



The Taboo Book

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Characters:

➤ Kito Akiichi (鬼頭明一):

A young man working in an *Izakaya* (traditional Japanese tavern). He suffered an unfortunate event one year ago, thus he became depressed and decadent. Although understanding some magic tricks, his skill still cannot be called “mastery”.

➤ Eunice (エヌニス):

An angel from heaven, with a particularly striking silver-white hair (actually it is the source of her magic). She is innocent and careless so that frequently making troubles, but she won't be annoying at all. However, in the aspect of the *contract*, she is always very rigorous, even make people feel rigid.

➤ Ryoko Shimizu (清水涼子):

Genius, top student, intellect... These adjectives are never too much for her. She is a playmate in the childhood of Kito. She has a sharp tongue but a tender heart, even though she does not want to admit it at all. She always takes care of Kito, maybe an ambiguous relationship has been formed?

➤ Uncle:

Owner of the Izakaya. He is a strong and frank man, who seems to be careless and strict, but in fact, he is very sensitive and warm-heart.

➤ Gangsters:

A group of infamous youth in the town.

➤ Witch:

A mysterious but kind woman, working in the shrine on the mountain.

➤ Grandma:

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.....? ..?

➤ Parents:

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Prologue

The sky was overcast, and the weather was also muggy.

Walking alone on the quiet street, it was not a tediously long journey, but I even thought it could not be finished forever.

Silent. Although my position did not deviate from the centre of this small town, I saw no one on the road. It must be noon now, despite it was as dark as evening. —As if falling into a strange parallel world, what a strange day.

How many times I had been alone like this? I couldn't remember. Well, maybe a whole year had passed after that thing happened.

With heavy steps, I continued to follow along this familiar road, walking, walking. The clothes were soaked with sweat.

"Damn weather..." Complaining like this, the bag in my hand seemed to be getting heavier.

Exhausted. My body was about to fall apart. Maybe I would totally faint next.

"Bah... Getting so tired...after just taking a mail?! Huh, well-well... I'm just a jerk!"

Knowing that no one would be listening, but still speaking out such affected words of self-abandonment... I really didn't know what's wrong with myself.

So quiet. What my ears could hear were only the sounds of the friction of the plastic bag and my heavy walking. Oh, of course, and the gusts of wind as well.

The weather forecast said there would be thunderstorms today. Sure enough, it was stupid to go out at this damn time.

Very close to my home on the edge of the town now... I shall hurry up... and get home before it fiercely rained. With that in mind, I quickened my pace.

One step... Two steps... Three steps...

In a moment, however, I seemed to lose my balance, I thus fall to the ground. The things in the bag had been spilled all over the floor. Terrible, I must pick them up quickly...

But... Why so dizzy... Was the world spinning?

—I couldn't do it. I was too exhausted to move anymore. I wanted to sleep... But why in this place?

Well, just forget it, anyway, everyone must be sheltering from the rain at home, even if I slept here, no one would be in trouble, right?

Well then... Good night, the world...

"...Hey!"

Eh? What was that noise? Was it an illusion?

"Hey, Akiichi! Wake up!!"

A familiar voice. Who was it? Who was calling me?

"I said, Akiichi! You big fool! Don't sleep here!!"

I slowly opened my eyes, and a fuzzy figure appeared in front of me.

"Kito Akiichi! Wake up, or you'll catch a cold!"

When my eyes gradually focused, I finally realized that I was wet through, and the

girl holding an umbrella for me was keeping looking at me with reproachful eyes.

“Hey, hey, you fool, you wanna have a fever? Stand up right now!”

Well, that made sense. I gave a weak sigh and called the familiar name—

“Ryoko, it’s you.”

“So you are not stupid enough, ah huh? —Come on, grab my hand and I’ll pull you up,” Said Ryoko, who attempted to reach out to me.

“...Thank you,” After a simple thanks, I stood up and began to look around. I found that the things spilled on the ground had already been picked up, and now they were neatly placed beside me.

Thanks to the rain, I felt much cooler, though I would catch a cold if I kept going on like this. But now I must go home as soon as possible. I tried to pick up the bag and was ready to leave.

“Stop! What are you going?!” As soon as I just intended to step forward, I was immediately stopped again by the loud female voice.

“Go home,” I replied briefly and left the umbrella held by Ryoko at the same time. —Ah, honestly, there was a chill at the moment.

“Enough!! Akiichi, how long will you be so decadent?” Ryoko’s angry voice came, and my head was soon covered by an umbrella, “Come on, I’ll go back with you!”

“No, my house was in a mess. Besides, there’s nothing to do with Ryoko.”

“So what?! I can’t leave you alone, do you understand? And you know, we are...”

She suddenly stopped, but only a few seconds later, another harsh voice came:

“In a word, don’t stay here too long. Let’s go back to your home first.”

In this way, with Ryoko’s insistence, we walked home with an umbrella.

There must be a world of difference between walking in the rain in romantic movies with the cruel reality — for every step, my shoes would be steeped once. Woo... That was so annoying!

Unconsciously, I began to slowly look at the beside me with long straight hair and in glasses — Shimizu Ryoko, my playmates in childhood, in other words, we were brought up together. Until we grew up, recently she was accepted by a famous university in the city, but I hate learning, so I could just be trapped in this boring town forever. But even so, Ryoko would always come back here every summer, these days she must be on holiday — well, that was why she began to interfere with my affairs just now?

At this time, Ryoko seemed to have noticed my sight, so she glared back at me, and then quickly looked ahead again — as if she was disgusted with me.

“What an interesting move,” I laughed, in spite of myself. Such a long-lost feeling, I hadn’t laughed like that for a long time.

Ah, it was just like back in the past, when Ryoko and I quarrelled every day. I really miss that happy time... Since *that thing* happened, I...

Thinking of this, I suddenly began to have a headache again, and the smile on my face thus disappeared.

Therefore, we continued to go through the road in silence.

Soon after, we stopped in front of a gray house.

“Oh my, Akiichi, this’s too messy,” Ryoko, who had just put away her umbrella, immediately showed a look of blame.

Ryoko’s complaint was reasonable. Honestly, I loathed cleaning and even felt a headache when I heard that word. Furthermore, due to my depression these days, I never intended to do chores such as cleaning my house with garbage mountains, dust everywhere. Just like a disorderly warehouse, my “sweet” home just supported me barely lived.

“...I’m not good at housework. After all, for me, it’s enough to live.”

Not wanting to explain too much, I silently took out the key and opened the rusty door. Although the guest was Ryoko, my old friend, I still felt embarrassed to make her seen the messy room.

What came into view was the living room. Despite it was called the living room, only two sofas were placed. The whole room was full of all kinds of sundries. Except for the ground leading to the stairs, other places were covered with dust.

“Unbelievable,” Ryoko said, with her hands akimbo. Her dark eyes kept staring at me, “Where’s the broom?”

“You don’t have to help me... Ryoko.”

“And let you sleep in a pigsty-like place, huh?! Can’t you see that, ah, the garbage on the ground is already stinky! If no one deals with it, cockroaches will settle down here soon!”

“That’s exaggerating... Ryoko, you haven’t changed at all.”

“I can’t stand it anymore! —Bucket! Where’s the bucket?”

“Ah... Wait!”

So, with a sense of guilt, I began to clean this messy house, or rather, under the pressure of Ryoko.

“Whoa, so tired!” Two hours later, looking at the clean floor, Ryoko was planted on the sofa with her arms outstretched.

In the face of Ryoko, I couldn’t help feeling more guilty. I wrung the blackened rag again beside the bucket. Ah, how many times have I repeated it? I really couldn’t remember.

“Thank you, Ryoko. I’m really happy after cleaning with you. Ryoko must be a good wife.”

“W-What?!!”

Ryoko’s face immediately blushed, “what are you talking about...”

All of a sudden, she noticed a picture frame at the table, in a flash, she fell silent.

“It’s grandma,” I took the frame and wiped the dust with my hand, “She will be also happy to see Ryoko is coming.”

“Ah, I’m sorry about that... Akiichi...I feel so sorry to your grandma...”

“Don’t apologize. I think I should get used to it.”

I sighed and answered Ryoko, but it was more like saying to myself, “after all, I was alone at first, even though my parents... I’ve never seen them. Now even if I have nothing, I may face it calmly.”

“Akiichi...” Ryoko suddenly looked at me seriously, “Maybe you should know...”

“Know what?”

Ryoko didn’t answer. Instead, she stood up and opened her wet backpack, looking for something.

Soon, Ryoko stopped. What appeared in her hands were two... two books?

“Actually, I’m here for you this time...”

Ryoko spoke, her sweet voice clearly into my ears, gradually, formed a sentence that I can’t let go of—

“Kito Akiichi, do you really think your parents left you nothing?”

“Eh?”

