light's arms.

The ambivalence returned.

'I can't read him right now. I don't know if I should pull back or keep going.'

The silence lengthened. He noted Ryuzaki still did not try to retreat or remove Light's hands.

'It would be really difficult to set up something like this again. He'll be expecting it next time.'

He banished uncertainty, and kept going.

"You can be childish. That's also part of why you wouldn't work on the case. You remind me of a kid who loses a game, kicks the board across the room, and yells: 'This game is stupid. I don't want to play anymore'."

"I did not lose games when I was a child," Ryuzaki argued.

"Well, you lost at something. Watari said you acted like this before. So…"

His prompt was, of course, ignored.

'I want to know, but the probability of getting an answer out of him is…'

Light thought quickly.

'…almost zero. I'll think up another plan for that later.'

He returned to the previous subject.
"I think solving criminal cases is a game for you. You talked about the reality of justice, but that doesn't really enter into your motivations. At least, not in a significant way."

The detective's shoulders slouched forward. His voice, when he spoke, was hushed.

"Light-kun thinks I was lying?"

"In a way. When you solve cases, justice is served. But it's more of a…side-effect. If justice was truly important to you, you wouldn't use illegal methods. You, basically, commit crimes in order to stop crimes. Some of your actions have been dishonest, immoral, and unfair."

"Kira must be stopped, Light-kun."

"So…the ends justify the means?"

"Yes."

"The only problem is that kind of thinking and the principle of justice are mutually exclusive. You can't be immoral and just at the same time. You're either one or the other. Anyways, that's not the point of what I'm saying. What really matters to you are the puzzle and the contest. It's a game to you and you'll do anything to win."

Ryuzaki's shoulders and chest had been slowly drooping forward. By the time Light finished speaking, he was hunched over in his normal posture. He continued to look aside.

"Where is Light-kun going with this?" he asked quietly.

"Solving crimes is a game you have to win every single time. You equate being wrong with losing. You made a mistake when you identified me as the mastermind behind all the killings. It was such a blow that you wanted to give up. You ended up staying but refused to participate. I'm not asking you to confirm my conclusions. I don't think you will, even if I'm right. What I want is for you to answer two questions."

Light hesitated. He knew what he wanted to ask. It was just that he hadn't envisioned getting this far, at least not right away. He had estimated that it would take multiple attempts to get Ryuzaki to listen to everything he had to say. Therefore, he was unprepared.

'I have to phrase the questions in a specific way. They have to be…general. So he can respond without going into detail or supplying any identifying information.'

It took approximately a minute for Light to perceive the impossibility of that task. General questions would only yield general answers. He abandoned this fruitless exercise and, instead, straightforwardly asked:

"Why do you have an absolute need to be right, to never be wrong? And why didn't you just withdraw from the case completely? You obviously wanted to. Why didn't you?"

Ryuzaki turned his head and finally looked at him. His eyes were no longer spiteful. They were void of any emotion at all. The shock temporarily suspended Light's thoughts and reactions. He froze.

"Release me, Light-kun."

Upon hearing his voice, Light's uncertainty returned in its entirety. It was intensely reinforced by his rapidly constricting chest. He did not try to suppress these responses. He felt like there was no time. The urgency of replying overruled everything.
Consequently, his agitation was evident when he asked:

"Why? Where are you going?"

"I'm tired. I want to sit down," Ryuzaki answered listlessly.

'No.'

Light tightened his grip, and leaned forward. He pressed his forehead against Ryuzaki's stomach and thought frantically.

'I don't want to let him go. I want him to answer my questions. I've gone as far as I can on my own. I can't completely understand without more information. He has to tell me because I...' 

His thoughts were cut off when he felt Ryuzaki's hand on the back of his neck. He involuntarily tensed, expecting to be forced back. That was why he was surprised; when all Ryuzaki did was simply move his fingers in soft circles.

Light loosened his grip, and closed his eyes.

'I really want to know.'

"Light-kun," Ryuzaki prompted in a dispirited voice.

Light let go.

For the next half hour, he watched Ryuzaki. The detective sat in his chair. His legs were huddled tightly to his chest, and his arms were wrapped completely around them. He did not look at Light, instead burying his face in his knees. It was easy to read the implication of this positioning: the conversation was over.

'This is exactly how he acted after that argument with Watari.'

For the half hour after that, Light alternated between observing him and reading more of the files. Ryuzaki did not move or make any sound. Light came to a realization in that time.

'I don't know how to handle this.'

Another realization came soon after.

'I don't want to.'

Light went to bed. Ryuzaki remained where he was.

When he woke the next morning, the detective was working on his laptop. Light called out:

"Good morning."

Ryuzaki stopped typing, and looked at him.

"Good morning, Light-kun."

"Did you stay up all night?"

"Yes."

Light frowned.
"You couldn't sleep?"

"I was working, and lost track of the time," Ryuzaki explained.

"That's not good, Ryuzaki. You need to sleep," Light admonished.

The detective smiled.

"I'm fine. Thank you for your concern, though," he said in a warm voice.

'There's something…'

"That is very kind of you, Light-kun. Did you sleep well?"

'.really wrong here.'

"…I did. Thank you for asking," Light replied slowly.

Ryuzaki nodded.

Light walked towards the bathroom. He kept his eyes on the detective the whole way. Just before he went through the door, he said:

"I won't be long, and then we can go. You already had your shower, right?"

"Yes. I am not in a hurry, though. So, please don't feel you have to rush."

"…Thanks, Ryuzaki."

When he closed the door, Ryuzaki was still smiling.

Light most definitely was not.

The rest of the day passed quickly. The operations room was unusually quiet. Light suspected it was due to the absence of Aizawa. No one spoke of it, but there was tension in the air.

Light noted that the other team members spoke sparingly to Ryuzaki, if at all. However, when they did, the detective responded in his usual manner; brusquely and economically.

That was why the way he spoke to Light stood out. If Light asked him a question, or made an observation; Ryuzaki's manner was exceedingly courteous and…pleasant. Just like that morning.

Light, at first, did not know why it bothered him. After all, wasn't it an improvement over being ignored? Truthfully, that was what he had expected. By the end of last night's confrontation, Ryuzaki had refused to engage anymore. To the point where he would not even look at Light. Considering that, he had predicted Ryuzaki would give him the cold shoulder. Therefore, his…friendliness was jarring.

Light resolved to get to the bottom of this issue.

It took some time to successfully analyze Ryuzaki's behavior. When he had an answer, he immediately comprehended why it was grating on his nerves. He also especially understood, on a personal level, why it was making him uncomfortable.

It was unnatural. It was not genuine. When he recalled Ryuzaki's reactions the night before, it was apparent that Light's words had an effect. Yet, today, he acted in this genial manner. It was out of
character and false. There was no doubt about it.

There was another element behind his certainty.

Light was a polite person. He had been raised to be, so that was part of it. However, he was courteous for another reason. It was how he got along with people, how he related. He was well-mannered with everyone. This caused him to be viewed in a positive way by others. They thought he was friendly, considerate, and helpful. Light had believed that about himself too. It was only in the last few weeks that he had seen the truth.

He was not friendly, he was detached. His politeness, to a great degree, was simply an act. It didn't mean anything. It was a way to interact that required almost no effort on his part. He could see that now. When he looked at Ryuzaki, he saw it in him too. When the detective smiled and spoke to him that day, there was nothing behind it.

Ryuzaki's amiability was not an improvement over being ignored. If anything, it was far worse. It was a way to "handle" Light, a way to avoid him. It showed just how absent he really was. He was so detached that it was possible for him not to ignore Light.

As the day progressed, Light became more and more unsettled. And irritated.

He decided to do something about it, and came up with another plan. The goal was to disrupt Ryuzaki's "politeness". To make him engage.

It wouldn't be too hard. All he had to do was 'fight fire with fire'. Light was positive that, when it came to courtesy, he definitely had the advantage over Ryuzaki.

He waited until they were alone.

Light was in his pajamas, and sitting on his bed. Ryuzaki was at the table, working on his laptop.

Light spoke in a polite tone.

"Ryuzaki, I was wondering if you were going to bed soon."

The detective looked up from his screen, and smiled.

"I'm not tired. Am I disturbing you? If you like, I can turn off the lamp," he offered courteously.

Light smiled back.

"No, no, I'm fine. I was actually asking because, if you're awake anyway, maybe we can continue our conversation from last night?"

Ryuzaki's smile didn't falter.

"I'm sorry, Light-kun, but there is a pressing matter I must deal with. Perhaps another time?" he said regretfully.

Light, in spite of himself, was a little impressed.

'I didn't think he had the social skills, but he's actually pretty good at this.'

He stood up.

'But I'm better.'
"That's all right, Ryuzaki. To be honest, I'm not tired either. I can wait until you're done," he said amicably.

He walked over to the table.

The detective's smile faltered.

"It may be some time."

Light pulled out a chair, and sat down. His voice was warm when he said:

"I don't mind. So, please, go ahead and do whatever you need to. I'm in no rush whatsoever."

Ryuzaki stopped smiling.

"Light-kun should go to sleep. It will be many hours before I am finished," he said tersely.

Light crossed his arms, and sat back.

"Then I'll wait for many hours. I'm not tired so I can't sleep," he said firmly.

Ryuzaki's eyes narrowed. Light continued.

"We didn't finish our conversation. I'd really like to hear your answers to my questions. So, I don't mind waiting as long as it takes."

There was silence.

Ryuzaki removed his hands from the keyboard, and placed them on his knees.

"Light-kun is being persistent. He annoys me," he said coldly.

"Why? Does it bother you if I sit here? I can wait…"

He swept an arm toward the beds.

"…over there, if you want."

When he did not respond, Light asked:

"Or is this about something else? Maybe you don't want to answer my questions?"

"That is correct."

"Why not? I want to know because I'm interested."

"That is incorrect. Light-kun wants me to confirm his observations. That is because he always has to be right."

Light felt a flash of irritation. He dropped his polite façade.

"No, that's wrong. I don't want you to confirm my conclusions. I don't need you to because I already know I'm right. What I want is to understand why you're like that. That's all," he said in an exasperated voice.

Ryuzaki looked down, and hugged his legs tightly to his chest.
"This is tiresome. Light-kun should stop talking."

He rested his chin on his knees. That, and his blank expression, clearly indicated what was coming.

Light rolled his eyes.

"Are you going to sulk again? That doesn't solve anything. Why can't you see that?" he asked impatiently.

"I don't want to talk to Light-kun. Why can't he hear that?" Ryuzaki answered softly.

Light did not have a chance to reply. That was because Ryuzaki pressed his face into his knees, and ended the conversation.

In the ensuing silence, Light tried to suppress his rising temper. His effort was both sincere and vigorous. Unfortunately, it didn't show at all when he angrily said:

"It wasn't wrong for me to tell you what I thought. You had no problem telling me that I was controlling. If you can tell me what you think, then I can tell you what I think. That's the way it is, Ryuzaki. Sulking about it is childish and ridiculous."

Light stood, and approached him. He leaned forward, placed his hands on Ryuzaki's shoulders, and spoke softly into his ear.

"One day, this isn't going to work on me anymore. I want you to know that. But, for now, I'll concede defeat. You win. I'm sure that will make you happy."

Light released him, and stepped back.

"Good night, Ryuzaki," he said quietly.

There was, naturally, no response.

It took a long time for Light to fall asleep that night. He lay in bed and watched Ryuzaki; who remained in the same, unchanging position. This caused a feeling of frustration within Light.

'Why does he do that? It's unreasonable, irrational, and pointless.'

It wasn't Light's intention to create a stalemate between them. All he wanted was information. He felt he had the right to ask. After all, as long as they were bound together, any choices Ryuzaki made impacted Light too. Just like his previous refusal to work on the case had.

It was just…

'I don't know how to handle this.'

And that was because…

'His reaction doesn't make sense. It's subjective and…emotional. That's why he thinks I'm trying to make him say I'm right, when I'm not.'

He watched Ryuzaki.

'I'm just interested. I really want to know.'

When Light was interested in something, he would study it. It was in his nature. If something
warranted his interest, then it also warranted his absolute focus and energy. His methods and approach were only as limited as his intellect, which was unlimited. Some people might have identified this mindset as obsessive and relentless. Light saw it as being thorough and determined. It reflected his sincere wish to gain comprehension and knowledge.

Ryuzaki was completely shut down.

There was nothing wrong with Light's motives in pressing this matter. He held no malevolence towards Ryuzaki. This was how he always approached subjects that drew him. This was how he always succeeded in achieving his goals.

Ryuzaki would not even look at him.

It finally occurred to Light. Perhaps he had failed to take into account one crucial aspect. There were different considerations involved when the subject of interest was a person. Especially if that person was one who Light cared about.

Ryuzaki's eyes had been empty.

Light wanted to know, and felt he had the right to ask. However, he realized there was one consideration that overruled his wishes. It came to him as he watched Ryuzaki.

'I don't want to see him like this anymore.'

This desire introduced clarity to Light's thoughts. Ambivalence and anxiety quickly faded away. He understood what his next move should be. It was a choice he had never actively made before. It was foreign and discomfiting, but he made it anyway.

'I give up.'

Light turned away from Ryuzaki, and slowly fell into a restless sleep.

When he woke the next morning, the detective was still at the table. He was not working on his laptop, and remained in the same position as the previous night.

"Good morning, Ryuzaki," he said carefully.

There was no response. Light went to the bathroom and prepared for the day.

There was an exciting breakthrough on the case later that morning. Soichiro had noticed a commonality in the deaths convenient to Yotsuba. They were mostly occurring between Friday night and Saturday. Light turned to the detective.

"The murders are being concentrated during the weekend. Why?"

Ryuzaki did not look at him when he replied.

"That's odd. If these deaths are connected to Kira, then that would mean Kira can kill by means other than heart attack. If that were the case, then he would spread them out randomly to make them harder to detect."

'So, he'll still talk to me.'

Ryuzaki continued.

"Is there a meaning behind this? Is this not Kira's work?"
Light smiled at Soichiro.
"I totally missed this. It could be valuable information, dad."

Soichiro smiled back, and said:
"I'm not going to take a backseat to you and Ryuzaki just yet. I need to pull my weight."

Ryuzaki spoke again.
"We don't know if Kira is in Yotsuba, or if he is using Yotsuba. However, we will operate under the assumption that this is Kira's work. We will investigate Yotsuba thoroughly."

The rest of the day was busy. Their objective was to scrutinize every aspect of Yotsuba. This was a daunting task, considering the sheer size and scope of the company and its field of operations.

It would have been helpful to have more people. However, Soichiro made a valid point. It was doubtful that many officers would quit the police to assist them.

That point was rendered moot when Ryuzaki responded. He said he would not trust an officer if he came to them. The detective would assume he was a spy.

It was then that Ryuzaki contacted Watari. The conversation had been public.
"Can you call Aiber and Wedy?" the detective asked.

Watari's voice, when he replied, indicated surprise.
"Huh? I know their current locations, but do you plan to show your face to them?"

"We already have a level of trust between us. And with a big case like Yotsuba, it would be complicated to have to contact them through you. I would not be able to explain my thoughts as well," Ryuzaki explained.

"I see. I'll deal with the arrangements."

Later that night, Light lay in bed. Ryuzaki was at the table, working on his laptop.

Light was curious about Wedy and Aiber. Who were they? How would they be of assistance to the investigation of Yotsuba? And, perhaps most importantly, how did Ryuzaki know them?

It was surprising that Ryuzaki had a level of trust with these people. It was incongruous with the view Light had of him. The detective did not seem to trust anyone. Apparently, however, that was not entirely accurate.

This was an aspect of Ryuzaki that Light had never seen before. In fact, he hadn't even considered it. It was unknown to him, and Light was interested to find out more about it. Despite that, he made no attempt to question him. Instead, he quietly said:
"Good night, Ryuzaki."

The detective did not look away from his screen.
"Good night, Light-kun," he said distantly.

The next day passed in much the same, hectic way as the previous one.
Ryuzaki would respond when Light spoke to him. When he did, he looked away and spoke sparingly. Light, for his part, ensured that any subject he introduced was related to the case. He made no effort to communicate with Ryuzaki otherwise.

When Light finally fell into bed, he was exhausted. Ryuzaki was too. It was evident from his appearance. However, once again he chose to sit at the table, and work on his computer.

"Good night, Ryuzaki," he called out.

The detective looked up from his screen, and met Light's eyes.

"Good night, Light-kun," he answered quietly.

The next day came and went much like the previous day. Everybody worked diligently on the investigation into Yotsuba. Well, except for Matsuda. He, like yesterday, had to depart to escort Misa to a movie shoot. She had a starring role, so Matsuda was often absent as he fulfilled his duties as her manager.

It was late in the evening before Light and Ryuzaki retired. When they arrived at the bedroom, the same scenario played out yet again. Light lay in bed, and Ryuzaki sat at the table.

Light watched him. At the moment, he was simply staring downwards. This was not the first time he had done that. Yesterday, it was noticeable that Ryuzaki was exhausted. Today, it was obvious.

'He can't even concentrate anymore. He's too tired.'

Light rose, and approached him. When he was standing beside him, he spoke calmly.

"Come on, Ryuzaki. Let's go to sleep."

Ryuzaki did not look at him.

"I'm not tired," he mumbled.

Light lowered his body into a crouch.

"If you come to bed, I'll give you a back massage."

He looked down at him, from the corner of his eye.

"Why?"

"Well, maybe it will help you sleep."

Ryuzaki turned his head and regarded him.

"What is Light-kun up to?" he asked suspiciously.

"What do you mean?"

"He is being…nice. Surely he has a hidden agenda."

Light thought this over.

"I can see why you would think that. But, I actually don't," he said seriously.

"I don't believe you," Ryuzaki stated.
Light grinned.

"Oh, really? Well, what do you think my true intentions are? What dastardly plan do you see behind my offer of a back massage?" he asked in a teasing voice.

Ryuzaki's eyes narrowed.

"Yet again Light-kun gains amusement at my expense. Even while he is endeavoring to set up another opportunity to throw my faults in my face," he said irritably.

Light affected a shocked expression.

"Wow, that was really...direct."

He stood up, and clasped his wrist.

"Let's go, Ryuzaki. You're way more tired than I thought. You've lost the ability to speak obliquely," Light said with exaggerated worry.

As Light pulled him to his feet, Ryuzaki's voice was sullen.

"Light-kun is not funny."

Light released his hold, and met his eyes.

"I know," he said softly.

Ryuzaki looked down. There was a small silence, and then he quietly said:

"I don't want to answer Light-kun's questions."

Light kept his voice soft.

"Okay."

He extended his hand.

"Will you come?"

Ryuzaki did not respond right away. Light waited patiently. Finally, he slowly placed his hand in Light's.

Light smiled, and turned to lead them towards the bed. He spoke over his shoulder.

"I'm actually really good at massages."

"Light-kun is the epitome of modesty. His humbleness is inspiring," Ryuzaki said in an admiring voice.

"Very funny, Ryuzaki. Now, lie down so that I may humbly begin."

By this point, they had reached the bed. The detective climbed in and laid on his front. Light sat, leaned over him, and began to caress and knead his back.

"He's really tense. This is going to take a while."

It took a half hour before Light saw some results. He felt Ryuzaki's body slowly relaxing under his
hands. At the same time, Light was becoming very tense. It was incredibly tempting to slip his fingers beneath Ryuzaki's shirt. Or his jeans.

'I should go take a shower.'

Light withdrew his hands, and started to move away. He was stopped by a quiet voice.

"Light-kun?"

Ryuzaki turned over onto his back, and sat up. He placed a hand on Light's shoulder.

"I'm going to take a…"

Light faltered when Ryuzaki moved forward.

'Or I could stay right here.'

Their lips met in a slow kiss. Light, already aroused, held back.

When Ryuzaki gently squeezed Light's upper lip between his and slipped his tongue into his mouth; Light stopped holding back.

He clutched the nape of Ryuzaki's neck, and deepened the kiss. With his other hand, he reached under his shirt. His caresses were rapid, and bordering on rough.

Ryuzaki's hand traveled from his shoulder to his face. His fingertips brushed softly against Light's cheek.

Light broke the kiss, and rested his forehead against Ryuzaki's.

'Closer.'

His hand ran up and down his back.

'I want to be closer.'

In the stillness of the darkened room, all Light could hear was his own harsh breathing. A feeling of ambivalence welled up within. His hand stopped moving as uncertainty immobilized him.

He felt Ryuzaki's hands against his chest. Light closed his eyes, expecting to be pushed away. That was why he was surprised; when all Ryuzaki did was simply unbutton his shirt.

Light's astonishment temporarily suspended any reaction. That was why he sat passively while Ryuzaki explored his chest. His touch was careful and somewhat hesitant. When fingertips brushed his nipples, Light shivered. When hands tentatively slid down his stomach, Light moved.

The next ten minutes passed in a fervid rush of motion.

Light pulling off Ryuzaki's shirt. Ryuzaki's lips on his and his hands gliding over Light's skin. Light's mouth and tongue caressing his neck, collarbones, and nipples. Ryuzaki's hand slipping beneath the waist of his pajamas. Light moaning as he stroked his erection. Ryuzaki intensely kissing him when Light undid his jeans and seized him. The heady sensation of Ryuzaki pressing his bare chest against Light's. Ryuzaki's hand on the back of his neck tightening. The pressure of his kiss increasing as he climaxed. Light burying his face in Ryuzaki's shoulder. His fingers digging into his hips as he came.

Afterward, Ryuzaki leaned against him; already falling asleep.
It took some coaxing, but Light managed to get him to the bathroom. Once there, he cleaned them both up. He also managed to convince him to wear pajama bottoms, instead of his usual jeans. Finally, Light led them back to the other bed.

Ryuzaki fell asleep immediately, with his body turned away from Light.

He waited a while, and then gently turned him onto his back. He rested his arm on Ryuzaki's chest and watched him. His fingers moved softly upon his shoulder.

The atmosphere was tranquil.

It still took many hours for Light to fall asleep that night.

*The Hanged Man*

reversal, independence, devotion to a worthwhile cause, a testing period, flexibility, adaptability, readjustment, unexpected changes, suspension of action – giving up urgency – pausing to reflect, a lesson to be learned, a unique perspective that others may not appreciate or understand, sacrifice – sacrificing one thing to obtain another – the subject will have to give something up – there is no doubt about this – because that is the only way he will achieve what he really wants, putting self-interest aside, a person being who he is – even if others think he has everything backwards, a different viewpoint, contemplation, a person who is able to look beyond what is before him – he is able to find solutions to problems that most people wouldn't find, reflection, letting go – accepting what is – ending the struggle – giving up control, renunciation, waiting, a new perspective, the Hanged Man's number (12) is 2 times 6 – the High Priestess (2) raises the Lovers (6) to a higher level – in the Hanged Man, the ideas first represented by the Lovers have actually begun to happen – previous concepts become – after Justice – a genuine experience, peace that comes after some difficult trial, serenity, stillness, receptivity

*The Fool has reached the half-way point of the Major Arcana. This point is indicated by three cards: the Wheel of Fortune, Justice, and the Hanged Man. They symbolize a process rather than a moment.*

*In Justice, the Fool went through the crisis of seeing what he had made of his life. The Hanged Man brings about the peace of acceptance, as well as a reversal of attitude and experience. His world, through the Hanged Man, is turned upside down. That is why, at this stage, the Fool's awareness and growth can only be maintained by a (continued) withdrawal from society.*
There were times when Light did not recognize himself anymore.

This moment, right now, was one of those times. He said the words. They were clearly spoken by him.

"I see... these kinds of people will be helpful in investigating Yotsuba. Let's all work together and solve this case."

Upon hearing Light's response, both Soichiro and Matsuda acceded. They, like him, agreed to work with criminals. The team had just been introduced to Wedy and Aiber. Wedy, who was a thief; and Aiber, who was a con artist.

Ryuzaki explained their roles, and also that he knew of other criminals who could help if needed. This was a tactic he had been unable to use when they were connected to the police. Soichiro had begun to protest, while Light and Matsuda remained silent. The situation was resolved when Light stepped in and welcomed Wedy and Aiber.

He welcomed them.

'What... was... that?'

Wedy and Aiber departed once the meeting was finished. Light supposed they were taking the day to settle into their new quarters. They were staying in the building although he did not know which floor.

The rest of the day was busy, as usual. Matsuda left to accompany Misa to her movie shoot. Mogi was absent; possibly out on an errand for Ryuzaki. Soichiro, surprisingly, excused himself in the late afternoon. Well, perhaps it was not so surprising after all. It was obvious that he was against working with Wedy and Aiber. Light had noted his disapproving expression during the introductions. And how, afterward, his face had set in a grim visage and remained that way. When he bid farewell, his voice was subdued.

"I'll be going home for the night. Is there anything you need?"

"No, I'm fine," Light replied carefully.

"All right, then. I'll see you both tomorrow."

With that, he turned and walked towards the elevator. Light called out:

"Have a good night, dad."

Soichiro looked back and smiled faintly.

"You too, son."

Once he was gone, Light continued working. He also contemplated upon the recent changes in the team, and the structure of the investigation. It would seem the withdrawal of the police had more ramifications than he initially realized. It was true that they were of little to no use in the hunt for Kira. Their absence, however, introduced the problem of manpower; or rather the lack of it.

The inclusion of Wedy and Aiber did resolve that issue. Ryuzaki's solution would allow them to get
the job done. It was practical and effective. Light could see that. But, was there really no other way? Frankly, he shared his father's dismay.

Soichiro was a just man, and Light admired him for it. He believed that, as he had grown up, his own sense of justice and moral code had come to reflect his father's. Therefore, he held the same view towards the inclusion of Wedy and Aiber. It was wrong. That was an unequivocal truth.

There was only one problem.

'I meant what I said earlier. They will be helpful.'

Light wrestled with this internal conflict for a while longer, and then finally gave up. Thinking about it was resolving nothing. If anything, he was more confused than when he began. As well, now included in the mix was a very distinct feeling of unsettlement. Maybe he should talk to Ryuzaki about it. After all, it was his idea to include Wedy and Aiber. If Light could understand his justification and reasoning for doing so...

'I can settle this, one way or the other.'

He turned to the detective.

"So,…Ryuzaki?"

He glanced at him, but did not turn away from his monitor.

"How do you know Wedy?" Light asked.

"I have hired her to work for me before, on other cases," he answered absently.

"…Okay. But, how do you know her?"

Ryuzaki turned his head and focused on him.

"I required someone with her skills and sought her out."

"So, you needed a thief who could bypass any security system?" Light asked in a measured voice.

"Yes. And before Light-kun asks, it was the same with Aiber."

"Then…in his case, you needed someone who was an expert at conning people?"

"Yes."

"When you initially hired them,…were you working on criminal investigations?"

"Yes."

"And the times after that too?"

"Yes."

Light raised an eyebrow.

"You don't see that as a conflict of interest?"

Ryuzaki's eyes hardened.
"No, I do not."

"But…"

Ryuzaki interjected.

"Will Light-kun be giving me another lecture on the principle of justice?" he asked in a cool voice.

Light broke eye contact, and looked down.

"…No, that wasn't my intention," he answered quietly.

'This conversation is just going to keep deteriorating until it turns into a fight.'

Light honestly did not have the energy or inclination to enter into another stand-off with Ryuzaki. Especially since the last one had just been resolved the previous night. The best option would be to...

'drop it.'

He looked up and smiled.

"We should probably get back to work, Ryuzaki."

The detective frowned, and turned his chair to face him.

"Is Light-kun all right?"

"What? Yes! Of course, I am," Light replied gamely.

Ryuzaki regarded him with piercing eyes.

"You are lying," he stated.

Light's smile faded away. He opened his mouth, and then closed it. In actuality, he was feeling a little off-balance. That was because he was currently undergoing a very rare event in his life.

'I don't know what to say.'

He looked down, away from his stare.

"Light-kun," Ryuzaki said peremptorily.

Light reluctantly raised his head. When their eyes met, Ryuzaki spoke seriously.

"I want to solve this case, no matter what. To that end, I am willing to do whatever is necessary. I had this building constructed. I revealed myself to you and the others, which I have never done before. I…"

Light cut in.

"Never?"

"Yes, never."

"This is the first time you've met Wedy and Aiber face-to-face, right?"
"Yes.

"You said you trusted them. Why would you trust those kinds of people? Don't you think it's dangerous to let them see your face?"

"Dangerous?"

"Yes. I mean, think about it, Ryuzaki. They're…"

Ryuzaki interrupted.

"Those kinds of people," he pronounced sharply.

There was a small silence as they stared at one another. Light was once again undergoing the unusual experience of not knowing how to respond. He eventually opted for a simple nod.

Ryuzaki's face wore a dark expression when he asked:

"What kinds of people are they, Light-kun?"

Light hesitated. He recognized a loaded question when he heard one. Despite that, he decided to forge ahead.

"Do I really have to say it, Ryuzaki? They're criminals. They're people who knowingly and deliberately break the law. We shouldn't be working with them. We should be handing them over to the police."

"And what kind of person are you?"

"…I, like the majority of society, am a person who doesn't break the law. It's a fairly clear-cut distinction, Ryuzaki. I don't see why I have to explain it to you," Light replied in a defensive voice.

"Because, according to your simplistic classification system, I am also a criminal. I am that kind of person. Do you think I should be handed over to the police too?" Ryuzaki said sardonically.

Light's eyes narrowed.

"No, because there's a difference. They break the law for their own personal gain. You do it to solve cases."

"Yes, and I have summoned Wedy and Aiber in order to solve this case. They have the required skills to infiltrate Yotsuba. They are more than competent and will carry out their duties in a professional manner."

"But they're still profiting from committing illegal acts. You said you hired them so that means you're paying them," Light argued.

The fingers of Ryuzaki's hand began rapidly tapping on his knee. His tone, when he spoke, conveyed annoyance.

"Yes, they are being compensated for their services. I will say it again, Light-kun. I want to solve this case, no matter what."

Light crossed his arms. His voice reflected his irritation.

"You don't need to repeat yourself. I heard you the first time and I understand that."
Ryuzaki's expression was skeptical. Light tensely continued.

"I do, and I agree with your decision."

Ryuzaki tilted his head to the side, and gazed at him with puzzlement.

"You have just completely contradicted yourself, Light-kun."

Light suddenly leaned forward.

"I know that, Ryuzaki!" he snapped.

Their faces were inches apart. There was a shocked silence, and then Ryuzaki leaned back; away from him. His countenance was guarded.

After a few moments, Light looked down.

"I know I did," he said softly.

Light's elbows were on his knees. He buried his face in his hands as a wave of exhaustion swept over him.

"Look, Ryuzaki,…I…I'm tired."

"Light-kun could not sleep last night?" he asked quietly.

"I did, but only for a few hours."

Light stood up.

"I need to go to bed."

Ryuzaki nodded. He followed as Light walked to the elevator.

When they reached the bedroom, the detective opened the door and detached the handcuffs. Light stepped into the room and turned around. There was an awkward pause. In truth, Light was feeling demoralized. In what was turning out to be a personal record, for the third time in one day, he was drawing a blank on what to say.

The problem was solved when Ryuzaki reached towards him. He gingerly patted his shoulder, and said:

"Light-kun will feel better once he has slept."

Light smiled.

"Good night, Ryuzaki."

"Good night."

Once the door was closed, Light changed into his pajamas and gratefully sank into bed. It was only around six in the evening, and the hunger pangs in his stomach were a reminder that he had not eaten dinner. However, even that discomfort did not prevent him from falling into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

It was several hours later when he was disturbed from his slumber. The room was pitch black but he
could hear the sounds of quiet movement. He was eventually able to make out a silhouette in the
darkness.

"What time is it, Ryuzaki?" he asked sleepily.

He approached and sat down on the other bed, across from Light.

"It's two o'clock."

Light propped himself up on one elbow.

"What are you still doing up? Are you coming to bed?"

"...Yes."

