Come Morning Light

by NotHereForIt

Summary

Reigen is standing in a world that exists, but doesn't, in front of a house that is Mob's, but not, with a man that's dead, but isn't.

In which Reigen thinks he's dreaming, and he very much is not.

Notes

Title inspired by Safe and Sound, because I'm a walking cliché.

I really wanted to write Mob and Reigen dealing with some of the fallout from the Mogami arc together, and I really wanted to see how Reigen might react to actually glimpsing some of what Mogami's world was like. Also, I figured I could try my hand at some horror elements. Uh... not sure I succeeded. Especially on that last one. Oh well! Good experiment at the very least.

WARNINGS: Dark/disturbing themes and imagery, Suicide imagery, descriptions of Blood and Injuries, Animal Death, Ambiguously Implied Sexual Abuse (things are kept ambiguous, as we just have the suspicions of one character due to the reactions of another).

If you want more clarification on the warnings, or want me to tag or warn for something specific, just send me a quick message.

See the end of the work for more notes
The world around Reigen doesn’t exist.

It’s white. Just endless stretches of white, and white, and more white, and Reigen thinks that if he were to take a step off of the sidewalk then he might dissolve into the white backdrop.

It’s a tempting thought actually.

Considering the fact that Reigen is almost certain this is not real.

The last thing Reigen remembers before opening his eyes to this place is his head hitting the pillow, and staring at his alarm clock, willing the damned thing to actually fucking work tomorrow morning.

So, in all likelihood, this is a dream.

But even that is odd, because typically, Reigen does not remember falling asleep in his actual dream. He can count the number of times he’s realized he’s dreaming on one hand, and even then, in each of those situations, he didn’t remember falling asleep, he just happened upon the realization in the middle of the dream.

There isn’t really any other explanation for all of this however.

There is no other explanation for why Reigen is standing in a world that does not exist, in front of a house that looks like his student’s but not.

It looks like Mob’s house, except it’s off, not quite right, not quite unassuming enough for that.

The name plate declaring ‘Kageyama’ on the mail slot is missing. But that’s not the only thing that’s wrong.

The grass in the yard looks too brown, too brittle, the white of the house looks too dreary, the curtain’s pastel colors too faded, almost as if all the colors had been sapped out of the house. The roof looks as if it’s one bad rainstorm away from caving in, the windows are too grimy, and the curtains are drawn.

It’s a bit unnerving.

It’s also the only thing that exists in this world that does not exist.

The sidewalk is the only thing that exists outside the gate, and it does not expand past the entrance way, creating a small, cracked square. Reigen isn’t entirely sure it won’t cave beneath him and leave him falling into a white abyss.

Reigen frowns, and concentrates, tries to imagine the name plate of the Kageyama household reappearing, tries to imagine the sidewalk expanding. If this is a dream, then he should be able to control things like that.

Nothing changes.

Reigen doesn’t know what to make of that.

He looks around his surroundings again, trying to discern what he should be doing here. But there’s still nothing. Nothing but the house that is Mob’s but not.

Reigen doesn’t intend to stand on a single patch of sidewalk for however long this dream lasts, so
that leaves him with only two options. He can either step into the abyss, and hope for the best (hell, maybe he’ll even wake up). Or he can open the gate, and enter the house.

For some reason, the latter sounds more intimidating.

He figures that must mean it’s the correct answer.

Reigen pushes open the front gate, and it squeals like a pig up for slaughter. Reigen cringes at the sound. Damn thing needs to be oiled pretty badly then.

The dead grass crunches under his shoes like brittle skeletons.

Reigen can’t shake the feeling that he is walking through a graveyard.

The doorstep that is supposed to be here is mostly gone, left as nothing but cracked cement scattered about. It’s odd.

Reigen decides not to dwell on it, and raises a hand to knock on the front door. The glass of the door is grimy and distorted, and there is a panel missing that has been covered with tape. The curtains are drawn here as well, they hang limp and tattered.

When no one answers the knock, Reigen suddenly wonders why he bothered in the first place.

Who, exactly, is he expecting to be home in a house that is not his in a world that does not exist, in a dream?

Well, Mob, he supposes, given that this is his house. Or perhaps Ritsu, who might be better suited to answer the door with his general surly expression and disdain for Reigen’s existence in this house that is his but not. Or perhaps Mr. or Mrs. Kageyama, who he has only met a handful of times, but could open the door with tired eyes, and a demand that Reigen leave (not that they ever have asked such).

But still, no one comes.

Of course not, because this is Reigen’s dream.

Reigen tries to will Mob to answer the door, tries to will his student into existence in this mental world his mind’s created.

Mob does not come.

Neither does Ritsu, or their parents.

Reigen sighs, and knocks again, calling out, “Hello? Anyone home?” almost as if he believes if he pretends hard enough, this dream will provide him with some company.

There’s nothing.

Reigen frowns, and tries the handle. The door pushes in easily, with little resistance.

That’s admittedly a bit alarming. The door should be locked. Reigen will have to ask Mob about-
No. He wouldn’t. Because this is a dream, and Mob is not here, because no one is here.

Reigen shakes his head, trying to clear it of the cobwebs that keep gathering.
This entire thing is throwing him off a bit.

It feels wrong to just enter someone else’s home without an invitation, but then again, this is a dream, and Reigen has nothing else to do, nowhere else to go. So he steels himself and pushes open the door the rest of the way.

The door creaks, loud and echoing in the empty halls of the house and the empty white of the world, as it opens to reveal darkness.

For a second, Reigen almost thinks that nothing beyond the front door exists. But no, he can just barely make out a foyer and walls, and the outline of a staircase in the adjacent hall.

Reigen braces himself and steps into the house.

The darkness does not swallow him, which is a relief.

Instead, as he steps inside, the house no longer seems so black. It simply appears dreary and dim. The little bit of light that is here casts deeper shadows than is reasonable, and does little to light the way. Reigen nearly trips over the step in front of the foyer.

It feels entirely different in here than outside in the world that doesn’t exist—darker than he would have expected, damper. The atmosphere is thicker than he would have believed possible of a world that does not exist.

Reigen can hear the scuttling of legs somewhere in the house, and he does not know if it’s rats or cockroaches, but both options send shivers down his spine and make him want to turn heel and run.

The hallway seems longer than it should, and there cobwebs and broken plaster where pictures should be. There are no small tables, no knickknacks, no clean hardwood floors. Instead everything is bare and covered in layers of grime and dust.

Reigen is starting to suspect mildew might be growing somewhere in here.

It’s a good thing that this is a dream. Otherwise this might be a health hazard.

The house smells like rot.

Reigen manages to step into the foyer, and shuffles forward, eyes darting around to take in his surroundings. There are halls diverging from the foyer, but Reigen can just make out the staircase and beyond it, the door that leads to the living area, in the dark. For a brief moment, Reigen thinks he can see the outline of a person, and as he turns and the staircase comes into full view—

Reigen actually screams.

Reigen can’t stop the cry of horror that leaves his mouth, can’t stop himself from stumbling back, tripping, his back slamming against the wall, shaking the house.

Because there, swinging freely next to the staircase, is a body.

It hangs from the ceiling, a rope around its broken neck.

For one, horrific moment, Reigen thinks that he may be looking at the body of his student.