I was stunned. Until just now, I firmly believed that I had lost everything except this old house. —My parents, whom I had never met before, almost be of little.

“My parents...?”

Silently reciting this empty and strange word, there was no touch in my heart?

What would they leave me? Relics? Money? Or...

“These two books?”

“These aren’t ordinary books. They’re *magical* books.”

Magic —another word that shocked me.

Maybe in the eyes of others, that was ridiculous absurd. However, I knew clearly in my heart that magic does exist, and my grandmother was a witch, after all.

“My parents were wizards, too?”

“Well, just like Grandma. They manipulated magic.”

“Well...” I answered briefly, but there was a storm in my heart.

“Go to the attic, you know, the *attic*.”

Ryoko seemed to see through my mind and walked towards the stairs.

The attic was where grandma used to study her magic. The only people who knew this secret were me, grandma and Ryoko.

We skillfully climbed up the ladder to the small room. Finding the familiar oil lamp in the dark, wiping the dust, and then reigniting it. In the heavy rain, this oil lamp became the only light source in the dim attic.

“Well, I miss it so much,” Ryoko sighed as she looked around the attic.

Just last year, I also studied magic with my grandmother here. Nevertheless, compared with my skilled grandmother, I could only do some simple tricks.

“Is there anything special about these two books?” I asked.

Ryoko put the books on the small table. With the light of the oil lamp, I watched them carefully—

These are two very old books, one is black, another is white, but there were no words on their covers. In other words, if only dully staring at their appearances, we could never know what was written inside.

“Grandma gave them to me. She just asked me to bring them to you when you’re at a loss or in trouble...” Ryoko replied.

“...In trouble?”

“Well, as the gifts from your parents, you’d better open it by yourself. So... I’ll wait for you downstairs.”

Thus, Ryoko left. I was the only one left standing in the attic, staring at the two books.

So, which book should I choose?

**The White one*

Page 1

I gently stroked the book's wrinkled cover. What a broken book! Then, I put my palm on the book cover slowly in spite of myself.

"Woo-ahhhh!"

Suddenly, I withdrew my hand like getting an electric shock. The quite wild magic wave was surging inside — such an incredible magic book, obviously, the book left from my parents.

"...Parents?" speaking this word as strange as from a foreign language, I sighed, "the legacy of my parents who I have never met..."

All of a sudden, out of the window there was a flash of lightning across the deep sky, leaving a faint silver-white glow to illuminate the house. The rain was wildly getting violent, knocking on the roof and windows, as if to drown the whole room.

Rumble, rumble... the thunder rolled, the sound fiercely hit the room, and the glass hereby trembled slightly.

"Shall I have the roof repaired?" I looked up the old roof, by the way, what was the mantra of restoration? I could hardly remember it.

"Well, I'd better open this white book at first and have a look," I said, and I reached out to the book with a white cover.

"Err...?"

While I was attempting to open the first page, soft white light abruptly overflowed, followed by an oncoming powerful magic wave.

"Woo... Ahhhhh—!!!"

I couldn't help crying, and my body subconsciously retreated back, which was a sudden realization that the flame from the book was becoming too stronger to let me open my eyes. But soon, the dazzling white light disappeared.

"What's going on... Eh?" I opened my eyes, looking around the already bright attic, suddenly burst into words with uncontrollable surprise, "The rain... unexpectedly stopped?"

It was really impossible — Could anyone believe a storm of lightning and thunder turned into a sunny day just at a moment, without any signs?

"Is it... This book?" In a hurry, I had my sight focused on this opening book, however—

"Hey— hey?!"

In front of me, there was a girl. No, it was not so much a girl, but...

“An angel?”

Angel-like girl, spread out her snow-white wings, in the dazzling white light half hanging in the air. As the energy fluctuation still not dissipated, her silver-white hair was whipping in the wind, her skirt as white as the divine wings were also gracefully swaying as well. — She was like the fairy in the forest with breathtaking beauty.

The girl gently closed her eyes without saying a word, her slightly infant cheek under the holy light was remarkably pure and graceful as if she was from a quaint oil painting. I was too shocked to speak, even forgot to breathe, just dully staring at the abrupt guest who was gradually falling to the ground.

Finally, the girl opened her eyes, and her blue pupils reflected the stunned me.

“Ex—cuse me?” I said slowly, “you are...”

“Whoa—! Whoaaa... It’s so... SO embarrassing!”

Err...? Before I finished speaking, the elegant Angel did something that was not suitable for her appearance. She quickly turned her body around and tried to use the white wings to cover her back, and her red cheeks and ears as well.

“Hello...? You... Are you ok?” I hurriedly walked over, but the girl immediately took a few steps away without looking back.

“Really... It’s really hard to face up to *Kito sama*... I’m so lame... boo-hoo...”

Just when I was at a loss facing the angel shivering in the corner, Ryoko, who seemed also hear the commotion, was climbing into the attic.

“Hey, Akiichi! What’s going on? And do you know, it is queerly sunny outside now! You...” Ryoko came in a hurry and suddenly noticed the girl too, “Huh? Who’s she?”

“I don’t know! I just happened to open the book and felt the wild magic wave all of sudden, then I...”

“Wait... Oh, look! Are somethings written in the book...?”

Ryoko picked up the book lying on the floor, and I hereby temporarily neglect the mysterious girl for a while. I got close to Ryoko, then began to read the first page—

Holy and pure Angel Eunice, the adherent of Venus, the apprentice of romance, and the faithful of the divine contract, falling from heaven to tightly connected with covenant. The great Angel holds out an olive branch to the desperate mortal and uses her competent medicine to heal the wounded heart. When the sacred wings descend the world, the lofty contract is hereby established.

“What the actually hell...?” I was full of confusion, “so... I assume the ‘the holy and pure angel’ means her?”

“Theoretically, yeah...” said Ryoko who was keeping looking at the timid angel, “but that’s really suspicious.”

“You must be kidding...” I whispered, “Just opening a book to earn an angel who wanna make a contract with me... What a cheesy plot!”

“Indeed. And somethings like using good medicine to heal the wounded heart... Don’t the author feel embarrassed?” the frowning Ryoko agreed with me.

“Geez, in fact, my parents sent me a fairy tale to amuse me, didn’t they?”

“Well... Kito sama,” the angel who kept silent suddenly said, “it’s not a joke, please trust me! I... I will try my best to solve your problems!”

“Oh sorry... you are Eunice, aren’t you?” After realizing it was not suitable to comment on others, I immediately changed the subject.

“Ye...yes, as the book says, I’m the one who signed the contract with Kito sama. I shall certainly work hard! Just believe me please, Kito sama!” Eunice replied in a hurry, she even did an exaggerative bow, her long silver hair thus drooped down, looking a bit hilarious.

“Oh, you don’t have to be so exaggerating! By the way, how can you... err... heal me?”

“Well, I don’t know...”

“W-what? So what do you think you’re doing?” Ryoko, standing by me for a long time, could not help complaining.

“I’m sorry! I’m really, really sorry!” Eunice quickly bowed again.

“Ah, this is fine, because... well... maybe I’m not as weak as you assume?”

“Please don’t let yourself be pressured, Kito sama! I’m your contractor and I should know, there have been many unfortunate things happening to you recently. Grandma died, and the boss deducted your salary, but don’t worry, I promise I will... Wooo—!!!”

“Are you serious?! Why do you have to touch his pain points, huh?!” Before the awesome angel finished her words, Ryoko, who perceived my face looked worse, instantly covered her mouth to halt the talking.

As a result, it took Ryoko and I nearly such a long time to pacify Eunice, who was about to cry. To be honest, I was extremely surprised that an angel who looked so dignified and elegant was such a casual and shy girl. —Is that why people can’t judge their appearance?

Page 2

Indistinctly hearing the sound of cicadas echoed in my ears, I subsequently felt a touch of sunshine through the window shone on my face.

I reluctantly opened my sleepy eyes, vaguely used my hand to seek for my mobile phone that usually happened to be put under my pillow. The touch of the wet cloth came from my fingertips, which meant my back had been soaked with sweat.

“So hot...” I weakly complained in a low voice. —I needed to find my mobile phone quickly and applied for another day off with my boss... Well, although I must be definitely reprimanded. I didn’t want to get up and continued to lie flat on the bed, stretching out my arms and looking around for the black cuboid that could save my life—

“Eh?”

I felt something soft. Was my bedsheet so soft? Absolutely not, it was even moving. I quickly turned my head and saw—

“W-whattttt?”

My yell reverberated throughout the house because Eunice was unbelievably sleeping next to me.

“Hmm...” Eunice seemed to wake up. The culprit may not be aware that she had done something inappropriate. She rubbed her sleepy eyes with her hands, “good morning... Kito sama...”