Light moved over. When nothing happened, he returned to his previous position. He leaned across
the space separating them, and clasped Ryuzaki's arm. His amusement was apparent in his voice
when he said:

"Well, come on then."

After a brief interlude, Ryuzaki stood and stepped towards him.

"Light-kun finds entertainment in highly inappropriate things. Also, he may release me now. I am not
going to 'run away' as he calls it," he said peevishly.

Light let go, and shifted over. Ryuzaki laid down on his back. Light moved quickly, before he could
turn away, and settled on top of him. He rested his chin on his folded arms and spoke in a mock-
serious tone.

"Has anyone ever told you that you can be a little vindictive?"

Ryuzaki's fingertips touched his elbows.

"No. I see Light-kun is feeling better. He is back to his old self."

"Yeah, I was just tired. I'm fine now. Actually, I thought you would be in a great mood too."

"Why would Light-kun think that?"

"Well, with me out the way tonight, you would have been able to conduct your clandestine activities
without any interference."

"I have no idea what Light-kun is referring to," Ryuzaki said bemusedly.

Light smiled. His humor was reflected in his voice when he asked:

"So, how did your secret meeting with Wedy and Aiber go?"

"Yet again I have no idea what Light-kun is referring to. He is being very enigmatic."

"So, you won't tell me?"

"He is like a sphinx."

Light chuckled.
"Right. *I'm* the mysterious one," he said dryly.

Ryuzaki's hands drifted up and came to a rest on his shoulders.

Light started when he touched his face. Fingers traced his jawline. It was a feathery movement, airy and light.

It was too dark to clearly see Ryuzaki's expression. As a result, Light could not adequately read him.

Fingertips traveled to the contours of his cheeks.

Or his unanticipated and unfamiliar actions.

The air surrounding them was deathly still. Suddenly, it felt constraining. To Light, the density of it was oppressive.

He moved his hands to grasp Ryuzaki's shoulders, and then advanced until his face was poised above his. Ryuzaki's hands stopped.

Light broke the silence.

"What are you thinking about?"

Ryuzaki's hands resumed their exploration.

"That you are heavy," he replied softly.

Light snickered and caught his wrist. He pinned his arm and, with feigned indignation, asked:

"What are you talking about?"

When he did not answer, Light seized his other wrist. That arm joined his first on the bed. He lowered his face until their lips were almost touching.

"I'd estimate that we weigh almost the same amount. I might be a little heavier than you, but not by much. Definitely less than five kilograms," he said amusedly.

"Yes, that is true but…"

Ryuzaki's body tensed. Light grinned and braced himself.

"…you are still heavy, Light-kun."

Five minutes later, Light was straddling his chest. They were both sweating and breathing harshly. The sheets and pillows were strewn about haphazardly.

"It's my win, Ryuzaki!" Light crowed triumphantly.

Ryuzaki's resentment was evident in the tone of his voice.

"Light-kun only won because he started with an unfair advantage."

"That's called tactics, Ryuzaki. With any contest, if you want to win, you have to plan ahead. Anyways, you *almost* had me a few times. If I hadn't evaded your legs, you *probably* would have been able to throw me off. So, don't be mad. Just because you're the *loser* this time, doesn't mean you always will be."
There was a stunned silence, and then:

"You are being truly insufferable right now," Ryuzaki said wonderingly.

Light still had his wrists pinned. He let go, and moved to lie beside him. Propping himself up on his elbow, he placed his hand on Ryuzaki's stomach and spoke in a conciliatory tone.

"It's just play fighting. I'm not being serious."

Light leaned over him as his hand inched downward.

"You know that,…right?"

Ryuzaki shrugged and reached to hold his shoulder. Light undid his jeans.

This time, Light moved at a much slower pace. It allowed him to pick up on things he had not noticed the previous night. The hitch in Ryuzaki's breath and the arch of his back when he reached between his legs. The way he shivered when Light kissed and nipped at his neck. The heat and flush of his skin. His hand gliding beneath the waist of Light's pajamas. His arm encircling Light's shoulders to drag him down into an impassioned kiss as he came. Light burying his face in his shoulder as Ryuzaki's caresses brought him closer...

Ryuzaki raised himself up. It was surprising when he lifted Light's head and tentatively pressed his lips to his mouth. There was no time to dwell on this development, though, because that was when the excitation in Light reached its peak. He forgot himself and kissed Ryuzaki so hard that he pushed him back onto the bed.

Later, they reclined in bed. Ryuzaki was on his side, and Light was against his back. Into this hushed atmosphere, Light drowsily asked:

"What are you thinking about?"

"That Light-kun is not the play fighting type," Ryuzaki replied softly.

"You're still thinking about that? Go to sleep. We have to get up soon."

Light tightened his arms around him.

"Good night, Ryuzaki."

"…Good night, Light-kun."

Light woke before the alarm went off. He decided to get up and prepare for the day. After he had showered, he sat at the table. Ryuzaki was still asleep and would likely remain so for a while longer. This was beneficial. It allowed him the space and time to think. He needed to come to a resolution about the two new additions to the team. He turned his thoughts inward and began the process of examining the dilemma from both sides.

Soichiro was correct. His reluctance to work with criminals was based on his strong moral code, and also his identity as a police officer. Light knew his father would go along with this new arrangement. It was exactly as he had once said. Sometimes a person had to put aside their feelings to get the job done. As well, Soichiro had said that he supported Ryuzaki, no matter what. His dad would follow the detective's lead because stopping Kira was what truly mattered.

It occurred to Light that he differed from his father in this regard. He would not subvert his principles
for Ryuzaki. That was why he had refused to manipulate Misa's feelings when he asked him to. However, it seemed that would not be an issue when it came to Wedy and Aiber. There was no conflict between Light's moral code and working with them. The reason for that was simple.

Ryuzaki was right. He had found a way to negate the obstacles of investigating Yotsuba. Yes, it was unorthodox and morally questionable. Yes, it was a solution that most people wouldn't think of, or condone. Nevertheless, it allowed them to move forward. That was what was important. After all, the number of Kira's victims only continued to increase.

Furthermore, Ryuzaki's solution was efficient. This resonated with Light. He was, in fact, an efficient person himself and so admired it in others. The inclusion of Wedy and Aiber was a good choice on Ryuzaki's part. It would greatly expedite the case and showed his shrewdness, ingenuity, and determination to catch Kira.

Light decided he was willing to follow Ryuzaki's lead in this situation. He, like Soichiro, was able to put his feelings aside in order to get the job done. However, unlike his father, he was not adverse to the detective's surprising move. It was what was needed at this point.

If he was absolutely honest, though, there was another reason behind his acceptance. He was curious about how Ryuzaki planned to use Wedy and Aiber. Light may have been initially uncertain, but now that he had resolved his feelings; he was interested to see how this would play out.

Light leaned back and stretched his arms above his head. It felt like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders. It was then that the alarm went off. He watched Ryuzaki sit up and sleepily search for him. When their eyes met, Light's smile was genuine.

Sadly, his respite was fated to be short-lived. It happened in the early afternoon.

Light was at his desk. He had been thinking about Ryuzaki's astuteness when it came to Kira and the case. This, naturally, led to the detective's theory that he was the first Kira. If Light could acknowledge his proficiency, as he had done that morning, then…

'Is it even possible for him to be completely wrong about me?'

A new weight quietly descended upon Light as he considered this. He turned his attention inward, and sorted through his memories.

When he went to Spaceland with Yuri, the bus was hijacked. Kiichiro Osoreda, a criminal who had robbed a bank, fired shots. Then he had jumped out of the bus, been struck by a car, and died.

'If Kira can kill by means other than heart attack…'

Also on the bus was an FBI agent named Raye Penber. It might be possible to control Osoreda to make Penber reveal his name. Then, there was Penber's fiancée. Naomi Misora was currently missing, but…

'I did meet her around New Year's day.'

Light did not remember all the details of their conversation, but they had discussed the Kira case. She had mentioned that Kira could kill by means other than heart attack. He thought for a bit.

'Yes, she clearly said that.'

An unsettled feeling arose within. It disrupted his mental flow, and threw Light into a state of confusion.
'How come I never focused on this before? I just never thought of it until now?'

No, Penber and Misora were important people to the case. He had known that.

'Could Ryuzaki be right? Am I really…'

No.

'That can't be.'

When his uneasiness did not abate, Light examined the issue from a different angle.

'What if, hypothetically, I had the power to kill using only a person's face and name? Would I use the power to punish criminals?'

Truthfully, Light did think the world would be better without certain people. But, he did not think he would go so far as to become a murderer himself to improve it.

'I'm over-thinking this. I can't possibly be Kira. I have no memories of it. How could someone kill so many and not remember it?'

Even though it was relevant to the case, Light decided he shouldn't discuss Penber and Misora with Ryuzaki. There was no reason to and it would just complicate things again. He was not Kira, and this wasn't what he needed to be focusing on right now.

'Kira is still killing criminals. I need to concentrate on capturing Kira as soon as possible.'

Light was brought out his inner monologue by the sound of Ryuzaki's voice.

"Light-kun."

He was quite close, and watching him with intense eyes. Light had been so deep in thought that he hadn't even noticed.

"What's wrong? You have such a serious face," Ryuzaki said.

Light smiled slightly, and looked at his screen.

"Nothing. Just tired from staring at the monitor all day."

He brought up the relevant data, and said:

"I've hacked into the Yotsuba company computer, but there's nothing that leads to Kira. Not that I expected them to leave that kind of evidence here, though."

Ryuzaki leaned in front of him to peer at the screen.

"That is incredible. With skills like this, I am sure you could have hacked into the police system too."

Light placed his hand on Ryuzaki's back, and pressed.

'It's true that I've hacked into my dad's work computer, but that was to try to solve the Kira case on my own. Not because I am Kira.'

The detective shifted away. He still regarded the screen. Light watched him and said:

"You're still saying stuff like that, Ryuzaki? You can suspect me all you want, but I hope you're
paying attention to what's going on in front of us."

"You're right. We must catch the current Kira. There is no mistake that he will lead us closer to a final solution to this case."

They were interrupted when Watari addressed Ryuzaki through the intercom.

He revealed that a detective, named Eraldo Coil, had been asked to uncover L’s identity. The client went through two agents in an attempt to keep their identity secret. Despite that, Watari was able to determine that the request came from Yotsuba. Specifically, from Masahiko Kida; who was the VP of Rights and Planning for their Tokyo office.

Soichiro approached. He knew of Eraldo Coil, and explained that he was one of the best detectives; besides L. He was famous for taking any job as long as the money was good, and for his ability to locate people.

Light spoke to Ryuzaki.

"If Yotsuba is connected to Kira and wants to know L’s identity, then that means they'll kill you once they uncover it."

Soichiro's voice was troubled when he said:

"This is bad. We're already short-handed here and now we also have to worry about Coil. And nobody knows what Coil looks like either."

Their concern, however, was unnecessary. That became clear when Ryuzaki said:

"There is nothing to worry about. Eraldo Coil is also me."

Light sat down and bought up Yotsuba's employee list on his computer. He listened as Ryuzaki explained that he was the three top detectives in the world. He went under the aliases of L, Coil, and Deneuve; and asked them not to tell anyone.

"People who are trying to uncover me usually fall for this. Watari acts as the intermediary for both Coil and Deneuve, so it's obvious."

Light smiled.

"Nice one, Ryuzaki."

Light found Kida's profile and, after a brief discussion, the detective called Wedy and Aiber.

Once they arrived, Ryuzaki outlined how they would proceed. Aiber would get close to Kida, and Wedy would make it possible to get around Yotsuba's security system. He stressed that Yotsuba must not find out they were being investigated, and that no one should act without his instructions.

Ryuzaki was just about to elaborate on Wedy's and Aiber's roles when Watari called. Matsuda was sending a distress signal from the Yotsuba Tokyo office. Since he was sending the signal, it meant he had been caught. It was likely that he would be killed.

Ryuzaki's expression was annoyed when he said:

"Please forget everything I just said. We need to re-think our strategy…stupid Matsuda."

From then on, everything happened in a rush. It was after midnight when Light found himself in an
ambulance. He and the detective were dressed as paramedics. There were only five minutes to go
before the time came to implement their part of the plan. Ryuzaki was in an extremely bad mood.

Light, sensibly, decided to ignore him. Instead, he recounted the events that had led them here.

Ryuzaki had called Matsuda shortly after the distress signal came in. Light thought it was too
dangerous, but the detective said he could pull it off. And he did. He was able to establish that
Matsuda was separated from Misa and in trouble.

Ryuzaki had clarified that Matsuda only carried identification as Misa's manager before calling. He
then asked Light to call Misa. Her phone was turned off so he left a message. While they waited for
her to call back, Soichiro spoke to the detective.

"What should we do, Ryuzaki? Matsuda's there alone and from the sound of the call, it seemed like
someone was listening in," he said anxiously.

"Yes. He seems to be in big trouble. Though, if Matsuda-san dies now, that will substantiate the
suspicion against Yotsuba."

Light, Soichiro, and Mogi were taken aback. Ryuzaki continued.

"Any drastic actions would cause them to notice us. Let's wait and see for now."

Misa called a short while later. Light had just begun to speak to her when she received a call from
Matsuda. That was when they found out he was trying to convince Yotsuba to hire Misa for a
commercial. He asked her to come to their office. When she relayed the news to Light, he told her
not to go to Yotsuba. She misunderstood the meaning behind his words, and said:

"Huh? What do you mean? No matter how big a star I become, I'll always be your Misa."

What Light meant was that it was obviously too dangerous. He started to explain, but was interrupted
by Ryuzaki.

"Light-kun, let's have Misa-san go. We may be able to save Matsuda-san…She will do as you tell
her."

From there, Ryuzaki devised a plan that would save Matsuda. Light explained Misa's part to her. He
also told her that, with her beauty, it should work. She was grateful for the compliment, and more
than willing to fulfill her role. Misa then went to Yotsuba's office and invited eight of their executives
to come to a party. They accepted and relocated to her floor in the building. Matsuda was also there,
along with several girls from Misa's agency.

Matsuda found an opportunity to use Misa's phone and called Ryuzaki. The detective told him that
he would have to die before he was killed. He explained that he should pretend to be drunk, and fall
from the balcony. Mogi and Soichiro would be on the balcony below and catch him with a mattress.
Aiber, disguised as Matsuda, would lie in the street. Wedy would play the part of a bystander who
happened upon the scene, and pretend to call an ambulance. In reality, she would call Ryuzaki and
Light.

It had now been five minutes since they received that call. They departed and headed for the site.
Once there, Light and Ryuzaki used a stretcher to carry Aiber into the ambulance. As they drove
away, Light's attention was drawn to Ryuzaki when he irritably said:

"I know we are short on staff, but for me to have to play a role like this…stupid Matsuda."
It was three in the morning before they were able to retire. Light quickly prepared for bed. There were only a few hours left until they would have to be up again. He needed to get as much sleep as possible. A rest would be good for Ryuzaki too. He was still grouchy despite the fact that his plan had succeeded. Matsuda was alive and they had saved him without revealing their existence to Yotsuba.

Light was not used to dealing with this side of Ryuzaki. Frankly, it was grating on his nerves. Perhaps this was why, when Ryuzaki exited the bathroom, he chose that exact moment to bring up something which annoyed him.

Light was sitting on the bed, and Ryuzaki was moving towards him.

"Do you have to sleep in your clothes?"

Ryuzaki stopped. He just stared for a few seconds, and then walked to the other bed. He went to the side furthest from Light, and lay down with his back towards him.

Light rolled his eyes.

"Oh, come on, Ryuzaki! I'm saying this for your benefit. Wearing pajamas would allow you to sleep more comfortably."

The detective remained facing away when he said:

"Light-kun should try to remember that I am not like 'his Misa'. I will not do as he tells me even if he fakes concern for me."

There were many responses Light could have made. He chose this one:

"You know what? You're being really impossible right now. So, forget I said anything. Just do whatever you want."

"Thank you for giving me your permission, Light-kun. Good night."

Light forcefully stifled the urge to retort. Instead, he turned off the lamp and moved as far way from Ryuzaki as possible. Surprisingly, he fell asleep almost as soon as his head hit the pillow.

When the alarm went off, Light dragged himself out of bed. He prepared for the day, and then sat at the table and watched Ryuzaki; who was still sleeping.

It was very likely that, after last night, they were in another stand-off. He felt tired just thinking about it.

'How do I fix this?'

He recalled that Ryuzaki had said he was not like Misa. Light smiled.

'Well, obviously.'

If he was, then Light would not be interested in him. In fact, Ryuzaki was significantly different from any woman he had been with. Again, that was rather obvious too.

It struck him that, in the past, he did not have the kinds of problems he faced with Ryuzaki. It was easy to get his way because the women he dated were all, more or less, like Misa. They wanted to please him. If there were any difficulties; a well-placed compliment or show of caring would quickly nullify any resistance.
A good example was when he was dating Takada. They were sitting together in class. Light had been preoccupied and so was not paying attention to her. She was offended, and said he didn't seem very happy to be with her. Light had responded by praising her beauty and referencing her nickname; "Miss To-Oh". That was all it took to placate her.

It occurred to him that his old methods, as reliable as they had been, were not effective with Ryuzaki. As well, there was one other key distinction.

Light was indifferent to every woman he had been involved with. That was why he would appease them, instead of trying to understand their feelings. It was also why he flattered them to get what he wanted. It was always about him, not them. If it was a choice between his wishes or those of someone else; he unilaterally chose his. Quite simply, he had never cared enough to make even the slightest sacrifice for any of them.

No, Ryuzaki certainly was not like Misa, Takada, Yuri, or anyone else. He didn't share their characteristics or their blind devotion. However, the most profound difference was in the way Light felt about him.

'I'm not indifferent to him at all.'

Light rose and approached him. He sat on the edge of the bed, and placed his hand on his waist. Ryuzaki's eyes opened.

"What were you so angry about yesterday?" Light asked quietly.

There was a small pause.

"Because Light-kun was being contro…"

Light held up his hand, and interrupted.

"Stop right there, Ryuzaki. That's not what I'm talking about. I realize I could have picked a better time to bring that up. But, what I'm asking is why you were so mad before that," he said in an even voice.

Ryuzaki frowned, and propped himself up on one elbow.

"I do not suffer fools gladly, Light-kun."

"I know, but you already knew that about Matsuda. You've actually said he was an idiot right to his face. Anyways, the world is full of people like him. You must have had a really sheltered upbringing if you haven't realized that by now."

"Since you are misunderstanding me, I will be more specific. This is the first time an idiot has ever single-handedly derailed my carefully thought-out strategy. I did not even have the chance to finish explaining it before his stupidity made it worthless," Ryuzaki said testily.

Light took a minute to imagine how he might have reacted in the same situation.

"Okay, you have a point. When I look at it that way, I think you were actually fairly calm about the whole thing."

Light stood up, and extended his hand.

"Come on. Go get ready, and then I'll make you whatever you want for breakfast as a consolation."
Ryuzaki grabbed hold. As Light pulled him up, he said:

"I want french toast."

Over breakfast, Light brought up the point that Ryuzaki's strategy was still valid. It was true that he had been unable to fully explain it, but he had outlined Wedy's and Aiber's tasks. Of course, some of the finer details might have to be changed. For example, Matsuda's stunt would likely cause Kida to be suspicious if Aiber directly approached him. He and the other executives would be much more wary than they were before. However, it was still a good way to move forward. Ryuzaki had smiled at him, and agreed.

They were late getting to work that day. In an unusual twist, Light discovered he wasn't concerned about it.

There was a small article in the newspaper about the death of Misa's manager. Light politely smiled at Matsuda and said:

"I'm sure those eight would have checked, just in case. So, now you'll be okay…probably."


Ryuzaki decided that Mogi would fulfill the role as Misa's new manager. He initially offered it to Aiber. He turned it down saying that he had his own plans. Then, they went on to examine each of the eight Yotsuba executives.

Matsuda clarified that he had heard them say they would use Kira to kill someone. It was established that they, unlike the second Kira, did not have the power to kill with just a person's face.

"If they could do that, then it is highly unlikely that Matsuda-san would be alive now; even after faking his death," Ryuzaki explained.

"Huh? Oh, I see…I guess I really was in trouble, wasn't I?" Matsuda said in an alarmed voice.

Light noted that they had yet to uncover any deaths that would implicate the executives personally.

"I figured that if they were using Kira's power to increase the wealth of the Yotsuba Corporation, they'd also use it for their own personal benefit but…"

"So, they are not able to use Kira's power freely then?" the detective asked.

"Or perhaps they're being careful so that even if Yotsuba is suspected, they won't be personally," Light speculated.

"Either way, this Kira has assembled a group to make the decisions. So, the person must be a stupid coward who cannot do anything on his own," Ryuzaki stated.

What they needed to do now was gather evidence. By this point, Aiber had left. Ryuzaki confirmed that he would work to get close to one of the eight, while Wedy concentrated on getting through Yotsuba's security system.

"If things go well, this next Friday should be very interesting," Ryuzaki said.

Everyone was, naturally, a little fatigued. Light was so tired that, by late afternoon, he was finding it difficult to concentrate. There wasn't really anything pressing to do, so he convinced Ryuzaki to go for an early dinner break.
There was actually another motive behind Light's actions. He wanted to be alone with Ryuzaki to discuss something with him. However, once they reached the kitchen, he discovered he had no idea how to bring it up.

Light was picking at his food, and furtively glancing at Ryuzaki; who was reading a book.

'There is no way this isn't going to be awkward. Maybe I should just say it? But, then again, being straightforward isn't necessarily the best way. Maybe I should be more indirect, kind of lead into it slowly. Then again…'

Light's inner debate was interrupted when Ryuzaki said:

"What is it, Light-kun?"

He had his book in front of his eyes. Light hesitated for a while longer, and then…

'Enough. Straightforward it is.'

Light rested his elbows on the table, and leaned forward.

"I think it's time we had 'the talk',' he said seriously.

Ryuzaki lowered his book, and peered over the top of it.

"Will Light-kun's next sentence begin with any variation of; 'When two people care about each other, sometimes they want to be closer'?'"

"What are…No!"

Ryuzaki put the book down and smirked.

"I am glad to hear that. Otherwise, he would have given me no choice but to laugh in his face."

Light sighed.

"Can you try not to make this any more difficult than it already is?"

Ryuzaki kept smiling, and said:

"Please continue. Light-kun has my full attention."

There was a long silence; a really lengthy one.

"…I know you don't want to talk about whether you've had any…experiences before."

Ryuzaki nodded.

"I have, but I think you should know that I'm…healthy. So…"

Ryuzaki was still smiling. He leaned forward, and asked:

"Light-kun is trying to determine whether I am 'healthy' too?"

'He's really enjoying this.'

Light frowned, and nodded.
"No, I do not have any sexually transmitted diseases," Ryuzaki said amusedly.

"And you believe me when I say I don't? You'll trust that I'm not lying?"

"Yes. Light-kun is not stupid enough to tell a lie that can so easily be disproved. I trust his intelligence."

It took a few moments to form a reply.

"Thanks, Ryuzaki. That…that's really touching."

"Light-kun is…"

Light held up his hand.

"No, don't say anything else. I just never realized…I'm deeply moved right now," he said with affected tenderness.

Ryuzaki shook his head, and picked up his book. Light grinned and managed to get in one more comment before he raised it in front of his eyes.

"Deeply moved, Ryuzaki," he said laughingly.

It was only nine o'clock when they retired. This was mostly due to Light's insistence. He was finding it tiresome to be in the operations room. He explained to Ryuzaki that, with so little sleep, it was impossible for him to focus.

However.

As soon as they entered the bedroom he, somehow, dredged up the energy to pull Ryuzaki into his arms. It was right after he removed the handcuffs. He was still holding them when Light caught his lips in a demanding kiss. When he didn't respond, he ran his tongue along his lower lip. His hands rose to slowly trail through his hair.

Coaxing, enticing.

Ryuzaki opened his mouth. Light's tongue plunged in. The chain jangled as it hit the floor.

Ryuzaki clung to his shoulders while Light's hands went down to his hips. When he brought their groins together, he keenly felt Ryuzaki's arousal along with his own. A soft gasp from Ryuzaki caused their mouths to move apart. Light's arm encircled his waist as his other hand roved up his back; taking his shirt with it. He reclaimed his lips, his tongue intertwining with Ryuzaki's. To Light, he tasted sweet. Honeyed and delicious. Ryuzaki leaned into him, his fingers curving around the nape of his neck. Without breaking the kiss, Light began walking him backwards; towards the bed.

There was something Light wanted to try. Something he had received before, but never been in a position to give. There was an obstacle, though, and Light focused on removing it. By the time they reached the bed, Ryuzaki's shirt was off and his jeans were headed that way too.

It was as he was tossing the last piece of Ryuzaki's clothing aside that he remembered. Light had never seen him completely naked before. This would be the first time.

The curtains were open and the glow of the moon cast Ryuzaki in its cool radiance.

Light forgot what he was doing and simply stared.
His hair, dark and lustrous against his pale skin. The curve of his waist and indentation of his stomach. Lean muscle, lithely flowing under his arms and shoulders. His hard-on…His hands, fine-boned and graceful, undoing the clasp of Light's pants.

Light, startled out of his reverie, looked up.

His cheeks, stained a rosy hue. His slightly swollen lips. His eyes…warm, welcoming.

Light quickly removed his shirt while Ryuzaki took care of his pants.

They fell on the bed together, ending up on their sides; facing each other.

There was a pause.

Just a small lull when their eyes met.

But it caused Light to realize that the air around them was deathly quiet. Suddenly, it felt like it was closing in on him.

Ryuzaki tilted his head to the side, looking at him questioningly.

Light disrupted the stillness.

He reached for Ryuzaki, tugging him closer. Light's mouth caressed his neck while he maneuvered to lie atop of him, his weight causing Ryuzaki to sink onto his back. Fingertips lightly glided along his back as his lips trailed a downward path. Fingers kneaded his arms and shoulders when he went lower. Hands twined through his hair when he went lower still.

Light went down on Ryuzaki with confidence. While true that he had never done this before, he knew what he liked. Licking, sucking, hard and fast. He savored the feeling of Ryuzaki's erection, sliding in and out of his mouth, and the sound of his breath becoming heavier and harsher. Even while doing so, Light's fingers meandered down the back of Ryuzaki's thigh; wondering if he would let him…

Ryuzaki tensed.

'No, I guess not.'

Ryuzaki propped himself up on his elbows.

"If Light-kun is going to do that, then he should…"

He reached and opened the drawer to the nightstand and…

"…use this."

…tossed a bottle of lubricant to him. Light unscrewed the top, and picked up where he left off.

Soon, Ryuzaki's breath turned into pants as his body shuddered; so close to climax. Light chose that exact moment to stop what he was doing. Instead of continuing, he moved to lie on top of him; his face poised above his.

"Light-kun," Ryuzaki murmured tensely. His hands tightly clutched Light's shoulders.

Light grinned, and slowly moved his hips to rub their erections together. He might have maintained that rhythm for a while longer had Ryuzaki not wrapped his arms around his neck; yanking Light
down into a searing kiss. The ardency of his embrace, and the feeling of his naked body writhing under his, caused Light's tempo to speed up. It was not long after that he felt Ryuzaki jerking and trembling beneath him. And it was no time at all before Light followed.

It wasn't until the next day that it struck him.

He brought it up at breakfast. Light was reading the newspaper. He continued scanning the articles, and asked:

"When did you get that lubricant?"

Ryuzaki was reading a book. He turned a page, and replied:

"Two days ago."

"Did Watari get it for you?"

"Yes."

Light had reached the Business section of the newspaper. He perused it for any mention of Yotsuba.

"Did he ask why you wanted it?"

"No. Watari is observant and intelligent."

Light looked up, and regarded him quizzically.

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"The upkeep of our bedroom is one of Watari's many duties."

Light was taken aback.

"Are you saying he personally goes in and changes the sheets?"


"That's not very funny, Ryuzaki."

"I am not being serious, Light-kun. I…"

Light held up his hand, and interrupted.

"Let me guess. You're being playful?"

Ryuzaki's smile widened. Light sighed and went back to his newspaper.

A few minutes later, he said:

"You're actually a very pragmatic person, aren't you?"

Ryuzaki put his book down. His expression was thoughtful when he said:

"I have never been called that before…but, yes. That is accurate."

He leaned forward with a soft smile on his lips. Light leaned back.
"Don't start, Ryuzaki," he said warningly. 

"Light-kun is the first person ever to call me pragmatic. This poignant moment will live on in my memories. I will turn to it for support…"

Light cut in. 

"You just can't help yourself, can you?" he asked in a resigned voice. 

Ryuzaki grinned. Light shook his head, and then grinned back. 

The rest of the day, and the following day passed quickly. 

During work hours, Light was focused on the case. During the nights, he was focused on Ryuzaki. In that time, he learned all there was to know about the eight Yotsuba executives. Exempting, of course, who or how many of them had Kira's power. He also learned a great deal about Ryuzaki's body, although not quite everything. However, the warmth of his bare skin and the caress of his hands became familiar sensations to Light. He was untroubled and happy. 

It was on the third day that there came a shift. 

It was late in the evening when a call came in from Aiber. He told Ryuzaki that he had indirectly contacted the eight Yotsuba executives, under the guise of Eraldo Coil. They were starting to trust him, though not yet completely. He was coming back to Japan the next day because he predicted they would soon want to meet him, and ask for his opinion. 

"Aiber, showing yourself before them is very dangerous. Please be careful," Ryuzaki said. 

"I understand. But you've saved me more than once, L. And anyway, with the evidence you have on me, I'm looking at a life behind bars. This is a lot more fun than that. One reason I can't quit being a con man is the thrill of it."

Aiber then went on to reveal that he had already collected five million from them. He wanted to figure out a way to hand over a fake L in order to receive another ten million. He asked for Ryuzaki's permission to proceed. Ryuzaki gave it and said he would think about it, as well. 

By this point, Light was frowning and Soichiro was glaring. Matsuda was nervously watching them. They were all standing behind Ryuzaki. 

"He's trying to con them out of ten million dollars with a fake L," Matsuda said in a hushed voice. 

"It's all part of the investigation," Ryuzaki answered airily. 

There was a silence. And in that pause, Light stepped closer to Ryuzaki. 

"Infiltrating Yotsuba as Coil…smart thinking by Aiber," he said. 

"I don't appreciate him using my other self like that, but it was a good idea so I am staying quiet about it," Ryuzaki replied. 

They were interrupted when Watari informed Ryuzaki that Wedy was calling. 

She said that Yotsuba's security system was nothing special at all. All they had were a few security guards. As long as she knew the guards' schedule; it would be no problem for her to set up surveillance equipment in the meeting room.
Watari had hired a spy ware professional at Ryuzaki's request. The detective asked Wedy to help him install bugs and cameras in the meeting room. They should do this late tomorrow night.

By this point, Light was standing beside Ryuzaki. He leaned forward to peer at the monitor, and smiled.

"You're right, Ryuzaki. If they have another meeting on Friday, it will be very interesting."

Ryuzaki looked at him from the corner of his eye, and smiled back.

"Yes."

Later that night, Light lay awake in bed. He was tired, but his excitement about the investigation kept him up. His mind was racing with the possibilities.

If things went well, they would be able to obtain evidence that Yotsuba and Kira were working together. Or maybe even which of the eight men had Kira's power. No matter what they learned, this was a huge step forward in solving the case.

'Ryuzaki's solution was definitely the right one.'

Aiber and Wedy were able to do what they could not. Aiber, in particular, had displayed…

'Aiber.'

Light's mind slowed down as his train of thought was disrupted.

A feeling of uneasiness welled up within, and threw him into a state of disarray.

Aiber wanted to obtain more money by handing over a fake L to Yotsuba. That was wrong. Light knew it was wrong. There was no middle ground in this situation. He understood that just as clearly as his father did. However, if that was true…

'Why didn't I say anything? Why did I go along with it?'