But no. As Reigen stares, unable to draw his eyes away from the gut-wrenching sight, he realizes that the corpse is much too tall, too broad, to belong to a child. It does not belong to a woman either.
Is this… Mob’s father then?

Reigen’s entire body is shaking, and he can’t make sense of this. He glances at the door, half wanting to run, and run, until he hits the white world and vanishes into oblivion.

The door has shut.

Reigen sucks in a shuddering breath, and immediately regrets it as the smell of rot and mold fills his lungs, and turns his attention back to the corpse.

The body is mostly obscured in shadows. Reigen can’t really make out any details except for the eyes. The sockets are black and hallow, barring two bright white specks that take the place of pupils.

The thing is staring at Reigen.

There’s no way to describe the chill the creeps up his spine, the horror that seeps into his bones, the way his skin suddenly turns clammy and cold. His chest feels tight, as if the rope around the thing’s neck has coiled around his own torso. Everything here feels so, so wrong.

Reigen swallows thickly, and as he straightens, shakily, standing from where he had partially slid down the wall of the foyer. The eyes of the hanged man follow him.

It’s chilling.

But that also means one, very important thing.

Whatever this thing is- it’s not dead.

Reigen squares his shoulders.

Dead bodies hanging in front of staircase bannisters are not something he knows how to deal with.

Evil spirits haunting a staircase banister however? That… well okay, he only kind of knows how to deal with, but it’s more familiar territory at the very least.

So Reigen braces himself, and steps forward, into the hall.

The ceiling is creaking from the weight of holding up the body, and the corpse swings freely, lightly, as if moved by a subtle breeze.

Reigen has only taken a few steps, and the thing suddenly seems to loom over him. He has to force himself to not cower from its presence.

Now that he’s closer he can make out more details.

It does not help.

Most of the body is still cast in shadows, but Reigen can make out pale, dry, and cracked skin, bruising around the rope digging into the thing’s neck, limp, dark hair, and a slack jaw.

It’s enough for Reigen to recognize Mogami Keiji.

That realization in and of itself is alarming.

Reigen can remember, back when Mogami died, back when they aired the finding of his body on live television, just a bit too late to realize, the horror that he had felt staring at the limp, hanging body
of his childhood icon.

His mother had covered his eyes quickly, and shut off the television. But it had been too late.

The image had haunted his nightmares for weeks after the fact, too unnerving for Reigen to ever really forget.

But Reigen has not had a nightmare featuring Mogami Keiji’s body since he was thirteen years old. In fact, he had barely thought of the psychic for nearly a decade before they encountered him inhabiting the body of Asagiri Minori.

And even then, he has not had a nightmare involving the spirit since the week after the exorcism- he has barely thought of Mogami in the past month or so.

So why is he appearing now, in a way he hasn’t since Reigen was twelve, hanged and dead, but not, with hallow eyes that follow him, in some warped version of his student’s home?

It makes no sense.

“What the hell?” Reigen murmurs, more to himself than to the body in front of him, and it seems to settle alongside the dust clamoring for space on every surface around him.

“Who are you?”

Reigen startles at the question, jumping, and whirling away from Mogami to find the source of the voice.

Mob stands on the staircase, staring at Reigen with blank eyes.

And that is equally startling, not only because Reigen had been under the impression that there was no one else in this dream world, and it seems strange that his mind only conjure up Mob’s presence now, but because Mob looks awful.

He looks even thinner than normal, the childish fat gone from his cheeks, making him appear gaunt, and he’s paler too- like he hasn’t seen the sun in God-Knows-How-Long. His middle school uniform looks as if it’s falling apart at the seams, covered in dirt and grime. And his hair almost looks sticky, clumping together oddly, and glistening all wrong.

But that’s not the worst of it.

No, the worst of it is the bruising. It covers Mob’s wrist, it wraps around his neck, it highlights his jaw and upper cheek. The worst of it is the blood. The cuts that scratch at the back of his hands and around the edges of his feet. The scrapes over his eye. The worst of it is the thick trail of dried blood on his temple, reaching up past his hairline.

“Mob,” Reigen breathes out, horrified. “What- what the hell happened to you?”

For a split second, Reigen forgets that this isn’t real.

Mob wraps his arms around himself, and draws back at the question. He looks scared.

“How do you know me?” Mob demands. “Why are you here?”

“How do I-?” Reigen shakes his head, and takes a step forward, away from the swinging body of Mogami Keiji, and Mob takes a step back, inching higher on the staircase. A bloody print is left behind on the step. Reigen stops. “I’m your boss,” Reigen says, and he can’t stop the note of
incredulity from creeping into his voice. “Of course I know you. You’re my student.”

“Student?” The word is little more than a murmur, and there is a crinkle in Mob’s brow. “You’re not my teacher,” Mob says, a bit louder. “And I don’t remember seeing you around school.”

Reigen almost feels as if he’s been slapped, and he stands there, gob smacked, staring at his student.

“School…” Reigen shakes his head, and he has no idea what’s going on, no idea why Mob is acting like this. “No, Mob, it’s- it’s me- Reigen. Do you not remember…?”

There is fear and apprehension shining in Mob’s eyes as he stares down at Reigen, and takes another step back, stumbling a bit as his heel catches on the edge of the step. Reigen can’t stop the hand he reflexively raises, even though he knows he’s too far away to catch Mob if he trips.

Mob only startles at the movement, freezing like a deer in the headlights, staring at Reigen’s hand like he expects it to somehow fly up the staircase and bite him.

They both stay like that, frozen for a moment.

A cockroach crawls across the bannister.

Reigen feels sick.

He drops his hand.

“You came to me four years ago,” Reigen says, and he tries to sound patient and understanding, tries to keep his voice level, “and asked me to help teach you how to control your psychic powers.”

Mob stares. “I don’t have psychic powers.”

Reigen’s brows jump to his hairline at that statement, and he straightens, examining his student with new eyes.

He catches sight of Mogami’s body out of the corner of his eye. When he allows his gaze to flick over to the corpse that is not dead, he realizes that it has twisted, and Mogami’s unnerving gaze now faces the staircase where Reigen and Shigeo stand.

Reigen can’t stop the shudder that rolls through him.

“What are you doing here, Mob?” Reigen asks, and his voice is too quiet for his liking. “Why… why are you here with this? You shouldn’t be here.”

Mob frowns at the question, and glances over at Mogami’s body. He doesn’t visibly react to it.

“I don’t know why he’s here,” Mob replies in a small voice. “He just… he just follows me. With his eyes. And says stuff. He… I don’t know why he’s here,” he repeats.

Reigen swallows thickly, and purposefully keeps his gaze on Mob.

“You’re hurt,” Reigen says, changing the subject. “Why don’t you come with me? Let me help you.”

Reigen takes a step forward, and he is at the staircase’s edge.

Mob takes another step back.
“I don’t know you,” Mob says in a shaky voice. He eyes Reigen warily, like a wild animal that has been caged, and does not know what its captor may do. “I don’t know you. I want you to leave, please.”

Reigen can’t do anything but give a weak laugh at that. God- what is going on here?

“Come on, kid,” Reigen tries, and he puts a foot on the first step of the staircase. “Just let me help-”

The step creaks under his weight.

Mob turns tail and bolts back up the stairs.

Reigen tries to reach a hand out to stop him, but the roach from before comes skittering down the bannister, and he jumps back with a yelp at the sight of it.