“You...! why would you and me... be on ONE bed?!” I looked down, sure enough, I was almost naked, sleeping with the angel I just met yesterday.

“Kito sama?”

“Ah, anyway, I went out first!” Ignoring Eunice’s puzzled look, I picked up my clothes and ran out of my room without looking back.

—What a crazy morning!

Besides, when I ran downstairs in a panic, I found Ryoko was coming. Seeing me appearing only in my underwear, Ryoko almost threw her kitchen knives at me.

“So, Eunice, why were you sleeping in my bed” When the farce subsided, I, who was already dressed, and Eunice, who had an innocent face, sat face to face in the living room.

“That’s... because Kito sama didn’t tell me where to sleep... and I was very sleepy, I could just sleep next to you... Couldn’t I?”

“Of course not!” Recalling the experience that happened just now, it was my turn to be awkward, “because... our relationship simply can’t allow us to sleep together!”

“Woo... I’m sorry.” Eunice dropped her head in despondency.

“Alas, you are a really strange angel. But by the way, do you need sleep too? I thought you’d go back to that book each night, just like what always appears in vulgar stories...”

“You must be reading too many fairy tales, Akiichi Kito.” with a slightly teasing tone, Ryoko came out of the kitchen carrying something. Wait, a KITCHEN? Does she...

“Hey, Ryoko, don’t you...”

“Zip it, and help yourself,” although she replied with mean words, Ryoko brought the breakfast for three to the table, obviously including Eunice’s.

“Wow, it looks delicious...” Eunice rubbed her hands excitedly, “*itadakimasu~!*”

However, I scrutinized the food in front of me and felt even more headaches, “Well Ryoko, you really haven’t progressed at all.”

As I said, Eunice, who sent the obviously burnt egg to her mouth, soon vomited it out.

“H-E-Y, You two!” Ryoko blushed and slapped the table with exaggeration, “don’t belittle my cooking skills. You see, it’s nice... Whoa— so salty!”

After Ryoko demonstrated the bacon was also dangerous, I secretly congratulated myself that I didn’t have this horrible breakfast. It was really ironic that such a top student with excellent achievement in the university had such poor cooking performance.

“Woo, I’m exhausted!” at dusk, as I was dragging my tired body on my way home after finishing the work. Although I wanted to take another day off with my boss, while I perceived I was absent for three days in a row, and also made a mess during the work a while ago, I didn’t dare to irritate that Big Uncle anymore.

The dusk of summer was quite unusual, the whole sky was dyed with the fiery red, and the street became lively. Various kinds of people in the small town, including office workers in suits, children in fun, and the wandering elderly, had come in sight now.

“Excuse me, sir? How can I get to the park near here?” An old lady on the side of the road stopped me.

“Ah, just go straight along this street and turn right at the second crossing.”

The old lady left with satisfaction after saying thank-you to me. By the way, how long had it been since I went to that park?

“Maybe I showed her a wrong way...” I scratched my hair, sorry, madam!

“Ah! Kito sama!” Suddenly, a familiar figure appeared in front of me — the girl with silver hair in a white skirt was waving to me and running toward me. Under the setting sun, her brilliant smile had been more moving, like an incredible magic curse, my senses of exhaustion and melancholy seemed to be washed away. Was this the charm of the angel? My heart surged with a long-lost and warm feeling.

“Well, I’m back.” I also smiled back at her, which was quite different from the hypocritical smile at work. —That was a heartfelt and joyful smile.

Eunice stopped in front of me, and I abruptly realized—

“Eh? What about your wings?”

“Oh, because my identity is absolutely confidential. Only you can know the secret, Kito sama.”

“But Ryoko knows.”

“Oh no!!” Eunice squatted on the ground with her head in her arms, like a child who had made a mistake and was reprimanded, “the content of the contract... I accidentally violated it, boo-hoo...”

“It doesn’t matter, because Ryoko will never let it get out.”

“That would be great...” Eunice seemed relieved, “If it’s exposed, Eunice must be scolded by Lord God”

“Lord God?”

“Ah, nothing! Woo— how can I have a slip of the tongue again...”

“Er...” looking at this flustered angel in front of me, I felt dumbfounding, “well, it’s late, why don’t we go home now?”

“Oh, okay.” Eunice kept up with me.

That night, as soon as Eunice got home, she fell asleep in the living room.

“She locked herself in the attic for a whole day and didn’t know what she was doing...” said Ryoko, who came to support.

With Ryoko’s help, I put Eunice in the attic and prepared a small bed for her. Under the weak light of the bedside oil lamp, I saw Eunice’s calm sleeping face.

“She’s really cute when she falls asleep,” I muttered to myself.

High nose, cherry-like lips, delicate skin... For a moment, I forgot to leave as if I was completely fascinated, I just watched the sleeping Eunice from a distance instead.

A gust of evening wind came from the window, I heard the rustle of the pages from the mysterious book on the floor.

“Ah, by the way, that book...”

I carefully picked the old white book up and gently stroked the slightly broken page. Eunice would not be here without it, after all. But what exactly was written in this book? I wanted to know. So, I turned to the second page of the book—

*Morning-greeting from the bedside;
A flawed meal before exhausting the mind;
An affecting reunion results in secrets cannot hide.*

“Eh? Isn’t it...”

—What happened today.

“So ridiculous...” my surprise had been beyond words. Did the book aim to predict the future? No, it was supposed to be...

“The future that is written for ME?”

Just like experiencing a sudden realization, I came up with a more absurd idea. Nope, since I opened this book, there had been too many “absurd” things. For example, thanks to this book, Eunice, the lovely and active angel, would have come to me... I recited these three abstract and riddle-like sentences several times in my heart, “well, let me guess, it will tell me what will happen tomorrow...”

With a tentative mood, I continued to turn the page back—

Divine teardrop from Izakaya, crisis of dark night has passed.

Another vague sentence, obviously. It seemed to prognosticate something.

“But what actually does the crisis in the book mean?” I muttered. Izakaya... it was the place where I worked. Tomorrow should be the day when I go to work. Maybe I would be scolded by the boss big uncle again, or would there be anything bad happening tomorrow?

As I pondered, a rare cool summer breeze came out of the window, and I thus felt sleepy.

“Forget it... Tomorrow, the answer will be revealed.”

I quietly climbed down the stairs, went back to my bedroom, and soon fell asleep.

Page 4

“Hmm... that’s all right, maybe.”

Expertly putting on the uniform, checking the items that should be carried again, and turning the annoying phone’s alarm off at the moment when it just began to ring. — everything seemed to be ready now.

“But... It’s really annoying. Annoying annoying annoying — ANNOYING!!!”

I complained feebly, it was the time to work in an Izakaya, the so-called heaven of salarymen with Japanese conventional features. Compared with yesterday when I went to the warehouse to help purchase goods, today it was my turn to serve in front of the bar.

“No, no, I shouldn’t be so depressed even before it starts.” I shook my head hard and took a deep breath — well, let’s go!

“Oops, Kito sama?”

While I was opening the door handle, a soft voice came from behind.

“Oh hey, Eunice, are you awake?”

“It’s already seven o’clock in the evening, are you going to work now?” Eunice said and rubbed her sleepy eyes as if she had just got up.

“Well... indeed. How do you know?”

“Because Kito sama just kept muttering in his dream this morning. You mumbled things like ‘it’s so annoying to have to work at night!’ over and over again...”

“Ah, yeah...” Sure enough, Eunice had heard my dream talk. It’s a shame!

“Will you let me... go with you, Kito sama?”

“Eh? But you know I’m going to work. It’s boring, and...”

— And there are usually a lot of mobs, I thought, but I didn’t tell Eunice finally.

“That’s fine!” Eunice nodded very seriously, “because... investigating Kito sama’s lifestyle from all aspects is also a part of my job!”

“Well, if you say so. But see how you look like, there must be commotion occurring if you go to the Izakaya...” I confusingly looked at Eunice in her nightgown (provided from Ryoko) and her striking wings.

“Never mind! Because I can *camouflage* myself!” Eunice said, her body was immediately covered by a white light, and then her snow-white wings disappeared.

“Okay... follow me closely.”

About an hour later, it was completely dark. The Izakaya was bustling in the sultry summer night. As the simple neon sign kept flashing in front of the tavern, we opened for business tonight.

“Hey guy, two more beers!”

“Yes, just a moment, please.”

“Mr. Kito, please help me to serve table three!”

“I see.”

Manage to produce a perfunctory smile, began to shuttle between rows of red lanterns, served food and took orders in the corridor full of smoke and wine, and sometimes had to deal with troublesome guests. Nevertheless, even though I was deeply steeped in annoyance, this small Izakaya that immersed in the secular world seemed to have an incredible magic power, which made me forget everything and just gave up thinking as if time had been always fixed in this restless night.