Light's chest slowly began to tighten. It hurt. In an effort to ward it off, he determinedly rallied.

What did it matter if Yotsuba was bilked out of millions? They were a hugely successfully company and had the money. It wouldn't significantly harm them. What's more, there was the manner in which they had obtained that money. It was extremely likely that they were murdering people to achieve their financial success. And, in that case, they didn't deserve to have it. In fact, in a twisted way, there was a certain justice in what Aiber was doing.

Aiber's approach and methods for infiltrating Yotsuba were intellectually sound. There was a very high probability that he would succeed in gaining their trust. It certainly helped that he had represented himself as Eraldo Coil. He had the weight of Ryuzaki's achievements to assist him in this endeavor. Since Yotsuba had already paid Aiber so much money, it was obvious that they were impressed by Coil's reputation.

Aiber's actions would allow them to move forward. It was true that they were excessive…he paused.

'Far too excessive, actually.'

He wanted to deliver a fake L to Yotsuba. But…just who would be chosen for that role? It was pretty clear what would happen to him. A person, posing as L, being handed over to a group with Kira's power. It didn't matter whether they had the ability to know a person's name by merely seeing
their face. Kira's power was not the only way to kill.

'Ryuzaki said he would think about it too. So, it's almost a given that it's going to happen.'

He remembered Aiber saying that Ryuzaki had enough evidence to send him to jail for life. Light assumed he also had evidence on Wedy. Aiber and Wedy were both skilled and intelligent. It would have been challenging to build up a case against them, but Ryuzaki had done it. He had also mentioned, a few days ago, that he knew other criminals that could aid them.

'So,…maybe one of them would be chosen as the fake L. One that doesn't have the same kind of value as Wedy and Aiber.'

A criminal who was of little use, but was obligated to Ryuzaki. That would be the ideal person to choose. Since it would be a criminal, then maybe…Light caught himself.

'What am I thinking? I can't justify this. It's sacrificing a person's life for money. It doesn't matter if it's a criminal. This is absolutely not justifiable.'

It was true that he felt the world would be a better place without certain people. It was also true that criminals were at the top of the list. But, he would never go so far as to…

He was brought out of his internal examination when Ryuzaki squirmed and moaned softly. It made Light realize that he was holding him far too tightly. He was sleeping on his side and Light was against his back. At some point, while he was lost in his thoughts, his arms had locked in a vice-like grip on him.

He loosened his hold and moved his hand in a soothing manner upon his chest. Ryuzaki eventually settled down. Light smiled when he heard the resumption of his steady, deep breaths.

That was when he became aware that the air around him was deathly silent. Suddenly, it was pressing in on him.

He tried to withstand it but, after a few minutes, it felt like it was permeating his skin.

Light disturbed the quiet.

He kissed the side of Ryuzaki's neck, reached between his legs, and woke him up.

The next day passed very slowly. They were in a holding pattern until Friday. Time seemed to drag for Light. It didn't help that he was exhausted. After he woke Ryuzaki the previous night, it was over an hour before the room became still again. Light had been able to finally fall asleep, but he was restless and woke up sporadically until the alarm went off.

It was just after dinner when he informed Ryuzaki that he needed to retire.

Once he was alone in the bedroom, he changed into his pajamas and tumbled into bed. He mentally focused and willed himself to fall asleep. The end result was over an hour of tossing and turning. Finally, he resignedly thought:

'Something's wrong.'

Light rolled over onto his back, and put his hands behind his head. He stared up at the ceiling while he cast his mind back over the last two weeks.

There had been many changes. Thirteen days had passed since the initial breakthrough on the case.
Now, they were on the cusp of solving the mystery of the third Kira. It was true that nothing was
definite yet, but he suspected Friday would yield many of the answers they were looking for.

Within a very short period of time, the case had moved forward at an extraordinary rate. This was
largely due to Ryuzaki's contributions. As soon as he involved himself, their progress towards
catching Kira was greatly accelerated. Light still wasn't sure if he agreed with all his methods, but he
couldn't deny that they were effective. If everything worked out, they would soon be able to stop the
mass murdering of criminals; as well as the other victims that Kira targeted.

It occurred to him that there had been another change.

Ryuzaki.

Light had seen many changes in him. He was still quiet, distant, and sometimes extremely difficult.
However, he was also receptive, playful, and very interesting to be with. He enjoyed talking with
him, working with him, and especially sleeping with him. Light had never wanted someone like he
wanted Ryuzaki. It wasn't just about sex, although there was that too. It was more than that.

'I've never been this close to another person.'

And, perhaps most importantly…

'I never thought I would want to be.'

That was when he recognized that the air around him was deadly silent. It descended upon him and it
was massive.

Suddenly, it was terrifying.

Light closed his eyes and endured it.

When Ryuzaki came into the bedroom a few hours later, he was dozing.

Light was startled awake when he flopped down beside him. He lay on his stomach, with his face
turned away. Light sat up.

"Ryuzaki?"

When there was no response, he asked:

"Did something happen?"

Ryuzaki shrugged.

'Something happened.'

There was a lengthy silence.

"So,…do you want to tell me about it?"

"No," he said quietly.

Light thought for a bit.

"Do you want me to give you a back massage?"
He shrugged. Light leaned forward and placed his hands on his waist.

"Lift up so I can take off your shirt."

There was a lull, and then:

"Light-kun always has to have his own way."

Light's brow wrinkled in confusion.

"What are you talking about?"

"I like sleeping in my clothes."

Light withdrew his hands.

"How does that relate to me giving you a back massage?" he asked in a bewildered voice.

Ryuzaki turned on his side, facing away from him.

"I have not slept in my clothes even once since he told me not to," he said sullenly.

Light's eyes narrowed.

"I didn't tell you do anything. I asked you…"

Light hesitated. He took a minute to study Ryuzaki, and ultimately decided not to finish his sentence. Instead; he lay down on his side, propped himself up on one elbow, and reached to place his hand on his hip.

"You are certainly trying very hard to start a fight with me, Ryuzaki," he said quietly.

There was no reply.

"You don't want to tell me what happened?"

Ryuzaki shook his head. He moved his hand to clasp Light's wrist, and slightly pulled.

'But you want my attention.'

Light moved forward until his chest was against his back. Ryuzaki let go of his wrist.

Ryuzaki was tense. Light could readily feel it along the lines where their bodies touched. It struck him again. Ryuzaki was unlike anyone he had ever been with. There was probably nothing Light could say to solve whatever was troubling him. After all, words did not always get through to him; especially when he was like this. Maybe it was time to try something new.

Light carefully moved his hand to caress his chest. His movements were unhurried and designed to soothe. It brought about a sense of relief when he felt Ryuzaki slowly relaxing as his fingers traveled over his arms, shoulders, and abdomen. Light kissed the nape of his neck, and was disappointed when he shifted away. However, it was only for the length of time it took him to pull off his shirt and shimmy out of his jeans. Light removed his pajamas.

Ryuzaki rested his back against Light's chest. Taking this as the invitation it was, Light continued where he had left off.
Sometimes, it amazed him.

It astounded Light that Ryuzaki would yield and permit him to be this close to him. He did not think he could ever become weary of it. It was impossible to be bored when his nipples tautened under Light's teasing fingers. Indifference was unimaginable as Ryuzaki shivered under the flow of his hands. When his lips drifted alongside his neck, and Ryuzaki inclined his head to grant him more space; it was inconceivable to be unmoved.

Propping himself up, Light leaned down to claim his lips in a languid embrace while his hand roamed about in an intimate journey. Traveling along the prominence of his hip, the plane of his stomach, and the sleekness of his inner thigh. Ryuzaki's gasp caused their mouths to part ways; his body pressing into Light when he stroked his erection, and made him harder.

Light twined the fingers of his other hand in Ryuzaki's hair as a whirl of impressions flooded over him. Smooth locks brushing against his cheek. The faint scent of shampoo. Luminous skin, gliding against his. The hand that held his arm. Fingers that usually moved in delicate patterns curved into a strong grip. In place of aloofness, a heated and fierce response.

To Light.

The ragged sound of his breathing. The sensation of his writhing body. Against his chest, his legs, his arms. The whirl of Light's thoughts slowed and focused…

Against his groin.

…into a pinpoint.

Light, who had been ignoring his own desire, ached. He feverishly thought of something he wanted from Ryuzaki but had never tried to take. Nor would he because some things, unless freely given, lost their meaning. Especially with Ryuzaki.

Especially for Light.

This painful want, however, caused his voice to be strained when he asked:

"Ryuzaki…Do you think maybe we could…"

Ryuzaki cut in.

"Yes. Go ahead."

A pause.

"…You don't even know what I was going to say."

"Based on Light-kun's actions over the last few nights,…"

He reached and retrieved the lubricant from the nightstand.

"…I was able to reason out what his goal was."

Light took the bottle from him, and inelegantly replied:

"…uh."

While he was floundering around for what to say, Ryuzaki spoke again.
"Light-kun should use this moment to compliment me on my pragmatism. It was very touching the last time," he said amusedly.

After a brief interlude, Light grinned and said:

"You know, you're really not as funny as you think you are, Ryuzaki."

They remained on their sides when, a short while later, Light slowly and carefully entered him. He was excited and apprehensive at the same time. Incredibly aroused by the heat and tightness enveloping him. Nervous about Ryuzaki's sharp intake of breath and the sudden tension of his body. He stopped and spoke quietly.

"Ryuzaki?"

"Don't move, Light-kun," he said softly.

"Does it hurt?"

"Yes, a little. Please wait."

Light nodded and rubbed his arm, indolently moving between his shoulder and elbow. It was a reassuring caress, slow and easy. Light remembered the countless times he had fantasized about this moment. But this feeling, the sensation of being inside Ryuzaki, was beyond anything he had been capable of conjuring. It was so very difficult to stay still. His caress sped up while his lips rained kisses upon Ryuzaki's shoulder. It was a release when Ryuzaki caught and held his hand. Light moved.

There was a sense of euphoria and pleasure as Light thrust, filling Ryuzaki. It was an engulfing intensity but, right alongside it, there was also a prickling in his awareness. Ryuzaki was gripping his hand far too tightly. He was breathing much too harshly. Light's motion slowed as he gently nuzzled his ear. His voice little more than a whisper when he said:

"Let go of my hand, Ryuzaki."

His hand, now free, reached to take hold of his erection. Light delayed his own gratification because it was important to him that Ryuzaki feel good too. It was a consideration he had been incapable of manifesting in the past. He could do so now because it was warranted.

For Light, Ryuzaki mattered.

He moved his hand in unison with his shallow thrusts into his body. A harmony that caused Ryuzaki's fingers, initially clenching his elbow, to begin lightly running along his arm. Careful thrusts went a little deeper and a lot harder. Ryuzaki gasped and pushed back against him. His hand rapidly caressed Light's side. The thrill caused Light to lose what little restraint he had left.

With nothing left to contain it, the pressure within Light contracted, expanded, released. His arms enfolded Ryuzaki, holding him as close as he possibly could, as the throes of climax washed over him. While the shudders slowly receded, Light continued to embrace Ryuzaki. He shakily held on and simply caught his breath.

He was only granted a short rest before there was a slight tug on his wrist. Light roused himself to lean over Ryuzaki and into him; his weight causing him to sink onto his back. Light's face was poised above Ryuzaki's when he reached between his legs and resumed where he had left off.

A very deliberate positioning on Light's part; for there was a purpose to this design.
It was because of something he had ever so gradually noticed about Ryuzaki. Over time, over the
nights of exploration and discovery, and the growing familiarity of being held by him and holding
him in turn. When Ryuzaki was close to orgasm, he would ferociously pull Light to him and
passionately kiss him. This produced the same response in Light every time.

It made him happy.

Later, they reclined in bed. Ryuzaki was on his back, and Light lay on top of him. Light's chin rested
on his folded arms.

The curtains were drawn and the room was enshrouded in darkness.

He listened to Ryuzaki's breathing, and felt the steady rise and fall of his chest beneath him.

A feeling of calmness ascended within.

Hands touched his face. Fingers airily traced a path from the curve of his jaw to the contours of his
cheeks.

The air surrounding them was ethereally still.

Fingertips ghosted over his closed eyes.

Suddenly, it was peaceful.

To Light, the vastness of it was liberating.

Death

major transformation, necessary and profound change, leaving the past behind, death of the old self,
rebirth, stripping away the worthless matter - the shedding of outmoded attitudes - a clearing away
of old habits and rigidity to allow a new life to emerge – Death is the quintessential example of
"letting go", alterations, transition – moving from the known to the unknown, a parting of the ways,
experiencing an inexorable force – a situation that (like death) is inescapable, inevitable endings,
death, periods of change or difficulty which will bring about an expanded life, a greater self, or a
greater good – the symbolic death that follows will allow a person to move forward, reluctance,
fear, release – the ego never wants to release energy – it tries to hoard it against the fear of death
(this can be seen very graphically in people's breathing when they panic – they try to gulp air
without letting any out and become short of breath) – in sex too the ego hoards energy – it fights
climax and surrender because at that moment the ego partly dissolves, liberation, empowerment, an
increased sense of self-awareness, a sense of completion

Death is about transition, transformation, renewal, death of the old, purification, and significant
change.

Death shows the precise moment(s) at which the Fool gives up the old masks and allows
transformation to take place. By force of will (Strength) the Fool, with the help of the guide (the
Hermit), allows knowledge to emerge of who he really is and what habits and fears he wishes to
shed (the Wheel of Fortune, Justice). This knowledge brings calm, a reversal of attitude and
experience, and a willingness to change (the Hanged Man). But then a fear sets in (Death).

The Fool fears that if he gives up his behavior/attitudes/opinions that there will be nothing left. He
will die. He has lived under the ego’s control for so many years that he has come to believe that
nothing else exists. The sense of a sluggish, boring life masks the sometimes desperate battle of the ego to avoid change. Death with its subsequent rebirth is not only a possibility but also, in a sense, a necessity. The moment has come to die. By drowning the Fool in lethargy, the ego prevents awareness of this fact from coming into consciousness. Inertia, boredom, and depression often conceal inner terrors.

What the Fool fears is the destruction of the personality. It is the ego that sees itself as separate from life; because it is only a mask the ego does not wish to die. It wishes to make itself superior to the universe.

The mask is what the Fool knows. It is comfortable and familiar. Therefore, even though it may not serve his interests, he does not wish to release it. If he does, the "I" created out of these lifelong behaviors will cease to exist. That person will cease to exist. However, Death is not simply about endings. Without death to clear away the old, nothing new could find a place in the world. If the Fool accepts Death, the old self will die. But something new will emerge.

Death is the thirteenth card of the Major Arcana. The number 13, in a symbolic sense, is considered unlucky because it takes the Fool beyond 12. Twelve is something of a 'perfect' number. It combines the archetypes of 1 (the Magician) and 2 (the High Priestess). It symbolizes the zodiac (the 12 astrological signs) and therefore the universe. It can be divided by 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6; more digits than any other number. Thirteen destroys this elegance. It can be divided by nothing but 1 and itself. However, it is precisely because it ruins the perfection of 12 that 13 signifies a new creation. Death breaks up old forms and makes way for the new.
Light could not accept it.

Night had fallen several hours ago. The only sounds in the operations room were the muted hum of machinery, and the occasional faint noise when Ryuzaki typed on his keyboard or clicked his mouse. He performed these functions with one hand. His other hand rested on his knee, fingers tapping continuously. He was obviously agitated and possibly angry, as well. Light honestly did not care to analyze him any further. There was a reason for that.

Light was furious.

The other team members had departed twenty minutes ago. As soon as they were gone, Light had dropped his calm and collected demeanor. He crossed his arms and stonily stared at his monitor. There he remained, unmoving, since then. Within five minutes of his adoption of this posture, Ryuzaki's fingers had begun their disturbed motion.

'I've had enough of this and…'

He turned his head to regard Ryuzaki.

'…of him.'

The pain in the right side of his face intensified as a scowl twisted his features. It burned; a fitting accompaniment to the mixture of resentment, impatience, and animosity within. For some reason, right then, he remembered something Ryuzaki had once said. It was during their tennis match.

"He who moves first always wins."

He rotated his chair to face him.

'No. To win, you have to attack.'

The fragile equilibrium of the room was shattered by the sound of Light's voice.

"Tell me your reasoning."

Ryuzaki continued to stare at his monitor.

"My statement was self-explanatory, Light-kun."

"No, it wasn't."

Ryuzaki did not answer. Instead, he kept reading the document on his screen. He, more or less, ignored Light.

This went over about as well as could be expected, given Light's frame of mind and mood. That is to say; it went over very badly. It had an effect akin to throwing gasoline on a fire or a sharp slap to the face.

Light leaned over, grabbed the arm of Ryuzaki's chair, and yanked it towards him. The suddenness of the movement caused him to unbalance and start to fall forward. Light caught his shoulder and steadied him.
"I'm telling you to explain it to me."

Ryuzaki still refused to look at him.

"No," he said flatly.

The combination of that response and the stubborn set of his jaw exacerbated Light's temper. The end result was that his actions, already aggressive, degenerated into belligerence. He used the hand on Ryuzaki's shoulder to jerk him nearer, until their faces were inches apart. Light was now close enough to clearly see the swelling and redness that marred his features.

And yet somehow still far enough away to be unmoved by it.

Ryuzaki's shoulder relaxed under his hand while his expression smoothed into blankness. A response that, in the past, normally deterred Light. Its effectiveness was undermined, though, due to Light's state. He would not, and could not, abide an impassive reaction. And so…

Light sneered.

"Ignoring me isn't going to work anymore. I already warned you that, one day, it wouldn't."

His voice took on a mocking edge.

"Well, today is that day, Ryuzaki."

He reached forward with his other hand, with the intention of making Ryuzaki face him. Ryuzaki, however, managed to catch him by surprise. That was because his emotionless visage contrasted greatly with the speed and force he used to knock Light's arm aside, wrench his body away from his grip, and stand up.

Light recovered quickly. Ryuzaki was only able to take a couple steps away before he caught his arm.

"Where do you think you're going?"

Ryuzaki's back was to him.

"After I tell Light-kun what he wishes to know, I assume he will have many things to say to me."

"Your assumption is correct."

Ryuzaki turned and smiled at him; a smile that did not reach his cold eyes.

"Then if I am to be subjected to his righteous indignation, I would prefer it to be elsewhere."

Light smiled back; a smile that only highlighted the hostility in his eyes.

"Why and where?"

"This room is monitored by Watari. The kitchen."

He dropped his gaze and pointedly stared at Light's hand. After a pause, he released his arm.

"Fine."

The detective turned and walked towards the stairs. Light slowly moved to follow him. There was
something…

'It's not like him to give in like this.'

Ryuzaki had reached the stairs.

"Since when do you care if Watari hears what we say?" Light asked warily.

He glanced back at him, and answered:

"I don't."

That, and the odd jangling of the chain, confirmed the rising suspicion in Light's mind. He started to rush forward.

"Ryuzaki! Don't you dare…"

But it was too late. Light watched helplessly as he snapped the handcuff on the railing and then dashed up the stairs, taking them two at a time. He was almost out the door at the top, but stopped upon hearing Light's voice.

"Running away again, Ryuzaki?"

He looked down at Light, his lips curved in a humorless smile.

"Light-kun will have to think of a new way to manipulate me. That one will not work anymore," he said tauntingly.

Light's eyes narrowed. His voice, when he spoke, was coldly dark.

"You have to come back eventually."

Ryuzaki shrugged and walked out the door. This left Light alone in the quiet room, awash with chaotic emotions that had nowhere to go. Feelings of humiliation, powerlessness, and spite swirled within. Those, coupled with the affront that Ryuzaki had just dealt, made him actually shake with rage.

'He got me.'

Light paced back and forth.

'I look like a fool. He made me look like a fool.'

His hands clenched and unclenched, over and over.

'If I could get my hands on that arrogant, high-handed…'

He stopped. There was another uncomfortable twinge in his forehead. In actuality, there were several over the last few hours. He had chosen to ignore it, but it was becoming more acute.

'I would…'

He placed his fingers against his temples. It was an automatic response to the sensation of aching pressure there.

'I would definitely want to…'
Light clutched his head as twinges and pressure suddenly escalated into severe pain. It destabilized his thought process, and the ominous direction in which it had been heading. The headache itself was not beneficial, but the distraction it served was. It allowed a rather pressing fact to enter Light's awareness.

He was in the operations room. It was monitored at all times. There was a possibility that Watari was watching him right now.

'Or even worse, Ryuzaki.'

He walked to the stairs and sat on the bottom step, with his back leaning against the wall.

'I need to calm down.'

He massaged his forehead with one hand and took deep breaths. There was no telling how long he was going to be stuck here. No way of knowing when Ryuzaki would come back. It could be hours. It could even be all night.

'It better not be all night. If I'm still sitting here when my dad and the others walk in, then I swear I will make Ryuzaki…'

He caught himself.

Useless.

Ranting about Ryuzaki. Planning how he would retaliate if this or that happened. Focusing on his own impotent rage, and the humiliation he felt right now. It was all useless. It was also extremely counter-productive to what he actually wanted to do, which was to calm down. Anyway, even if he was still here when everyone came to work tomorrow, it wouldn't be him that looked bad. It would be Ryuzaki.

Light fastened onto this. Finally, a distracting line of thought. One that he quite willingly ran with.

There was a division in the team at this time. On one side stood Soichiro, Mogi, and Matsuda. On the other were Ryuzaki and Light. He was not voluntarily on Ryuzaki's side…he decided not to think about that. That would be another subject that was detrimental to gaining equanimity.

So many things had happened in the span of the last few hours. It would be all too easy to get mentally bogged down. Maybe it would be judicious to examine only certain events. There were a few incidents with Ryuzaki that he really shouldn't recall. Not now. Not when his internal state was already volatile and his head was hurting so much.

Light bent his knees and rested his elbows on them. One hand continued to massage his forehead. Despite everything, he forced himself to focus on only two subjects. This took a fair amount of willpower, of course. It was difficult for him to put his emotions aside in these circumstances, just as it would be for anyone. Light, however, was nothing if not mentally disciplined. Or maybe he was just practiced.

He thought of the recent advances in the investigation and the resultant split of the team into two competing sides.

It all started, earlier today, with the meeting between the Yotsuba executives. The bugs and cameras enabled the discovery of a great deal of general and specific information. The first thing they learned was that there were no longer eight executives. Ryuzaki guessed they had killed the missing member. Confirmation of that came soon enough.
Hatori’s death was of interest to Light and he had made some quick mental notes regarding it. Now, unlike then, he had the time to contemplate it. Most likely lots and lots of time; scads of it, really. Light smiled grimly and carried on.

This meant there was no loyalty or higher purpose tying them together. It was apparent from the way they reacted to Hatori’s death. It was true that two of the men were visibly distressed, but the others were seemingly unconcerned. One man, Namikawa, even said he was relieved that Hatori died.

That provided insight into the group dynamics. It told Light there was an undercurrent of fear and coercion operating. Hatori wanted out and was killed by Kira. It was evident the others understood the implicit threat of this action. It was why they barely reacted to his death. It also confirmed that their goals were money and status. There were many reasons behind why a person would choose to commit murder. Out of all the possible motivations they could have had; greed was certainly one of the basest. Given that, there would obviously be an attitude of...

The seven had gone on to discuss the report submitted by Eraldo Coil, and who they should kill for the advancement of Yotsuba. There were two theories that became facts at this point. First, Kira could kill in ways other than a heart attack. Second, the Yotsuba executives had access to Kira’s power and were using it to eliminate the competition.

Unfortunately, they were unable to determine who had Kira's power or even if he was one of the seven. Shimura, one of the members, suggested that Kira identify himself to the group. His request, however, was rejected by the others. Hatori's death may have ensured none of them would betray Kira, but that wasn't really the issue. If Kira's identity was known, then he would be the one who dictated everything. They would lose their equal say.

They then went on to confer over whom, exactly, they should kill. An American company was named. It was an insurance company that was attempting to gain entry into the Japanese market. There was a vote which ended in unanimous agreement. They would kill off the important American figures involved in the endeavor and the deaths would be "accidents".

Light was shocked by how quickly they decided, and the ease with which they could cause the deaths. It seemed they simply had to choose who, when, and how; and the victim would die in the specified manner. Besides the people from the American company, there was one other person targeted. There was a man, Santaro Zenzai, who opposed Yotsuba’s proposed development of a resort. He had a weak heart and so a date would be picked for him to have a stroke.

Eraldo Coil had warned them that the concentration of weekend deaths could be noticed by L. It was while they were discussing the pacing of the planned murders that Light spoke up.

"Kira...death by accident, death by disease, the time of deaths. It's just as we assumed, there's no doubt!"

"No. Unfortunately, we cannot say there is no doubt until the people mentioned die," Ryuzaki answered.
There had been cracks forming in the team for some time. In hindsight, Light could see that. However, they became readily apparent after what Ryuzaki said next.

"What these seven say at the meeting and their actions until the people mentioned are killed...if we examine those closely, we will definitely catch Kira."

"R-Ryuzaki!"

This exclamation came from both Light and Soichiro. In harmony, no less; a concert of outrage.

"I can't go along with your thinking, it's wrong!" Light stated loudly.

"Yes!" Soichiro agreed vehemently.

And so it began.

Light's recollections were interrupted by the sound of movement. He looked up to see Ryuzaki crouching at the top of the stairs, reading a book. It was the slight noise of a turning page that had caught his attention.

'When did he get here? How long has he been sitting there?'

Truthfully, Light was surprised. He had expected it to be a considerable amount of time before Ryuzaki returned, if at all. Instead, it had only been about an hour.

'But that's not important right now.'

What was important was figuring out what to say in order to maneuver him down the stairs. To within arm's reach.

Over the next half hour, Light scrutinized the dilemma from many different angles. He was unable to come up with anything useful, though. He wouldn't lower himself to ask to be freed. The very thought made his now quieted anger begin to stir once again. Slowly, but with a steady and disconcerting violence. Rather than let it continue, he examined other options.

He could reason with him.

'Except, while he's usually logical and rational, there are times when he's completely unreasonable.'

He chained Light to the stairs. This was one of the unreasonable times.

He could appeal to his sense of fair play. Light internally laughed at that option. For quite a long time, actually.

Naturally, the favored course of action was Light ordering Ryuzaki to release him and Ryuzaki doing it. He considered this for a few moments. After it was ruled out for being unfeasible, he was left with only one option.

He waited.

In the meantime, Ryuzaki had descended and was now on the third step. Light calculated how long it would take him to reach his position based on the number of remaining stairs and his rate of movement.

'Approximately two hours.'
Light rolled his eyes and made himself more comfortable. This involved resting his forehead in his hands and attempting to think calming thoughts. When that didn't work out, he concentrated on devising a plan.

It was around two hours later when the plan went into effect. Ryuzaki was perched on the step directly above Light and had been for five minutes. His face was obscured by the book in front of his eyes. Light stared straight ahead, with his arms crossed. He did not, in any way, react to Ryuzaki's presence. Light suspected that one wrong move on his part would cause him to retreat again. Were that to happen, the possibility of staying here overnight would likely become a certainty. So, he bided his time. Light predicted that an opportunity would come and that was what he patiently waited for.

It finally came when Ryuzaki laid the book across his knees, reached into his pocket, and removed the key for the handcuffs. Light, in a flash, captured his wrist and plucked the key from his fingers. Then, in a display of remarkable dexterity, he used one hand to unlock the cuff from the railing, pulled Ryuzaki's arm over, and snapped it onto his wrist. Light stood up.

"Let's go," he said composedly.

By this point, Ryuzaki had also risen to his feet. He opened his mouth to speak, but was not given the chance. Light brushed past him and climbed the stairs; compelling him to follow. He used the handcuffs to give Ryuzaki only one option. Just like Ryuzaki had done to him.

When they reached the bedroom, the detective unlocked and opened the door. His back was momentarily turned to Light which presented the second opportunity. He started to coil the chain around his forearm.

Calmly and methodically.

The meaning of this action was not lost on Ryuzaki. He stepped back a few paces, and held out his hand.

"Light-kun will return the key to me now," he said tensely.

Light finished what he was doing and then cast a critical eye over the result. There was less than a foot of loose chain between them. Satisfied, he looked up and smiled.

"Not a chance, Ryuzaki," he answered pleasantly.

"The key is not for Light-kun to hold. He is overstepping his…"

He was cut off when Light turned and walked into the room, pulling him along behind him. Once the door was closed, he headed for the closet.

"It's funny that you should mention 'overstepping', Ryuzaki," he said conversationally.

Light opened the door and took a bottle of water from the top shelf.

"Because that is exactly what I want to talk to you about."

"I don't have time for this, Light-kun. I…"

Light spoke over him as he turned and walked towards the bed.

"It's funny you should mention that too. Because that's the second thing I want to talk to you about."
He sat down, and retrieved the aspirin from the nightstand. This took some effort since Ryuzaki was very determined to keep his distance. However, Light won the tug of war between their joined arms for two reasons. First, the wrapped chain provided the stability to effectively use his strength. Second, he was willing to use more force than Ryuzaki was. Quite a bit more, in fact.

Light took two aspirin, and then moved to the center of the bed. He lay down on his back and covered his eyes with his free arm. This caused Ryuzaki to move forward until his legs touched the side. The chain stretched taut between them, for now neither was willing to give an inch.

Light's tone was still conversational when he asked:

"So, what did you do tonight?"

There was no reply.

"Were you watching me on the cameras?"

"…No."

"Well, then, what did you do instead?"

There was a long pause.

"I went to the kitchen," Ryuzaki answered slowly.

"You ate for an hour?" Light asked amusedly.

"No, I…"

Light waited for him to finish his sentence. When he did not, he asked:

"You what?"

There was another long pause.

"What is Light-kun doing?"

'Waiting for an opportunity.'

"What does it look like I'm doing, Ryuzaki? I'm obviously just…'

'waiting for you to drop your guard.'

"…trying to have a conversation with you."

There was silence.

Light removed his arm from across his eyes, and propped himself up. He met Ryuzaki's gaze and earnestly asked:

"What will it take to convince you to sit and talk with me?"

The soft glow from the lamp illuminated the wariness in Ryuzaki's countenance.

"Return the key to me."

'So you can free yourself and leave?'
Light sat up.

'There is no chance of that happening.'

"Fine. If that's what it takes, then I'll give back the key. It's in my left pocket."

This just happened to coincide with the need to use his left hand, the one that was currently held immobile by the chain. After a moment, Ryuzaki let up on his end. Light unwound several coils from his arm, and then retrieved the key.

He put it in the palm of his right hand and offered it. Ryuzaki leaned forward and slowly reached. When he almost had it in his grasp, he took his eyes off Light for a split second.

A split second of opportunity.

Light tilted his hand, causing the key to fall to the mattress, and seized his wrist. He grabbed the chain with his other hand, and then pulled with both arms while simultaneously reclining. Ryuzaki, already precariously positioned, fell forward onto Light's chest. For the finishing move, Light shifted his leg to cover the key.

Ryuzaki gripped his shoulders and pushed himself up. Light interlaced his fingers together and locked his arms around him.

Ryuzaki's anger was evident in his voice.

"I knew you were deceiving me."

Light grinned.

"I'm sure you did, but it didn't help you in the end...Now, did it?"

Ryuzaki's eyes narrowed.

"Let me go, Light-kun," he demanded coldly.

Light dropped his façade.

"Once is once, Ryuzaki," he stated in a hard voice.

Ryuzaki's struggling stilled. Light continued.

"You should already understand what that means. But in case you don't; it means you aren't allowed to refuse staying here, just like I wasn't allowed to refuse staying on the staircase earlier."

"Light-kun has misunderstood the meaning of that phrase."

"No, I haven't. It's an effect for an effect. If I punch you, then you kick me. Both of those actions have the same effect."