Mob is down the hall and out of sight in that one second.

He can move fast for someone who isn’t particularly athletic.

The roach scuttles off, and Reigen stares after his student, feeling vaguely hopeless.

There are bloody footprints left where he was standing.

Reigen grits his teeth, and whirls around to face Mogami’s corpse. It is closer than he would have thought, and he starts, but only pulls back slightly.

“What are you doing here?” Reigen demands, as if this isn’t a dream, as if he thinks he’ll be getting an answer form a corpse that is not a corpse.

He still gets one.

Like me.

Like me

Like me

Like me

Like me

Like me

Like Me

Like Me.

He’s like me.

The answer is Mogami’s, and it echoes around him, but does not come from the corpse’s slack mouth. The pinpricks within hallow eyes seem to gleam with vicious delight.

He’ll end up like me.

Cold prickles up the back of Reigen’s neck, and something grips his heart.

Hanging here. Like me.

“You’re wrong,” Reigen says, but his voice does not hold the conviction he would like. It feels like he’s forcing the words through cement.
It's inevitable.

Mogami’s head seems to tilt on his broken neck.

* I am his inevitability.

Reigen turns from him and marches up the stairs.

He’s not going to stay here to listen to vague threats from an evil spirit that his imagination conjured up.

Still the words echo after him.

_Inevitable

_Inevitable

_Inevitable

It’s haunting.

“Creepy fuck,” Reigen spits under his breath, and he does not look back.

He doesn’t know why his brain has dreamed all of this up- has dragged up a long gone horror over the sight of Mogami Keiji’s body, or the faded terror of his lingering spirit, or Mob’s… actually, Reigen doesn’t really know how to explain Mob.

Reigen has a lot of fears swirling around the kid- fears of Mob getting hurt, fears of Mob calling him out for the fraud he is, fears of Mob growing to resent him, fears of hurting his student somehow.

But he can’t really say he’s ever been afraid that Mob would just forget him altogether. Or forget that he even has psychic powers.

There’s really no explanation for this horror show.

As Reigen makes it to the top of the staircase, he heads for the door that he assumes leads to Mob’s room- the only door that is open.

The windows here are grimy as well, and the rooms, despite their doors being shut tight, feel empty, and haunted.

Reigen can’t help but think absently that he has never actually been to the top floor of the Kageyama household-only coming in a handful of times to speak with Mob’s parents.

Reigen doesn’t get the chance to examine that thought before he sees the cat.

It feels as if all the air has suddenly been sucked out of the room.

Because there, at the entrance to Mob’s room, lies a cat, with its eyes open and glazed over, staring up at Reigen, covered in blood, it’s ribcage collapsed in, and it’s leg bent at an odd angle.

Reigen feels his stomach lurch at the sight of the dead animal.

What the hell- why the hell- just-

Reigen feels frustration, and despair, and things he cannot even name well up in him.
Why is his student here, stuck in a decrepit house, with a dead man, and a dead cat, looking as if he has been dragged through the forest by his ankles?

With no small amount of bile building up in the back of his throat, Reigen takes a deep, shaky breath (and tries not the cough at the dust and rot that clogs his nose), and steps over the corpse of the cat gingerly, into Mob’s bedroom.

Mob’s room is small, mostly barren.

There is a bookcase that looks to be falling apart and houses almost no books, and a desk with only a shoddy lamp and torn book bag on it. There isn’t a bed, but Reigen can see a folded up, rather ratty looking futon beside the desk, that Mob appears to be using as a shield of some sort.

Mob sits, curled up in the corner of the room, with his knees gathered to his chest, and the futon bunched up in front of him. He’s shaking.

Reigen feels his heart ache at the sight.

Reigen admittedly can’t see too well in here. It’s dark, damp. The only light comes from the cracks in the walls. The curtains covering the windows are in tatters, but the windows themselves are too smudged to do much good.

“Hey,” Reigen says, shuffling forward in the dim lighting, hoping that he doesn’t trip over one of the stray floorboards that appear to be lifting. “Look, I’m not here to hurt you, Mob, I promise.”

Mob just shrinks back further as Reigen approaches, cowering in the corner.

“I just want to help you,” Reigen continues, and he drops down at the desk’s edge to his knee, holding out a hand.

Mob shakes his head emphatically.

“There’s a dead man downstairs,” Reigen says, not mincing his words. “You can’t be staying in a house with a decomposing corpse.”

Mob flinches at that. “I…”

“It isn’t healthy,” Reigen says, trying to sound reasonable.

“I’m fine.” Mob’s voice quakes he presses back against the wall. “Please leave.”

Reigen’s brow furrows at that, and he examines Mob now that he is closer.

His face is streaked with filth and blood, bruises overlap one another, and Reigen can just smell spoiled milk cloying around him. That explains the hair at least.

Reigen wonders when the kid last had a shower.

He is clearly not fine.

“You’re hurt,” Reigen says gently, and he reaches out a hand slowly. Mob squeezes his eyes shut, and turns his head away.

“You’re bleeding.” Reigen lightly presses two fingers under Mob’s chin, and turns the boy’s face back towards him, trying to get a better look at some of the damage.
Wide, terrified eyes snap open, staring up at him. Reigen startles a bit at the unfiltered horror in those eyes. He can hear Mob’s breath catch in his throat, and suddenly, everything around Reigen warps and blurs.

And when the world suddenly comes back into focus again, Reigen finds that those terrified eyes are suddenly much closer, no longer separated by arm’s length and a dusty futon.

The sudden shift is disorienting enough that it takes Reigen a moment to realize that he is in fact no longer crouching, but standing, and that Mob is no longer curling away from him in the corner of the room, but in front of him, pressed back against the desk, his spine curving away from Reigen’s now looming figure, and Reigen no longer simply has two fingers pressed gently under Mob’s chin, but is instead clutching his student’s jaw in a rough, bruising grip.

Reigen’s body has Mob pinned to the desk, his legs are pressed against his student’s. His face is inches from Mob’s own; closeness bending Mob back over the desk.

Mob lets out a high, panicked sound, and Reigen snaps back into reality, his brain suddenly processing the wholly inappropriate nature of their positions.

Reigen snatches his hand away from Mob’s face as if he’d been burnt, and staggers back.

What.

The Fuck.

Was That?

Reigen’s chest heaves, and his stomach is roiling, and he thinks he might be sick right here.

What. The. Fuck. What the fuck, what the fuckwhatthefuckwhatthefuckwhatthefuck???

He- he hadn’t lost time just now, he knows- and he wouldn’t have to begin with. So how-why-

A cockroach scuttles down the window frame, and stops next to Mob’s ear. The boy is still pressed against the desk, trembling, staring up at Reigen, and Mogami’s voice fills the air again, emanating from the disgusting little creature.

You can’t really trust adults, the cockroach whispers.

And in that second, the burning hot fury that floods through Reigen’s system is enough to let him forget just how terrified he is of roaches. Reigen’s hand shoots out, snatching the disgusting bug from its place by Mob’s head, and throws it to the ground with a flick of his wrist, crushing it under the heel of his shoe before it has the chance to skitter away with a distinctive crunch.

“Rot,” Reigen spits vehemently, grinding the cockroach into the floorboard with his heel.

Reigen’s chest is still heaving, and his hands are shaking, balled into fists, and Reigen sees Mob scramble back on the desk, lifting his feet from the floor, and curling up against the window. Mob stares up at him through his stiff bangs, and Reigan can hear his student’s stuttering breath.