“Hey, the waiter over there! When will our *Oden* be ready?!”

“I will urge the chef, please wait patiently, thank you.”

The guests came in and out, and dishes were passed by me one after another — everything was just like enjoying flowers while riding on horseback — without the sense of reality. Anyway, that was a relief for me. Although I was in such a small town where almost everyone could name each other, the frequent patrons of the tavern seldom paid attention to strangers. As a humble waiter, I might bury myself in the crowd, without getting involved with anyone—

“Yo, Kito! You look like fine today.”

A rough voice came from behind. Well, I was wrong.

“Boss, good evening.”

There was no need to confirm it, I already knew who was him —the owner and head chef of the Izakaya, a harsh and vulgar uncle.

“Well, keep your mind on your work, boy! Or your salary will be deducted again!” the uncle patted my back hard. I could not help coughing because of such a strong force, but he just grinned.

“Yes, boss.”

My concise and capable reply marked the end of the dialogue. The uncle just waved his hand with satisfaction and went back to the kitchen without looking back again. — Honestly, this damn uncle was always spiting me these days, but I had no room to resist.

“Well, he’s really annoying! And his Izakaya aims to exploit the staff...” I complained in a low voice where he couldn’t hear me. —Though as I said, there many troublesome drudgeries here, I still knew very well that there were no other places in this town that could accept me better. So, this uncle even could be my benefactor... Thinking of this, I shook my head and decided to continue my work.

It was almost time to have a rest after the last table had been served with green soybeans. I sat in the corner of the little tavern and wiped the sweat on my forehead with the towel I brought from home.

“Wait... What about Eunice?” I jumped up from my seat in an instant. —Damn it! I must work too hard to remember that I was accompanied by her today.

I hurried to the door where I asked Eunice to wait for me in the chair by it. However, while I went out of the Izakaya, I was shocked by the sight——

A group of young men dressed strangely blocked the alley in front of our tavern. Some of them were holding cigarettes, some were squatting on the ground, and some were swaying wine bottles. Vulgar laughter and shouts echoed in the narrow alley. At any rate, they were out of place in here.

“Where do these guys come from... Well, who cares! But where’s Eunice?” By the light of the lantern in front of the door, I anxiously looked for a familiar figure from the crowd — until my eyes tightly captured on the girl with silver hair surrounded by those suspicious men.

“Eunice!!” I could not help shouting.

Suddenly seven or eight pairs of eyes glanced toward my side — I was found, obviously. But it was just what I wanted. I ran quickly toward them and even forgot that I was still working.

“Kito sama!” The girl called my name in a trembling voice. It was Eunice.

However, when I was about to run in front of her, a figure appeared in front of me.

“Hey, jackass! where the hell are you comin’ from?!” The tallest man stood in my way. He was topless, wearing only a pair of torn jeans. On his arm, there was a tiger tattoo. —Absolutely isn’t a good kind. A gang? I thought to myself, and then I said, “you guys, get out of here and stay away from my friend!!”

“Why? So he’s the girl’s boyfriend?” One man among them heckled.

“Wanna be the hero to save your princess, little runt?” Another one pointed his middle finger at me.

“This chick is already mine, see? Fuck off now you dirty asshole!” The tall man held Eunice in his arms and swore against me.

“Go! Kito sama, go! Please leave me alone!” Eunice was struggling, tears had welled up in her eyes.

“Shut the fuck up, chick!” the man covered Eunice’s mouth rudely and joked shamelessly, “you’d better save some energy to serve me, ha-ha!”

“Huh? Why you cry, chick? Wanna suck my d...”

“SHUT UP, you bastard!!”

—Disgust, anger. I felt my hands fiercely shaking. I was about to rush up and punch the disgusting man, but at a moment, I felt a burning pain appearing from my lower abdomen.

“Whoa—!!” My legs were immediately weak, and I fell to the ground directly. However, I didn’t have time to do any defence at all. One punch, two punches... The fists of the nasty gangsters hit me one after another.

“Son of a bitch...” before I finished my words, I was slapped again. Warm liquid flowed down my nose. Was it blood? What a shame! In dozens of seconds, I was just like a sandbag, and let these scoundrels ravage me... What about Eunice now? I raised my head desperately, but I was quickly trampled down by the foot of a tall man.

“So what? Is that all you have, little runt?! I wasn’t expecting you to be so lame!”

“Boss, why don’t you just kill the jackass?”

“Are you stupid, don’t you see there are too many people here?! Just break his legs to teach him not to meddle in our affairs!”

As soon as the voice fell, I felt that another punch was waving toward me. Instinctively, I held out my arm, even though I knew that my resistance was futile.

Was it really over? I couldn't protect Eunice, not even myself... What a joke, Kito Akiichi, you were a complete jerk! With despair, I slowly closed my eyes, waiting for the fatal blow——

It should have been like that.

“Woo... Whoaaaaaaaaaaaaa—!!!” a shrill scream came.

Eh? That wasn't my voice. The pain in my imagination didn't appear. Did I avoid it? I twisted my scarred body and looked at the source of the sound——

A gangster had collapsed in the corner of the wall, and blood gushed out from his fist.

What...?!

“Hey, boss! That man...?”

“It's... true?”

Others present were also stunned, even though I didn't know what happened, I knew that was my chance — I stood up via the incredible power, with the help of run-up, I fiercely kicked at the tall man.

“Woo...” sure enough, he foamed at the mouth, knelt on the ground like a doll with a broken line, as if the tough momentum just now was a fraud.

“Kito sama! Watch out!” freeing from the bondage, Eunice immediately grabbed my arm, and I turned around and found other two gangsters who wanted to sneak up on me.

“Get out of here!” I waved my fist with no mercy. Once, twice... soon, two more people fell down.

“Damn it! Run...!” The rest of the men seemed to get muddleheaded. Before my fist waved again, they had been thrown into a panic and broke into a run.

As I was about to chase, Eunice's voice came to me.

“Enough, Kito sama! That's enough...” Eunice stopped me timidly, and burst into tears, “I'm sorry... Kito sama... I'm so sorry! That's all my fault. If I had not insisted on coming out with you, you would not have been hurt for me!”

“No! It's not Eunice's fault!” in a moment, I almost forgot the pain, hugged Eunice as tightly as I could, tried my best to comforted the crying angel, “you are brave, Eunice.”

I could not remember the later things. Before long, the sound of police flute and people's whispers came in the alley. I just held Eunice in my wounded arms. It began to rain, the raindrop hit my body, and the sharp pain was awakened again, but I didn't care. In the dim and damp alley, we just comforted each other over and over again.

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Since the day Eunice was surrounded by those gangsters, my name had probably spread all over the town. These days, I obviously felt that more and more people talk to me. Although unnecessary troubles were brought, fortunately my life had not been affected too much. The injury in the fight made me stay in the hospital for several days. During the boring convalescence, I did feel grateful that Eunice and Ryoko kept accompanying me. Thanks to them, I soon recovered and returned to my daily life.

The Izakaya in summer was much busier than at any time of the year. Luckily, I seemed to be accustomed to such fast-paced work.

“Hey chap, two more beers please!”

“Okay.”

I picked up the cup skillfully from the counter, pulled down the pull rod of the beer machine, and stopped it when the white foam was about to overflow.

“Two beers for table 7. Please enjoy yourself.” I avoided using my injured right hand to deliver the beers, so my motion was clumsy, but it didn’t matter, because the big uncle should still be in the kitchen, after all.

“Thanks, lad.” The guests laughed heartily. —What surprised me a lot was that I could find more and more familiar faces appeared in this tavern these days — no, or in fact, did I begin to subconsciously remember the appearance of customers?

“Are you planning to find your little girlfriend after work?” A drunk at the next table joked. As a result, I didn’t have to say one word at all, the whole Izakaya suddenly became boiling.

“Awesome boy! You were very handsome to beat those buggers that day. “

“Your girl must be proud of you, ha-ha!”

Oh, no, I got annoyed in a moment. Although it was a compliment, to be commented on by a group of drunk men couldn’t consider a pleasant scene at all!

What saved my life was the sound of the bell marked that it had been the time of shift. I immediately slipped into the dressing room, readied to pack up and went home.

“I’m back.”

“Welcome back!” Eunice’s soft voice came at once. After a day’s hard work, nothing could be better than having someone warmly welcome me in my home.

“Eunice, you don’t have to meet me every day.”

“How can I do that? Helping Mr. Kito out of trouble is also a part of my duty!” Eunice trotted as if holding something in her hand.

“Oh, oh! It’s a towel! Thank you!” I took the wet towel and wiped it on my forehead.

“Kito sama is really hardworking.”

“All right... Because I actually have a cruel boss.”

“Eh? Do you mean the stout uncle?”