Ryuzaki looked at the right side of Light's face, and Light examined the center of his. Each studied the other's injuries for a moment.

Ryuzaki continued to look aside when Light spoke again.

"You chained me to the railing which had the effect of forcing me to stay there for three and a half hours. It's not the actions that have to equalize, it's the effect. My actions right now are different from
yours, but they have the same effect."

Ryuzaki's eyes shifted to meet Light's intent stare.

"You're staying here for three and a half hours, Ryuzaki. Once is once."

Ryuzaki released his shoulders. His fingers were rapidly tapping upon them when he stated:

"That is incorrect."

Light frowned. Ryuzaki continued.

"The time should start from the moment Light-kun put the handcuff on my wrist. I wished to continue working, but he did not give me the chance."

Light thought this over.

"All right, that's valid. So, you have to stay here for…"

He glanced at the clock.

"…another two hours and fifty-three minutes."

Ryuzaki, who had been rigidly holding his body away from Light's, relaxed.

"Yes. That is correct."

There was a length of silence while Light gathered his thoughts. He knew what he wanted to say, but the headache made it challenging to concentrate. Therefore, he took a few minutes to put his major points in order. Once completed, he said:

"Ryuzaki, you need to understa…"

Ryuzaki had shifted as soon as he began to speak. He rested his chin in his hands and dug his elbows into Light's chest. Hard.

A faint smirk played across his lips. Light's eyes narrowed.

'If I move my hands to stop him, he's going to use the opportunity to retreat…and he saw where the key fell."

Which would disrupt his plan and potentially lead to the failure of achieving his objectives.

Which was, naturally, absolutely unacceptable.

Light grit his teeth, and started over.

"You need to understand that I agreed to be handcuffed to you. Before that, I agreed to be confined. You didn't have the legal authority to hold me in a cell at all, much less for that amount of time. You may be able to request the cooperation of the world's police forces, but that doesn't mean they have to work for you. It's conditional upon their agreement or the government's. That's because you're a detective; not a police officer, judge, or any other kind of law enforcement agent. It's the same with the handcuffs. You don't have the legal authority to use them like this. As well, for both situations, the law would work in my favor; not yours."

Ryuzaki wasn't letting up on the pressure to his chest. He was, however, no longer smirking.
"Light-kun is stating the obvious."

"No, I'm not, Ryuzaki. Because you obviously don't understand the most important part of what I just said. It's that I agreed to be handcuffed to you. I agreed to be together twenty-four hours a day to work on the case. Your method to ensure that, the handcuffs, is excessive but I went along with it. What I…"

Ryuzaki cut in.

"I told Light-kun that I still suspected him. That was the reason for the handcuffs."

Light's anger suddenly broke free and surged up.

"I already know that, Ryuzaki! This may shock you, but I was somehow able to figure that out all by myself. And can you stop what you're doing with your elbows? It's your own fault that you're stuck here, so stop acting like a brat and just accept it!"

Ryuzaki, after a pause, did stop what he was doing with his elbows. That was because he moved his hands back to Light's shoulders and pushed down on them. His body was no longer relaxed and his countenance was guarded.

Light closed his eyes and waged a brief internal battle. He sought to re-establish control and enforce calm. Once he had a firm grip, he was able to speak in a conciliatory tone.

"Okay,…look, you had your reasons and I had mine."

"What is your point, Light-kun?" Ryuzaki asked quietly.

"My point is that I agreed to be handcuffed to you to work on the case. That's all I agreed to. So, when you use them like you did tonight, that goes against the terms for their use. I definitely didn't agree to that."

The detective looked aside.

"Ryuzaki," Light prompted tensely.

"Yes. I understand," he answered softly.

His hands traveled until his fingertips rested on Light's forehead. Light, recalling what he had done with his elbows, tensed up.

"Light-kun looks very ill."

He moved his fingers in soft circles. It was soothing. In time, Light unclasped his hands and rested them on his back. They stayed like that for a while.

Light's eyelids were becoming heavier and heavier. It was as he was drifting into sleep that he remembered the second subject he wanted to talk about. After giving himself a resolute, internal shake; he opened his eyes and gazed up at Ryuzaki with amusement.

"You're trying to make me go to sleep."

He looked back at him with an expression of utmost sincerity.

"No, of course not."
Light's smile widened.
"Right. So, on to the second thing I wanted to talk to you about."

"Light-kun does not have much time left. He should wait until tomorrow to…"

Light cut in.
"I'm desperate. I don't have time."

Ryuzaki's fingers stilled. Light continued.
"That's what you said today. Twice, in fact."

"Yes, because the killings have been delayed for only one month. We must capture Kira in that time."

"And?"

"We are in a race with your father's side."

"And?"

Ryuzaki frowned.

"There is no other reason."

Light raised an eyebrow.

"You once said that I have extremely sharp insight and understand your way of thinking. If you really think that, then you should understand that I know neither of those reasons are enough to make you say you're desperate."

Ryuzaki just stared at him. Light pressed on.

"Tell me the real reason."

"I said there was no other reason, Light-kun," he said in an annoyed fashion.

Light sighed.

'I guess I have to use that.'

"All right, Ryuzaki. Then let me put it this way. I don't agree with putting Misa in danger to further the investigation. Your reason for using such an extreme method is because you're desperate and out of time," he said calmly.

"Light-kun's concern for Misa Misa's safety is very…"

Light shook his head, and interrupted.

"Don't try to change the subject. I would say the same thing if it was Matsuda, Mogi, or anyone else."

He had already mentally rehearsed what he would say in this eventuality. He used phrasing that was designed to make his position crystal clear.
"You said you wouldn't remove the handcuffs today. So, we both went to Misa's room. Then, you manipulated her into agreeing to help you. You also tried to manipulate me into being on your side."

Ryuzaki looked away. Light carried on.

"Unless you tell me the real reason why you're desperate, I'm not going to be on your side. I'll be on my dad's. Since we won't be working on the investigation together, the terms for the handcuffs no longer apply. You'll be on your own, just like you said earlier. And I will retract my agreement to wear them."

There was a long, tense silence. It was broken when Light said:

"Uh…Ryuzaki? I have a really bad headache so can you stop driving your fingers into my forehead like that?"

Ryuzaki removed his hands from his face, and then placed them back in a different way. An alarming way.

'What is he doing?'

His palms covered Light's eyes, blocking his sight.

"Ryuzaki?"

He gently moved his fingers upon Light's forehead. His voice, when he spoke, was emotionless.

"Watari mentioned that he knew of some people who could aid us with the investigation."

"Criminals?"

"No. They are colleagues."

"Then you've met them. Would they be helpful?"

"No. I have not met them."

"Then how can they be your colleagues?"

"That is unimportant."

Light was perplexed. He decided to approach from another angle.

"When did Watari say this to you?"

"Two nights ago."

'Two nights ago…he was upset and wouldn't tell me why. Instead, he tried to start a fight.'

"Okay. What, exactly, did Watari say?"

"He said that those colleagues were available."

After a moment, Light made a reasoned guess.

"You don't need their help."

"Correct."
"I mean, why would you? You're the top three detectives in the world,…right?"

"Yes. I have never failed to solve a case."

Light thought for a bit. About Watari…

'There was the time he reprimanded him for not working on the case.'

About Ryuzaki and certain personality traits he contained.

'Needs to win, needs to be right, stubborn, used to being number one…oh, I get it.'

"Ryuzaki, did you interpret what Watari said as him doubting your abilities?"

There was no reply.

"Because if you did, then I think you read a lot more into it than there actually was."

"Yes. That is possible."

Light opened his mouth to speak, but was not given the chance.

"I have answered your question."

There were now many new questions that Light would have liked to ask, but…

"Yes, I suppose you did," he agreed reluctantly.

For the next thirty minutes, Ryuzaki continued to massage his forehead. Light, for a while, pondered upon what he had just learned. It presented yet another contradiction. Why would Ryuzaki request the help of criminals, but refuse the aid of colleagues? It was irrational and, frankly, unreasonable for Ryuzaki to do so. However, the peaceful atmosphere eventually caused him to lose mental focus. As well, the headache and tumult of the day had finally caught up to him with a vengeance. Consequently, he was barely awake when Ryuzaki removed his hands from his eyes and said:

"The time is up."

Light, blinking in the sudden brightness, nodded and moved his hands from his back. Ryuzaki retrieved the key, unlocked the cuffs, and took the chain away. When he was standing beside the bed, Light drowsily said:

"So, tomorrow we should focus on the details of your plan."

Ryuzaki nodded.

Light slung his arm over his eyes.

"Good night."

Ryuzaki turned off the lamp. Light expected him to leave and go back to work. That was why it was surprising when he laid down beside him.

"Good night, Light-kun."

His back was to him. Light rolled over, placed his arm around his chest, and gathered him close. He was fast asleep within minutes.
The next day started very awkwardly. Light did not come right out and tell his father that he was on Ryuzaki's side, but his actions made it clear. After some strained small talk, the two groups separated and kept their distance from each other. Soichiro's manner, especially with Ryuzaki, was curt.

It was because Ryuzaki and Soichiro were not on friendly terms. There was nothing overt, but there was a strained atmosphere in the operations room. Which was to be expected, Light supposed. Considering what had transpired the previous day.

At present, Light and Ryuzaki were going over the specifics of his plan. Aiber would play a prominent role in it, and Ryuzaki was briefing him on the phone. Light, while he waited for him to finish, reflected on the events of yesterday. What had happened when the team gathered to watch the Yotsuba meeting.

There had been a major conflict between Ryuzaki, Light, and Soichiro. On the surface, it was about how to proceed with the investigation. However, in Light's opinion, what it really came down to was a clash of morals, beliefs, and professional ethics. With Ryuzaki on one side, and Light and Soichiro on the other.

Light and Soichiro were outraged.

"You seem to be planning on capturing Kira by letting these seven continue to kill, but we can't do that!" Light said heatedly.

To which Soichiro added:

"Yes, these seven are clearly doing the killing. You should be able to prove it with Matsuda's testimony and this tape. Having them kill to strengthen the case is out of the question!"

Ryuzaki's back was to them.

"I haven't said anything about having them kill...yet," he answered.

Unless one of the people they mentioned died, Ryuzaki did not think it would be possible to arrest them. His main concern was that if they caught the seven now, everything would be ruined.

Light's voice was quietly tense.

"Ryuzaki, calm down and think this over. The people about to be killed aren't criminals. We can't turn our back to this. It's clear that these seven are behind the Yotsuba-related killings."

"So, you believe it is all right for criminals to die then, Light-kun?"

Light's voice was loudly angry.

"That's not what I mean! Don't change the subject!"

The Yotsuba meeting was still ongoing in the background. It was at this point that the executives determined the times of death for the victims. They would kill Zenzai over the weekend and the others would be in three weeks. Since it was Friday, this meant that Zenzai would die sometime in the next two days.

Soichiro wanted to call one of them and stop the killing. Light agreed, and also brought up that they could record the call with the police system. However, Ryuzaki made a valid point. It was possible that the police would reveal everything to the Yotsuba side. It was safer to assume the police could not be trusted.
Ryuzaki disagreed with Soichiro's plan. If they called one of them now, they would be suspicious when Aiber contacted them in three days. Most importantly, it would become highly likely that they would no longer be able to determine who Kira was. What he wanted to do was take the time to find the evidence that surely existed.

Soichiro asked how he could be so certain about the existence of evidence. Surprisingly, Matsuda jumped in and explained. It was because Kira had killed Lind L. Tailor and the FBI agents. If he had nothing to fear from being investigated, then killing them would have been meaningless. This showed there definitely was evidence. Unsurprisingly, it turned out Matsuda was only repeating what Aizawa had once said.

Light could understand Ryuzaki's arguments, but it didn't change the fact that human life was more important. A point that he and Soichiro agreed on. It was decided they would have to reveal themselves to Yotsuba. It was the only way to save Zenzai.

To which Ryuzaki responded:

"Yes…we have no choice. Of course saving lives is more important than catching Kira."

He sat with his chin on his knees and his face turned away. His posture and the tone of his voice formed a picture of dejection. A portrayal, Light noted, that starkly contrasted with his assenting words. There was a pause, while he studied Ryuzaki, and that was when inspiration struck. Thinking back on it now, it was likely the combination of the sight of L and hearing Tailor's name.

Light, borrowing the name of L, made a pre-emptive, bold, and unexpected move against the Yotsuba side. Similar in nature to the move that L once made against Kira, using Tailor.

It was also, in a sense, a compromise. Ryuzaki wanted to let the planned murders proceed. If they did, and each of the seven were placed under constant surveillance; it was highly probable that they would be able to determine who had Kira's power and how it was used. On the other hand, Light and Soichiro placed a higher value on saving the intended victims. Even if it meant revealing themselves to the Yotsuba side and derailing all the progress they had made in the case.

The positions of the two opposing sides seemed irreconcilable. With such a difference in morals and professional ethics; how could they not be? However, Light found a way to compromise between the two. A solution that would address the major concerns of both sides. Ryuzaki who wanted to capture Kira at any cost. Light and Soichiro who wanted to save lives at any cost.

Light called one of the executives and identified himself as L. He chose Namikawa for a few reasons. First, he seemed to have a good amount of influence with the group. The second reason was one that Ryuzaki brought up and Light agreed with. Namikawa had status and was intelligent. If he was Kira, he would have acted alone; not assembled a group to make the decisions. Finally, he was the one who expressed relief at Hatori's death. This showed, among other things, an extremely self-serving nature. Namikawa would assuredly put his own welfare and interests above those of the group, thereby making him ideal for use in Light's strategy.

Light made a deal with him. The terms were that Namikawa would convince the others to delay the killings for one month, and cooperate with the investigation team in the future. In return, he would not be charged with any crime nor would any of them who were not Kira. Light also convinced him to keep their conversation a secret from the others. He explained that telling them was disadvantageous for Namikawa. It would just cause panic and the immediate arrest of them all.

Light finished up by telling Namikawa that he should go along with both sides, and stay on the sidelines. L’s goal was a confrontation with Kira. If L won, then he and the others would not be
charged with any crime. If Kira won, then they would continue their wealthy life as it was now.

Light's maneuver was successful and the killings were delayed for a month. However, then a new issue arose. Soichiro believed they should capture the seven anyway. If they did, there was a possibility that the killing of criminals would stop. Light also thought there was a chance of this happening. Ryuzaki disagreed.

His stance was that there was no guarantee that Kira was one of the seven. He could merely be connected to them. In that case, capturing the executives would only lead to them being killed by Kira. Therefore, it was meaningless to arrest them now. They needed to take more time to find out if Kira was among them.

Soichiro countered that life must come first. They didn't know that Kira was not one of the seven, after all. If he was, then the murdering of criminals would stop. Ryuzaki argued that they might stop. Matsuda brought up the point that they were no longer detectives and could not expect any help from the police. So, maybe Ryuzaki was right and they should wait until they had solid evidence.

To which Soichiro responded:

"Isn't limiting victims the most important thing?"

The argument was only gaining momentum and likely would have continued for some time. However, it was brought to an abrupt end when Ryuzaki said:

"I think I should go after Kira on my own."

In the end, there was no compromise to be found between Ryuzaki's and Soichiro's opposing viewpoints. Soichiro thought that capturing the seven represented a chance to stop the killings of criminals. Ryuzaki admitted his method was most correct, but believed concentrating on capturing Kira was the way to proceed. If they did not stop Kira, then he may only appear again and the number of overall victims would increase.

Ryuzaki gave Soichiro permission to use the headquarters and then split the team into two.

As the confrontation had wound down, Light remained silent. He objected strongly, on every level, to allowing innocent people to die. However, that problem was temporarily solved through Namikawa. He was not positive that Ryuzaki was serious about gaining evidence through the deaths of innocents. Light hoped he wasn't, and that he would never have the opportunity to find out for certain.

Light was also against allowing criminals to continue being killed. It was just that Ryuzaki was right. If they captured Kira, the killings would permanently stop. This was a certainty whereas what Soichiro wanted to do was based on chance. Without more information and evidence, arresting the seven could potentially lead to the failure of capturing Kira.

Light was brought out of his thoughts when Ryuzaki hung up the phone.

The remainder of the day and the following days were busy. They worked on the details of Ryuzaki's plan, and the many eventualities there were to account for. Then there was research to be done and data to be inputted, with regards to Kira and Yotsuba. As well, they watched the Yotsuba tape numerous times and discussed it. There was one last thing that they did.

They argued. A lot.

The disputes occurred over a variety of subjects. What time to eat, what to eat, when to go to bed,
when to wake up, Ryuzaki wearing his clothes to bed, Ryuzaki's clothes, Ryuzaki's posture, Ryuzaki's lack of footwear; and on and on.

It is not uncommon for two people, who spend all their time together, to bicker. This was especially true in the case of Light and Ryuzaki. After all, neither was accustomed to constantly being in the sole company of another person. Light suspected that Ryuzaki was completely unfamiliar with it. Light, in reality, was not much different. He did spend time with family and friends, but it had never been even close to this extent. Therefore, neither he nor Ryuzaki were well-equipped to handle the stress and friction that such circumstances can create. Adding to that; there was little to no interaction with Soichiro, Matsuda, and Mogi. It was just Light and Ryuzaki, with no distracting or alleviating outside influences.

This was the conclusion that Light came to, how he explained it to himself. He searched for, and found, a reasonable answer to why their exchanges were so strained and volatile. Nevertheless, despite his understanding, the situation continued to worsen as the days passed. This was evident in how the intensity, frequency, and duration of their arguments only escalated.

The breaking point came on the fourth night.

An altercation broke out during sex. Over positions, naturally.

Light wanted Ryuzaki on his hands and knees. Ryuzaki preferred to straddle his lap. Light argued that he should control the pace. Ryuzaki countered that Light had chosen the positioning every single time. It was his turn now.

That was when Light got out of bed and stormed over to the table. He pulled out a chair and sat down. Ryuzaki remained where he was. There was a lengthy silence while they glared at each other.

Light's voice was low and angry.

"You are the most difficult, stubborn, and infuriating person I have ever met."

Ryuzaki's voice was quiet and cold.

"You are the most trying, controlling, and annoying person I have ever met."

Light crossed his arms.

"What is your problem?"

"Light-kun is the one with the problem. He cannot seem to stop himself from criticizing and picking at me."

"Well, maybe if you made some effort to improve yourself, I wouldn't have to."

Ryuzaki's eyes narrowed.

"Maybe Light-kun should stop asking questions he does not want to hear the answer to."

Light's eyes widened. In an exercise of willpower and restraint unlike any before; he managed to stay where he was and keep his voice steady when he said:

"That's it, Ryuzaki. I'm done here. Either you leave or I do."

Less than a minute later, Light had the bedroom all to himself.
It took a long time for him to calm down. To quell the fury within and restore equilibrium. The quietness of the room was helpful. It had a sedating effect. As well, perhaps equally important, was the solitude. It wasn't that Light disliked Ryuzaki's company. He did; to a degree that he had never experienced before. He was even willing, sometimes, to confide in Ryuzaki about things that bothered him. Considering he was formerly unable to see any value in that kind of communication, this was a significant development.

Still, Light had always been a private person. That had not changed and would not change. What this meant was he was inclined towards solving his problems on his own, and he needed a secluded environment to do it in.

Light returned to the bed and laid down on his back, with his hands behind his head.

There was one other incident that occurred during the Yotsuba meeting. One that he had avoided recalling because of the reaction it provoked. A rage that came out of nowhere. A feeling so extreme that, when it initially manifested, he had unthinkingly and immediately acted on it. It was not the anger itself that was the problem. It was a valid response to the situation at the time. What was causing the sense of trepidation Light felt right now was something entirely different. It was the idea that he could lose control of it again. Like he did on that day.

The beginning was when, after Light completed his conversation with Namikawa, Ryuzaki had observed:

"It went well...You certainly are impressive, Light-kun. You not only delayed the killings, but now we may be able to get information out of Namikawa. It is similar to how I would have done things, and you came up with it faster than I did. At this rate, if I die, you could probably become the successor to the L name."

To which Light answered:

"Don't say that. We now need to figure out who Kira is, and obtain evidence within a month. The hard part is just beginning."

Ryuzaki, after barely acknowledging Light's words, had noted that Light was also the first one to notice Yotsuba.

"One could say you are more capable than I am...You might be able to do it, Light-kun."

By this point, Light was frowning.

"To be your successor as L?"

"No, that was not what I was just thinking. But if I die, would you take over for me?"

Light, in a protesting manner, said:

"What are you talking about, Ryuzaki?"

He held up his left arm; the one which wore the handcuff.

"As long as we have this, we die together, right?"

And that was when it hit him. The handcuffs and what they truly meant. As well, would Ryuzaki
seriously speak like this? With a personality like his, would he sincerely utter self-deprecating words in a comparison between himself and Light?

Light lowered his arm to his side, and quietly said:

"Oh, I get it."

Light did, indeed, comprehend what Ryuzaki was thinking. He then went on to explain it to everyone else.

If Light was Kira, Ryuzaki was assuming one of two possibilities. Either Light was faking that he was not Kira, or the power had been passed on to someone else; leaving him with no memory of being Kira. If it was the former then the handcuffs would never come off. Light could not be allowed to be free again. In reality, Ryuzaki probably would not remove the handcuffs for the second possibility either.

"Ryuzaki thinks I'm Kira, and even if the power has been passed on to someone else; he's assumed I've set things up in a way that eventually the power will return to me. So, I wasn't controlled. It was all a plan to pass the power to someone else and gain it back when I'm no longer a suspect."

Ryuzaki remained silent. Light continued.

"Ryuzaki is thinking; 'Yagami Light could become Kira while also being L'."

Ryuzaki's answer was a single word.

"Correct."

To become the next L and freely control the world's police forces, while being Kira behind the scenes. It would be the ultimate position.

"And you're saying I could do it…no, that I'm trying to do it."

"Yes."

"But what about now? You should at least realize I'm not acting."

"If you were planning to take over the role of L, then you would not be revealing it in front of everyone…Is that what you are implying?"

"Yes, and if Ryuzaki…I mean, if L were to die while I continued to live and Kira appeared again; you'd just need to have Watari or a third party determine I was Kira. And for the other possibility…say it's true that I sent the power to someone else and plan to have it return in the future. If that's the case, the assumption is that I've lost my memories of being Kira, correct?"

Ryuzaki's back was to him.

"Yes. That is the only way it would make sense."

This was when Light committed a considerable error in judgment. He made an earnest and sincere appeal to Ryuzaki.

He turned his chair around, put his hands on his shoulders, and said:

"If I capture the current Kira…after that, do you really think I would become Kira? Do I really look like that kind of person?"
Ryuzaki looked Light straight in the eye and, after a pause, replied:

"That is what I think, and that is how you look."

Light closed his eyes for a moment. This, lamentably, allowed a feeling of rage to surge up.

Distraction-free.

What happened next was Light's fist hitting Ryuzaki's face and Ryuzaki's foot kicking his. It only ended there because Matsuda stepped in between them.

That was what Light had attempted to confront Ryuzaki about, right before he was chained to the stairs. Ryuzaki's refusal to engage had, at the time, infuriated him even more. Now, he realized that it was beneficial. If the confrontation had gone ahead, it probably would have ended violently. Just like it had earlier in the day.

Light found this all very unsettling. He did not see himself as a violent person and yet…

'This is the second time it's come to blows between us.'

There were some key distinctions between the two incidents. The first time, months ago, was a response to Ryuzaki saying he wanted to give up. It was definitely motivated by anger and dismay on Light's part, but it was also calculated. He wanted to get through to him; to shake him out of his dejection. So, he chose a method that utilized aggressiveness; an equal but opposite force to combat the passivity Ryuzaki was displaying. Of course, such a simplistic solution would ultimately prove to be ineffective. He had not known Ryuzaki well enough to realize that, though.

This recent incident was not like the previous one. There was no calculation, cognizance, or purpose when he punched Ryuzaki. If there had been, he would have refrained from doing it. Taking actions that accomplished nothing was not in Light's nature. Therefore, acting on pure, blind rage was disconcerting and foreign to him.

Finally, unlike the first incident, Light stayed angry at Ryuzaki afterward. If he was absolutely honest, he was still mad at him now. That feeling had not dispersed at all. It had been underlying all their interactions since then. What Ryuzaki said was accurate.

'I have been criticizing and starting arguments with him.'

Truthfully, Light did not think what happened with Ryuzaki warranted this level of reaction. It mystified him.

'After all, this isn't the first time the Kira issue has come up between us.'

There were the various incidents since they were chained together. Before that, there was the time after their tennis match when Ryuzaki said he suspected Light. There was the time he asked Light to play the role of Kira and write a message to the second Kira. And there was his statement that he was "desperate and out of time".

Light did not doubt that Watari said something to Ryuzaki. It explained his behavior from one week ago, when he was upset and tried to start an argument. That occurred two days before the Yotsuba meeting. So, that was part of it. However, the other part was his suspicion that Light was aiming to take over the position of L.

'I'm glad he didn't repeat his...theory when I asked for the real reason why he was desperate. I wouldn't have accepted a reiteration of his suspicions as an answer. I suppose he must have realized
Finally, there was the confinement and the handcuffs. All these made it glaringly obvious that Ryuzaki thought he was Kira.

It wasn't that Light had not noticed all these things, all this evidence. It was more that he had been able to keep a sense of perspective about it. He believed Ryuzaki would eventually see that he was not, and never had been, Kira. He understood it would take time. After all, Ryuzaki was incredibly suspicious and obstinate. He had even said he wanted Light to be Kira, back when they first moved to this building.

Light scowled.

In truth, that still irked him. However, if he looked at it dispassionately, there was a reason why Ryuzaki would say something like that.

'He needs to be right and can't tolerate being wrong. It's irritating but that's all it is.'

Considering everything, it was a mistake for Light to pose that question to him. To straight-up ask if he looked like the kind of person who could become Kira. It was just as Ryuzaki said. He asked a question he didn't really want to hear the answer to. Light couldn't fathom why he had done it. Nothing had significantly changed in their situation. Well, except for the fact that they were sleeping together, but…

'Oh,…right.'

That would change things, wouldn't it? No, maybe it would be more accurate to say it had changed things. Light was not naïve or innocent when it came to sexual matters, so it wasn't the sex itself. He was also not the sort of person to attach any significant emotional or romantic meaning to it. In the past, if asked, he would have said it was a physical act committed between two people. That was all. However, in the past, he had felt almost nothing for the people he committed those acts with. He had been well and truly indifferent. And therein lay the difference with Ryuzaki.

Light was not indifferent to him at all. He had acknowledged this recently. However, at the time, he had not fully understood what that actually meant. It signified more than a change in how Light spoke to Ryuzaki or how he treated him. The repercussions were more far-reaching than that and, it was turning out, a lot more personal.

Light, normally detached, had involved himself with Ryuzaki. In reality, the masks he wore had started tearing not long after they were handcuffed together. In the ensuing weeks and months, this exchange or that moment would cause cracks to appear. Light had doggedly made every effort to repair those fractures when they occurred. However, at the same time, he had also determinedly made every effort to get closer to Ryuzaki.

Wanting to remain at a distance, and wanting to be closer. An irreconcilable opposition within himself. It was true that the masks he wore had been under stress, but he was still able to maintain them to some extent. It was when Light realized that he was closer to Ryuzaki than he had ever been with anyone, and that was what he wanted; that moment permanently broke the stalemate.

Sleeping together was more than just a physical act. It was a way, and a form, of being closer. In order to attain that, it was not possible to remain detached in any manner. This voided the one trait he consistently had with every person before Ryuzaki.

'An aloof attitude.'
That was what he felt when relating to other people. That was what had begun to fray upon meeting Ryuzaki. By making an effort with him, by pursuing him, by continually choosing to engage; that attitude had become increasingly insubstantial and difficult to hold onto. Finally, he had removed the biggest obstacle between him and his goal of getting closer to Ryuzaki. The indifferent mask he wore, that old and comfortable façade; Light destroyed it himself.

Light had never faced another person without that shield. At least, not since the time he first created it; years and years ago. He had acknowledged that he had trouble with being vulnerable around Ryuzaki. However, that was nothing compared to now. It felt like he was wide open. This had positive and negative connotations. When it came to Kira, and Ryuzaki's opinion on Light as Kira, the effect was pronounced.

It made him extremely angry, offended, and confused. In actuality, it had done so all along. However, now, his reaction was much more intense; to the point where it had externally manifested. Light had punched Ryuzaki with all the force he could muster. It was true that Ryuzaki had retaliated, but that was irrelevant. It didn't negate Light's actions or the fact that, in an instant, he had completely and utterly lost his self-control. And would have lost it again if Ryuzaki had not evaded him by chaining him to the stairs.

So, there was something else present besides the usual anger and indignation. Something that could cause Light to take an action that accomplished nothing, and conflicted with his will and intentions.

'I've been working on the investigation. I've made every effort to move it forward with the goal of capturing Kira. Even when he refused to participate, I didn't give up. I've even cooperated with his ridiculous handcuff idea and put my life on hold while we're working together. And he still thinks I'm Kira. Nothing has changed.'

Light had taken many risks when it came to Ryuzaki. He had also invested time, attention, and energy into him. He made these efforts because he was interested in him, but also because he cared. Maybe that was why Ryuzaki possessed an ability that no one else did; he could affect Light. His opinions carried more weight than anyone else's. Ryuzaki was fully capable of provoking a variety of responses in him. Some were positive, like calmness. Some were negative, like anger. However, now that Light no longer had the capability to be indifferent to him; another potential response had materialized.

That was when Light found the missing element. The one emotion that, when acknowledged and added to the mixture within, caused his anger to wane. Only then was he able to see why Ryuzaki's opinion had disturbed him to such an extent. It was a little bit…

'…painful.'

To hear those words coming from him. It didn't matter that Ryuzaki was wrong. Light's certainty that he was not Kira was equally irrelevant.

'Maybe it's because he also said I look like that kind of person. Like Kira.'

Light sighed.

This was an exceptionally difficult problem. One that he could not solve through reasoning, persuasion, appeals, or any other method. The only way to resolve this was to catch the current Kira. Once they had him in custody, Light would be exonerated. He was sure of it. As well, it would take solid evidence to convince Ryuzaki.

'That's the kind of person he is. It's nothing personal…I think.'
With these conclusions in place, Light decided it was useless to continue fighting with Ryuzaki. Petty bickering didn't solve anything and was, frankly, beneath him. As well, being in constant conflict with Ryuzaki was causing him to feel anxious and unhappy. It was impacting Ryuzaki too. Light had not seen any sign of playfulness or good humor in him recently. Instead, he had consistently retaliated against Light over the last few days. He, for example, insulted and argued back during their disagreements. Even while he did that, though, it was obvious that Ryuzaki was stressed and agitated. This could be seen in how he had become quieter and gloomier since the Yotsuba meeting.

'And stubborn. Incredibly, frustratingly stubborn.'

They were now at the point where Ryuzaki would no longer give an inch on anything. It was the same with Light. The result was a never-ending deadlock. The real issue, hidden beneath all the senseless arguing, was Kira; and the possibility that Light was the first Kira.

They were still in the early stages of investigating the current Kira. It would take time to capture him and, by doing so, clear up Ryuzaki's suspicions about Light. So, it was foolish to continue this meaningless battle. Especially since what this all came down to was quite simple. This was...

'A waiting game.'

Nothing more and nothing less.

Light was still awake when Ryuzaki returned later. He was actually waiting for him. After sorting through many options; he had picked the one that would, hopefully, end the strain between them. It was a decision he had previously been unable to even consider; with regards to Ryuzaki, Kira, and himself. However, out of all the choices before him, it was the only one that seemed right. Therefore, there was something he wanted to say to Ryuzaki; to establish between them.

He noted that Ryuzaki did not even spare him a glance as he made his way to the bathroom. This meant he had a limited amount of time and opportunity to catch his attention, and prevent a possible retreat. Given that, Light determined the best method to advance would be in the use of short, simple, and direct words. Ryuzaki was almost to the door, but stopped upon hearing Light's voice.