Reigen tries desperately to clear his thoughts, tries to think, tries to come up with something constructive, some platitude or reassurance or apology to give Mob. But there’s nothing. Nothing but the anger burning through him. His hand tingles and burns a bit.

Reigen wishes desperately that Mogami Keiji was not dead, if only so he could kill the man himself.
Or at the very least give him a well-deserved kick where it hurts.

He wonders if perhaps he could track down Matsuo and just start sprinkling purified salt into whatever jar the psychic kept Mogami’s spirit in. Reigen doubts it’d be enough to kill the spirit, but damn it, at the very least it would annoy him.

But no.

Right now, that’s not helpful. Right now, being vengeful and angry will not help Mob.

Mob, who is still curled up on top of the desk, watching Reigen with terrified eyes.

Reigen sighs harshly through his nose, and tries to regain his composure.

The cockroach remains squashed under his heel, and does not move.

Good.

Reigen turns to look at Mob properly, and there are half formed words on his tongue. He wants to apologize, wants to reassure, wants to stammer out that he would never, never-

He wants to ask, he wants to ask what happened, ask how Mob could think such a thing of him, ask-

He wants to demand, demand to know who had made him afraid, who had hurt him like this, who had-

He wants to reach out and hug his student.

Reigen does none of these things.

Instead, his gaze catches on the bottom of Mob’s feet, visible now with how he is curled on the desk, and Reigen asks, “What happened to your feet?”

They’re sliced to hell and back, with wounds of various length and severity bleeding sluggishly. Reigen supposes that answers the question raised by the bloody footprints from earlier.

Mob still startles at the question however, and glances down at his own feet, as if to discern just what Reigen might mean.

“Oh,” Mob says quietly, and he curls his arms around his knees tighter. “They took my shoes and threw them into an abandoned lot. There was a lot of broken glass and stuff like that.”

Reigen’s brows raise at that. “They?”

“They...” Mob trails off, expression scrunching up in confusion, as if he’s trying to remember something distant. “Some kids at my school. They aren’t very nice. Or maybe they just don’t like me very much. They took my shoes.”

Bullies?

Reigen wracks his brain, trying to think of any time Mob’s mentioned being bullied in class. There are a few instances he can recall, but they seemed mostly like isolated incidents. From what Reigen could gather Mob’s school considered him kind of weird, but didn’t particularly dislike him for it. So why would they...?

Trying to think through it is giving him a headache, so instead he says, “Those cuts look pretty bad.
They’re still bleeding. Why not bandage them?”

“Oh.” Mob looks up at Reigen, blinking slowly. “I—um— I didn’t really think about it?”

Mob flinches at his own uncertainty.

“Yeah?” Reigen asks, and he doesn’t hide his skepticism. “What about that, then?” He motions to his own forehead, mirroring where the blood has dried across Mob’s face.

Mob lifts a hand to his hairline hesitantly. He flinches when his hand meets the remnants of the wound.

“I… I think someone hit me,” Mob says, but it sounds more like a question. “But I don’t remember…”

Reigen honestly isn’t sure how he hasn’t thrown up by this point.

“Why didn’t you bandage it?” Reigen presses, shoving his own discomfort to the back of his mind. “Head wounds can be pretty severe, you know.”

Mob looks away again, and directs his gaze towards the empty bookshelf, as he mutters into his knees, “I don’t have a medical kit.”

Reigen’s expression softens at the admission.

“I have one,” Reigen says, seeing his opening. “Back at my apartment. I could try to help you—help make sure none of those get infected.”

They won’t of course, because this isn’t… isn’t…

Mob stiffens at the suggestion, understandably.

“Come on,” Reigen urges gently. “It’s not safe for you to just be… here. With all of this. You’re going to end up getting sick with all the death in the air.” Mob flinches at that. “You can come back to mine. It smells better, I promise. And I can help you with your feet.”

Mob hesitates, but he does not immediately turn Reigen down.

Reigen moves slowly, trying to keep his distance as he pulls out the too small chair to Mob’s desk and plops down in it. It puts them closer to eye level- gives Shigeo more power here.

“Do you really want to stay here?” Reigen asks. He gestures around broadly to the room. “I mean, dead things around, blood, cockroaches.” Reigen doesn’t bother to suppress his shudder. “I mean where even are your parents and your brother?”

Mob just looks at him blankly. “My… my what?”

Reigen nearly double takes.

Okay.

No powers.

No parents.

No brother.
Fine, fine, okay, whatever. He can… he can deal with that.

(It’s amazing how much he cannot deal with that.)

“Does anyone else live here?” Reigen shifts tactics.

Mob shakes his head, hesitant.

“Then why stay?”

Mob bites at his bottom lip, worrying it between his teeth for a moment as he considers the question. Finally, he says, voice barely above a whisper, “I don’t know.”

Reigen’s gaze is sympathetic, and he holds a hand out to the boy (though he’s careful to keep from actually touching the kid). “Then why not come with me? I can help you. You can get out of this place.”

Mob eyes him warily. “Why do you want to help me?”

The question sears something in Reigen, but he doesn’t let it show as he lets his hand drop back to his lap.

He can’t answer, ‘Because you’re my student, and I care about and respect you, and I would very much like you to not be hurt,’ because as far as Mob knows right now, he is not Reigen’s student. So instead, Reigen says, “It’s my job to help people who have something hurting them. Usually people haunted by evil spirits, but it can be other stuff too. Stuff like this.”

Something in Mob’s expression lightens at that.

“I just want to help,” Reigen adds.

There’s silence for a long moment. Then, slowly, very slowly, Mob nods.

“Ohay,” the boy says, and even in the quiet of the empty room, Reigen almost doesn’t hear him.

Reigen feels relief sweep through him, and he stands, slowly, careful not to startle Mob again. “Alright then,” he says. “Let’s get you out of here.”

He offers a hand again, but the kid shies away from it, slowly scooting to the edge of the desk and stepping down on his own. Reigen tries not to let that get to him.

Instead he just rolls his shoulders back, glances around for any more creepy crawlies, and then heads towards the door, motioning for Mob to follow. Reigen grimaces as he’s forced to step over the sickening corpse of the cat again. The footsteps behind him pause.

Reigen glances back, and Mob stands, staring down at the cat, expression twisted with grief.

Reigen tries to keep his tone gentle as he says, “There’s nothing we can do for it now. I’m sorry.”

“I know,” Mob whispers, his eyes squeezing shut. “It was my fault.”

Reigen opens his mouth to object, but Mob is already stepping over the corpse, eyes open again, but hooded.
Reigen just frowns, and continues on. He half expects the boy to bolt at any moment, to turn around and run back to his corner. Reigen wouldn’t blame him if he did.

But the kid follows him down the stairs, and they both avoid looking at Mogami’s corpse.

*You’ll be back,* the corpse whispers as Reigen reaches for the door. *You’ll always end up right back here.*

*Just Like Me.*

The boy glances back at the sound, his eyes searching for Mogami’s hanging figure, but Reigen doesn’t allow it. Instead, he presses a hand insistently on Mob’s back, and ushers him forward and out the door, and with one last glare over his shoulder, Reigen slams it shut behind them. The glass rattles in the window panes.

Reigen pauses, taking a deep breath of clean air.