“Well, as soon as I was discharged, he urged me to go back to work! What a tyrant! capitalist! Cold-blooded animals!” I evaluated half-jokingly my boss. Because of him, now I was filled with heavy work every day.

“Ah, in fact, I feel that the uncle is really concerned about Kito sama.”

“Oh, really? I don’t see it at all.”

“Hmm, have you forgotten? Kito sama often received refreshments during the period staying in the hospital? Actually, these gifts were sent from the boss. At that time, he said to me, ‘tell that boy to take good care of himself! We do need him in this busy period!’ So you shouldn’t be so harsh to that big uncle...”

“Pooh...” I couldn’t help laughing as Eunice pursed her lips to imitate the boss. But thinking about it carefully, maybe only I unilaterally assume he was so mean to me.

“Kito sama, please try to appreciate. No matter the boss or your life, everything around you was not as bad as you think.”

“Appreciate...?” it was the first time someone said that to me. Well, maybe so, since *that thing* happened, I had lost interest in everything around me, then I lived like a walking corpse every day. However, who made me gradually pay attention to the all-around experiences and recollect the hope to be living again?

“Kito sama? Is there anything on my face?”

“Oh, sorry.” I quickly took my eyes away from Eunice. —The answer may be obvious.

“You must be too tired, Kito sama. Before dawn, you’d better go to bed for a while.”

“Oh, oh. Well, by the way, Eunice, today is Tanabata. Do you want to go out with me in the evening?”

“Well, but your work...”

“Don’t worry. Tomorrow will be my day off. There will be a celebration in the town. I know you haven’t come there, have you?”

“Of course! I’d love to go with Kito sama!”

Great. It looked like I could date Eunice. I climbed up the stairs delightedly and planned to have a good sleep — though I thought so, I subconsciously went into the attic, lit the oil lamp, and made the white book come into my eyes again.

“What will happen tomorrow?” I turned one page back, as I did every day, and it had become my daily habit.

Laughter filled the celebration.

—This time, it was just a short sentence. Surprisingly simple.

“Nice, it seems that tomorrow will be very joyful!” I laughed with satisfaction and noticed the dust on the cover of the book. So I picked up the towel I was carrying and carefully wiped the book that changed my destiny. But I didn’t realize Eunice was standing behind me at that time.

“Have you read this book again, Kito sama?”

“Yeah, this is the treasure my parents left me. Eunice can’t be here without this book, after all. So I must value it with gratitude.”

“Well, really?” Eunice responded to me with a shallow smile. However, I feel that her smile is not pure.

“Eunice, what’s the matter with you?”

“Ah, I’m fine! Just... a little bit tired.”

“Well, now both of us shall go back to bed.”

“All right, good night, Kito sama. And... Even if this book is really wonderful, please always remember, *don’t be too greedy.*”

“Eh?”

“Good night.” Eunice left gently.

A familiar sentence. Why? Eunice’s hesitant expression and the advice just now... I felt that I had seen the scene before...

Trying to recall, however, I suddenly got a severe headache. Oh no, maybe I'm really exhausted.

"I need to sleep. Because I'm going to the celebration with Eunice this dusk." After that, I put out the oil lamp, climbed down the attic ladder and went to the bedroom.

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As soon as Tanabata came, the whole town became lively. Colourful silk and red paper lanterns were used to decorate the intricate streets and alleys, and various celebration posters were pasted on almost every telegraph pole. Shuttling through the cheers and laughter, Eunice and I followed the congested crowd toward the biggest plaza of the town.

"Wow, such a lot of people here!" Eunice, with her bright piercing eyes, stood on tiptoe in the crowd, attempting to capture everything.

"Eunice, follow me. Let's not get separated." Before the entrance decorated with huge signs became more crowded, I subconsciously took her hand.

"Woo..." however, Eunice seemed to be very sensitive to such intimate contact, and she looked away shyly.

"Err... I'm just worried that you will be involved in something bad... like that day." When I realized my abrupt action, I quickly explained. If there was a mirror in the celebration, I should be able to detect how flustered I looked.

It was a stiff effort to squeeze into the brilliantly illuminated plaza. Row upon row of vendors lined up on both sides of the procession, and the conventional melodies were one after another sang by the street peddlers. Takoyaki, chow mein, and yakitori... The fragrance of so many traditional snacks had filled the air. Children's frolic sounds came from various kinds of small games such as fishing for goldfish and water polo...

"Do you like here, Eunice?" I asked my companion from heaven. Although Eunice walked beside me now, she seemed to rush out at any time. Glancing left and right absolutely could not satisfy her overwhelming enthusiasm. Honestly, sometimes, Eunice was like an innocent and pure child.

"Yeah, coming to such a wonderful place with Kito sama was awesome, AWESOME!!"

"Hey... By the way, Eunice," I scratched my hair uneasily, "well, I wanted to say that a long time ago, you don't need to call me so solemnly... Just like Ryoko, you can simply call me Akiichi."

"No way!" Eunice suddenly exclaimed, "absolutely — no!! Because Kito sama is Kito sama. As the object of the contract, I must be respectful to you and never surpass the line!"

Sleeping with your object of the contract in one bed DID surpass the line... I silently make complaints about it.

"But Eunice and I are friends, aren't we? As friends, it's not impolite to call each other's name, isn't it?"

"Boo-hoo... No, no! I really..." The divine angel suddenly blushed, she hung her head, covered her face with her hands, and shook her head desperately. Well... It seemed

impossible for her to change the way to called me for the time being.

“Well... let’s stop talking about this now. So would you like a kebab or something else?” As we were getting closed to the food stall, I decided to change the subject.

“Excuse me... But what’s that?”

“Oops, have you never eaten it? Oh, right, because Eunice is from heaven...”
Therefore, I quickly walked to the stall and said, “two strings of Yakitori, please.”

Combining the tender and juicy chicken thigh with fresh mushrooms and green peppers, stringing them on bamboo sticks, and then baking on a charcoal grill until the colour of the meat turned red and oily. Finally, brushing with Teriyaki sauce, two strings of Yakitori were thus finished and delivered in our hands.

“Whoa, it looks delicious!” Eunice’s eyes lit up with joy and expectation.

“Try it.” I immediately sent the Yakitori kebab to my mouth, tasty! Although there were similar dishes in the Izakaya where I worked, the most authentic Yakitori could only be found in a celebration like this.

“Hoo, Hoo! So hot, hot hot hot—!!” While I was enjoying myself, Eunice’s voice suddenly came.

“Hey, watch out!”

A piece of chicken fell on Eunice’s white skirt.

“Oh my... That’s awful!” Eunice looked depressed, but is it because of her stained clothes or the failure to eat the meat? —I didn’t know.

Seeing this, I laughed again and stroked the rash angel’s hair with my hand as if treating a lovely younger sister, “don’t panic. There are many other snacks at the celebration. Come on, we are going to taste all of them!”

“Really, Kito sama?!”

“Exactly.”

“Then... Then I’ll not stand on ceremony!” Eunice smiled and ran to other vendors.

“Hey Eunice, just wait for me!” I also went after her with laughter.

Later, Eunice did not show a sign of satiety until eating more than a dozen different types of snacks. I began to wonder how big this little angel’s appetite in front of me was.

After the food farce ended, night had quietly come. We walked side by side through the vendors and came to the open space in the center of the plaza. The procession also stopped here. In the brightly lit square, we were waiting for something with everyone present——

A golden beam cut through the sky and bloomed into a resplendent grandeur. The crowd was agitated for a moment.

“Here we are,” Eunice and I raised our heads at the same time, enjoying the breathtaking fireworks show, the symbol that pushed the celebration to a climax.

Then, more dazzling fireworks soared into the air, just like the release of gorgeous jade tassels on the black curtain. The sky was full of colours, followed by a variety of flowers passed through the boundless darkness, making people dazzled— A visual feast only took place once a year. Slowly, sensing the weight on my right arm, I turned to see Eunice resting quietly on my shoulder. To be honest, I was startled by this sudden action, but I didn’t resist. I just kept looking up and enjoying the rare scenery.

“Magnificent...” Eunice said suddenly, “that’s my first... first time to witness such a spectacular scene.”

“Isn’t heaven more beautiful?” I curiously asked.

“No, that’s not the same,” said Eunice softly, “in the distant place, nothing will be much better than enjoying such a unique scenery with... an important person of mine.”

“Hey, your words may go too far...” honestly I was flattered and a little embarrassed with her sudden statement, “Next year, if you like, I’ll bring you here, too.”

“Really? I’m so happy...” Eunice said that, but I was aware of the subtle sadness in her words, as if she was hiding something.

“What’s the matter?”

“Oh, nothing, Kito sama. But I’m a little tired. May I rest on your shoulder for a while?”

Before she finished, Eunice snored softly.