"So,…truce?"

Ryuzaki turned around and eyed him warily, but did not answer. He, however, remained where he was; giving Light the chance to continue.

'An ambivalent sign, but leaning towards good.'

Light rose and approached him. He put his hands on his shoulders and quietly said:

"I'm serious, Ryuzaki. Let's stop this pointless arguing."

'I don't want to fight with you anymore.'

Light breathed an inner sigh of relief when, after an excruciatingly long silence, Ryuzaki's shoulders relaxed under his hands.

"Yes. Truce," he agreed softly.

Light smiled. He was about to speak again when Ryuzaki dropped his gaze. His eyes slowly traveled up and down Light's body. Once the assessment was complete, he observed:
"Light-kun has become very immodest."

Light shrugged nonchalantly.

"There's no point in wearing pajamas when I'm just going to take them right off again."

Ryuzaki stepped back from him.

Light made a smooth recovery.

"Since I'm going to take a shower tonight instead of tomorrow morning."

Ryuzaki crossed his arms. A faint smirk played across his lips. Light eyed him speculatively.

"So, do you want to…"

His voice trailed off when Ryuzaki retreated another couple steps.

Light crossed his arms. They stared at one another in a silent stand-off.

Light caved first. He grinned, and spoke in a voice filled with exaggerated reluctance.

"Fine. You can choose. I won't argue with you."

Ryuzaki's smirk became a smile.

They ended up on the floor of the bathtub. Ryuzaki was straddling Light's lap. He controlled the pace. Ryuzaki moved in a unique rhythm of his own, one that was different from his. However, to Light's surprise, he discovered that he liked it. When Ryuzaki cupped his cheeks and kissed him intensely, Light's impassioned response was genuine.

It was afterward that the question drifted into his mind.

'If you think I'm Kira, then why are you doing this with me?'

The warm spray of the shower rained down upon them. Ryuzaki's hands moved in light caresses along his back. Light closed his eyes and rested his forehead on his shoulder. The atmosphere was tranquil. Light chose to keep it that way, and leave that question unvoiced.

There would come an appropriate time to ask such questions, but now was not it. They had yet to solve all the mysteries of Kira and uncover the truth. Light could and would patiently wait for that day; for when it became the proper time. The right time.

He tightened his arms around Ryuzaki, drawing him into a closer embrace.

That was what Light believed.

Temperance

a middle course, a sense of proper timing, a balanced viewpoint, fairness, compromise – a compromise between two incompatible courses of action may be the best option – seemingly irreconcilable opposites may not be irreconcilable at all – however, if a person believes they are irreconcilable – they will be, calm capability, equilibrium, adaptation, issues of prudence versus excess in behavior, reasonableness, 'temperance' means moderation which is often interpreted to
mean self-control – however, the tarot Temperance does not go to such extremes simply because extremes are unnecessary – it is not an artificial inhibition according to a moral code but exactly the opposite – a true and proper response to all situations as they arise, self-restraint, patience, caution, right action – doing the correct thing in whatever situation arises – very often this means doing nothing – the intemperate person always needs to be doing something – but very often a situation requires a person to simply wait, joining forces - innovation through combination, successful negotiations, the right mixture, manifesting an idea or desire into the material world – the ability to turn a negative situation into a positive one, cooperation, reconciliation, a need for healing, a need for emotional stability, the subject needs to slow down – re-evaluate his position - and remain open to compromise, wounds heal with the passage of time

The first line of the Major Arcana (cards 1 through 7, the Magician through the Chariot), with its concentration on such matters as love, social authority, and education, describes the main concerns of society. In many ways the world we see mirrored in our novels, films, and schools is summed up by the first seven cards of the Major Arcana. A person can live and die and be judged a success by everyone around him without ever going beyond the level of the Chariot.

Modern depth psychology concerns itself with the second line of the Major Arcana (cards 8 through 14, Strength through Temperance), with their symbols of hermit-like withdrawal into self-awareness followed by a symbolic death and rebirth.

The Chariot symbolized the successful construction of an ego able to deal victoriously with life. As time goes by this ego becomes rigid; slowly behavior becomes less a response to reality and more and more a string of habits. The purpose of the second line of the Major Arcana is to free the Fool from this artificial personality.

The word ‘temperance’ derives from the Latin ‘temperare’ which means ‘to mix’ or ‘to combine properly’. Temperance combines the elements of the personality, so that the person and the outer world will flow together more naturally.

Psychologically, Temperance indicates the energy which emerges after the ego’s Death. This energy works within the realm of normal activities. The Fool does not need to perform miracles to sense his connection with the immortal universe. He need only be himself. Temperance is a card of behavior, not concepts.
The world is a rotten mess.

This was Light's rather slanted view on the society and world that he lived in. It was not an opinion that he shared with anyone else. To do so would be to open a gateway to some of Light's more hidden qualities. It would invite questioning and examination of his reasoning, judgment, and nature. Another person might point out that Light had never left Japan, that he had traveled very little even in Japan, and led a very sheltered and privileged life with his family. What did he know of the world? Fair judgment requires complete knowledge and, in this case, direct experience. Light did not have that knowledge or experience. Then how could he, with all seriousness, condemn the world as a rotten mess?

As within, so without.

It was because the world did not conform to Light's vision of what it should be. His view was slanted towards the precepts of order. That, in turn, was based upon his intellect which functioned in a manner similar to a sword. People who broke the law were criminals and unprincipled. Those who obeyed the law were not. People who were morally bereft or ambiguous were bad. Those who were virtuous and righteous were good. His mind was a cutting edge that divided and separated. The end result was an ideal world that was ordered, stable, and perfect.

Pure intellectual energy is like a double-edged sword. It holds the capacity and potential for great good and great evil. It is optimal, then, that this power be tempered with other elements so it will not cause pain to the possessor and those around him. Other elements could include feeling, empathy, compassion, spirit, and common sense. If this is accepted as a truism, then a re-examination of Light's ideal world would cause a different picture to take form.

Light's vision of what the world should be was based upon what already existed within himself. An intellect with a knife-like sharpness that divided and separated. He did not commit crimes so he was not a criminal or unprincipled. He was virtuous and righteous so he was good. There was, admittedly, some moral ambiguity too. Light was only human and, just like everyone else, he struggled with the concepts of right and wrong. Or, rather, he did now. It was not like that before he joined the investigation. Prior to that, any thought or idea identified as not righteous was immediately cut away and banished. Out of conscious awareness, out of existence.

Into the darkness.

What was left was an inner world that was ordered, unchanging, divided, separate, and infallible. Tranquil in its own silent and cold way.

Something that does not grow, expand, or change can be interpreted in many ways. Boring, rigid, inert, stagnant, complete, flawless, familiar, perfect. It all depends on who you ask. With regards to Light's inner world, though, there was another issue that came to the fore. One that superseded the complexity and labels of interpretation only because it was so very basic.

Was it alive?

A question that would never have dawned for Light in the past. The only reason it could now was
due to the significant changes that had occurred in his environment and experiences. The supreme order of his inner world had been destabilized and was often in a state of flux; even chaos at times. The outer manifestation of this instability was his relationship with Ryuzaki. It was cause and effect. Something had come into existence within Light and it had caused a radical change in how he approached and related to Ryuzaki. An argument could be made that it had materialized months ago.

When he stopped trying to analyze Ryuzaki as if he were a thing. When he ceased looking at him solely as a problem to be solved. When he chose to befriend Ryuzaki and attempted to understand him. When he sacrificed efficiency for patience and eventually discovered there was a great deal more to Ryuzaki than met the eye.

It was not Ryuzaki who was truly responsible for this process, although he certainly was the catalyst. It was a random element that had wedged itself into Light's inner world. What occurred with Ryuzaki was a product of it. It was not orderly, fixed, or cerebral. It introduced confusion, indecision, sorrow, anxiety, anger, and even fear to Light's consciousness. It also introduced equanimity, choice, hope, fulfillment, affection, and even happiness.

This random element did have a tiny, minuscule, amount of power of its own. However, it would have been relatively easy for Light to intellectually crush it. Such was the difference in strength between the two. As well, order and this random element were not exactly compatible. Nevertheless, they co-existed within Light simply because the rewards outweighed the setbacks and trials.

Until now, that is.

There was another, a third power within Light. One that was banished from his conscious awareness, but had been slowly and cunningly weaving its way back in. It possessed overwhelming force and unrelenting persistency, and events were unfolding in a way that would allow it to become more and more prominent. There was a serious problem and conflict here, though. This immense force, when joined with Light's intellect and ordered internal world, produced a fully compatible trio. The random element, however, became the odd man out. It did not, and could not, harmonize with the third power or any combination in which it held a dominant role.

Therefore, Light faced a choice. A random element within that was only recently born, or perhaps it had been resurrected, now existed. It was still fragile and weak in many ways, but had the potential to embody an unwavering strength and fortitude. Would Light cultivate it or neglect it? He could allow it to continue developing or he could ignore it, pay no attention to it, and block any further expansion. Those options were definitely under his dominion. There was another, a third option too. It was also within his power to eradicate it. To tear out something that was evolving and growing.

And kill it.

The need to make a decision would manifest in many ways. Small ways, big ways, hard ways, easy ways. This all happened over the course of the next nine days. It was on ninth day that he would be forced to finally, irrevocably, choose. Who gets to live and who gets to die. But he was not there yet. The first day, the present moment, was at hand.

It begins here.

Light and Ryuzaki were having a 'discussion'.

It was lunch time and they had relocated to the kitchen. The meal began in silence; with Light calmly eating his sandwich and Ryuzaki calmly eating his cake. Light was fully aware that he had been brought here for a reason, and also what that reason was. Misa had wanted to eat together, but Ryuzaki insisted they separate. This, along with certain recent events, provided all the clues that
Light required. He, however, had decided not to make it any easier for him. Therefore, he quietly waited; impelling Ryuzaki to make the first move.

Within ten minutes, the detective had launched the initial volley.

"Misa-san does not seem to understand the importance of what we are doing."

Light had been wondering how he would choose to advance. So, it was going to be…

'Indirectly.'

He decided to play along.

"That seems to be the case. She's not being very cooperative, is she?"

"No, it is not that she is being uncooperative. She is being very difficult."

Light smiled, and diplomatically said:

"We only just started the rehearsals this morning. I'm sure if you explain it to her again, she'll understand."

Ryuzaki put his fork down and leaned forward.

"I have already explained it to her five times, Light-kun. She is either being deliberately obtuse or she simply is that stupid."

"That's not a very fair thing to say, Ryuzaki. Not everyone has the level of intelligence that you and I have. Why don't you try explaining it to her again after lunch? The odds are, with enough repetition, she'll eventually get it. It could be the sixth time will be the one that works."

Ryuzaki's eyes hardened.

"Don't give up. I'm sure you can do it," Light said encouragingly.

"Or you could."

Light leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms. So, he was switching to a direct approach. There was a silence while Light considered his options. After determining that he was not going to be the one who broke the truce, he answered:

"I don't think there's anything I could say that you haven't already. Just give it time. We still have the rest of today and tomorrow before they have to go to Yotsuba. You have to be patient."

Ryuzaki's eyes narrowed.

"I see," he stated flatly.

He leaned back and averted his gaze.

"You're right, Light-kun."

Light smiled warmly.

"There you go, Ryuzaki."

He stood up.
"So, shall we get back to it?"

The detective remained where he was.

"Misa Misa is not the only one who is being difficult," he muttered in a low voice.

Light's smile became a little bit forced.

"I'm sorry, Ryuzaki, I didn't quite catch that. What did you say?"

He turned his head aside and did not answer. Light stopped smiling, and asked:

"Are we going or not?"

All he received in response was a shrug. Light stared at him for a few moments, and then pulled his chair back out and sat down.

"Did you have something else you wanted to say to me?"

"No."

"Then why are we still here?"

"I am being patient, just like Light-kun told me to be."

Light raised an eyebrow.

"You call what you're doing right now 'being patient'?"

"Yes."

Twenty, silent minutes later; Light resignedly sighed and leaned forward.

"Look, Ryuzaki, you need to see this from my perspective. You once asked me to manipulate Misa for information. I told you I thought taking advantage of a person's feelings like that is despicable. I was very clear. There is no possibility you misunderstood my stance. Despite that, you went ahead and took advantage of her feelings for me and used them to manipulate her. And you did it right in front of me."

Ryuzaki regarded him from the corner of his eye.

"Light-kun wants to catch Kira. Misa Misa wants to help Light-kun. I am not making her participate. I gave her an opportunity to be involved in the investigation and she chose to take it."

Light scowled.

"A choice that you manipulated her into making, Ryuzaki! You actually asked her if she preferred catching Kira to you and me dying!"

Ryuzaki did not reply. Light took a moment to forcefully restore his composure, and then continued.

"But, fine. If you don't want to see that, then I can't make you. So, let's move on to that choice. Going to Yotsuba will put Misa in danger. You're jeopardizing her life to move the investigation forward. I don't agree with that."

"And yet you are going along with it."
"That's exactly right, Ryuzaki. I am going along with it. I'm on your side, and I've helped with the plan and the script for Misa and Aiber. Against my better judgment, I did all that. Now, if I understand you correctly, you want me to tell Misa that I want her to do this and to take it seriously. Or something to that effect."

Ryuzaki turned his head and met Light's eyes.

"Yes. Misa Misa will do whatever Light-kun tells her to."

Light leaned back and crossed his arms. His voice, when he spoke, was quietly adamant.

"No. I'm not going to do that for you. I may have helped you, but it's your plan. You make it work."

Ryuzaki leaned forward, and composedly said:

"Light-kun, you need to see this from a realistic and unbiased perspective…"

Light cut in.

"I need to see…" he scoffed.

Ryuzaki cut in.

"Yes, you do. Misa-san and Aiber will be going to Yotsuba on the day after tomorrow. However it may have come about, they made their own decisions in this matter. When they go, they will both be in danger. If Misa-san does not perform her role flawlessly, then that risk will be substantially increased. Any failure on her part will result in severe consequences not only for her, but also for Aiber and even the investigation itself."

Light just stared at him, stonily.

Ryuzaki's expression was slightly puzzled when he added:

"I should not have to explain this to you, Light-kun. Your reasoning skills are superb."

Light thought this over, and then concluded:

"You have completely missed the point, Ryuzaki. This isn't about logic or being 'realistic'. It's about having principles."

Ryuzaki shook his head, and replied:

"That is incorrect. You committed yourself to this plan and have been fully involved until this point. Your own actions and words contradict your so-called 'principles'. So, I conclude that you are simply being stubborn."

A bark of harsh laughter escaped before Light could restrain it. Ryuzaki started, and then frowned. Once Light had recovered himself, he coldly said:

"No, Ryuzaki. That's your forte, not mine. Just because I won't do what you want me to, doesn't mean I'm stubborn. All it means is that I've reached the outer limit on how much I'm able and willing to compromise my principles."

Ryuzaki looked away.

"I see," he answered sullenly.
After a brief interval had passed, Light stood up. His voice, when he spoke, matched his remote expression.

"Are we finished here? Can we go back now?"

In lieu of verbally responding, the detective rose to his feet. Not a word was exchanged as they made their way back to the room where Misa and Alber waited.

The rest of the afternoon was a repeat of the morning. Aiber, in the role of Eraldo Coil, would ask Misa one of the questions prepared by Light and Ryuzaki. Misa occasionally replied with the lines that were put together for her. The problem was that sometimes she overacted, or changed the line, or ignored Aiber and Ryuzaki to flirt with Light. The result was very little progress being made, and a steadily increasing amount of bickering between Misa and Ryuzaki.

Light watched all this with a sort of detached interest. In actuality, he was a little surprised by Ryuzaki's restraint. If there was one thing he had learned about him it was that he, indeed, did not suffer fools gladly. Light shared this trait with him, but was very adept at masking any impatience or disdain he felt towards the follies of others. Ryuzaki did not have that adeptness but was making an impressive showing, nonetheless. Still, it was only a matter of time before his tolerance reached its limit.

The time came in the late afternoon when Aiber said:

"Misa, you said you were going to meet Kira and left for Tokyo."

Misa, complete with an absurdly exaggerated physical reaction, exclaimed:

"What?"

"Misa-san, please stop with the total overacting," Ryuzaki said.

"What? But I thought that was perfect," she answered petulantly.

"Just try again."

Misa dismissively waved her hands at him.

"Yes, yes, Director Ryuzaki."

"Misa-san, take this seriously or I'll kick you."

Well, this was new. Light couldn't recall him ever saying anything like that before. The 'once is once' phrase included the potential for kicking, but would be more accurately defined as a promise of retaliation. This differed in that it was an actual threat.

He wondered what would happen next.

However, unfortunately for Light, his intellectual interest in this development was doomed to remain unappeased. That was because Ryuzaki abruptly withdrew from the situation. He walked to the phone in the room, with Light following, and called the operations room. They would need Mogi to play the role of Misa's manager. Since he was on Soichiro's side, it was no longer certain he would be willing to perform that function.

Ryuzaki's voice had an edge at the beginning of the conversation. It was safe, then, to assume he was talking to Soichiro. Nevertheless, an agreement was reached that Mogi would participate. Ryuzaki
finished the exchange with the instructions that they needed Mogi to try and act like a manager, and he should follow Matsuda's example.

As they walked back to Misa and Aiber, Light pondered upon one other statement Ryuzaki had made. That things were going very well with their plan. This was, of course, an outright lie. One that the rest of the team would be able to clearly see too. There were cameras in this room which linked to the operations room.

'He has a lot of pride.'

Maybe too much at times.

Misa was hungry and so they took a dinner break. There was a buffet of food in the room and, this time, Ryuzaki did not have any issue with everyone eating together. Instead, he sat with his back to Light and conversed exclusively with Aiber. They were talking about the plan and Yotsuba, but it was difficult to keep track of their conversation. Misa was in high spirits and barraged Light with a stream of animated chatter. He eventually gave up and concentrated on replying when necessary to Misa, and on Ryuzaki and his plan.

Ryuzaki had not said one word to him since lunch.

'So, that's how it's going to be. The silent treatment...again.'

Sadly, the truce had only lasted for two and a half days. Although, when Light thought about it, that was par for the course. They were, after all, in very restrictive and stressful circumstances. Just as Light's freedom was limited, so was Ryuzaki's. It encompassed more than just the hindrance of the handcuffs. He surmised that Ryuzaki was unused to anyone questioning his methods or refusing to comply with his directives. And therein lay the true reason behind why he split up the team. Soichiro definitely would not have agreed to Misa being put in life-threatening danger. And, in that case, neither would Mogi nor Matsuda.

This had all started on the night of the Yotsuba meeting, when he and Ryuzaki went to Misa's room. Earlier in the evening, Light had been unsure whether Ryuzaki was serious about gaining evidence through the deaths of innocents. He also hoped to never have the opportunity to find out for certain. As Light watched him manipulate Misa and listened to him outline his plan, it seemed like that unwanted opportunity had arrived.

The plan itself was relatively uncomplicated and the first phase had been implemented yesterday. Aiber, as Eraldo Coil, submitted a report to Yotsuba. It described Misa's admiration for Kira, as well as her arrest and confinement on suspicion of being the second Kira. It also said those allegations were a mistake and Misa was paid off to keep the whole incident a secret.

Ryuzaki had predicted that the Yotsuba executives would "definitely bite". And they did. The report accomplished exactly what it was designed to. It made the Yotsuba side believe there was contact between Misa and L, and that she may know his identity. It also increased their trust in Aiber. This could be seen in how they did not question the authenticity of the report and their insistence that he join them.

What he was joining them for was an interview with Misa. Thanks to Matsuda's bumbling, there was already a pitch to use her in a commercial. Under that guise, she would be going to Yotsuba on the day after tomorrow. So, basically, it had all gone as Ryuzaki said it would. What happened next was where the complications lay.

The plan, as a whole, was structurally unsound. That was Light's opinion. It relied on too many
assumptions and uncontrollable factors. As well, whether it succeeded or failed was largely
dependent on Misa. She, far more than Aiber, was the basis which potentially introduced some
problems while definitely introducing some inequities.

Light thought for a moment.

'Many inequities, in fact.'

A list of them, really. On which a great starting point would be that Misa was the only one using her
real name in these proceedings. And there was a lot more where that came from. There was... he
paused.

With great difficulty, he forced his mind away from the lure of compiling a detailed list. It would take
too much attention and time. Probably the rest of the day. Possibly even part of the night too.

Back to the matter at hand.

It was obvious that Ryuzaki thought up this strategy on the spur of the moment. The plan was not
well-reasoned and, consequently, carried an extremely high level of risk. Misa would be in mortal
danger when she went to Yotsuba. Light comprehended this immediately and tried to argue him out
of it. However, for everything he said, the detective had a countering argument. The confrontation
had occurred a week ago; while they were still in Misa's room.

Light stated that Kira could control a person's actions before death. So, there was a good chance that
Yotsuba would make Misa talk before killing her. His assertion, however, was disproved when
Ryuzaki revealed a fax he had received from Wedy. It was a document she recovered from the
shredder after the Yotsuba meeting. It detailed the "rules of killing" and, for some reason, Ryuzaki
kept its existence a secret until then. This irritated Light, but there was no time to dwell on it.

There was a rule which stated that a person's face and name were needed to kill, but the name could
not be a nickname. As well, when controlling someone you could not make them say something
about another person. If another person was specified, the description would not go into effect and
everyone would die of a heart attack. So, they could not ask Misa to talk about L. And even if they
tried, L was a nickname and she would die of a heart attack.

Ryuzaki had confirmed, when they first arrived, that Misa did not know who L was. She knew
Ryuzaki only as Ryuzaki, and L as a person in the computer screen with the "L" letter. Light's very
first objection was that Yotsuba would force Misa to talk if they thought she knew L; there was no
telling what they might do. Misa, however, was the one who refuted that argument. She claimed she
would not talk, no matter what they did to her. Ryuzaki was confident that she wouldn't, as well.

'That's because he has nothing to worry about even if she did.'

Misa did not know that Ryuzaki actually was L. Ryuzaki had made it a point to verify this and, given
what he wanted her to do, it was important she remain ignorant. Light kept this in mind when he
made his next objection. He argued that once they killed L, they would kill Misa to keep her silent.
Ryuzaki countered that if they won, then Misa would not die.

In the end, Ryuzaki had an answer for every objection he raised. He also, by manipulating her desire
to help and be of use to Light, maneuvered Misa into being on his side. Light's resistance to the plan
was based on the extreme danger it put her in. However, she clearly wasn't interested in his opinion
or concerns. This was proven when Misa said she would gladly die for him.

He was brought out of his recollections when another dispute broke out between Misa and Ryuzaki.
They had resumed practicing for the interview. As Light watched, he became more and more irritated. Their squabbling was part of it, but not the true reason behind his anger. It was the events he had just recalled. They annoyed him, both of them. Ryuzaki and Misa.

With Ryuzaki, it was his manipulative behavior. It was like with his childishness. It was one thing to understand he could be like that; it was quite another to see it in action. The way he had capitalized on Misa's feelings for Light was both perturbing and infuriating. Yes, it was true that Light had eventually gone along with his plan and even helped formulate it further. But that was a different and unrelated matter. It didn't change Light's view of his underhanded approach and ruthless scheming. Frankly, he found it…

'Repulsive.'

And then there was Misa. She agreed with Ryuzaki's plan because she wanted to be of use to Light and be loved by him more. Or so she said. In reality, they barely knew each other. He didn't have any particular feelings for her and certainly didn't love her. And the same was true for Misa. What she called "love" was nothing more than infatuation. That was how Light, when in a charitable mood, classified it. He was not in such a mood at the moment. So, she was risking her life because she was obsessed with him. Or rather, some made-up image she had of him. It was evident her attachment to him was based on her own fantasies. That was why she believed he could love her "more".

It was like he was an unwilling participant in a romantic movie. One which Misa had written, directed, and cast herself in as the star. Light detested romance films. And then there was her statement that she would gladly die for him. So, it was a romance-tragedy. He loathed those too. In all honesty, though, he didn't hate Misa or even especially dislike her. It was more that he found her and her presumptuous, make-believe love to be…

'Ridiculous.'

Ryuzaki and Misa were still bickering. That, along with the resentment and anger now swirling within, caused Light's patience to instantaneously reach its limit.

His voice was loud, and tinged with exasperation, when he interrupted them.

"It's getting late. Let's call it a night."

They turned toward him and simultaneously spoke in protesting voices.

"What? But Misa wants to spend more time with her Light…"

"Light-kun, we still have to cover pages eleven through…"

Aiber jumped in.

"I agree with Yagami. We've done enough for today. Let's sleep on it and get an early start tomorrow."

This, thankfully, diverted their attention from Light to him. Aiber handled their complaints and grumbling in a calm, genial, and placating manner. It was quite impressive, actually, and effective too.

Ten minutes later, they were all filing out of the room.

As they boarded the elevator, he kept a discreet eye on Aiber. When Aiber initially spoke, his gaze
was on Light. It had given Light the sudden, disconcerting impression that he may have been watching him for a while. Maybe that was why he interceded. Aiber was likely tired of the senseless arguing too, but it might have also been on Light's behalf. Ryuzaki had said he was an expert at psychology. So, it was feasible that Aiber had accurately read his expressions and body language. This caused a feeling of distinct discomfort within Light.

The first stop was Light and Ryuzaki. Light smiled and said "good night" in a polite and friendly voice. The farewells were rushed, though, due to Ryuzaki. He forwent the pleasantries and started walking away as soon as the door opened. Just before Light turned to follow him, he noted that Aiber responded with an easy smile and a nod.

He could hear Misa's voice become muted and distant as the door closed, and the elevator resumed its downward trip. She was saying something to Light, but he wasn't focusing on her. He thought of Aiber and Ryuzaki. So, there were two observant and perceptive people around him. They would all be together tomorrow too. He needed to account for that.

When they reached the bedroom, Ryuzaki detached the handcuffs and opened the door. Light entered the room and was completely unsurprised when the door shut, leaving him alone. Ryuzaki was probably meeting up with Aiber. They would likely discuss the plan and conceptualize a strategy for handling the present difficulties. Ryuzaki had said that Aiber was adept at personality transformation and could always forge a strong bond with his target. His target, then, would surely be Misa. But what if…

'It's me too.'

Light examined this eventuality as he prepared for bed. However, by the time he slipped under the covers, he had concluded that it was improbable. It was true that, sometimes, Ryuzaki had a tendency to underestimate him. This could readily be seen in his efforts to manipulate him and his recent attempt to convince him to lie to Misa. Nevertheless, even Ryuzaki should comprehend there was no possibility he could be influenced by Aiber. Not by someone who Light knew to be an expert at conning people.

With that out of the way, he returned to the main issue. It bitterly amused him that Ryuzaki had called him "stubborn". It was like he had not listened to a word Light said. Just like during the time in Misa's room. In both situations, he dismissed or circumvented Light's objections and opinions. He, basically, didn't take him seriously. And after doing all that, he actually had the arrogance to request his help with Misa. To propose that he lie and say he wanted her to go to Yotsuba. To expect Light to be as dishonest and manipulative as he was.

His mindset was austere when he thought:

'That is not going to happen.'

And it was while in this state that he drifted off to sleep.

There was a dream.

It woke him up. Right out of a sound slumber and well before morning. The room was dark and silent. He sat up and hurriedly scanned the surroundings.

'Where is he?'

There he was. Ryuzaki was sleeping in the other bed. He could faintly see his outline in the gloom. Light relaxed, and then concentrated on restoring inner equilibrium. After mentally replaying the
images that had woken him, he came to a satisfactory conclusion.  

It was just a dream. A strange and unsettling one, admittedly, but only a dream. So, there was no reason to get up. Dreams, his or anyone else’s, did not interest him. They were random and, for the most part, meaningless. So, there were clearly no grounds to climb into the other bed. The figure that appeared to be Ryuzaki in the dream was not actually Ryuzaki. Because Ryuzaki was not weak and sick like that. So, there was obviously no need for Light to put his arms around him.  

"Light-kun?"  
His voice was slurred with sleepiness; in striking contrast with the way his body was tensing up.  
"Everything's fine, Ryuzaki. Go back to sleep."

Light was behind him. He felt him relax just before he said:  
"I see Light-kun has decided he is speaking to me again."

A stunned pause, and then:  
"You have a really interesting way of twisting things around. You do know that, right?"

"If Light-kun says so," he replied noncommittally.  
Light reclined a little, taking Ryuzaki with him, and answered:  
"I do."

He leaned down and rested his cheek against his temple. His voice, when he spoke, was deliberately softened.  
"You know, if things don't go better today, you might have to cancel the interview."

Ryuzaki's voice was equally tempered when he responded.  
"It is already too late for that. Canceling or even postponing would cause them to become suspicious of Misa-san, as well as distrustful of Aiber."

Light was reluctant to admit it, but…  
"Yeah, considering their interest in her is based on the contents of the report we wrote. And that report was submitted to them by Aiber… I see your point. You're right."

He thought for a bit.  
"Did you and Aiber come up with a solution?"

Ryuzaki shifted. His lips brushed against the corner of Light's mouth just before he whispered:  
"Good night, Light-kun."

Ryuzaki moved forward, taking Light with him, and curled up to go back to sleep.  
"Good night," Light answered quietly.

It was a while before Light fell asleep but, by the time he did, he had come to a decision. One that, as a preemptive measure, he implemented immediately the following morning. It was right after
exchanging greetings with Misa and Aiber that he said:

"Misa, we're running out of time. There's only until the end of today to rehearse your lines. I'm willing to help but, in exchange, you have to work hard and take this seriously."

Light, while he spoke, made a concentrated effort not to look at Ryuzaki. Any sign of smugness, any hint of amusement from him would be unbearable. Therefore, he kept his eyes trained on Misa; who was enthusiastically declaring that she would "work hard" and "do her best". With that established; they began a long, tiring, but ultimately successful day of rehearsals.

It did occur to Light that what he perceived as the "limit" on his willingness and ability to compromise his principles was, in reality, not a limit at all. This knowledge caused a feeling of discomfiture, but it was only a fleeting sensation. It wasn't like he had any choice left in the matter. The interview was scheduled for tomorrow and it was in everyone's best interests, especially Misa's, for it to go smoothly.

In other words, Ryuzaki's points were valid. Light recognized their validity and that was why he cooperated. There was nothing more to it.

The following afternoon, Light and Ryuzaki stood with Misa and Mogi. There was a subdued air about which was hardly surprising. They were due to set off for Yotsuba and the gravity of the situation weighed heavily on all parties. It was Light, curiously, who lightened things up.

He had discovered, the prior day, that Misa was an accomplished actor. It was new knowledge which had served to settle much of Light's uneasiness about the upcoming interview. There should be no problems on her part and, even if there were, Aiber would be there to smooth over any difficulties that may arise.

When he reassured Misa by praising her acting skills, he was sincere. This, along with a few compliments thrown in regarding her appearance, elicited the desired response. Misa swelled with confidence and determination, and her usual cheerful smile returned.

He wasn't sure what to say to Mogi, though, and left it to Ryuzaki.

Which may or may not have been a mistake, he reflected later.

Light was at his desk and remembering how Mogi's expression had become increasingly tense and worried as Ryuzaki repeated, in various ways and patterns, that he needed to act like Matsuda. By the end of it, Mogi's face had been pale and coated with a thin sheen of perspiration. His wordless nodding seemed to have an almost panicked quality to it.

What occurred next was an exceedingly rare instance of self-mockery. For Light, it was unheard of and would probably never happen again in his lifetime.

He supposed if there was a contest for the most obvious finding, the following observation showed that he would have been a heavy contender.

It might have been better if he was the one to give Mogi some last, parting words of advice and encouragement. It's not like he knew anything about him or his personality, but he could have managed something. It was one of his strong points, actually, as opposed to Ryuzaki. The detective excelled at many things, but giving pep talks did not rank high on the list. It could, in fact, be argued that it would not even appear on the list since he tended to be spectacularly...