It’s not nearly as satisfying as it should be. Because while it no longer reeks of mildew and rot out here, it doesn’t exactly smell like nature either. It’s just an absence of scent. It’s disturbing. Like most things here.

Reigen sighs, and turns to look at the boy, who is hovering next to him, fidgeting anxiously, and twisting his hands around one another. He glances up at Reigen, expression uncertain.

Reigen’s gaze drifts down to the boy’s feet. There is still blood left in his wake.

“*I can carry you,*” Reigen offers, “*if you’d like. I imagine that has to hurt-*” but when he moves to take a step closer, reaching out a hand to possibly lift the boy, the kid flinches back, twisting away from Reigen.

Reigen pauses, and feels his heart clench.

Right.

Careful with touching.

He’ll… he’ll need to remember that.

Reigen drops his arm, and instead turns to the front gate, where the world does not exist.

Why does it not exist again?

Reigen can’t remember.

But the vast expanse of white, white, white is intimidating. If Reigen is honest he’s not really sure how they’re even supposed to get to his apartment. Nothing but the house seems to exist here.

But anything is better than staying here. And Reigen will not allow Mob to drift away in this house any longer.

So. Braving the world that does not exist it is then.

Reigen pushes open the squealing gate, and motions to the kid. “Coming?”

Mob hesitates, glancing back at the house, and for a moment Reigen almost thinks he will make a run for the door.
But then, the kid takes a deep breath, and nods, stepping out of his front yard and onto the small patch of concrete that lay beyond.

Reigen follows behind him, and the gate creaks shut behind with a definitive clang!

Reigen frowns, and tries to gather his thoughts for a moment. Well, if they’re supposed to be headed to his place, then from here he’d turn… right. Definitely right.

Reigen takes a deep breath, and then his feet are at the edge of the concrete patch.

“You ready?” Reigen asks again, and the boy is standing at Reigen’s side, looking down at the white nothingness as well.

“Oh-huh,” he says.

“Well then,” Reigen says, swallowing thickly, “let’s go.” And with that he screws his eyes shut and steps off.

Nothing happens.

No falling, no dissolving, nothing. Just- ground.

Reigen’s eyes snap open, and he stares down at his feet, where the sidewalk has suddenly extended beneath him.

Okay then… okay. Okay, he can do this.

Reigen squares his shoulders, and without another thought, marches forward. The boy stays in step beside him, and the sidewalk expands under their feet, coming into focus, and stretching out in front of them. When Reigen glances back, he can still see the house. The neighborhood does not fill itself in. But Reigen imagines passing house after house, trees, parks, streets.

And as they walk, the path comes to life under their feet.

Reigen does not know how, but he knows the boy beside him is responsible for it.

Reigen also knows that when he looks up to see his apartment building that they have not walked nearly long enough to already be here.

But then again, in a world where nothing really exists, Reigen supposes his apartment could be anywhere.

The building looks like it should, but doesn’t. It’s mostly there- the open structure, the beige walls, the two stories. Yet the edges are blurry, almost as if they haven’t quite snapped into focus. And the shape of the windows shifts. Rounded at the top, then flat, round, then flat, round, then-

“Come on then,” Reigen says, holding open the gate to the complex.

The boy follows him in without a word, brows drawn as he looks around furtively.

There’s none of the usual people in the open court yard. No dogs. No stray cats. None of the old gossips out by the patio that lies in the center of the complex.

The silence is unnerving. Like everything else here.

After ascending the stairs, the kid stepping gingerly, wincing at the feeling of open wood against his
feet, Reigen pulls to a stop in front of his apartment, taking out his keys.

In the time it takes him to unlock the door, it has changed colors no less than three times. Brown, to a chipped, faded blue, to a pale pink.

Reigen ignores it as he ushers the kid inside.

The apartment looks exactly as it should.

Well… mostly. There aren’t clothes strewn about, there aren’t dishes in the sink, and the tray table that Reigen has drug around his living room multiple times is tucked away neatly in the corner.

Things are not as Reigen left them, but the apartment itself- the layout, the furniture, all the way down to the peeling paint by the window, are as they should be.

And better yet- there are no hanging bodies, dead cats, or crawling cockroaches.

Reigen lets out the breath he had been holding.

When he opens his eyes, he realizes the kid is watching him, standing between the living room and the dining table, holding himself carefully, as if afraid to touch anything.

Reigne rubs a hand down his face.

“T’m sorry about your floor,” the kid says in that same timid voice. “I didn’t mean to make a mess.”

There are bloody footprints dotting Reigen’s faux hardwood floors. Reigen honestly couldn’t care less.

“T’s fine,” Reigen sighs. “Don’t worry about it.”

The boy frowns, shifting nervously. “But I-“ he begins to protest, but Reigen stops him before he can.

“It’s just blood,” Reigne runs a hand through his hair, “it’ll wash away easily enough. Let’s just… Let’s just get you a shower, alright?”

A shower. Yeah, that would probably be preferable. Between the reek of spoiled milk clumping together locks of the boy’s hair, and the general grime and blood clinging to him, trying to do any amount of bandaging would end up being counterproductive.

But the kid still stiffens at the suggestion, eyeing Reigen up and down, as if searching for some clue, some sign of something… something. Reigen doesn’t know what. He’s too tired to try to think of what it could be.

So he doesn’t.

Instead, Reigen just walks past the boy to the small shower room, motioning for him to follow.

The kid shuffles after him reluctantly, and stands in the doorway, the blood now more evident against the tile floor, watching as Reigen turns on the water.

“Heat’s on the left, cold on the right, if you want to adjust the temperature,” Reigen explains. It feels superfluous, but it gives Reigen something to ground himself with. He turns to the kid. “Your clothes are uh… kind of a lost cause to be honest,” he says with a critical eye.
The kid rubs his own arms for comfort, not looking Reigen in the eye. He draws back a bit at Reigen’s bluntness.

“But I guess I can still wash them,” Reigen amends. “Can always figure out what to do about it after. In the mean time I can… I should have some extra clothes. Can probably finds something that fits you. So I can… yeah, I can do that. Just. Clothes. Yeah.”

Reigen shakes his head. Everything about this just feels wrong, wrong, wrong.

It does not make it better when the kid suddenly starts pulling off his shirt right there in the doorway, his movements stiff and robotic.

“Woah, woah, woah!” Reigen calls out, backpedaling a bit, and throwing out his hands. “Maybe wait for some privacy?!”

The boy pauses with his black uniform jacket in his hands, staring up at Reigen, frozen in fear.

“What are you doing?” Reigen asks, absolutely bewildered.

The kid clutches the jacket to his chest. “I-I’m sorry, I didn’t- I just. You were-” the boy stops, clenching his jaw, before speaking again. “I wasn’t thinking. I’m sorry.”

Reigen needs a cigarette badly right about now.

He shakes his head. “It’s fine just…I wouldn’t-” Reigen brakes off and takes a steadying breath. “It’s fine. Just get clean, and I’ll grab you some clothes.”

The kid nods, and Reigen ducks around him, out the door. He stops, and glances back at the boy, saying, “The door locks. Feel free to use it. If that… if it makes you comfortable. I can set the clothes right outside the door for when you’re finished. The towel on the rack should be clean.”

He does not wait to watch the kid’s reaction before making a beeline for his bedroom.