“Eh? —Hey! Don’t fall asleep here!” I said hastily, though in vain. Eunice fell right into my arms and I almost lost my balance. In a consequence, I had no choice but to put Eunice on the bench in the corner of the celebration. I just sat by her side and planned to take her home at the end of the celebration.

The place we stayed was near to the warehouse of vendors, where few people would visit. So, even in the noisy celebration, this dark area was a rare quiet place. Just sitting here for a moment, I could not help feeling a little sleepy. However, a sound of the footstep came, I thus raised my head and looked toward the source of it — and only to see a figure that I was familiar with——

“Ryoko?”

“Hi, Akiichi! How’s it going?” Ryoko came up to me, based on the pale moonlight, I saw her light clothes and a fashionable shoulder bag.

“Ah, very good, thank you. And I didn’t expect to meet you here.”

“That’s an annual celebration. How can I not be here on such a rare day?” Ryoko answered in a calm voice and began to pace beside me.

“Well, I’m sorry... I forgot to invite you. I thought you were still busy with your study...”

“It doesn’t matter. I don’t wanna disturb your date, after all.”

“... did you see it all?” When I realized Ryoko’s tone had become odd, I was also at a loss for a moment.

“Aha, since the beginning of the celebration, I’ve noticed you guys. Because, this girl...” Speaking of this, Ryoko lowered her head, looked at Eunice, who was gently leaning on my shoulder, and said with a shallow smile, “this girl has such striking silver hair and a lovely face, she’s effortless to be distinguished among the crowd, isn’t she?”

“Ryoko... What’s the matter with you today?”

“By the way, Akiichi. What about you and Eunice? Are you guys seeing each other now?” Ryoko ignored my question and continued to ask me with a smile. However, the calmer she was, and the more she smiled, the more I could feel that Ryoko seemed to have been hit.

“Ah, not at all! We are just ordinary friends,” I waved to Ryoko in a hurry. However, as Eunice was leaning on my shoulder at this time, the ambiguous relationship made my

explanation totally unconvincing.

“Yeah—yeah, but I dare to say that’s not what Eunice thought at all,” Ryoko still said calmly, but her smile faded away.

“Ryoko... You...”

“Look at me, Akiichi!” Suddenly, Ryoko harshly said to me, her beautiful eyes had become extremely sharp at this time, through the frame of glasses, an invisible pressure was released, “tell me the truth with your conscience, just tell me how you really feel about Eunice!”

“What are you actually wanna say, Ryoko?”

“Kito Akiichi! You’re always like this, always like this!!” Ryoko’s voice grew louder and louder, with a trace of anger in it, “are you going to bury your feelings in your heart forever? Do you have to be so slow? Why... Why can’t you just face up to your feelings? And why can’t you realize others’ feelings?!”

“I...” I was overwhelmed by Ryoko’s sudden rebuke. I had never seen Ryoko like this before.

“Akiichi likes that... I... I... I hate it most!” With that, Ryoko turned and ran away, leaving the confused me with a blank expression and Eunice who was still sleeping.

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Since the end of the celebration, I had returned to my monotonous and boring daily life. During this period, Ryoko seemed to return to the large city because of her study, although I felt that it was mostly because of our quarrel. And I, fortunately, with Eunice’s company, my life instantly added quite a lot of colours.

“Eunice,” I said to Eunice as I received the wet towel and wiped the sweat from my forehead, “tomorrow is my day off. Do you want to go out for a walk?”

“Of course, but haven’t we been to all the places in the town, such as parks, plazas, and even shopping malls?”

“Don’t worry, because the place we are going to this time is the shrine on the mountain.”

“Shrine?” Eunice had never heard of this place.

“Ah, it’s a kinda traditional house for worshipping gods. You can say that’s a holy land of Shinto followers. Eunice, as an angel, maybe you are quite suitable to visit.”

“Well, as long as I can go with Kito sama, I’ll be very willing!” Eunice readily agreed. When encountering new things, Eunice always preferred to find out, which was one of the reasons why I appreciated her.

As a result, we took the bus to the back mountain on the morning of the rest day. Dense buildings and intricate streets were gradually replaced by broad farmland. We drove along the highway to the sparsely populated mountain area, until the bus stopped at the platform at the foot of the mountain. In front of us was a painted red Torii Gate, which stood beside the stone steps leading to the summit.

“...Eunice, can you fly?” Looking up at the endless steps, I had an idea in my heart.

“It’s taboo to use wings in the human world! Kito sama should climb to the top by *himself*!”

Sure enough, Eunice was always very formal in some small matters. So, with strong determination, I began to climb this steep mountain. But soon, I found out that Eunice was just completely showing off — because it took less than two minutes for her from encouraging me to hike up the mountain to sitting on the ground.

It wasn't until the sun rose above us that the tiring mountaineering trip came to an end. We came to the shrine built on the top of the mountain, and the ancient buildings were particularly cordial at this time.

"Ah, welcome." A woman with long black hair and a broom warmly welcomed us, "few visitors have come to us recently."

Later, we learned that this lady was the Witch of the shrine. Under her guidance, we practiced the custom here — first, we cleaned our hands with a long-handled wooden spoon by the pool in front of the shrine, and then we entered the shrine palace where the roof was raised on both sides to worship. We threw some change into the box with wooden bars, patted our hands and prayed together.

"Kito sama, what's that?" Eunice pointed to the thick hemp rope hanging in front of the worship temple and asked.

"Ah, this may be for a blessing. Honestly, I didn't know much about it, but from the television shows, I often saw girls shaking the rope and praying. Maybe it was also a unique custom."

"Oh, so let's come to pray!" Eunice ran toward the rope and shook it with great effort. The wind chime on the rope thus made a sound.

"Well, let me help you," I resignedly smiled, walked past, and seized the rope again, shaking a few times.

"He-he, it's time to make a wish!" Eunice joyfully said, exaggeratingly put her hands on her chest, closing the eyes tightly and whispering something.

"What wish did you make?"

"Secret! If I tell you, it won't come true!"

"Aha, sometimes, you really don't look like an angel, but a playful girl."

"Hey! It's very impolite to say that! Even Kito sama, I will still be angry?"

As we bickered, we continued to shake the rope. *Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling* — The clear sound of wind chimes reverberated in the whole courtyard. Dozens of white birds started from the treetops, flapped their wings and flew to the deep blue sky.

"Ah, sorry to bother you," The witch in the white robe and red long skirt came over with a graceful smile, holding two small wooden cards in her hand, "these are the Amulets that received the blessing from Gods. Would you like to buy them to pray for lifelong happiness, young lovers?"

"—Eh?" Eunice's face flushed at a moment.

"No, no, we're not what you think... Friends! Yeah, we are just friends!" I was also in a panic and quickly explained.

"Well, I'm sorry," The witch said, "but just reminding, only lovers and the elderly will shake the hemp rope in front of the worship temple."

Then the witch went back to the clergy's room, left Eunice and me at a loss here.

"... only lovers do it?" Eunice awkwardly scratched her red cheek with her fingers.

In a flash, an indescribable emotion surged in my chest. Attic, streets under the setting sun, Izakaya, celebration... Countless scenes in my memory fiercely revolve in my mind now — What was going on? Just like playing a film, innumerable familiar and strange pictures indiscriminately mixed, followed by the rapid interwovenness of such a huge number of pieces of memory. Soon, Eunice's smile appeared, occupying all of me. Aware of these subtle but sincere feelings, I instantly felt I was a jerk, an incurable jerk. At that time, Ryoko's words of blame reverberated in my mind — she was right. Yeah, yeah, I finally got it!

“Kito... Kito sama?”

A warm breeze swept my face, and Eunice's dazzling silver hair flew with it. Through the mottled shadow of trees, a ray of sunlight shined on us. In the distance, cooking smoke rises slowly from the shrine — The environment could be the best catalyst. Gradually, our distance was getting closer.

“Eh...?”

Feeling the exhaled heat at the tip of her nose, I realized that our distance had beyond the scope of friends — but that of a couple.

Finally, I took a deep breath, put one hand on the tree trunk, and said softly close to Eunice's ear——

“Sure enough, we can't just be friends... I love you, Eunice.”

Human is a greedy animal. Slowly, I leaned over and kissed her soft lips. She did not resist and even ceased to be moving, while for the expression on her face, I could not judge whether it was joy or amazement.

Soon, I moved my lips away. As far as I could, I looked her in the eyes deeply, “What's your reply, Eunice?”

“No... because of the contract...” Eunice seemed to be startled. She tried to retreat but was stopped by the tree trunk.

“Contract doesn't matter at all!” I almost yelled, “because I really love you! Love you... love you from my heart! Isn't that all right?”

“Kito sama...” that pair of charming eyes was already full of tears.

“Please, what's your reply, Eunice?”

“Yes... I love... I love Kito sama too! —I love you most!!”