Light searched for the appropriate word.
'dismal'

...in such matters.

Although, he seemed to do all right when it came to Misa.

He recalled how, when initially outlining his plan and seeking Misa's participation, Ryuzaki had said her acting was "brilliant" and that her guts and love for Light were the greatest in the world. It was set, point, and match when he followed up with the statement that she was the perfect woman for Light. Thinking back on it now...

'Misa never really stood a chance.'

There was a very real possibility that Ryuzaki had learned by watching Light. What to say and how to act in order to guarantee cooperation and biddability. At least, when it involved Misa. She was a great actor, though. Light had to concede that. As for the rest...

Light swiftly retreated from the path his mind had inadvertently stumbled upon. It was better not to dwell on some things. Especially things that bothered him as much as...

With a brisk, internal shake; he completely and utterly quelled that line of thought. He had done this a number of times recently and had become quite proficient at it.

Practice makes perfect, and all that.

Instead, he turned his attention to his computer screen. He was dimly aware of Matsuda pacing worriedly and questioning whether they should have attached listening devices to Misa or in the interview room. Ryuzaki reasonably pointing out that they didn't know which room the interview would be in and attaching listening devices would put Misa in greater danger.

"This is what my team is doing, so you don't need to worry about it," Ryuzaki finished dismissively.

Before Matsuda could respond, Soichiro chimed in.

"That's right. Come help me, Matsuda," he said in a voice that had teeth in it.

And, thus, the battle lines were redrawn and everyone returned to work. With the exception of Ryuzaki, who was enjoying a fruit cocktail. Not provided by Light, of course. He had determined, prudently, that it was inadvisable to ask his father to continue picking up desserts at present.

Light tuned everything out and focused on the data in front of him. Where he had been leaning towards the theory of there being more than one Kira only a short while ago, he had now attained certainty about it.

'They're definitely different people...the Kira before I was put into confinement and the current one.'

They were both killing criminals but their methods were clearly different. The current Kira executed every person reported in the news to have killed someone, whereas the previous Kira wouldn't punish anyone who killed accidentally or without malice.

'Like car accidents, for example. Unless the person caused that accident through some extremely malicious circumstances, Kira wouldn't punish him.'

If the original Kira determined that the murdered person deserved what he got, the killer was not punished.
'If I was Kira, I'd probably operate like that. In comparison, I feel no human emotion coming from the actions of this current Kira.'

Light's breathing became shallower in response to the tightening in his chest. He vaguely noticed it, while outwardly giving no indication of any distress at all.

He carried on.

'No, the original and current Kira are both mass murderers. There's no right and wrong when it comes to killing people, it's always evil. I know that.'

But.

'The way the original Kira acted…'

If…Light took a moment to stress the word in his own mind. If he had the power to punish criminals…

'Would I use it?'

Hypothetically speaking, of course. This was a re-examination of a question he had already asked himself, after all. He did so because the observation of a similarity between him and the original Kira was disquieting. Nonetheless, this was an intellectual exercise; nothing more.

Feeling somewhat reassured, Light seriously considered the issue.

There was a time when he thought rehabilitation was the solution to the great problem of criminals in society. Exempting nations where capital punishment was legal, the sentencing procedures of most countries were designed with that concept in mind. The loss of freedom, loss of rights, and a length of time spent in prison were meant to function as a deterrent, a punishment, and a rehabilitative measure.

Capital punishment embodied only two of those objectives. Kira's killing campaign was capital punishment in its essence. Unlike legal executions, however, there was no trial, no defense for the accused, no plea bargaining, no appeals, and no application of law and legal procedures. Another difference was that trials governed by law were usually public and presided over by a judge or judiciary body; who were trained and experienced in legal matters.

Kira, conversely, operated in anonymity and secrecy. This introduced a high level of inscrutability among the general public. Still, not fully understanding something does not prevent most people from forming an opinion anyway. There were as many views on Kira as there were stars in the sky, but the majority of them were hardly accurate. Ignorance does not make a capable judge, after all.

Light didn't have that problem. He thought he understood Kira very well. It was because he had been so deeply immersed in the case virtually since it began. First, as a solo effort and then as part of the investigation team. So, it was fairly easy for him to comprehend the reasoning, morality or lack thereof, and motives of the Kiras. There was no doubt there were at least two of them. And if Light was absolutely honest, there was also no doubt he identified more with the first one.

The question was why.

The now total constriction in his chest was accompanied by a sort of desperate internal scrabbling for an answer. This went on for a few minutes and might have continued indeterminately if not for a nudge at his side.
He looked at Ryuzaki, who announced:

"I would like a beverage."

Light's mind was undergoing the complicated and laborious process of switching gears, which temporarily rescinded the necessary resources for rapid comprehension and apposite replies.

In other words, he opened his mouth but nothing came out.

Undaunted, Ryuzaki continued.

"I want a hot chocolate."

Light blinked a few times, and then stood up.

"Sure. Let's go."

As Ryuzaki trailed behind him to the elevator, there was a thoughtful pause. Then, speaking with the air of one who has come to a vital decision after careful deliberation, he added:

"With whipped cream and marshmallows."

Light looked back and nodded. When he faced forward again, he was smiling.

When they arrived at the kitchen, he made an exaggerated show of reaching for the kettle.

"I'll just boil some water and make instant since it's faster."

The look Ryuzaki gave him was nothing short of withering. Light held up his hands in a placating manner and, with feigned artlessness, said:

"Oh, that's right. I forgot that you have standards when it comes to sweet things. So sorry."

Ryuzaki, disappointingly, ignored the bait.

"That is correct. Light-kun should use milk like he always does. I will get it for him," he answered surlily.

But Light didn't give up.

"Are you sure you know where it is?"

Ryuzaki, in the act of opening the fridge door, paused. When he glanced over his shoulder, he was met with Light's mirthful grin. There was an almost inaudible sigh, and then he picked up the carton and thrust it into Light's arms with a bit more force than was strictly necessary.

After a handful of seconds, a small smile adorned his features while Light's laughter filled the room.

Ryuzaki had an encyclopedic knowledge of culinary delights from around the world. Well, specifically about desserts. While they waited for the milk to heat up, Light was treated to yet another exposition on a particular food that Ryuzaki enjoyed. This time it was gelato. He learned about its origins, history, ingredients, top brands, and the best flavors.

They stood, side by side, leaning back against the counter. Light had his arm around Ryuzaki's shoulders, just resting it there. He listened attentively.
It still surprised him sometimes. Light had zero interest in food, sweet or otherwise, but always paid attention when Ryuzaki spoke about it. And it wasn't the fake, humoring type of listening he normally employed when someone talked about an unimportant topic. He actually, genuinely, even interestedly listened.

He supposed there was the rarity value of Ryuzaki speaking at length and, even more so, in an animated and enthusiastic fashion. Light found it charming. It was also that Ryuzaki, usually so quiet and guarded, was talking about something which held meaning for him. More than any other reason, it was perhaps this alone that caught Light's attention.

When he returned to his desk, he was in a much better mood. This was beneficial since it allowed him to reintroduce reason and equanimity to his previous enquiry. Wasting no time, he dove back in.

He identified with the first Kira. By his own admission, that was an established fact. This wasn't about whether he was the first Kira, it was about the observation that their ideals seemed to coincide. The discrepancy was that Light believed in law, legal process, and rehabilitation which were in direct opposition to the first Kira's methods. It was reasonable, then, to postulate that the shared ideals were relatively new. They had not always existed within Light. If they had, Light was fairly certain he would have known about it. Which meant they had manifested since he began working on the case. Given that, there would be an impetus or reason behind this occurrence.

That was what he was trying to look at. That and only that.

It took a while to find it. An answer that explained the presence of this anomaly.

Supporting and believing in the legal system, law, and rehabilitation had been simple when his only exposure to criminals was the occasional news story or case study in school. The key here was the investigation and the fact that he had been involved in it almost from the beginning. Kira, both former and current, had executed a multitude of criminals. The difference was that the first Kira targeted the most atrocious ones and left the rest alone.

Light opened up a folder on his screen. There were thousands of names there. Going by the date, he brought up information on a man killed by the original Kira.

His name was John Edwards. Prior to finally being apprehended by the police, he had murdered twelve people. However, before killing them there had been torture, assault, and sexual assault. Most of the victims were women. He had been awaiting trial when he suddenly died of a heart attack.

He had a history of criminal and violent behavior, and had already served time twice before the final incarceration.

'A person like that can't be rehabilitated. The fact that he kept re-offending even after doing prison time proves it. And his crimes only got worse each time he was released.'

The list of crimes in front of him were only the known ones. There were likely many more that had not been uncovered by the police. And they never would be. Either because the victim was too traumatized to come forward or because they were dead.

Who would miss someone like John Edwards? A person who inflicted so much pain and suffering; not only on his victims, but their family and friends too. Who, given the chance, would do it all over again. There was no hope for Edwards because his actions and lack of remorse clearly showed that he was...

'Evil.'
Frankly, the world was better off without him.

That was the kind of criteria the original Kira used when condemning a criminal. The reason Light could understand, and even agree with it, was due to his immersion in the case. He had read the crime sheets of so many criminals that were just like Edwards. And, in some cases, even worse. Malicious, unrepentant people who committed abhorrent acts against others; only stopping when they were finally caught. Even then, there was always a possibility they could be found 'not guilty' on a technicality or be given a lighter sentence due to plea bargaining. Either way, it meant the person would eventually be back on the streets and free to victimize innocent people once again.

Kira's actions, whether they were morally correct or not, were an effective solution. For some people, he was even a figure of justice and hope; especially those who had suffered at the hands of evil.

'Like Misa. The first time I met her she told me she watched a burglar kill her parents. And then his trial was delayed and delayed until it seemed like there was a chance he might get off.'

Kira punished that man and became like a savior to Misa.

It wasn't that Light agreed with Kira's methods. It was just that after being exposed to so many criminals, their repulsive and horrible violence towards others, and their imperviousness to rehabilitation…

'I understand why he thinks the world would be a better place without them and that he's trying to create a world without evil.'

This was why their ideals coincided. The difference was that the original Kira had the power to enforce his vision and Light did not. Which brought this all back around to…

'Would I use the power if I had it?'

After a brief contemplation, Light decided the answer was:

'No. I can understand and even relate to the first Kira's ideals, but I wouldn't go so far as to become a murderer to make the world a better place. Killing is wrong and committing crimes to stop crimes is unjust.'

So.

'The way the original Kira acted…'

While true that it was frighteningly close to Light's ideals…a tremor of uncertainty suddenly flared up within. It gave him pause for thirty seconds. That is, the time it took to quash it.

'What am I thinking? I'm not Kira. I must be crazy to be comparing myself to him.'

Light leaned back in his chair and expelled a breath of relief. A movement in his peripheral vision caught his attention. Ryuzaki was fishing out the remnants of the hot chocolate with a spoon.

'He must have noticed the differences between the original Kira and this one. Why hasn't he mentioned it to me?...Because Yagami Light is the first Kira, so why bring it up?'

It could be that.

'There was that time when I wanted to find out why he wouldn't work on the case. He said it might eventually be proven I was the first Kira and started to say something else…but I cut him off and
It could be that.

'There was also the recent incident where he said I looked like the kind of person who could become Kira...even though I've been putting in so much effort and time to capture this one. Then I punched him, although he kicked me too. So, maybe he figures I already know and bringing it up might cause more problems.'

Light's hands clenched into fists.

He wasn't sure that would ever stop bothering him. He could admit, to himself, that the original Kira had ideals he related to. However, his method for achieving those ideals was unjust, evil, and any other number of words that all boiled down to "wrong". The fact that he killed the FBI agents made it evident. It may be that Light understood about the slayings of major criminals, but the murder of innocents was unforgivable.

He was distracted from his internal diatribe by Matsuda's voice.

"Misa Misa sure is late. The interview is still going on?"

He had resumed his worried pacing.

"It seems like Yotsuba has many questions for her. That is a good sign," Ryuzaki replied.

Light was not Kira, no matter what Ryuzaki may think. He fully appreciated the value of human life and, unlike Ryuzaki, especially the lives of the innocent and blameless.

It was time to take a stand. Better late than never, he reasoned.

"Ryuzaki. Even if we're having Misa get close to Yotsuba, I think it's too dangerous to make them think she's the second Kira. We should use Namikawa or Aiber to completely dispel that."

"We are. She is saying: 'I was suspected of being the second Kira and captured by L, but exonerated and released'."

"I'm saying that the 'captured by L' part is what's dangerous," Light said in an edged tone.

Ryuzaki, who had turned to face him, looked away.

"But Misa-san wanted to go along with this plan."

Light, whose patience was teetering precariously over a chasm of anger and frustration, was saved the necessity of replying when Soichiro said:

"Don't worry, Light. I'm going to go on TV and announce everything we know."

He planned to go to Demegawa of Sakura TV and then, on air, explain everything. Why he had to quit the police force and that Yotsuba was using the power of Kira.

"Once I announce that, even if the killing of criminals doesn't stop, the killings done by Yotsuba will."

'Oh, no. That is not a good idea.'
Or, to put it more accurately, it was a wildly bad idea.

Light stared downwards, and said:

"But…almost everyone will just think that you're crazy. And, more importantly, you'll be killed by Kira, dad."

His head whipped up when Soichiro raised his voice.

"I know! But no matter what the public thinks, the murders committed by Yotsuba should stop. If you consider that my one life will save so many others…"

Light interrupted. His voice, when he spoke, was also raised.

"Dad! What about mom and Sayu?"

What would have likely become a very heated and lengthy argument was derailed when Ryuzaki calmly asked:

"Yagami-san, could you wait a month on that?"

Light turned in his chair so that his back was to Soichiro. His arms were crossed and his face creased with a frown. He listened to their conversation.

Ryuzaki explaining that, either way, it was set up so the Yotsuba killings were delayed for one month. He wanted Soichiro to wait that amount of time to implement his plan. Soichiro saying that if he announced the connection between Kira and Yotsuba, the killing of criminals might stop too. The detective countering that with Soichiro’s plan, there was a ninety-nine percent probability that the killings would not stop.

"As I have said before, it will just allow Kira to escape," Ryuzaki concluded.

There were a few moments of silence. Light mentally steeled himself.

"What do you think, Light?" Soichiro asked.

'I knew it. I knew I was eventually going to be put in this position.'

Light turned his head, looked his father in the eye, and spoke with aloof composure.

"Dad, I'm sorry but I have to agree with Ryuzaki. Unless Kira is caught, the killings won't stop. If we arrested all seven of them then there's a chance it could stop, but not with your plan. Announcing the names of the seven to the media would create chaos. And if some of the members of these meetings have been threatened with death by Kira to attend, then announcing their names would unfairly destroy their whole life."

"True," Soichiro said quietly.

After a short intermission, which felt much longer, he turned to the detective.

"Ryuzaki, all right. I'll wait a month and I'll help you until then. But if we cannot capture Kira in a month, I will take the actions I just outlined."

"I understand. Don't worry, with your help we will definitely capture him within a month," Ryuzaki answered.
With that out of the way, Soichiro leaned towards him.

"Well, now that I'm on the team again, I have to say that I'm also strongly against putting Amane in this type of danger," he said in a voice that Light had heard many times before.

It was a voice that denoted implacability. It was a welcome sound to Light in these circumstances, but perhaps not so much for the detective.

"...I see," Ryuzaki said tersely.

It was then that Matsuda, who was keeping an eye on the garage, announced that Misa was back.

It took approximately ten minutes for Mogi and Misa to arrive at the room. In that time, Ryuzaki faced the combined force of Light and Soichiro. With two minutes to spare, the detective's plan was well and truly finished.

It turned out the interview had been successful. Misa was hired by Yotsuba for their advertisement and three of the seven had already contacted her privately.

"So, I'll just go along with their requests and investigate each one just as planned, right?" she said, smiling.

"Looks like that plan has been canceled," Ryuzaki answered peevishly.

Light scowled, but still moved when Misa rushed toward the detective.

"What? After all this? Don't be ridiculous!" she said loudly, while gripping his hair and shaking his head about.

Thus making it rather challenging for Ryuzaki to reply, although he managed to say:

"I-it's not my choice."

Light caught her wrist and pulled her away. His expression was severe when he said:

"This puts you in danger, Misa. I won't tell you not to appear in the commercial, but from now on we'll deny the part about you being interrogated by L. Mogi-san will act as your bodyguard and you will just be there as an actor."

He released her wrist and waited. After a slight hesitation, she answered:

"Okay, if that's what you want, Light."

Light nodded. She gave him a warm smile, and said:

"Well, I'm tired and need to get up early tomorrow. Good night."

She walked to the elevator, entered, but then peered back from behind the doors.

"Light, want to come to bed with me?" she asked flirtatiously.

Light, with genuine confusion, responded:

"What are you talking about, Misa?"

She stepped back from the doors, allowing them to close. However, her parting words were still
readily heard.

"I know, we're saving that until after you catch Kira. Don't be so shy, Light."

Light frowned.

'What is she…' 

"Don't be so shy, Light-kun," Ryuzaki parroted.

"I'm not," Light said tersely.

"Why are you answering so seriously, Light-kun?" he asked mockingly.

Light's eyes narrowed. Then, after a brief internal struggle, he made an executive decision to ignore him. Ryuzaki was definitely trying to provoke him, but now was not the time or place to have an argument. Especially since it wasn't even about what Ryuzaki was really mad about. Light resolved to deal with it later, when they were alone. He knew, from experience, that there were only so many of Ryuzaki's passive-aggressive shots he could take before snapping. It was best to handle it as soon as possible.

For the next hour or so, the team discussed the day's events. Minus Ryuzaki, that is. He sat with his back to the group and made no contribution. To the uninformed eye, he appeared to be quietly pondering upon some important subject. Light knew better. To the trained eye, it was patently clear that he was sulking.

The team needed to come up with a new plan to capture Kira, but decided to continue brainstorming ideas tomorrow. It was the tail end of a long and tiring day and, as the others departed, there were muffled yawns interspersed among the "good night" farewells. Minus Ryuzaki, of course, who stayed stolidly silent.

Once they were alone, Light said:

"I'm ready to go to bed. How about you?"

Ryuzaki's answer was to get up and walk…

'Is he actually stalking?' 

…toward the elevator.

Naturally, when they arrived at the bedroom, Ryuzaki detached the cuffs outside the door and opened it for Light to go in.

Naturally, Light put his arm around his waist and limited Ryuzaki's range of choices. That is, he could accompany him into the room willingly or unwillingly.

Ryuzaki's choice was somewhere in the middle.

When the door shut, their faces were flushed and both were breathing a little heavier. Light had his hands on the door; on either side of Ryuzaki's shoulders. There was a lull while they each caught their breath, and then:

"What is your problem, Ryuzaki? Say it," Light said quietly.

In response, Ryuzaki reached for the doorknob. Without breaking eye contact, Light caught his
wrist. He held on and, with more volume, repeated:

"Say it."

His features set in a way that Light had come to know and intensely dislike. Still, it removed the
guesswork on what his next move should be.

"Fine, Ryuzaki. If you won't talk, then I'll say it. You're mad that your plan got canceled. You're
sulking about it like a child who can't have his way. What you're conveniently ignoring is that it was
a reckless plan and, if we continued it, would have led to Misa being killed."

Ryuzaki just watched him, mulishly. This helped Light decide, against all experience, that it was a
good idea to outline the plan's many flaws. In detail.

"Your first idea was that Misa should get close to the Yotsuba executives and seduce them. I wanted
to believe you were joking, but you were serious. When Misa refused to do that, you came up with
what she did today. She didn't realize it, but it's basically just another version of 'seduce them'. She
gave out her contact information, they would individually contact her, and then she'd go along with
their requests and investigate them."

Ryuzaki reached with his other hand and attempted to pull Light's grip from his wrist. Light refused
to let go and a spirited mini-battle ensued in the backdrop as he continued speaking.

"The three who contacted her are obviously stupid. They didn't make the connection between
Matsuda randomly showing up, the pitch to use Misa in a commercial, and her 'secret' contact with
L. I don't know if the other four noticed, but there's a high chance at least one did. Because it's so
ridiculously obvious, Ryuzaki. Then there's Namikawa. He said he'd stay on the sidelines, but who
knows if he will or not? He may decide to tell the others everything. If he did then even the stupid
ones would see that Misa showing up, with her convenient connection to L, is a set-up."

The ongoing mini-battle escalated when Ryuzaki pinched the inside of his wrist. Light withstood it
and retaliated by greatly tightening his grip. Ryuzaki endured it.

"The interview today went well because all of Misa's lines were prepared for her by us. There's no
way you didn't notice it during the rehearsals. She's a great actor, you were right about that. But it
was clear she didn't understand why she was saying this or that line. She's not stupid, but she's not
smart either. And you want to put her in an uncontrolled situation so she can 'investigate' the
individual members? Where she won't have Aiber to bail her out if something goes wrong?"

Ryuzaki was still pinching him, and Light still had a death grip on his wrist. There was definitely
going to be bruising.

"Finally, Ryuzaki, none of the individual members know who Kira is. So, unless Kira is one of the
stupid ones, Misa won't be going on a date with him. And even if he was, and absolutely nothing
got wrong, it still only leaves less than a month for her to get it out of him. Considering he kept
quiet about it to the other six, I highly doubt he'd confide his secret so quickly. If he even is one of
the seven. Kira could just be connected to them. That's an even worse case scenario for Misa. They
all, whether Kira is one of them or not, know her real name. She could be killed at anytime."

Ryuzaki's fingers retreated from his wrist. Light, gracious in victory, loosened his hold. The painful,
stinging sensation from the pinch, though, made him decide that actually releasing Ryuzaki's wrist
was currently out of the question.

The detective crossed one arm over his chest and silently glared at him. Light subtly shifted his
posture to communicate this:

'I will wait all night if I have to.'

Message received; Ryuzaki spoke in a quiet, cold voice.

"Your concern for Misa Misa is a ruse. Your critical points are all based on the fabrication that you care about her well-being. They are invalid for that reason and one other. You have failed to take into account that I was aware of the various problems and I, along with Aiber, had already prepared countermeasures to deal with them."

There were many things Light thought he might say, but this was not even tangentially related to any of them. Caught unprepared, he was struck speechless. Ryuzaki took advantage of this uncommon opportunity and kept speaking.

"It seems that I must spell it out for you, Light-kun. I am a detective and I am the best three in the world. Yet it never occurred to you that I might actually know what I am doing…no, that is incorrect. Even if it did occur to you, it would not matter in this situation. Your newfound concern for Misa Misa and your earnest compilation of the problems in my plan are founded on another reason."

Light, in spite of himself, wondered what it was. He was still in a state of shock and, in that suspended space, all he could see was Ryuzaki's face and all he could hear was his voice.

"In reality, despite all the objections you have raised, you were fully involved with the execution of the plan. If you truly meant any of them, you would not have participated at all. My conclusion is that, when we went to Misa Misa's room that night, you were outmaneuvered by me. You, Light-kun, hate to lose to anyone. Everything you have said, all your 'concerns' since then have been nothing more than an effort to reclaim victory from me."

He flinched. Light realized that he was clenching his wrist with inordinate force.

"Oh, sorry," he mumbled. And let go.

Ryuzaki gingerly massaged his wrist to get some life back into it. Light stared at him in silence. Deducing that the conversation was over, Ryuzaki slightly turned and reached for the doorknob. He stopped and turned back. He looked at Light questioningly.

It was because Light's hand was pressed against the line where the door and the wall met. Just above the doorknob.

It was strange. He had not actually chosen to prevent his departure. There was no decision-making process involved. He just suddenly moved his hand.

He once thought that Ryuzaki was the kind of person who would match him: word for word, deed for deed, action for action. Instead, Light had discovered he was far more complicated than that. It depended on what word, deed, or action. Otherwise, he was just as likely to withdraw or retreat.

This was Ryuzaki matching him word for word. Light wasn't sure he liked it.

He was sure that this conversation should end, though. He should step back and just let Ryuzaki go. They should go their separate ways for a while. He thought that even now. Right at this very moment.

But, then, his hand just seemed to move on its own.
His voice, when he spoke, was distant. "Then…today? What do you think…"

Ryuzaki cut in. "Your father does not agree with putting Misa Misa in danger. He will not 'go along' with the plan because his concern is genuine. You knew that and allied with him against me."

He crossed his arm back over his chest and regarded Light resentfully. "You were counting on it," he said bitterly.

Light broke eye contact and stared down at the floor. He vaguely noted Ryuzaki's hands closing around his arms a few seconds later. 'He probably thinks I'm going to punch him.'

Whereas, in actuality, Light had no such intentions. He just needed a little time to regain equilibrium. Once accomplished, he looked up and smiled.

It was not a particularly nice smile. "Ryuzaki…this is unbelievable. You are such a sore loser. You will say anything to avoid admitting that I'm right," he said amusedly.

Ryuzaki's hands dropped from his arms. Light continued. "You didn't think of strategies to compensate for the problems with the plan. That's impossible because there's no way to compensate for the majority of them. It only worked this long because the conditions were controllable. Misa had all the lines memorized, we rehearsed them, and Aiber was there to direct the questioning."

"I am telling you that Aiber and I…"

Light cut in. "And I am telling you that it's impossible. It was a weak plan, Ryuzaki. It was a bad plan that relied on Misa's willingness to do anything to help me. But what you two have completely ignored in all this is that I don't want her to die for me."

Ryuzaki smiled at him. It was not a particularly kind smile. "It must have been difficult for you, Light-kun. All those days we worked on the script together, all those hours we spent rehearsing with Misa Misa."

He reached and placed a comforting hand on Light's shoulder. "You were so worried about her personal safety the entire time. I did not realize the depth of your distress. You could have told me. I would have listened," he said with cloying sympathy.

Light jerked back from his touch, as if stung. It happened in an instant. Whatever had been holding back his temper, whatever inner barrier had kept his resentment and anger in check, snapped in two. And emotions, dynamic and volatile, surged forward over the pieces. His mind, his intellect, was drowned out by the deafening roar.
In other words, he opened his mouth and all sorts of things came out.

Loudly.

"What is it with you? Why are you always going on about Misa? She's my type, she's the perfect woman for me. Oh, but I don't care about her. I have no real concern for her. It's perfectly all right with me if she dies. I don't care if she lives or dies! Everything you say is ridiculous. What the hell is your problem, Ryuzaki? Why do you keep bringing this up?"

Faced with this tidal wave of words, Ryuzaki elected to warily watch him. Which was good because, for better or worse, Light had quite a bit more to say.

"I told you that it's one-sided. She just randomly showed up one night and said she loved me. I haven't been able to get rid of her since. Ryuzaki, she won't leave me alone! Do you understand? Can you comprehend these simple words? I make an effort not to see her. I barely talk to her when I do. She's not my type. She's not the perfect woman for me. I'm sleeping with you, I'm with you! Doesn't that tell you anything? About my likes and dislikes? About my type? You keep trying to make something out of nothing. You make an issue out of the fact that I don't want her to die for me! Does it ever occur to you that I don't want anyone to die for me?"

Light had to take a moment to get his breath back. Ryuzaki started to say:

"I thi…"

But Light was having none of that.

"Your little comments, your snide looks. I notice them, Ryuzaki! I just don't say anything because it's not worth it. You're so irrational and stubborn about this. It's like you're jealous or something and…I have…had en…"

Light's flow of words trickled to a stop when Ryuzaki's expression changed. It allowed for the dramatic return of his intellect. After a brief examination of what he had just said, it was apparent why Ryuzaki had a grin on his face. Light's eyes narrowed.

He turned and walked towards the bathroom, throwing over his shoulder:

"Shut up, Ryuzaki."

Ryuzaki followed at his heels.

"But I haven't said anything yet!"

Light ignored him

"Now that Light-kun has pieced together the true reason behind my observations, he should comfort and reassure me. He could gently hold my hand and tell me…"

Light slammed the bathroom door in his face. From the other side came a sound he had never heard before. It was soft, faint chuckling.

'He's laughing at me.'

Light opened the door. Ryuzaki was in mid-turn to leave when he caught his arm. So fast that it almost seemed like one motion, he pulled him in and closed the door. His hands held his shoulders. Ryuzaki was still smiling merrily.
"I thought Light-kun did not want to talk to me. He told me to 'shut up'."

"I don't want to talk to you. And I don't want to listen to you."

Light's gaze was considering. Option after option was examined and discarded in the space of seconds. Until, finally, only one remained. He wasn't quite certain about it, but…

"Maybe I just want to screw you," he said softly, as if to himself.

Ryuzaki adopted a pensive expression.

"I believe Light-kun meant to say have 'experiences' with me."

'He's been saving that one.'

Light smiled.

"No, I meant 'fuck you', Ryuzaki," he said sweetly.

Ryuzaki's lips curved into an appreciative grin, his eyes gleaming with humor.

Light liked that about him.

'I never have to explain the joke.'

His hold on his shoulders changed. What was loose became binding as he pushed him back against the door.

Still smiling, Light stepped forward.

And that was when everything went weird.

…Well, weirder.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter will be posted in parts due to its length and the tarot description will be located at the end of the final part. Thank you for reading!
The next day dawned bright and early, as was its wont.

Light was up and witness to the rising splendor of the morning sun and the slow wakening of the city below. He was sitting at the table, in repose, with his cheek cradled in one hand.

The glaring light and noise were getting on his nerves.

The shrill clamor of the alarm clock, not long after, also disturbed him. He eventually got up and turned it off. Ryuzaki had blunted the sound by putting a pillow over his head. Light stared down at him for a while, bracing himself for whatever may come.

He gingerly touched his shoulder and softly said his name. There was no response. Gently placing a hand on his arm, he quietly called again. There was a decided lack of movement.

One minute later found Light attempting to wrestle the pillow away from a resisting Ryuzaki.

"Come on, Ryuzaki! Get up or we're going to be late!"

Ryuzaki let go of his end so suddenly that Light tripped backwards and almost fell. And now it was upon him. The moment that he had spent the better part of the night awake and brooding about. Their eyes met.

Ryuzaki gave him a nasty, disgruntled look and then got up and hobbled off to the bathroom.

Leaving behind a very surprised Light; standing motionless and still clutching the pillow.

In the past, Ryuzaki had always awoke before Light. He was normally dressed and ready to go before the alarm even went off. However, over the past three weeks, that had gradually begun to change. It led Light to the discovery that Ryuzaki was not a morning person. The scenario that had just played out was not atypical. It was, in fact, business as usual nowadays which was why Light was so surprised. He had been anticipating…something. He wasn't sure exactly what, of course. It wasn't like he had ever been in this kind of situation before. Not with Ryuzaki or anybody else either.

Suddenly, it struck him. Ryuzaki was still half-asleep. Once he had his coffee, it would likely come out. Despite the content of this supposition, Light felt a little more assured. It was easy to respond appropriately once he had an idea of what to expect. So, over breakfast then. From Ryuzaki would come a cutting comment, or a subtle dig, or perhaps he would just coldly ignore Light.

But…no.

When they reached the kitchen, everything was normal. Light set two cups on the table. Ryuzaki smiled absently at him and spooned way too much sugar into his coffee. Light, intently observing, barely repressed a shudder. Ryuzaki pretended not to notice and turned back to his book. Business as usual. Again.

Light was perplexed.

They arrived at the operations room ahead of everyone else. By then, Light had surmised that he was over-thinking this matter and dismissed it. Soon after, the others arrived and everyone gathered for an impromptu meeting. Ryuzaki was conspicuously silent and so Light started things off. There were
many points to consider and a new approach was required. They had three weeks left to apprehend Kira before the deadline of one month ran out.

He began by explaining Ryuzaki's plan and to what stage it had been carried out. Therefore, the first item on the agenda was reducing L’s role in Misa’s arrest and confinement as the second Kira. Light put forth the idea that Aiber could be used for this.