He can’t think about all of this right now.


A hitch is immediately thrown into his plans when he opens to door to his bedroom and everything blurs out of focus.

Reigen blinks, pulling back in surprise, half expecting the picture in front of him to clear like a passing sense of vertigo.

It doesn’t.

His bedroom is blurry, hazy, and nearly nonexistent in places. Where there should be a window, there is only a white patch, like a puzzle piece missing. Reigen can vaguely make out his bed, but the color of the sheets keep changing, and the exact location shifts subtly, wavering back and forth even as Reigen stares. The computer table is little more than an utterly useless blob. And Reigen’s closet is half missing as well.

Reigen whips around quickly, half afraid that the world is dissolving around him.

But the rest of the apartment is the same as before. Crisp. Clear. Nothing missing or blurry about it.
Reigen pauses, slowly turning his attention back to the bedroom.

It feels as if someone had just ripped glasses from his nose.

But Reigen does not wear glasses.

So.

Reigen supposes he can rule out finding any clothes in here for Mob to wear.

Mob…

Reigen inhales sharply as the name rings out in his mind like a bell.

*Mob.*

The kid.

The kid is Mob- how had he… had he forgotten?

He-

Right. Right, this isn’t-

This isn’t real.

He’s in… a dream. His dream?

No, that doesn’t make sense any more. Not his dream. But… Mob’s?

So he’s in Mob’s dream?

Mob’s head?

That. That sounds right. It sounds like something he knew. Why did he forget that?

Did he?

Mob must only be able to create what he knows. And he has stayed at Reigen’s apartment multiple times, but likely only ever glimpsed Reigen’s bedroom. So he cannot accurately recreate it. And therefore, Reigen cannot interact with anything here.

That’s… that’s fine. That’s-

No, okay, no it’s not fine. Nothing about this is fine.

But until whatever this madness is stops, this is what Reigen has to work with. And what he has to work with is *not* his room.

Reigen closes the door, and turns back to the living room, wracking his brain.

Right okay. Clothes then? Can he find clothes anywhere else?

Reigen knows that he at one point- now? A year ago? When-

He had clothes that had been ‘designated’ as Mob’s for when he stayed the night at Reigen's apartment (either because his parents were out of town, or as part of the fallout from some job). An
old pair of sweatpants and a shirt too small for Reigen that he never touched otherwise.

He’s still pretty sure that they were tucked away somewhere in a drawer in his closet however. And that just- yeah. Okay.

Reigen feels his thoughts getting more scattered the longer he stays here. Keeping his thoughts in line makes him feel as if he’s grasping at straws.

He tries to keep his focus on one thing.

Clothes.

Well, Reigen’s bedroom is out, but Reigen does remember that he’s kept a spare futon for guests, Mob specifically, rolled up in the spare closet.

For some reason, whenever Reigen opens the door to the small side closet he half expects it to be full of dust, or rats, or cockroaches with Mogami’s voice, or, worse possibly, Mogami’s swinging corpse.

But none of those things are to be found.

Instead Reigen opens his closet to find a vacuum cleaner, several sheets, and the futon all tucked away carefully. The closet exists, fully, but everything else here snaps in and out of focus as well. But those few stationary items ground him, and Reigen pulls out the futon, and carries to the living room.

Sure enough, when he unrolls it he finds Mob’s things tucked away inside of it.

The shirt and sweats, a top sheet, and even a faded sweatshirt from Reigen’s old university.

Relief, nostalgia, and warmth flash through him.

Right. That’s right. Mob’s here, with him, and regardless of what Reigen’s been missing, regardless of what he fears might have happened, or at the very least, regardless of the horrors of this dream, Mob will be okay. Reigen can be sure of it.

And now he has clothes. So.

Reigen grabs the clothes, and sets them down next to the door of the shower room before knocking gently.

“Found you some clothes,” Reigen calls through the door, over the sound of rushing water. “They’re out here. Feel free to grab them whenever you want.”

There isn’t a reply, but Reigen feels confident enough that he was heard.

He takes a second to steady himself.

Med kit. Right. Just... focus on that next.

The restroom exists. As does the entire cabinet full of medical supplies under the sink, and a first aid kit. Some bottles lack distinctive labels, but Reigen has no use for them anyway. He rummages through everything, trying to account for what he does and does not have. Bandages, check. Antiseptic, check. Reigen isn’t sure what else he might need. Hell, he isn’t even sure what the proper bandaging would be for someone’s whose feet have been sliced up. But winging it is better than nothing.
When Reigen steps back out into the hallway he sees that the clothes are gone, and hears that the water has stopped.

Reigen sets the medical supplies down on the kitchen table, and decides to forgo lighting up a cigarette. Smoking right now wouldn’t exactly be the best idea either, because… because…

Reigen gives up on the thought before it can fully form, and collapses back into a chair.

He eyes the kitchen from the corner of his eye, and thinks about making food. He thinks he has some cup ramen somewhere. Probably. Maybe?

He can’t remember now.

He can worry about it after the kid is bandaged up. He might want food then.

And then… Then what?

Reigen’s taken in a skittish kid, who looks like hell, and acts like…

“Um-”

The hesitant voice startles Reigen out of thought, and he looks up to see the kid standing at the living area’s threshold.

“Oh, sorry,” Reigen says, shaking his head. “I just got lost in thought. You feel any better?”

He certainly looks better. The boy’s hair is damp, but no longer clumping together with a sticky sheen, and his torn up uniform has been replaced with a soft blue T-shirt and worn gray sweatpants that have been drawn as tight as possible and cuffed several times on the bottom.

With more skin revealed however, Reigen can see more bruising. More scrapes. The entire underside of the kid’s left forearm is a multicolored amalgamation of bruises old and new forming a discolored patch on his pale skin. A long scratch on his other arm disappears under the sleeve of the shirt, nothing too deep, but painful looking nonetheless.

Still though. The kid looks healthier. More alive than he did in that shambling mess of a haunted house.

The boy seems to consider the question genuinely for a moment before nodding slowly. “Yes. Thank you.”

Reigen just smiles softly. “Course. I can help you with your feet, and uh- some of the rest of that. If you’d like?”

The kid just nods, seeming almost shy as he crosses to sit in the chair Reigen rises from. There is still blood left in his wake, but it no longer looks so distinctive, so bright against the floorboards.

At first the boy keeps his gaze down, but when Reigen grabs the materials from the table, and sits, cross legged, in front of him, the kid turns his attention to the kitchen, eyes wandering aimlessly.

“For now I’m just going to clean these, and then bandage them,” Reigen explains, as he wets a cloth with antiseptic. “Is there… You mentioned that you walked across some glass. Were you able to get all of that out?”

The kid frowns, and still does not look at Reigen. “I think so,” he says. “I don’t really remember. But it… I don’t feel like anything is still-” he cuts himself off with a frustrated noise.
Reigen knows the feeling.

“I understand,” he says instead. “I’ll keep a look out for anything you might have missed. Just be prepared- this will probably sting a bit. If the pain’s too much let me know.”

Given that the kid’s been walking around with his feet like this though- Reigen doubts it’ll be a problem.

The boy gives a hum of acknowledgement, and Reigen sets to work.

He taps on the kid’s left foot to indicate where he’ll be starting, and the boy lifts it for him to get a good look. It’s a nasty piece of work. There are at least seven lacerations of varying lengths scattered across the skin here- jagged and raw. Reigen isn’t entirely sure a few don’t need stitches. To be honest it makes him a bit nauseous to look at.