We hugged each other, like magnets of mutual attraction, staying close together, feeling each other's warmth. All of a sudden, I felt such a strong feeling of satisfaction that even beyond words, the pain of the past was also instantly disappeared. I understood, fully understood, the meaning of the contract, the purpose of the book... Because Eunice in my arms now is my redemption, my hope, my all.

Till the dusk, we bid farewell to the beautiful mountain shrine. Different from when we came here, we walked down the stone steps dyed red by the afterglow side by side, hand in hand.

“Today is magnificent!” I held Eunice in one hand and kept shaking the peach wood card with strange runes, the Amulet from the shrine. Eunice and I each held one, which can be regarded as a symbol of love, “really, the prediction of that book is so amazing!”

“Is that the contract book?” Eunice asked.

“Exactly, the book told me good things will happen in the shrine today! At first, I thought it was just a little surprise or something else, but I never expect...” thinking of this, my eyes narrowed into a line, “I never expect that I could exchange feelings with Eunice and see her most lovely emotion! Whoa— this book is really, really amazing!!”

“Ugh, Kito sama just made a mess...” but Eunice turned her face away. Was that embarrassing for her? — Oh, come on — it was not cute at all!

“Hey, why are you still calling me ‘Kito sama’, Eunice?” I slyly got closed to her reddening ear and said softly, “we have been lovers, haven’t we? So shouldn’t I be entitled with a more cordial name?”

“Woo... please don’t pressure on me,” Eunice shook her head hard, but I felt her hesitation.

“Come on, just follow your heart.”

“Really... Is that... really ok?”

“It’s the order, the order of your contractor.” I whispered, “please call my first name, Eunice.”

Eunice’s body trembled imperceptibly, so did her soft lips. Finally, she slowly opened her mouth, her gorgeous mouth gradually conveyed the word, the word I want to hear most—

“...Aki...chi.”

“Yes, I’m here.”

“Akiichi... Akiichi, Akiichi! —**Akiichi!**” Relieved, Eunice’s bright smile came back to her face. She hugged me again, on the mountain path.

“—Hey, it’s dangerous! Ha-ha...” I also laughed; our laughter lingered in the mountains. —That was the first time, the first that I had learned what was the feelings to deeply love one person.

Eunice’s Monologue

My Lord, please forgive me!

The bright moonlight poured into the quiet attic. I knelt on one knee by the bed, holding the evening prayer. Nevertheless, I still felt restless in my heart.

“Oh, no, no! Lord God must be angry if I distract now...” I shook my head hard to cheer up. Come on, Eunice! —Because you are supposed to be an excellent angel!

Ah... Having said that, as long as I think about the figure of that person, I could hardly concentrate.

“Akiichi...” I couldn’t help evoking that person’s name. Why, when I spoke this name, my heart would always beat so violently?

“Your Majesty God of Venus, is this the feeling of love?”

Unbelievable. In the beginning, I held firm determination to become the contractor of this book, in order to help the tormented Kito sama out of the shadow. However, when on earth had my motive been not pure?

Did that mean I was really not a competent angel? As the object of the contract, I should know that such a taboo relationship would eventually face the predestined end,

but... I also deeply remembered the real and strong joy on Kito's face after the exchange of feelings, which was simply the fruit of my hard work. Well... if I just thought so like this, guilt seemed to be gone... So, could we just maintain our relationship? Even though, just for only several days, for a moment, we would hand in hand, side by side, exploring the delight of romance, until that day would come...?

"For the sake of Kito sama, it's OK to do that, isn't it...?" an answer had emerged in my heart. —Oh no, I carelessly called the original name again, Akiichi would be unhappy!

The room is painted white with moonshine — it seemed to know my feelings, too.

"Well, in order to atone, I must redouble my efforts!" I cheered myself up again, "Akiichi's work was about to end. As his girlfriend, today, I'm going to meet him in front of the Izakaya in person!"

Action speaks louder than words. I immediately hid my wings and pretended to be a mortal again. Akiichi, Eunice would never let you down!

Page 21

"I'm back." I opened the door handle of my house. Today's work was as tiring as ever. Now I was so thirsty for Eunice's response and her prepared wet towel for me. However, both of them did not come. I was only welcomed by the dark hall as if no one was at home.

"Eunice, Eunice? Where are you?" I looked around, but I couldn't find her.

She was not going out, was she? An idea sprouted in my heart. But Eunice was not familiar with the town at all, besides, she was always waiting for me at home these days, never acting alone. Such strange. Where would she go?

"Would she... was involved in some incidents?" Thinking of this, I was too nervous to sit for a moment.

"No, drawing a conclusion now is too early..." the reason stopped me, "maybe she just wanted to go for a walk, now I shall wait." Therefore, even though with anxiety, I forced myself to continue to sit in the dark hall, allowing the passage of time silently.

Tick, tick. In the quiet room, only the clock could be heard moving. One hour, two hours... The longer my waiting time went, the more uneasy I was getting. It wasn't until the first beam of the sunlight came through the window — symbolized the long night was ceased — I suddenly realized that I had been even waiting until dawn.

—It mustn't go on like this! I almost jumped up from the sofa and ran out of the door as if losing my mind.

The morning breeze came to me, brought a hint of rare coolness in summer. Sporadic morning exercisers dotted the streets under the rising sun, marking the awakening of the whole town — However, now I had no time to enjoy. My most important person had been gone all night. What's worse, I didn't know where she was and what she was facing, just like a fool, I sat at home for several hours to let the valuable time wantonly pass by.

I must find her.

But how to start? Request the police? —No, Eunice didn't even have an ID card, and I doubtlessly couldn't persuade them to find someone who didn't "exist".

—Whether I could find her just was up to me, but where should I begin to find her? I ran around without thinking, perceiving myself subconsciously on my way to the Izakaya.

"Fine! I shall go to have a look!"

Almost forced me to leave the anxious mood behind, I stumbled to the Izakaya.

"Eh? She didn't come here last night."

After a vain rush, I had been completely disorganized. Apart from the Izakaya, where else? Parks, plazas, convenience stores, shopping malls... As time inexorably went by, most of the parts of the small town had been left my footprints.

"Have you ever seen a girl with silver hair?!"

"...huh?"

"Please! Did you meet a girl about my age with silver hair?!"

Other people's suspicious eyes were now insignificant for me at all. I recklessly stopped the passers-by over and over again. —The hoarse voice of mine scared them, thus led me to gain nothing. As the annoying sun gradually rose above my head and the temperature surged in a perceptible trend, I became even more anxious — But high temperature doesn't matter at all!! Even if the world was damaged, nothing would ever block my footprints! I must find her, I must! There must be a little clue, even quite a little clue was crucial to me.

—That was all in vain. Heavy steps, severe breathing, physical exhaustion had beyond my maximum limit — I finally stopped, stopped in my most familiar street.

Not willing, very unwilling. The experience of these days like dozens of slides reappeared in my mind. Eunice's face, Eunice's smile, Eunice's voice... Everything was so beautiful — my vague and empty memory of her.

"Eunice, where the hell are you?!"

Almost a desperate roar. I held on to the railings of the street, violently panting, my "Damn it!!" I waved my fist and hit the wall, and the pain and numbness were instantly spread from my palm. The sun also severely shone on my vulnerable body, I felt like I was caught in a steamer, all over the body was soaked in sweat. My body had been really overdrawn.

I wanted to give up. Even the most cherished person of mine was not well protected, I also dared to grandiose said love her — What a ridiculous joke!

Passers-by kept whispering, no wonder that they did that because a jerk that was worth laughing at was just in front of them.

But why? Why did I hear my name among them?

I looked up to see — it was Ryoko, with a tight frown. Before I intended to say, she rushed toward me immediately, held my arm fast, trying to take me to leave the crowd.

“Leave me alone,” due to the uncontrollable chagrin and anger, I violently threw her arm away.

“Kito, do you know how disgraceful you are now?” A cold voice came.

“You know, that’s my affair.”

As I just finished my words, a burning pain thus occurred on my face. Turning around, I saw it was Ryoko’s hand.

The whisper was halted in a moment. I covered my side face and stared at Ryoko, who made this strange measure.

“Now, we can make a clear relationship...” Ryoko said to me in a low voice, but it was more like to herself. Her glasses reflected the sun, making me unable to see her eyes.

While I was shocking, Ryoko reached out again and grabbed my arm. I had no choice but was taken by her to left the crowd.

I didn’t know how many hours passed, I opened my eyes and saw the ceiling of the living room, due to the house had fallen into disrepair, the ceiling’s paint had fallen off. The light had been lit, and it was dark outside the window.

“Is it a dream?” I sat up slowly, but I found that I was sore all over, like a sign of excessive exercise. Not far away, I saw Ryoko sitting in the corner of the sofa, reading a heavy book.