"We can have him tell Yotsuba that L was behind her arrest, but the police were the only ones involved in her interrogation. Aiber could say he confirmed it with contacts in the police or something like that. I'm sure he can come up with something believable. Then there will no longer be any grounds to suspect she may have seen L or know his identity."

Light noted the flash of disapproval that crossed Soichiro's face at the mention of Aiber. And also Ryuzaki, who was looking off to the side and constantly fidgeting. Nonetheless, there was no voiced dissension and Watari agreed to pass on the instructions to Aiber. Light, not for the first time, was appreciative of Watari's presence. He had yet to physically meet him, but his professionalism was unwavering and reliable. And such a welcome contrast to the detective, especially at times like this.

There was a small interruption when Mogi had to depart. He, as Misa's manager and bodyguard, was responsible for escorting her to her movie shoot.

Light, as he watched him leave, took a few sips of his coffee. Though not normally given to such excess, it was his third cup of the day. He had only managed an hour's sleep before that dream woke him up. Same dream as before: same setting, same players, same events, and same frail and sickly Ryuzaki. This time, though, he had found it impossible to go back to sleep afterward. Hence, the caffeine binge he was currently on.

Aiber had written up a fairly detailed account of the previous day's interview. It was decided that they would each go back to their desks, read and analyze it, and regroup for another meeting in two hours. Light, of course, had already read it but wanted to go over it again. Four of the Yotsuba executives had been in attendance at the interview. He reasoned that if Kira was one of the members, he definitely would have been there. Misa, with her enticing connection to L, made it an opportunity he couldn't afford to pass up. So, he wanted to do some further research into Ooi, Shimura, Higuchi, and Mido.

He vaguely noted Matsuda lingering as he turned back to his computer. Matsuda often made little efforts at small talk with Ryuzaki. The results of those efforts were varied and largely dependent on Ryuzaki's mood. Light sometimes wondered if Matsuda wanted to befriend him or maybe just be acknowledged by him. Ryuzaki had been quite unforgiving about his "heroics", as Matsuda called it, in uncovering the Yotsuba meetings. There had been a fair number of comments referencing his stupidity in the aftermath. Most of them made directly to Matsuda.

Yet still he attempted to converse with the detective. Light shook his head and thought:

'Good luck with that.'

He was half-listening when Matsuda said:

"I talked to Misa Misa earlier and she told me Mogi was really energetic and cheerful yesterday. He followed my example, just like you said he should."

Ryuzaki's side was to Light. He was still fidgeting.

"It is unfortunate that you are no longer Misa-san's manager, Matsuda-san."
"Yeah, but now I can spend all my time working on the investigation with you and Light."

The mention of his name caught Light's attention. He turned his head to observe.

"Yes. You were very talented at being Misa-san's manager. It suited you."

Matsuda beamed.

"Thanks, Ryuzaki!"

Light turned away, grinning. How typical of Matsuda to only hear the praise in such a double-sided compliment.

Evidently deciding the footholds of friendship had been established, Matsuda leaned forward.

"I noticed that you look a little tired today. Did you sleep badly?"

There was a pause. Light glanced over again and, to his surprise, found that Ryuzaki was watching him. A mocking smile flickered briefly on his lips just before he turned back to Matsuda.

'He wouldn't...'

"Yes. It was difficult to sleep because Light-kun was being very aggressive towards me."

He would.

Light froze.

"Oh, no! Don't tell me you guys were fighting again?"

Another pause. Then, with an air of reflection, Ryuzaki answered:

"It would not be incorrect to call it 'fighting' in this instance. But it is more commonly known as havi..."

Light unfroze.

"An argument," he said loudly.

And heard the touch of shrillness in his own voice. All eyes turned towards him. Including, he noticed, his father's. Into the leaden silence, Light smiled and spoke in a carefully modulated tone.

"We just had a small disagreement about the case. And...and we were up late debating the finer points. It wasn't a big deal or anything."

Still smiling, he looked at the detective.

"Everything's fine now. Right, Ryuzaki?"

He nodded in agreement. The sharp humor etched in his features, however, was an unsettling portent. Light picked up his coffee cup.

Desperate times...

Matsuda, addressing Ryuzaki, said:

"So, you guys worked everything out? That's great!"
"Yes. It took a long time, though. Light-kun was very focused on acquiring cont…”

Light cut in.

"I'm sure no one is interested in hearing all the boring conclusions and details of our discussion, Ryuzaki. Matsuda-san probably wants to get back to work and…”

Light, as he spoke, made an expansive gesture towards Matsuda. While doing so, the contents of the cup he was holding sloshed over and spilled onto Ryuzaki.

…Desperate measures.

"I'm sorry, Ryuzaki! I can't believe I was so careless! Are you okay?"

Ryuzaki just stared, wide-eyed and open-mouthed. Matsuda was fussing over him and a concerned Soichiro was approaching. Light was aware of them, but the majority of his attention was centered on Ryuzaki. When his mouth closed into a thin line and his eyes narrowed, Light sprang into action.

Minutes later, they were in the bedroom. Ryuzaki released the handcuffs and, without a word, stamped off to the bathroom. The sound of the shower being turned on followed soon after.

Light sincerely hoped he would take a while. He also hoped that Soichiro and Matsuda didn't notice the way he had manhandled Ryuzaki into the elevator. He had been talking about getting him a change of clothes and apologizing. Maybe that had served as a sufficient distraction. It was meant to, after all.

Light was pacing back and forth. A string of perturbed thoughts accompanied this anxious movement.

'I wasn't expecting that.'

If there was one thing he really hated, it was being caught off-guard. It shook his view of himself and the world around him. Profoundly and negatively. It also drastically impeded his ability to respond appropriately. Though, truthfully, effectiveness was not always impaired. Dumping a cup of lukewarm coffee on Ryuzaki did halt the conversation.

'He wasn't giving me any choice.'

But it didn't solve the underlying problem. And Ryuzaki was vindictive. A quality of his that amused Light, for the most part. However, the entertainment value was vastly diminished when…

'It's aimed at me.'

Or, rather, when it was aimed and hit. Ryuzaki, when he put his mind to it, had an unerring ability to know exactly where to strike at Light. To make him flustered, or defensive, or angry. To, basically, put him off-balance. Then, while in that state, he said and did things…

'I would normally never say or do.'

The shower stopped.

And so did Light. He stared at the bathroom door.

If Ryuzaki was angry…no, he was definitely angry. Or upset. Or angry and upset. Or…Light caught himself.
Trying to identify exactly what Ryuzaki was thinking or feeling, right now, was the equivalent of entering into an infinite mental loop. A lemniscate of pointlessness, he thought dryly.

No, what he should concentrate on was... a noise penetrated the whirlpool of Light's thoughts and emotions. It was the sound of water running. Ryuzaki was having a bath. Practically, it made sense. There was a reason behind his constant fidgeting and shifting earlier. And, judiciously speaking, it gave Light exactly what he required at this juncture.

A respite.

What he needed to do was figure out what to say to Ryuzaki.

The clarity and force of his intellect, allied with a sense of purpose, resulted in the collapse of the maelstrom within.

In other words, Light calmed down.

He went and sat down at the table.

In truth, he had known that Ryuzaki would retaliate in some way. It was possible that it could have been headed off too. There had been opportunities, after all. Light could have talked to him during breakfast or even before. There were many reasons why he didn't.

He didn't know what to say.

He didn't know how to explain himself.

He didn't know what had come over him.

He didn't know if Ryuzaki thought differently of him now.

He didn't want to find out.

It was just... things went weird between them last night. And rough. Very, very rough. It was Light who had instigated that tone and, quite deliberately, enforced it. When he took him against the bathroom door, and then in the shower, and then on the bed. Looking back on it was like looking at another person. The vivid images of memory contained more than just him, though. He thought of Ryuzaki and winced.

Light was not a gentle person. Not really. He could act gentle, of course, if a situation or person called for it. But it was a conscious effort and not something that came naturally. He was, however, not a rough person either. He had never been aggressive towards the other people he had slept with. There had not been many, but he recalled being sometimes gentle, usually considerate, and occasionally assertive. That was how he normally was with Ryuzaki too.

Just not last night. Not at all.

Light had no idea what had gotten into him.

A thought meandered across his plane of consciousness. Or maybe it was...

'What had gotten out.'
What does it mean?

Something had come over him, something had gotten out. What does it matter? It had affected him to such a degree that it changed him into someone…

‘…something’

…unrecognizable. But did it matter where it came from? Seriously?

Light shook his head. This movement focused his mind and suppressed the strain and worry he felt. Not completely, of course, but enough so that he would not become bogged down. It was because those emotions did not matter to him at this time.

What mattered was the result. This was understandable considering the result was just behind a closed door only a few feet away. One that was eventually going to open. And, when it did, Light was going to have to…

'to...what?'

Apologize? Make amends? Explain himself? The thing was he knew what he should apologize for and why he should make amends. What he did not comprehend was his own actions in how he treated Ryuzaki the previous night. If he didn't get why he did it, then there was no way to explain it to Ryuzaki. As well, judging by the stunt the detective had just pulled, he wouldn't accept…

Wait a minute.

That was behavior he had never seen in Ryuzaki before. It was unprecedented in its spitefulness and vengefulness. If he continued with it, Soichiro and the others were going to find out something Light didn't want anyone to know. He briefly imagined his father's reaction to finding out his son was sleeping with L. A detective who suspected Light was a Kira. A person who he was restrained to by a chain. A sort of inner sense of horror accompanied his examination of these details and more. What they all added up to was a massive conflict of interest and an immense lack of professionalism. That was how his dad would see it. There was one other detail, of course.

His son sleeping with Ryuzaki, another man.

It was not so long ago that Soichiro had suffered a heart attack. It had been brought about by stress and overwork on the Kira case. It wasn't that Light thought finding out about Ryuzaki and him would cause another one, it was more that those causes were still prevalent in Soichiro's life. And Light and Ryuzaki's situation was an absolutely sure-fire way to increase his father's stress.

So, then.

He should focus on finding a way to pacify Ryuzaki. Why Light did what he did, and what it meant was irrelevant right now. As soon as Ryuzaki was done his bath, they would be heading back to the operations room. This lent a sense of urgency because…

'If I know him, and I do, he's not going to let up.'

A way to circumvent Ryuzaki's antagonism. He had to find it quickly. This, however, was easier said than done and Light was still examining various stratagems when the bathroom door opened.
Ryuzaki wore only a towel, loosely draped around his waist. Light watched as he traveled to the closet and pulled out clean jeans and another white sweatshirt. He had his back to him which allowed for a good, long perusal of the marks that marred his fair skin. When he finished and turned around, Light hurriedly raised his gaze. Their eyes met.

The stress was palpable. There was an opportunity for Light here, one that he absolutely needed to capitalize on. It was just that it was simple enough to come up with what he should or shouldn't say to restore equanimity while sitting here alone. Implementation, though, was a bit more complex. Especially given the way Ryuzaki was looking at him.

His cool expression was measured and assessing. It gave Light the sudden sense that he was being analyzed, sized up, picked apart. A discomforting realization formed: platitudes, excuses, and apologies were not going to aid him here. Not having the resources or knowledge to proceed introduced a troubling feeling to Light.

Helplessness.

One that he could not tolerate. Light stood up.

Ryuzaki spoke.

"What do you think of the way Misa-san acted last night?" he asked in a quiet way.

Light, half-way to crossing the distance between them, stopped. He took a moment to quell the familiar flare of irritation within and then calmly replied:

"I haven't really thought about it, but I guess I can see why she was disappointed the plan was canceled. We all put a lot of time and effort into it, after all."

"I am not referring to that, Light-kun."

Irritation made a dynamic comeback…

'So, you're going to make me say it.'

…and Light's annoyance was evident in his tone.

"I have no idea why she said we were saving…whatever…until after I catch Kira. I already told you, Ryuzaki, about her and me. I haven't thought about it because there's nothing to think about. What don't you understand here?"

Light might have continued speaking were it not for the change in Ryuzaki's countenance. A moment of confusion; a small waver in the unsettling intensity of his stare. It gave Light pause, namely because it seemed to be genuine. After a brief, internal adjustment:

"What did you notice?" Light asked curiously.

"Misa-san will do anything to be of help to you. That is why she agreed to participate."

"Right. And?"

"Her reaction to its cancellation was unusual."

Light recalled last night's conversation between the three of them.

"You mean after I told her it put her in danger?"
"Yes."

Misa had agreed with Light. Well, more specifically, she had not argued with him and simply acquiesced to his instructions.

"Well, she said she was tired. And maybe she finally understood what I've been saying all along. Continuing with the plan would have led to her being killed."

"But Misa-san said she wanted to be of use and would gladly die for you. Yet she backed down immediately when…"

Light interjected.

"Look, Ryuzaki, I think you're reading too much into this. It was late, she was tired, and she listened to me for once. There's nothing else there," he said matter-of-factly.

The detective regarded him questioningly.

"You believe I am overthinking this?"

Light's answer was short and succinct.

"Yeah, you are."

Ryuzaki looked down.

"I see," he said flatly.

And shuffled toward where he had dropped the chain on the bed.

'More like thrown.'

When he approached, Light offered his right arm instead of his usual left. Ryuzaki let this pass without comment and a minute later they were boarding the elevator.

Light realized he had about twenty seconds to speak privately with Ryuzaki and potentially head off any more retaliatory maneuvers. A show of concern was the best approach, he decided.

Sincere concern.

Awkwardly delivered.

Light stared up at the display of the floor numbers flashing by, and asked:

"Do you feel better now? I mean, after having a bath and uh…relaxing a bit."

And awkwardly received.

Ryuzaki looked to the side, away from Light, and answered:

"Yes."

Light's fascination with the floor numbers remained unabated.

"Good. I'm…glad to hear that."

As did Ryuzaki's with the elevator wall.
"Is Light-kun's shoulder hurting?"

"No, it…it's fine. Just a little stiff. That's all."

The elevator stopped. It was a relief when the doors opened and they stepped out into the operations room.

It was only a short while later when a call came in from Mogi. Misa had tricked him and got away. Ryuzaki responded nonchalantly, saying he understood if she wanted to have some fun away from surveillance. Matsuda and Soichiro were visibly shaken and worried. Light just calmly called her. Unusually, though, he was unable to get through.

"She's turned off the phone that she told me she'd always leave on in case I called," he informed the others.

It was decided that Mogi would return to headquarters. After that, all they could do was wait for Misa to return Light's call or for her to come back on her own.

'So much for her listening to me.'

Light, in truth, found this latest incident with Misa to be somewhat disquieting. Especially on the heels of the conversation he just had with Ryuzaki. It was fine if she snuck off to go shopping or on a date; some normal activity. It wasn't fine if she was proceeding with the plan and, even worse, in her own way. The detective could doubt him all he wanted, but Light honestly did not want to see any harm come to Misa.

He had no special feelings for her. That was accurate. But he didn't need those to be worried about her safety. After all…

'I don't want to see her or anyone else be brutally murdered.'

It was shortly thereafter that Misa returned.

She came into the operations room, arms raised in a celebratory fashion.

"Light! Higuchi is Kira!" she announced triumphantly.

The proof was recorded on her cell phone.

"Since I'm Kira and I want you to trust me, I will halt the killings of criminals. And once you realize I'm Kira, you'll marry me, Misa," said Higuchi.

"Sure!" answered Misa.

Misa had disappeared to go on a date with Higuchi. They went for a drive and this was when she had obtained confirmation he was Kira. The team's reactions to the recording were varied.

"So, if the killings stop then Higuchi is Kira…this even stops what you were worried about, Chief. Wow, Misa Misa!" Matsuda exclaimed excitedly.

"Yes," Soichiro replied curtly.

"Misa," Light said with obvious dismay.

Ryuzaki stared at Misa and said nothing at all.
Which left gaining more information up to Light. He questioned Misa about how she persuaded Higuchi to admit he was Kira. She had told Higuchi she would marry Kira. Since he was crazy about her, and also believed she was the second Kira, he told her his identity. Light thought it sounded pretty weak, as far as plans went, but then again…

'Higuchi's obviously one of the stupid ones.'

As was Misa’s…strategy, for lack of a better word. She assumed they could now just go ahead and catch Higuchi. It wasn’t that easy, though.

"If he tells the other seven that they should 'stop the killing in order to bring Misa, the second Kira, on our side' then we won't know who Kira is," he explained to her.

Ryuzaki was still conspicuously silent. Light turned to him.

"Wait…we can just confirm with Namikawa if something like that came up before the killings stopped."

"Yes."

The detective was busily arranging sugar cubes into various structures. He did not turn around or cease this activity when he continued speaking.

Ryuzaki thought that if Higuchi had Kira's power, he would stop the killings without telling anyone. If he didn't, he would have to bring it up at the meeting and he doubted Kira would act on Higuchi's personal request.

Soichiro added that he wasn't sure Namikawa would tell them the truth. Light countered that if they told him Higuchi was Kira, he would have to side with L. Consequently, he would not lie to them.

Ryuzaki chimed back in.

"Either way, if the criminal killings do indeed stop…"

An interlude while he carefully added another cube to the mini-tower he was building on his coffee cup handle.

"…Higuchi has the power of Kira. That is clear," he concluded.

"That would be true," Light concurred.

Misa's contribution, at this point, was:

"Yay!"

It was still more than Matsuda's, however, when Ryuzaki asked him:

"Would you call this a triumph, Matsuda-san?"

Matsuda, in a rare display of acumen, did not answer.

Light took a moment to think everything over.

He could understand that Misa thought she was helping the investigation. And she had, to some degree. It was just that the amount of danger she was in now was immeasurably higher than before. And she, mystifyingly, didn't seem to have any conception of this clear cause and effect. There was
another problem present too.

He spoke it aloud.

They still did not know how Kira killed and if the killings stopped, they wouldn't be able to find out. So, they needed to find out before capturing him. The issue was Misa and her claim to be the second Kira. It put her in severe danger.

He addressed Ryuzaki and asked:

"What should we do? At this rate Misa might be killed."

A brief interval, and then Ryuzaki asked Misa for more details about her conversation with Higuchi. Misa had told Higuchi that if he could prove he was Kira, she would prove she was the second Kira. Ryuzaki pointed out that if the killings stopped, she would have to kill to prove she was the second Kira and asked her if she could do it. She stated she couldn't. And that was when it became crystal clear that she was labouring under a false assumption. She thought Higuchi just wanted to marry her. There was no possibility he would kill her.

Light, not for the first time, internally questioned whether Misa actually understood the majority of what was said to her.

"No, marriage isn't his main goal. If you aren't the second Kira, he'll kill you," he explained anyway.

No, not much comprehension there. That was evident in her reply.

"Oh, you're jealous of Higuchi? Don't worry; you're the only one I'll marry."

Light gave this the amount of attention it deserved.

That is, none.

When Light next addressed the detective, urgency was conveyed in his tone.

"This is bad; we can't worry about how he kills. Let's capture Higuchi."

Ryuzaki looked at him from the corner of his eye.

"In order to keep Misa-san out of danger?"

Light placed his hands on the desk, beside Ryuzaki, and emphatically stated:

"Yes."

"Light…” Misa uttered breathlessly, obviously touched.

Light explained.

Considering Misa did this because she thought it would help catch Higuchi, Light felt they didn't have any choice. As well, maybe they could learn how he killed after capturing him. Ryuzaki pointed out they wouldn't capture Higuchi unless the criminal killings stopped. Therefore, they had time to try other tactics. On that note, he contacted Wedy.

It turned out Namikawa, Higuchi, and Mido had major security systems. Higuchi, especially. He'd even recently built an underground room that blocked out electronic waves. It had taken Wedy two days to break in. Ryuzaki showed no interest in that information and instead asked her to attach
cameras and listening devices in his cars. All six of them, fifty devices each.
Misa, taking this as some sort of cue, asked:

"Okay, so I'll meet with Higuchi in his car and have him reveal how he kills?"

Light's frustration, when he spoke, was unmistakable.

"No! If you ask him that, he'll know you aren't the second Kira. You stay put, Misa."

Ryuzaki agreed and proposed a different way to proceed.

"How about we create a situation where Higuchi is forced to show us how he kills?"

"You have an idea?" Light asked interestedly.

"I think so. But before that, there's something that has been bothering me."

He still watched him from the corner of his eye.

"Light-kun, I'm sorry to bring this up again…but I'm just going to straight-out ask."

When nothing else was forthcoming, Light asked:

"What?"

Ryuzaki turned his head to regard him fully.

"Do you remember how to kill?"

Light's eyes widened.

'I should've known.'

His voice, when he replied, was subdued.

"You're still on this? How many times must I tell you I'm not Kira? You…"

Ryuzaki interjected.

"Please answer the question. Do you remember?"

Light stared, a frown marring his features. He didn't want to dignify the question with a response, but…

'Maybe he's asking me for another reason.'

It was possible that Light misunderstood where he was coming from, much like he had earlier when Ryuzaki asked him about Misa's unusual behavior. Given that…

'I won't assume anything.'

"I do not," he answered truthfully.

"What about you, Misa-san?"

"I don't either. I'm not Kira!" she replied angrily.
He turned back to Light.

"Light-kun, please seriously analyze what I'm about to say. How you answer may determine if we can capture Kira."

A pause, and then:

"Yagami Light was Kira. And Kira's power passed on to someone else while Yagami Light has forgotten that he was once Kira. I want you to analyze what I say while assuming those statements are true. Can you do that?"

Light nodded, and said:

"Okay, I'll try."

"Yagami Light was Kira. And the power passed to someone else…Did it pass on through Yagami Light's will? Or is there someone operating behind the scenes who switched the power to someone else. Which is it?"

Light closed his eyes, partly to give Ryuzaki's question due consideration and partly to shut out the dismayed expression on his father's face. It didn't take long to come to a conclusion.

"Under those circumstances, it would be by Yagami Light's will," he stated.

His reasoning, how he came to that outcome, was based on the time it took before the killings resumed after he was imprisoned. It had taken two weeks for Kira to start murdering criminals again. Based on that, if there was another party involved, he would have to either be with them on the investigation team or looking down on them constantly from Heaven or something. And if he could do either of those things, then he'd even know what they were saying right now.

Ryuzaki concurred.

"I figured you would come to the same conclusion as me. If we acknowledge the existence of someone watching down on us from above, then there is nothing we can do. We would have been killed long ago or we would just be made fools of forever."

He turned away.

"No, such a being cannot exist," he said softly, as if to himself.

And so the detective's final verdict was:

"Kira's power can only be transferred by the will of the person who possesses it."

Light didn't really have anything to add and so remained silent.

"Thank you, Light-kun. I feel ninety-nine percent confident now. We will create a situation where Higuchi won't pass on the power, and have him demonstrate how he kills."

Half an hour later found Light at his desk, hard at work. They had a new plan and it was finally one that he agreed with. The specifics still needed to be fine-tuned, but there was time to work on it. It was a strategy that would only go into effect if the criminal slayings ceased. The groundwork was already being laid out, nonetheless. Watari had just called with confirmation of a three hour block of time on Sakura TV.

Light thought over the recent conversation or perhaps it would be more aptly labelled…
Whatever it was, Light was glad he had chosen to just answer Ryuzaki when he asked if he remembered how to kill. There was no malice or accusation in the detective's words. He had only been seeking support for his own conclusions. And since Light and Ryuzaki's reasoning skills were on par with one another, it made sense for him to pose that question to Light.

There was nothing more to it.

Lunch time came and passed without anyone noticing. It was the arrival of bento, around mid-afternoon, that caused Light to vividly realize he was quite hungry. Selecting two boxes, he placed one in front of Ryuzaki and returned to his seat. He ate while continuing to work and it was only after, when he thought to return the boxes, that he noticed the detective had not touched his. Instead he continued to make structures of sweets and confections, occasionally popping a sugar cube into his mouth.

Light sighed.

He understood that his habit of playing with his food was part of a process. Ryuzaki believed it helped him think better. Light, while disbelieving this to be true, normally just let him get on with it. Not today, though.

The bento had been pushed aside. Light moved his chair closer and then slowly pushed the box back towards him. Only stopping when it touched the edge of the elaborate sugar castle, with moat, the detective was currently constructing. Light stopped moving the box but did not take his hand off it. He was prepared to knock down a wall or two to gain his attention. Ryuzaki, recognizing this for the implicit threat it was, looked up.

Light's voice, when he spoke, was genially persuasive.

"You should eat this. I noticed you lost a little weight recently. You need to take better care of yourself, Ryuzaki."

Ryuzaki frowned and shook his head.

"I have not, Light-kun. I have maintained the same weight for some time."

Light smiled and shook his head.

"It's not much, but I'd say you've lost around two kilograms."

The detective's skepticism was apparent in his expression. Light continued.

"Your clothes are a little looser. Haven't you noticed? I know you don't weigh yourself…"

Wait a minute.

That was actually a good way to resolve this. He moved a little closer.

"Let's go find a scale. That's the best way to see who's right."

Ryuzaki leaned away, and insistently said:

"That is not necessary. Light-kun clearly does not understand my method for…"

Light cut in.
"You use your head, right? You eat whatever you want by calculating the caloric value of your daily food intake and keeping the overall number consistent. That's why you can eat so many desserts without gaining weight. It's also why, some days, you barely eat anything else but desserts. But you have to factor in energy expended too."

"I do."

"You're not including all your activities, though, and that's why you've lost weight."

He gave him a look, heavy with meaning. Ryuzaki gazed back blankly.

Light sighed. Was he serious? Nevertheless, he carried on.

"Other exercise. That you weren't doing before."

"Have you been working out, Ryuzaki?"

This came from Matsuda who had been hovering nearby. Startled, Light turned his chair and abruptly remembered where he was. Ryuzaki also turned and deftly illustrated that he had, indeed, caught Light's meaning.

"Yes. I do activities at night with Light-kun."

Soichiro looked up from his paperwork, pen still. Mogi's fingers froze on his keyboard. Light's mind instantly fast forwarded through the impending conversation between Matsuda and Ryuzaki.

"What do you guys do?" Matsuda asked curiously.

Light intervened.

"We walk around the building. Do some calisthenics, stuff like that. It was my idea," he said brightly.

Soichiro smiled approvingly at him.

"Good for you, son. I'm glad to hear you're keeping in shape. It's not healthy the way you're stuck in this building all the time."

"That's exactly what I thought, dad."

Soichiro turned his smile to the detective.

"And good for you too, Ryuzaki. You're young, but it's important to take care of yourself no matter how old you are."

"Yes. Light-kun is very serious about physical fitness. He makes me exercise with him almost every night and sometimes during lunch breaks too."

A lull. Light was having another moment of mental fast forwarding.

"Well, you don't want to overdo it," Soichiro said sensibly.

Light intervened.

"Don't worry, dad. Nobody's overdoing anything."
He looked at Ryuzaki and put a friendly hand on his shoulder.

"Ryuzaki just needs to toughen up," he said, smiling.

This display of camaraderie did have a few cracks in it. They were not noticeable to the others, though. For example, no one else was aware of the way Light's fingers were pressing warningly into Ryuzaki's shoulder. As well, the rest of the team did not have the background information to infer exactly why Ryuzaki was smirking.

In other words, it just looked like their usual competitiveness. Although, thankfully, with a much more amicable tone than in the past.

Matsuda stepped closer as if to continue the conversation.

Light deflected him.

"We should probably get back to work," he said industriously.

The rest of the day passed in a blur. Light and Ryuzaki identified and worked on various logistical considerations for the plan. It was not yet certain they would use it, but confirmation of Higuchi's promise to stop the criminal killings could come as early as the next day. It was past midnight when they retired.

In truth, Light was exhausted. He hadn't been sleeping well over the past few nights and hardly at all the prior night. Normally, he might have elected to go to bed at an earlier time but reasonably calculated that to be inadvisable. With the way Ryuzaki was acting, the not-so-subtle hints he was dropping to the other team members, it was best to refrain from leaving him alone with them.

He still didn't know how to handle this matter and, given that, figured the only other option was to control it.

When they reached the bedroom, Light headed for the shower. His shoulder was sore and he sought the soothing caress of gently warm water.

As he stood there, a tentative hand reached toward the tiles lining the shower wall. Smooth pieces were interspersed with rougher, coarser ones. It would hurt to have one's bare skin pressed against such a surface. He remembered Ryuzaki telling him; that it was painful.

Light had smiled and pushed him against them even harder.

His fingertips retreated from the tiles and rose to gingerly touch his left shoulder.

Ryuzaki had buried his face into Light's shoulder and, moments later, his teeth had sunk in.

Light examined the injury. He'd bit him so hard that he'd broken the skin and left bruises. It wasn't surprising. Ryuzaki wasn't the type of person to just quietly accept whatever Light dished out. He gave as good as he got.

The pain had made Light gasp aloud. He'd punished that action by grabbing Ryuzaki by his hair and pulling…

No.

He didn't want to think about this right now. What he did. Why he did it. What it meant. What Ryuzaki thought about it.
What it showed about Light.

He quelled these thoughts and others as he toweled himself dry. It was, not surprisingly, still a work in progress when he slipped into the other bed. He chose to sleep apart from Ryuzaki because…

'It's better this way.'

A little distance between them. A little more time to recover.

The room was cloaked in deep shadow, opaque and silent.

Light shut his eyes to the gloom and soon fell into a heavy slumber.
"Light-kun."

A voice. He heard it as if from a distance.

"Light-kun."

Closer now. An impression, a feeling of warmth and mild pressure. Where? His face…no, higher.

"Light-kun…wake up."

He opened his eyes. Into a darkness so pitch that he could not see anything. There was a hand on his forehead. His gaze slid to the side, searching for the source. A faint luminance, a glimmer of alabaster. A shirt? A few seconds pass. A white sweatshirt.

His body and nerves, strained and stressed, began to ease.

"What's wrong, Ryuzaki?" Light asked softly.

"Light-kun was making a lot of noise in his sleep."

He was crouched beside the bed. His fingertips moved delicately upon Light's temple.

It was calming.

"I woke you up?"

"No, I was not asleep."

"Then I disturbed you. I'm sorry. I had a weird dream."

Light turned his head slightly.

"Is it just me or is it really dark in here? I can barely see you."

Ryuzaki's hand receded as he shifted back.

"There is no moonlight tonight because the sky is overcast. It will rain tomorrow," he explained.

"How do you know? Did you check the weather?"

"Yes. I check it every day."

New information. Light smiled.

"You check it daily?"

Chuckling, he added:

"Just like an old man."

"Light-kun is amusing, as always," Ryuzaki observed drolly.

He stood and turned to walk away; managing two whole steps before he was stopped.
It was because Light's hand held the bottom edge of his shirt.

'What am I doing?'

His arm relaxed as he hung his head; the weight causing Ryuzaki's shirt to stretch downward.

Ryuzaki's hand touches his. Light's grip tightens.

'What am I actually doing right now?'

"Hey, Ryuzaki?..."

A few seconds pass.

"Light-kun?" His voice sounds unsure. He takes hold of Light's hand and lifts.

'I wish I knew."

"...Can you stay here?"

Ryuzaki's effort to remove his grip succeeds.

'With me."

Because Light does not resist it.

Their hands are still lightly joined.

"Yes."

Light smiled and shifted over.

Moments later, they sit with their backs braced against the headboard. There is distance between them, a gap. Light is not sure how to bridge it or if he even wants to. It is an unusual predicament for him. He feels outside of himself, unfocused. And it is strange to be disconnected in that way. Despite this, there is one thing he is certain about.

A faint drumming catches his attention; pulls him out of his thoughts. Ryuzaki is tapping his fingers on his knee. The rhythm is turbulent.

Light wants Ryuzaki to stay.

His voice, when he speaks, is purposely mild.

"Hey, Ryuzaki? When you said I was making a lot of noise…What did you mean? Was I talking in my sleep?"

"Yes."

"Did I say anything…unusual?"