But then again, most things about this place make him feel ill.

He takes a deep, bracing breathe, and, supporting the boy’s heel with his hand, slowly starts to clean the wounds.

The kid tenses up at the feeling, and draws a sharp, hiccupping breath. Reigen pauses, but when nothing else happens, he continues. He doesn’t drag it out, but Reigen tries to be meticulous in his work- ensuring that each cut is cleaned well. The boy flinches occasionally, and Reigen does not stop him the few times he tries to pull away, but for the most part the kid stays still and allows him to work.

The bleeding has slowed significantly, and Reigen presses a rag to the wounds, mopping up the excess blood, before wiping down the kid’s foot one last time and starting in on wrapping the wounds.

Somehow, this is the hardest part.

Mainly because, as much as Reigen is mildly capable when it comes to basic first aid, foot injuries are a bit more difficult. It’s hard to get the wrappings to stay properly, and he keeps having to wipe away the blood from the sluggishly bleeding wounds. And then securing the bandage is nearly impossible.

Finally though, Reigen is confident that the wrappings will stay, and will do an adequate job. He sits back with a sigh of relief, and looks up at the boy.

The kid is no longer avoiding his gaze, instead staring down at him with what Reigen assumes is scrutiny. It's a bit hard to tell.

“Okay?” Reigen asks, holding out his other hand and rolling his shoulders back.

The boy rolls the ankle of the wrapped wound, staring down at it unblinkingly.

“Yeah,” finally comes the soft reply. “Okay.” And he lets Reigen start the whole process over with his other foot.

There are fewer cuts here, but two in particular are a bit longer, a bit deeper. They bleed more profusely, and Reigen finds himself having difficulty slowing it. He doesn’t think the boy’s in danger of blood loss any time soon (though, depending on how long he was in that house, Reigen’s not so sure), but it still makes cleaning the wound more difficult. Blood drips down to the floor as Reigen works, and he tries to ignore it.
At one point, Reigen perhaps presses too hard on one of the larger wounds, and the kid jerks back with a hiss of pain, curling in on himself a bit in the seat. Reigen’s grip does not slip from the boy’s heel, but he does not immobilize him either.

There’s a tense pause.

“That hurt,” the boy says.

Reigen looks up at him, and squeezes the kid’s ankle reassuringly as he says, “Sorry about that. Do you want me to stop?”

The boy shakes his head, and slowly extends his foot back out again. A drop of blood lands on Reigen’s pant leg.

Reigen nods, and tries to be a bit more careful as he cleans the rest of the cuts. He tries to preempt the rivets of blood from the wounds and keeps a cloth pressed to them as he begins wrapping this foot in bandages. He tries to keep the pressure firm, but gentle, not wanting to spook the kid again.

The silence here isn’t oppressive, but comfortable. Something that Reigen can’t help but find some relief in. It’s… nice.

As Reigen finishes securing the bandages, the kid speaks up again.

“Master Reigen,” the boy says, calling Reigen’s attention away from his work.

Reigen looks up, meeting eyes that are no longer so clouded by grief and pain and confusion, but look sharper. Clearer.

Mob.

All the air rushes out of Reigen at once as it hits him once again.

That’s right. This is Mob. His apprentice, his-

Reigen had… he had somehow forgotten again.

Reigen guesses it’s because of Mob’s influence.

Because he remembers now- this isn’t real. It’s just a dream. Just not his dream, as Reigen had initially thought, but Mob’s.

And since Mob did not remember Reigen, Reigen had forgotten as well.

But Mob looks back at Reigen with clear eyes, and Reigen remembers.

It feels like clean, fresh air rushing through his lungs again, and Reigen smiles up at Mob, tired, but sincere, as he leans back on his palms.

“Hey, there you are, kiddo,” he says, and Reigen can’t quite keep the fondness from of his voice.

Mob only inclines his head, considering Reigen carefully.

“Master Reigen,” Mob begins again, “what are you doing here?”

Coming from most people it would sound like an accusation- but Mob sounds genuinely confused.
Reigen shrugs. “I was thinking you could tell me that. I mean,” Reigen waves his hand around in a vague gesture, “you created all of this, didn’t you?”

Mob chews on his bottom lip for a moment, looking around at the apartment, contemplative. “Yes,” he says. “But I just don’t understand how you’re here as well. Or- or why?”

He looks back to Reigen, searching for some kind of answer.

But Reigen doesn’t have one.

To be honest, it doesn’t really concern him too much. His student has the capacity to pull other people into his dreams. Sure. Why not. Dream sharing’s not any crazier than anything else Reigen’s seen since taking Mob on as an apprentice.

Reigen stands, dusting off his pants and jacket where no dust clings, and just says, “I don’t know. Like I said, this is your world, Mob. I don’t think I’d be here unless you brought me here.”

Mob’s brow furrows. “But I-I don’t remember…”

Reigen just hums in acknowledgement, and takes a step forward, reaching out to push back Mob’s bangs.

He’s relieved when Mob does not tense or flinch away from him. Instead, his student just watches Reigen with that same searching gaze.

There are still bruises, but Reigen isn’t sure there’s much of anything he can do for those. The scrape crossing over Mob’s brow isn’t bleeding, and looks better now that he’s clean.

“May I?” Reigen asks, motioning towards the injuries scattered across Mob’s head.

Mob nods, hesitant. But as Reigen pushes back his hair further, and takes a step closer, checking a bruise he had missed, hidden under Mob’s hair, and searching for the cut that had left the blood caked on his student’s face, Mob says, “You know I’m not… I’m not actually hurt. Right?”

There’s something Reigen can’t quite place in his voice.

“I know,” Reigen replies easily, unperturbed. “Do you?”

“Yes,” Mob replies automatically, but there’s a pause after, something uncertain.

Reigen pulls back to meet Shigeo’s gaze again. He doesn’t say anything, but Mob looks away, frowning down at his feet.

Red still stains the bandages.

“I-” Mob breaks off, swallowing thickly. “I know it’s not real. I know. But it just… it feels…”

“I know,” Reigen says, and he lets his hands drop as he finds no wound of note hidden in Mob’s hairline. He hesitates, before offering, “Do you maybe want to tell me what this is all about?”

Mob does not raise his gaze. He looks conflicted.

“Because I have to admit,” Reigen continues, “this was uh- kind of unnerving. Even for me. The whole- Mogami. Thing. I- what was going on with that?”

Mob’s eyes dart up to Reigen, then to the ground again. “I…” The words seem to die on his tongue.
Reigen frowns, and sits down in the chair across from his apprentice, leaning his elbows against his knees.

“Was it…did all of this have to do with Mogami?” Reigen asks, framing the question differently.


Mob shakes his head slowly. “Not- Not really? I- it didn’t actually happen.”

Well that’s just confusing.

Then again they had been in a psychic battle over a young girl’s body and soul so that’s perhaps understandable.

“But it felt like it did,” Reigen clarifies.

Mob nods sharply.

Reigen runs a hand through his hair with a soft sigh.

This is… he doesn’t know what to think of all of this. None of it’s good, that’s for sure. And it means that Reigen must have missed something pretty vital along the way. And for a good while as well. It’s been well over a month since they ran into Mogami.