'Did I say your name?"

"Light-kun was muttering as he tossed and turned."

Light tensed. To think he would talk while asleep. It is unexpected and disconcerting. After a pause that seems interminable, Ryuzaki adds:
"Don't worry. Light-kun was unintelligible."

Light breathes an inner sigh of relief even while noting the hint of amusement in Ryuzaki's voice.

"Who said I was worried?" he scoffs.

His face is hidden from view and, for that, Light is grateful. He knows his expression does not match his words. And Ryuzaki, as perceptive as he is, would not fail to notice such an anomaly.

"Was it a bad dream?"

"Yeah."

Light thinks for a bit, and then adds:

"Well, it was more disturbing than bad, I guess."

"What does Light-kun mean?"

Light hedges. He doesn't have to respond nor does he really want to. Yet, for some inexplicable reason, he finds himself saying:

"I dreamed that someone I cared about was sick…"

'You were sicker than before…'

'…although I don't really remember who it was.'

'…and much, much weaker.'

"I see. Does Light-kun remember what the person looked like?" Ryuzaki asks in a thoughtful manner.

"No, not really. It was dark…as dark as it is right now. I can't see anything."

"Then Light-kun should have let me go."

Light's knees are bent, his hands resting on them. His eyes widen in synchronicity with the tightening of his hands. He suddenly becomes aware of just how much his chest is hurting. And that it has been since he woke up.

"What do you mean?" he asks; his voice barely above a whisper.

"I wanted to turn on the lamp."

'What?'

"I wished to aid Light-kun because he is afraid of the dark, but he would not let me."

Ah, familiar ground. Light relaxes a little.

"Oh, for sure, I'm scared. Terrified, actually," he says with mock-seriousness.

He stretches his legs in front of him, becoming more comfortable.

"Do you feel better now, Ryuzaki? Now that you got me back for the 'old man' comment?"
"Yes."

Light smiled.

"Anyway, it was just a dream. Interesting in some ways, but mostly meaningless."

"Light-kun was very agitated before I woke him up."

"Well, like I said, it was disturbing. But I don't know anyone like that in real life. That's why it's meaningless. Most dreams are like that."

"I see. Does Light-kun feel better now?"

"Yeah, I do."

"Then I will leave him so he may…"

Light caught his sleeve in mid-motion. He quickly casts his mind about for something to say. Something that will catch Ryuzaki's interest; a subject he will want to talk about. There is a reason for this.

"Hey, Ryuzaki?"

Light wants him to stay.

"Maybe we'll find out today that we can go ahead with the plan."

Ryuzaki settles into his former position.

"It will take more than one day to verify the criminal killings have stopped."

Light lets go of his sleeve.

"I know, but we could start to obtain confirmation as early as today. We're going to wait three days, right?"

"Yes. We will obtain confirmation over the course of the next three days. There must be no doubt that Higuchi has the power of Kira."

"If he does, he'll definitely fall for your strategy. I mean, it's amazing that he told Misa who he was without having any proof she's the second Kira. What kind of person does that?"

"A stupid coward," Ryuzaki replied disdainfully.

"Exactly. Speaking of which, it's good that Matsuda volunteered. It would be hard to pull this off without him."

"Light-kun is not worried about Matsuda-san's personal safety?"

A short pause while Light thought:

'…Incredible.'

And then:

"Oh, come on, Ryuzaki. This is clearly different from Misa."
"It is?" he questioned innocently.

Light smiled.

'Studied innocence.'

He took a moment to shift until he was lying on his back. Placing his hands behind his head, he spoke in a calmly amused voice.

"You never give up, do you? All right then, let me ask you this: What do you think the probability is that Higuchi has the ability to know a person's name just by seeing their face?"

"There is an eighteen percent chance."

Light thought this over.

"You know what? I'm not even going to ask how you came up with that number because I know it's much lower. It's almost zero and I know you're aware of that too, Ryuzaki. If he had that ability then Matsuda would already be dead."

"Then that is why Light-kun is unconcerned?"

"That's the main reason, but there's also the fact that we're all going to be there. You, me, my dad, Mogi, Wedy, Aiber, and even Watari. We can plan for any eventualities or issues and if any unpredictable problems come up, we'll be around to handle it."

"The conditions will be controllable…Is that what Light-kun is implying?"

Light heard the quiet edge in his voice. He answered carefully.

"Yeah, I think they are and…" 

Ryuzaki cut in.

"Yes, I see. Light-kun does prefer to be in control of the situations he encounters."

A small, stunned silence. Light was not sure if it was good or bad that he could not see Ryuzaki's face.

Probably for the best, though.

It was quite an impressive double-entendre, really. Light recognized this while feeling absolutely no admiration for it whatsoever. Still, it was an opening. He could, if he chose to, address this right here and now. But, instead, he decided that sometimes…

"Well, with Matsuda's life on the line, it can't be any other way, right?…"

…and discretion was the better part of valor.

"...And even though there's a lot of risk, it's worth it. If everything goes according to plan, we'll be able to catch Higuchi and find out how he kills. If he shows us that, then we'll be much closer to solving the Kira mystery. You want to know as much as I do, don't you?"

A pause while Light waited, anxiously, for his answer.

"Yes. That is something I have not been able to figure out completely."
Light did notice the use of the word "completely", but the thought was eclipsed by the sensation of relief arising within. His attempted subject change was an unqualified success. Ryuzaki continued.

"There have been many puzzles surrounding Kira. I am especially interested in whether he has the ability to control another person to kill for him. Even Light-kun worried that he was controlled."

Maybe 'unqualified' was wording it a tad strongly.

"I apologize for asking again, but…"

It could be 'success' was, in fact, not entirely accurate either.

"…why did you believe you could have been controlled, Light-kun?"

Perhaps 'utter failure' was more appropriate. This was Light's conclusion while any sense of reprieve turned into an ephemeral, distant memory. With effort, he was able to speak in a measured tone.

"This again, Ryuzaki? I already explained it to you several times. I thought that if you, a world-renowned detective, suspected me then there was a chance it could be true. Raye Penber was investigating me and he died. I went to Aoyama on the 22nd of May and the person Misa approached was me. Is that what you want to hear?"

"No. That is not what I want to hear."

'Then… what?'

"Look, I don't know what else I can tell you. I asked to be imprisoned because I wanted to defeat the fear of Kira that dwelled in me. And I thought I could be Kira without being aware of it. I…"

Wait a minute.

How did that make any sense? How could he possibly have come to that conclusion? It was so…

'irrational and…'

"Yes. You made the argument that you could be Kira while you slept. But that was definitively disproved."

'baseless."

"I don't appreciate that you were watching me while I slept, Ryuzaki, but it did take that theory out of the equation. And, when I think about it now,…"

Light faltered. He had doubts that, as much as he tried, had proven exceptionally resilient to being quashed. They manifested from an inner struggle between his intellectual honesty and his certain belief that he was not, nor had he ever been, Kira. And, now, there was an unexpected development.

Should he talk to Ryuzaki about it?

A new combatant had jumped into the fray.

"Light-kun?"

What if there was no ill will or accusation in Ryuzaki's words?

"When I think about it now…," Light repeated unsteadily. Stalling, calculating, predicting.
The possibility existed. It was there.

Deciding.

It was.

"...I can't imagine how a person could be Kira and not know it. I've thought about it over and over and I don't see how it would work. I just don't, Ryuzaki. I remember I was afraid that I was...that I had the potential to be Kira. But the idea that I could be Kira while being unaware or that I was Kira while asleep...I honestly cannot figure out why I said that."

"Yes. I was also confused by your reasoning."

"Don't you mean lack of reasoning? I mean, I meant the other stuff I said then. I do think the world would be better off without some people. And not just criminals, I've thought that about normal people too. But I don't think actually killing them is something I'm capable of. It's not something anyone should do."

"Why not?"

Light sighed. Mayhap his conclusion, and hope, regarding Ryuzaki's motivations was greatly mistaken. Nonetheless, he persevered.

"Because no individual has the right to decide that. There's no way Kira has enough information to fairly judge whether a person should be killed. And, on top of that, if someone decided to go ahead anyway...it would never stop. Kira could never stop punishing criminals or everything would revert back to the way it was. It's just so..."

"Pointless?"

"Well, I was going to say 'futile' but that works too...I guess what I'm saying is that even though I've had some...dark thoughts, I don't think that Kira's solution is the right way to handle them. I also think what he does is so extreme that there's no way I, or Misa, could do them unknowingly."

"Yes. That seems improbable."

"Improbable?...Right. Just like most of the reasons I gave then. The only explanation I can come up with is I was stressed...and tired. I was really, really worn out from being under suspicion. It was hurting my dad too."

The air in the room suddenly seemed to acquire a hint of chilliness. Light spoke quickly.

"I don't mean to sound like I'm blaming you, Ryuzaki. I'm not, at all. Aizawa was also suspicious of me, remember?"

The temperature plummeted a few more degrees at the mention of Aizawa. Light doggedly carried on.

"Okay, look, it doesn't matter who was suspicious of me. What matters is I was suspicious of myself. And it caused me to have some serious doubts. So, I came up with those theories and now, when I look back on it, they barely make any sense."

"So, is that your final answer?"

"Yes, I can't think of anything else to tell you," Light answered truthfully.
When Ryuzaki did not say anything, Light ventured an inquiry.

"Is that what you wanted to hear?"

"Yes."

Light was taken aback.

"You wanted to hear me basically say: 'I don't know'?"

"Yes, it was different from your usual reiterations."

The shadowiness of the room had begun to recede. Light glanced up at Ryuzaki. After searching for a different way to say 'stubborn', he observed:

"I believe you may actually be the most determined person I've ever met. Although…I suppose that's a good quality to have considering your position."

"Yes. It is necessary."

Light was not averse to another change in subject, and so curiously asked:

"How did you build up your reputation as the world's best detective? What cases did you solve?"

Ryuzaki, who had been staring straight ahead, looked down from the corner of his eye.

"Dawn is almost here, Light-kun."

Light looked away.

"Hey, Ryuzaki?" he said quietly.

He slung his arm over his eyes.

"That's not very equal."

"What does Light-kun mean?"

"I usually answer your questions, but you hardly ever answer mine."

"Light-kun thinks I am being unfair?" he asked softly.

Light shifted his arm and peered at him.

"Yeah, you are."

Ryuzaki looked upward, as if considering something. Seeming to come to a conclusion, he turned his head and met Light's eyes.

"Then I will answer your question. I am twenty-four years old."

Light propped himself up on his elbows and turned towards him. He knew he wasn't masking his surprise very well, but was uncaring about it. And, in truth, his reaction was not caused by the content of what he had just heard. He was just amazed that Ryuzaki was sharing identifying information. It was unheard of.

Despite it all, he made a swift recovery.
"You really are an old man, Ryuzaki!"

Ryuzaki's eyes narrowed as he moved to get up. Light grinned and moved faster.

"I'm kidding, kidding!" he said as he caught his shoulder.

Light gently pressed; turning Ryuzaki to face him.

"What I really meant to say was…"

His grin faded into a smile.

"There, was that so hard?"

Ryuzaki adopted a serious expression.

"Yes."

Light laughed as his fingers moved to trail through his hair.

"Let's see…It took over six weeks for you to answer me. I wonder how long it will take for you to tell me when your birthday is."

"I believe Light-kun already knows my answer."

"Right, right. Snowball, hell…I got it."

Ryuzaki's features softened as he smiled. Light impulsively leaned forward and kissed him. It was a delicate embrace, tender and searching. When Ryuzaki leaned into him, Light's hand traveled to the nape of his neck while his other hand caressed his thigh.

Ryuzaki broke the kiss.

"Light-kun," he said quietly.

"Yeah, I know. I just wanted to kiss you. Just that."

He reclined until he was once again lying on his back. Ryuzaki remained where he was, his face averted from view.

A picture of indecision.

One that Light did not wish to see.

For even one second longer.

His voice, when he spoke, was hushed.

"Are you still really sore?"

A nod.

"Does your body hurt too?"

Ryuzaki turned to look down at him; a faint smile playing on his lips.

Light smiled back and slowly reached up.
"You really like word plays, don't you? They entertain you."

His knuckles tapped very, very gently on his forehead as he said:

"You're kind of simple like that."

Followed immediately by:

"Ow! You don't have to pinch me, Ryuzaki!"

"Light-kun deserved it."

'Yeah, I do.'

"Maybe. Let's go to sleep."

Ryuzaki nodded, and settled onto his side. After Light scooted over and placed his arm around his waist, he asked:

"Do you think it would be okay if we went into work a bit later today? Get a bit more sleep?"

"I don't mind. I have always preferred to begin work at a later time."

"Yeah, I can see that now. You're really not much of a morning person, are you?"

Ryuzaki held up a hand, thumb and index finger curved toward one another. The threat was not lost on Light. He grinned, and said:

"Point taken. Good-night."

"Good-night, Light-kun."

Defused sunlight filtered through the curtains, brightening the surroundings. Ryuzaki was nestled snugly in his arms. It was comforting and warm.

An unbidden thought drifted across Light's consciousness as he fell into slumber.

_Closer now._
The stage was set.

Fluorescent lights shone down, illuminating the scene.

A small kitchen with all the usual amenities. A table of plain, varnished wood and two matching chairs.

The cast was gathered.

Light, Ryuzaki, the whole wheat toast, and the doughnuts.

It was a drama, an improv, and perhaps a bit of a farce.

This production that went under the name of "Impasse".

It was nine o'clock in the morning. Only an hour ago, the scripting began for this event. Hence, the improvisational nature of the performance was to be expected. Well, there was one other element that interfered with even the most carefully laid and well-intentioned plans of the dramatist.

That would be Ryuzaki, natch.

Earlier, Light awoke in a calm and refreshed frame of mind. It allowed him to examine the entity that had plagued him in the middle of the night. His manner, while doing so, was thoughtful and analytical. Dreams, both his and others, were meaningless…No. That wasn't quite accurate. Repetitive dreams, possibly, should be classified differently.

The last time Light had experienced a repetitive dream was a result of his father holding a gun to his head. Ryuzaki was pivotal in why that had occurred. So, Light confronted him about it. It had not gone well, but the end result was beneficial. The repetitive dream never occurred again.

Now, there was a similar situation. A repetitive dream had visited him three times over the last four nights. It was different in that Light was under no active threat and contained three figures. His father, Ryuzaki, and himself. Nothing of note happened, no extraordinary events, but Ryuzaki was portrayed in a debilitated state. One that, in last night's iteration, was becoming more pronounced.

The focal point was Ryuzaki. He was the image that drew the majority of his attention in the dream and also upon waking. Was it viable, then, that it was a reaction to Ryuzaki himself? Was it indicative of a problem that Light had thus far failed to notice?

He turned his attention outward.

Ryuzaki was sleeping and Light still had his arms around him. He could feel it. Ryuzaki was thinner. While true that it was not by much, it was weight he could ill afford to lose. He pondered upon how Ryuzaki used his head to eat as he liked while maintaining a stable weight. It was typical of him, really. To come up with an intelligent method like that and yet fail to notice when it stopped working as intended. It was because…

'He doesn't make his own health a priority.'

In reality, it was so far down on the list of things important to Ryuzaki as to be negligible.

Light was different in that regard. He took care of himself because he understood, in a practical
sense, that basic physical needs were actually *needs*. They were not optional. Ryuzaki, conversely, did not seem to comprehend that. This could be seen in his poor sleeping and eating habits.

It was getting late. Light paused his analysis and focused on the task of waking Ryuzaki. After the usual struggle, he watched his retreating figure as he trudged to the bathroom. His gaze was considering.

He did not want Ryuzaki to lose any more weight and, especially, did not want to see the image from his dream brought into reality. It was distressing and likely showing a problem that Light was not addressing. The issue, from what he could determine, was Ryuzaki. And since his former repetitive dream was dispersed through taking action, it followed that a comparable solution was relevant now.

It did occur to Light that his conclusion did not take into account the other two people in the dream. It was only a small observation and quite readily suppressed. Light had more important things to focus on. Like, changing Ryuzaki's eating habits. Whether he liked it or not.

It was for his own good, after all.

The backdrop.

Ryuzaki preferred to read during breakfast which left all the decisions (and chores) up to Light. Normally, he made coffee and a simple meal for himself and gave whatever new sweet item to Ryuzaki. It was a phenomenon that Light never bothered to ask about. He surmised it was Watari who faithfully delivered the pastries, cupcakes, and other foodstuffs on a daily basis. Little did he know, though, that even that was not enough to ensure Ryuzaki actually ate. If Light did not place the food in front of him, he would not ask for it or go get it. Instead, he would content himself with a coffee and grab the treat on the way out.

Fortunately, this particular habit of his was helpful to Light's purposes.

Once he was done with the preparations, Light set three plates down. One with two powdered doughnuts on it and the other pair with two pieces of whole wheat toast on each. They joined two cups of coffee and a bowl of peeled and cut apples which had already been placed.

And…

Raise curtain.

Light took a piece of apple and nibbled on it, waiting.

Ryuzaki, without lowering his book, reached toward his plate. Thumb and index finger lightly touched and then shirked away. Light watched as the book was lowered. Ryuzaki studied the contents of the dish and then looked up. Their eyes met.

Light smiled affably. The gesture was not returned. Ryuzaki's eyes lowered to observe the two plates in front of Light. One which held the toast he was currently eating and the other which held the doughnuts. His gaze lingered momentarily on the powdered confections and then returned to Light.

Ryuzaki set his book aside, and imperatively said:

"Light-kun."

An arm was outstretched, veered towards the doughnuts.

Light simulated a mildly confused expression, and asked:
"Yes? What is it, Ryuzaki?"

"Watari left those for me."

Light was careful not to overact.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't notice. Here, take them."

While lifting the plate, his thumb faintly impressed onto one of the doughnuts. It was easy to accomplish since it just so happened to be located on the edge of the dish. What followed next was, perhaps, a little showy.

It was with dismay that he observed:

"Wait. This is kind of hard. I think they're stale."

Light got up and…

"You can't eat this, Ryuzaki."

…dumped the contents of the plate into the trash can.

Light, not meaning to upstage Ryuzaki, sat back down.

"Why don't you eat some toast or apples instead?"

Ryuzaki just stared at him, his expression indecipherable. It gave Light pause for around two seconds and then he carried on.

"Or I could make you something else, if you want."

His response was to pick his book back up.

"Ryuzaki?" Light prompted.

As he raised the book in front of his eyes, he quietly said:

"I'm not hungry."

The rest of the meal passed in uncompanionable silence.

Close curtain.

When they arrived at the operations room, Light was met with a concerned Soichiro.

"Sorry, dad. I had trouble sleeping. I'll make up the time, don't worry."

"I'm not worried about that, Light. Did you have another headache?"

"No, I just needed a little more sleep."

Light was keeping an eye on the other occupants in the room, particularly Matsuda; who was approaching.

"If that's all it was, that's fine. But if there's a next time, I want you to let me know."

"I definitely will, dad," he said distractedly.
Matsuda arrived. Light changed the subject.

"Have there been any new Kira victims reported in the papers?"

"We haven't found any yet," Matsuda answered.

He leaned sideward to peer around Light. The detective was standing behind him at an angle.

"That's good news, right, Ryuzaki? It proves that Higuchi is Kira!"

Light shifted slightly over, cutting Ryuzaki off from view, and answered for him.

"No, we don't know that yet. I'll take a couple more days to get decisive proof," he replied briskly.

"...Oh, that's right. That's what you guys said yesterday," Matsuda said abashedly.

Soichiro, noticing his embarrassment, stepped in.

"It's a good start, though. We'll just have to keep our eyes open and check every source that we can over the next two days," he explained kindly.

Matsuda smiled and nodded. He leaned around Light again; a look of inquiry on his face.

'Time to end this.'

"There's some places on the internet that I want to check. You've got the papers covered, right, dad?"

Soichiro nodded, and said:

"We're just waiting on the afternoon editions. And Watari is checking with his contacts and keeping us up-to-date with any information the police have."

Light noted the discomfort in his father's features.

"Okay, I'll let you know if I find anything right away. And maybe you can look over the script we're working on for Matsuda-san after we finish it."

Soichiro smiled.

"All right, Light."

Light smiled back and then turned toward Ryuzaki.

"Come on," he said as he took hold of his arm.

And firmly propelled him towards their desks.

Light was troubled as he sat down. That brief look on his father's face;...

He clicked on the first news site on his list.

…it bothered him.

Soichiro had spent his entire career working for the good of society. His dedication, shrewdness, and hard work had eventually landed him the title of Detective Superintendent of the NPA. It was not so long ago that he had overseen and directed that huge organization. And, now, he was forced to rely on others to gain any information from the police. While true that he had chosen to resign, it was
because of Kira that he was put in that position in the first place.

'It's not fair.'

Light clicked on another site.

His father had said that, after catching Kira, there was always a new career. But, as inspiring at that statement was, it didn't change the fact that he had been forced to relinquish his former one. On one hand, it showed his dedication to bringing Kira to justice. Soichiro gave up everything he had built and worked for to remain with the investigation. On the other, it put him in the situation he was in now. The power and authority he had once wielded was irrecoverably gone.

By this time, Light had finished checking the various news sites he frequented. Next was a much smaller list of Kira-related websites. There were thousands of them already and more appeared every day. Light checked only a small sampling because the rhetoric and delusion on display was, as always, exasperating. Still, he didn't underestimate the information collection ability of people…

'…who have no life.'

He scanned the various pages, looking for any mention of new killings or observations that they had stopped. Several phrases, all the usual suspects, caught his attention.

The savior. The messiah. The messenger from Hell. The legend. The defender of the innocent.

…Guardian angel.

Light rolled his eyes.

Did people really believe this? He thought of Higuchi. That was quite the hero, there.

While his father gave up a lifetime's achievements, there were people spewing this dogma. In darkness and anonymity, they proclaimed their reverence and thankfulness to Kira. The same ones who would never celebrate his existence openly. Light knew this with absolute certainty. After all, that was the way most people were; hypocritical, helpless, ignorant, and mindless.

Saying one thing and doing another.

He was brought out of his internal condemnation by the arrival of lunch.

Ryuzaki was still absorbed in his work, allowing Light to peruse the selection on offer. It was doubtful that he would eat the sandwiches, but maybe the salad? Ryuzaki enjoyed fruit and there were fruit-based dressings available. He decided it was worth a try.

There was also a large slice of chocolate cake, but…

'That has no nutritional value whatsoever.'

So, it was out.

Ryuzaki paused and turned, reaching for it. At the same time, Light moved the salad toward him. While doing so, he carelessly knocked the cake onto the floor.

Whoops.

"I'm sorry, Ryuzaki! I wasn't paying attention!"
"My aim was off. Three more centimeters to the left and it would have landed right in the waste basket."

Light grabbed some napkins and kneeled to scoop up the pitiful remains. He stayed bent on task as he suggested:

"The raspberry dressing is pretty good. I've tried it before. Why don't you have salad instead?"

When there was no reply, he looked up. He was met with the same indecipherable expression that he had noticed earlier. With Light's attention, it disappeared in a flash; replaced by a slight smile.

"I'm not hungry," Ryuzaki stated softly.

Light frowned. He would have challenged such an obvious lie, but was distracted by the arrival of a pair of helping hands. Matsuda, armed with paper towel and cleanser, crouched beside him.

"Geez, what a mess! Isn't this your lunch, Ryuzaki?"

"Yes."

A dramatic pause.

"It was," he answered solemnly.

"Do you want me to run to the bakery and get you another one? It'll only take ten minutes or so."

Ryuzaki smiled. A true smile that was reflected in his eyes.

Matsuda stood, brushing his hands off on his pants.

"I'll be right back. Do you want…"

Light cut in.

"You don't need to do that, Matsuda-san."

He stood and, with a disarming smile, faced Matsuda.

"Ryuzaki's not hungry."

He turned to the detective.

"Isn't that what you just said?"

Ryuzaki's smile faded away. He shrugged and turned back to his computer screen.

An awkward intermission. Matsuda glanced at the detective.

"If you change your mind, just let me know. I don't mind going at all."

Light stepped closer to Ryuzaki.

"Sure, we'll let you know."

Matsuda smiled nervously and opened his mouth to speak.

Light circumvented him.
"Thank you for helping me clean up."

"Sure…no problem, Light.'

After ensuring he had returned to his desk, Light sat down and ate his lunch. Ryuzaki contented himself with coffee and the occasional sugar cube. The box had been moved well out of Light's reach.

Light wondered if he had offended Matsuda. He wasn't trying to be rude, but sometimes subtlety wasn't an option with certain people. Matsuda, while well-intentioned and gregarious, was a little on the slow side. He reminded Light of Misa. Sort of a male version of her. So, at times, there was no choice but to take a more direct approach.

There was a difference between Matsuda and Misa, of course. Where all of Misa's attention was focused on Light, it was Ryuzaki for Matsuda. It would seem he seriously wanted to befriend him or something. Which was fine. Light had no problem with that. It was just that his friendly overtures were too easily used as ammunition. Recently, Ryuzaki had twisted his innocent questions and used them to put Light in an incredibly defensive position. He had done it twice already and so long as there were unresolved matters between them; he would likely do it again.

As well, Light's method for dealing with Ryuzaki's diet was reliant on removing options and introducing others. Today was a testing period. In order for any preliminary results to be obtained, there could be no other variables besides the ones already in place. Matsuda's offer to replace the cake interfered with that. And he, well-meaning and dim, would only continue to be a hindrance if Light allowed it. So, for the time being, he wanted to keep Matsuda away from Ryuzaki.

The rest of the afternoon passed quickly. Light worked with Ryuzaki on the script for Matsuda. The main purpose of it was to incite Higuchi to take direct action. So, the unveiling Kira part needed to be written in near the start. It was both their estimation that Higuchi would take the bait immediately. Regardless, though, there were still three hours of dialogue to be constructed. Since both he and Ryuzaki were proficient at fabrications, the project went well. It was just before dinner when Light brought the final draft to his father.

The meal arrived while Soichiro was still reading it over. Light inspected the offerings. There was rice, fish, vegetables, and salad. Light frowned. There wasn't much to work with here. Maybe the rice? The salad was worth another try too.

There was also a generous slice of blueberry pie. It was charmingly topped with a dollop of whipped cream. It looked quite delicious.

Light studied it for approximately three seconds. Fruit was healthy but, in his opinion, the amount of sugar negated any benefit the blueberries introduced.

And so, not long after, it suffered the same gruesome fate as the cake.

Satisfied, Light looked over his handiwork. His aim was right on target this time. The pie had landed directly in the trash can. That should prevent Matsuda from coming over to "help". All the while, he offered his hollow apologies. Ryuzaki, playing the role of captive audience, just sat and passively watched the show. It was only when Light suggested his alternatives that he stirred. A small smile appeared as he very softly said:

"I'm not hungry."

Light resisted the urge to call his bluff and instead ate his dinner. Ryuzaki drank more coffee and
finished off the last sugar cube in the box.

In truth, Light was starting to feel a little irked. Why was Ryuzaki being so stubborn about this? There was no doubt he needed to eat. His total consumption for the day thus far was multiple cups of coffee and a box of sugar. Light did not even want to imagine what his blood sugar level was like.

What he wanted to accomplish was fairly simple. If Ryuzaki did not have access to his desserts, what would he choose to eat instead? That was the information Light was after. If he had that, then he could begin to devise a menu plan suitable for him. Ryuzaki's behavior, however, was making that impossible.

'How long is he going to keep up the pretense that he's not hungry?'

It was shortly thereafter that his question was answered.

Soichiro approached with Matsuda for an impromptu meeting about the script. After a brief discussion and some fine-tuning, it was decided that Soichiro would help Matsuda rehearse it the following day. On the condition, of course, that no new killings were reported. This was Light's idea. There were two reasons behind it although he did not say them aloud.

Matsuda was clearly anxious about his role in the plan. It was understandable considering the danger he could potentially be in. His father and Matsuda were used to working together and, more importantly, Soichiro exerted a beneficial influence over him. With his guidance, Matsuda would calm down and focus. The second reason was a little more personal. Working with Soichiro would keep Matsuda busy and away from Ryuzaki.

Through all this, Ryuzaki remained silent. It was as the meeting was winding down that he spoke up. Soichiro and Matsuda were getting to their feet when he said:

"Matsuda-san, if you have time now, will you please go to the bakery for me?"

Matsuda smiled cheerfully.

"Sure! What do you want me to pick up for you?"

Ryuzaki smiled back.

"I would like two powdered doughnuts, one piece of chocolate cake, and a slice of blueberry pie. Please ask them to add whipped cream to the pie."

"Wow, that's quite a list! I better write it down."

A lull while he jotted down the order in his notepad. And in that pause, Ryuzaki looked at Light.

Light's eyes narrowed at his smirk.

Ryuzaki turned away and addressed Soichiro.

"Would you like something too, Yagami-san? I wish to thank you for your hard work. Watari will reimburse Matsuda-san later."

A surprised smile lit up Soichiro's face.

"You don't need to do that, but now that you mention it...pie does sound good."

He spoke to Matsuda.
"Put me down for a slice of apple pie."

"Sure thing, Chief. What about you, Light?"

All eyes turned to him.

Light adopted an amiable expression.

"I'm fine. Thanks, anyway."

Ryuzaki's amusement was apparent.

"Light-kun has been working very hard today. He should receive a reward for all his efforts."

Matsuda chimed in.

"He's right! Come on, Light, isn't there anything you want?"

"Why don't you have some apple pie with me? I've had it from that place before and it's a close second to your mom's," Soichiro said persuasively.

Matsuda beamed at Light.

"It's been a long time since we had a chance to relax together. It'll be fun!"

"Yes. Matsuda-san is correct."

Light, realizing he was outnumbered...

He looked at Ryuzaki.

... and outmaneuvered, gave in.

"Sure,...why not? Let's do this," he said brightly; eyes never leaving Ryuzaki.

While they waited for Matsuda to come back, Soichiro filled Light in on Sachiko and Sayu's activities. He listened with perfunctory attention. As he did when Matsuda returned and regaled the group with anecdotes from his time as Misa's manager. What should have been a pleasant gathering was undermined for Light. He barely tasted the pie as he ate.

This was partly due to the realization that all his efforts had been for naught. Ryuzaki ended up eating every dessert he wanted and not a single healthy alternative. Instead, Light wound up eating the exact thing he attempted to keep away from him. He glanced over. Ryuzaki was eating the treats in the order they had appeared throughout the day. It was a message. As was the fact that he finished everything prior to Soichiro's departure for the night. Light would not say or do anything unusual in front of his father. Ryuzaki knew that and used it against him.

Later, Light lay in bed and watched him.

He must have been waiting all day. Acting passively and biding his time.

Ryuzaki was sitting at the table; working on his laptop.

He could have just said something. Instead, he used Matsuda and Soichiro to put Light in an untenable position. Again.
A vision of Ryuzaki's self-satisfied expression floated into his mind.

Light smiled and turned away.

Well, then, if he wanted to play games…

'I'll play.'

And…

'I'll win.'

End Notes

The Major Arcana of the tarot can be read in a number of ways. For the purposes of this fic, I have chosen to use them in numerical order. In that way, they build upon one another and show the journey of the soul. At the end of each chapter, I will detail the meaning of the card. I have used tarot cards for years and some parts of the definitions are from my own thoughts. However, I also used two sources which are:

1. Seventy Eight Degrees of Wisdom by Rachel Pollack

2. Tarot Plain and Simple by Anthony Louis

If anyone has anything to add to these interpretations, I would love to hear from you! I am always eager to learn more about the tarot. As well, the title Arcanas refers to the tarot theme and also to secrets and mystery.

One last point: the first two chapters of this fic, and part of the third, follow canon events closely. Therefore, I have used dialogue from the manga. These conversations are important to the plot of this story. I have chosen not to paraphrase them because I really don't feel I can improve upon the source material. Just wanted to give an explanation so it's not too jarring!

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