It leaves a ball of lead forming in the pit of his stomach.

“Master,” Mob says suddenly, and Reigen lifts his gaze. Mob’s eyes meet Reigen’s hesitantly. “I-thank you. For being here. And helping. Even if it’s not- not really-”

Reigen places a hand on Mob’s shoulder. “Any time you need me, I’ll be here,” he promises.

When Reigen stands, Mob follows suit. Reigen almost advises against it, knowing that Mob’s feet must still be tender.

But he gets the feeling that it won’t be a concern for much longer.

His apprentice stares up at him with wide, dark eyes, and Reigen just inclines his head, waiting for Mob to speak.

Instead, Mob just takes a stride forward, and wraps his arms tightly around Reigen’s torso.

Reigen startles a bit at the movement- but then he lets his arms wrap around Mob’s shoulders and pulls his student closer. He feels Mob shudder against him.

“It’s okay,” Reigen promises, squeezing his eyes closed as Mob’s arms tighten momentarily. “It’ll be okay.”

Mob nods against Reigen’s chest.

And they stand there as the world fades away.
When Mob wakes, it’s to tear tracks on his face.

He gasps as his eyes fly open, and for a horrible, disoriented moment, he thinks that he’s back in the house that is not his.

But then he realizes- he’s just woken up. From his dream. Where… where Reigen was.

Mob is clutching the sheets tight around his body, and he turns over with a small, pitiful moan.

He wants to think, to hope, that it was just a dream. That it was just a strangely vivid dream that Reigen had appeared in. He had appeared in dreams before. Both good and bad. Never… never really in dreams that revolved around Mogami’s world. But. It’s possible. It could just be a dream.

Mob knows better.

He presses the pillows around his head, squeezing his eyes shut. He has no idea what time it is, but he knows he’s not going to get any more sleep.

He doesn’t know if Dimple is here, watching.

The spirit often hung around their house at night, but he has also said that watching Shigeo or Ritsu sleep just feels kind of creepy to him.

Mob feels like he can sense him, but he’s not concentrating enough to be sure if Dimple is in his room or just somewhere else in the house close by.

If he is here, he stays blissfully silent as Mob shakes and shudders in his bed sheets.

He hates nights like this.

He hates how weak they make him feel.

And what’s worse-

What’s worse…

He likely dragged his master into this. Somehow.

It leaves a horrid pit in Mob’s stomach.

Mob does not know how long he stays there, curled in on himself, hoping that it wasn’t real, wishing to have the warmth and security of that hug back. It could be minutes, or hours.

“Shigeo,” Dimple calls out, and the green spirit is suddenly there, hovering a bit over Mob’s head. He’s frowning, and there’s something Mob can’t quite read in his tone when he says, “Reigen’s outside.”

Mob blinks in surprise at that, and feels his breath catch in his throat.

He gets up slowly before shuffling over to his window. The sun is just now starting to rise. So it must still be early then.

And there, leaning against the fence outside his house, is Master Reigen, just striking up a cigarette as he stares out at the empty street and quiet houses.

Oh. So then…
Mob’s throat feels tight, but he nods anyway, answering Dimple simply with an, “Okay.”

He dresses slowly, taking time to brush his hair carefully, and splash his face with water, before slipping on a warm sweater. He can’t help but check for bruises and cuts as he goes.

There are none to be found.

They never existed in the first place.

Mob is both jittery and sluggish all at once. Actually, in all honestly, Mob isn’t sure what he’s feeling.

Horror, maybe. At knowing it was real.

Dread. At the thought of Reigen now knowing the truth as well.

Relief.

It’s a tangle that Mob can’t quite undo.

When he walks down the stairs no one else has gotten up for breakfast yet. But that’s to be expected. Mob leaves a quick note for his family in case he is not back before they are up.

It’s hard, as he slips on his shoes, and glances over his shoulder, to not imagine Mogami’s body there, hanging, swinging next to the staircase.

Mob pushes out the fully intact front door.

Reigen is still there; the cigarette in his hand nearly gone.

Mob is a bit surprised to see him smoking. He knows that Reigen smokes, or at the very least used to. But he has not seen the man pick up a cigarette, or even so much as smelled smoke on Reigen’s suit or the walls of Spirits and Such since the first few months after he met the man.

Mob feels bad. He must have really stressed his master out.

As Mob opens the gate and steps out onto the sidewalk, Reigen glances over at him, and tosses the cigarette to the ground, grinding it out with the heel of his shoe.

Mob can’t help imagining the crunch of a cockroach beneath his master’s heel instead.

Reigen’s not dressed in his usual suit and tie. Instead he’s wrapped in a fall coat and jeans. Mob wonders if this perhaps means they are not going into work today.

Reigen pushes off of the wall as Mob approaches, his gaze assessing. Mob stops a few feet in front of him, and silence stretches between them for a long moment. For once, it is not comfortable.

Mob drops his gaze to his shoes.

When Reigen speaks his voice sounds raspy, and Mob cannot tell if it’s from the cigarette or something else. “I think we need to talk,” Reigen says, and he does not sound harsh, or angry. Just… sad.

Mob raises his eyes, and nods slowly. “Okay.”

He does not want to talk. He is bad at talking.
The thought of trying to explain everything, to try and explain what Mogami had done is daunting.

But… Master Reigen had offered to listen. Before. In the dream. And he had cared what Mob had to say. And-

Mob thinks that after everything, he perhaps owes his master an explanation.

Reigen shoves his hands into his pockets, and motions towards the sidewalk with his chin.

“Come on then. We can go grab breakfast somewhere,” Reigen says, and Mob falls into step beside him. “How do pancakes sound?”

Mob just nods.

“Yeah,” Reigen agrees, letting out a deep sigh, “that sounds good to me to.”

And Mob, despite everything, cannot help but feel safe walking by his side.

End Notes

Bonus:

They grab breakfast, and Reigen treats Mob to pancakes.

When they finally get around to talking about Mogami and the dream, at some small park bench on the mountain, away from the noise of the city, Reigen hands Mob a journal and a pencil.

'For when talking about it gets too complicated' he explains, and Mob is grateful.

When Reigen asks for specifics, and Mob has trouble finding the right words to explain, he writes it down. It's easier to write it, because he doesn't have to worry about what he looks or sounds like or what his hands are doing. It's just words.

Mob does not lose control until he talks about the cat. Reigen doesn't seem all that surprised, as he just holds Mob through the whipping wind, and the trees shaking, and the ground ripping itself into pieces over and over again.

After Mob has said everything he could and feels empty and raw, he and Reigen stay there, at the city's edge, until sun down.

Reigen offers for Mob to stay at his place for the night, if only for the company, and it turns into a bit of an event- with Teru and Ritsu joining them for dinner.

Mob does not dream that night. It's a relief.

*Shrugs* I guess Mob can kinda sorta use telepathy in this story? Who knows.
This isn't really depicting anything specific from the Mogami arc- besides the cat I guess- but instead is more an amalgamation of all the stuff that stands out in Mob's mind that he remembers from his time in Mogami's world. And, because of that, it's also kind of a representation of the amalgamation of what the Mogami arc is in my mind. Which is admittedly influenced by a lot of different things- not just canon.

I haven't a clue how on the mark I am with any of this, or if I completely missed the target altogether. Either way, constructive criticism is always welcome!

Thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoyed!

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