“Oh, you’re awake,” Ryoko came to me and pointed to the tea table, “I know you haven’t eaten for a whole today. Help yourself to grab something to eat.”

But I just kept my sight focused on the table and gradually realized that I was lying on the sofa in the living room just now. Eunice was not here — it was not a dream, obviously. Thus, I felt a sharp pain in my heart.

“Rest assured, I bought these from the convenience store, not by myself.” Ryoko picked up two cans of cola, then she delivered me one with a piece of bread as well.

“Ah, thank you,” I opened the can, wet my dry throat with cold cola, but put the bread aside.

“Are you calm down now?”

“Yeah, thanks to you,” The long-term sleep drove my restless mind to ease, now the thing that remained was only the agony, and I went on to say, “have you already known that?”

“Yes, in general. The big uncle from the Izakaya told me,” Ryoko deliberately kept away from me, and continued to say calmly, “that’s why you looked for her so silly all morning, and you haven’t even had a rest all night?”

I did not speak but perceived that it had been a whole day since Eunice disappeared.

“What a mess, Akiichi,” The ruthless judge next to me continued, “leave aside the confidentiality of the contract and the magic book, don’t you think the result of indiscriminately running around the town is totally in vain?”

“She’s my benefactor and girlfriend, I must find her!” I bit my teeth and responded with a firm tone to Ryoko’s blame.

“Akiichi, do you know? These days, you really changed,” Ryoko continued as if he had not heard me. She gently held the can in her hand, slightly smiled, and had her tone become much softer.

“You’ve changed a lot. Since Eunice appeared, the long-lost smile has gradually returned to your face, replacing the empty and decadent looks that occupied you for a long time. You start laughing, start complaining as usual, and you become hopeful about life again. You start to have motivation and ambition. —Those are what I haven’t helped you. Even, at the celebration, you showed the joy that I had never seen before as if *that thing* had never happened six months ago.”

I shocked. Ryoko continued to share her thoughts, and I was just a listener now.

“To be honest, I’ve been even jealous of Eunice, because the one who brings you with relief is not me, and the one you love is not me. But now I have figured it out — that’s a gift from your parents after all — you deserve it. And Eunice, that lovely girl, and the whole contract are undoubtedly a redemption for your soul.”

Ryoko smiled, which was not a perfunctory fake smile, but a smile from the heart.

“That’s ridiculous, right? I am trying to guiding you, but it is like comforting myself. I have decided, you mustn’t go back to be a depressed man like a living dead!” Ryoko stood up and reached out to me, “let’s look for Eunice together, not by brute strength, but the *wisdom*.”

“Yeah!” I regained confidence, feeling my blood had been boiling again, with tremendous gratitude to Ryoko, I grasped her hand.

— It seemed that we still have hope!

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It was helpless to be just depressed, we must find Eunice as soon as possible. But right now, I did not understand why Ryoko led me to the attic.

“What are we doing here?”

“As I said, sometimes you’re really slow, Akiichi,” Ryoko gave a wry smile, carrying the newly lit oil lamp, illuminating the white book with a faint light, “Remember what you told me, this book will predict the future, right?”

“Maybe we can find some clues!” I suddenly got Ryoko’s intention and quickly opened the book. That also reminded me, I hadn’t read it for two consecutive days — the prognostication of these days must have hidden some trace.

Soon I turned to page 21 that I had not read, and Ryoko came together, then we began to read the text carefully——

Unknown shackle occurs, Wings under lock.

“What does that mean... Ah—!! Was Eunice really kidnapped by someone?” I almost yelled out when I saw it.

“Keep reading on,” Ryoko ordered calmly.

Even if she didn’t say that, I would also do it. I turned to the next page right away.

Today's prediction was shown——

Steer the sepulchral revenge harbouring by blood moon, swears of rescue come true.

"Obviously, she's been abducted by someone, and the motive is revenge," Ryoko said, "Akiichi, think carefully. Have you ever offended anyone?"

"A gang," I gritted my teeth and felt anger burning in my heart, "Those bastards, they must have done something to Eunice now!!"

"Well, that will be easier."

"Why are you so calm? Eunice can be in great danger at any time now!" Ryoko's confidence irritated me honestly. I had many pictures in my mind, such as Eunice was inexorably tied up, leaving with no room for resistance despite being trampled by scums and so on. Now, I felt that I would be blinded by anger again.

But she sighed and shook her head to me with a smile, "Listen, if those gangsters really hurt Eunice, the book won't avoid mentioning such an important thing. I guess for some reason, they are keeping Eunice in captivity. Maybe they wanna force her to say something, but anyway, now they can't do anything about her for the time being."

Ryoko's words reassured me a little, "if so, that would be great. Eunice is an angel, after all, she must have some special abilities to protect herself."

"But that's just my most optimistic conjecture. It's only a matter of time before the gangsters hit her. We'd better hurry up, Akiichi," while saying that, Ryoko began to rummage in the attic, looking for something.

"Ha, here's it," Before long, she turned around, holding a crystal ball in her hand.

"Is this..." I stared at the ball — the classic style, fine workmanship purple magic instrument — no matter how I looked, it must be...

"This is the magic instrument that *grandma* once showed for us"

Heart suddenly suffered a stabbing pain. Yes, grandma, my dearest grandma. Childhood memories had been awakened, and the time learning magic with Ryoko hand in hand in the attic was just like what happened yesterday— I never wanted to recall that, ever since **that thing** happened. As such happy scenes in my memory poured into the mind, grandma's kind voice lingered again.

As if the nearly healed scar being rapidly torn apart again, the memory in the brain seemed to be in chaos. Eunice, grandma... My eyes were darkened, feet were staggering. In a moment, I thought I was about to fall down—

For an instant, a warm hand hugged my waist.

"Akiichi, face the past," Ryoko's gentle voice came, "now, Eunice is still waiting for our rescue somewhere. If we can successfully find her by magic, grandma in heaven will be very happy, won't she?"

"...Thank you, Ryoko," I said. Yeah, she was right, we didn't have much time to be depressed because I had already owned my important person to protect!

We stood on both sides of the round table, holding each other's hands tightly. The crystal ball on the table began to shine the light mixed with purple and red. In the next moment, thousands of golden beams shot out, and the dim attic was as bright as noon.

—It was a part of the ceremony. We shut our eyes and whispered familiar incantations, which I had never mastered in my childhood, but at this moment, I absolutely wanted and *needed* to succeed. How tacit understanding the interwoven voice, how hard it to stop the firm belief! For Eunice, I must be much closer to success than ever!

*“Resplendent stars, please show me the way forward;
Bright moon, please drive the hesitation to halt;
Unrestrained sun, please lighten the direction thou dot;
Vast universe, please present the blessing throughout folks;*

Vultus prodilectione mea...”

In a flash, countless beams of light converged in the air. After the dazzling light faded, a golden bird was flapping its wings and staring at us in the air.

“Great!” I delightedly exclaimed, “We succeed! We finally succeed! —We can find Eunice now!”

The bird quickly flew out of the window. Even in the dark sky, its golden light was still clear.

“Let’s follow it, now!” Ryoko took my hand and we fast ran down the attic.

Under the guidance of the golden bird, we ran fast on the road of the small town under the darkness. We quickly across the illuminated avenue, came to a muddy path. Cicadas were singing, weeds swayed with the wind, and on both sides of the dim path, there had been fewer and fewer buildings that could be seen — now I realized that we had left the town.

“Where are we going?” I gasped.

“I’ve never been here...” Ryoko’s breathing became short as well, “Anyway... just follow this bird... Go on...”

We ran another distance, and I felt like I was close to my limit, but just then the bird stopped. A warehouse-like building appeared on the roadside.

The golden bird landed in front of the closed gate, began to gaze at us again, and then slowly disappeared.

“Is this place our destination?” I asked immediately, but Ryoko swiftly covered my mouth and motioned me to keep quiet.

Ryoko took a flashlight out of her shoulder bag, we subsequently looked at the building carefully. The steel plate of the exterior wall had been rusted, the structure seemed to be very old. There was no window in the whole building, but on the other side of it, we found a shabby wooden door that was not shut tightly. A beam of yellow light came from the door. While we paid attention to hear, a subtle voice could be detected.

“Someone’s inside,” Ryoko whispered to me.

“What shall we do?” I asked her as quietly as I could.

“Take another look and see what’s actually going on.”

So, we furtively crept to the door, and through the crack of it, I saw the scene inside—

The shelves full of dust and huge containers were indiscriminately left, which strongly demonstrated that was an abandoned warehouse. The whole warehouse was replete with the odour of mildew, and...

The smell of gasoline?

"That's...?!" I looked around fast, and suddenly noticed a few beer bottles lying on the dirty ground near the blind area of my vision. The liquid overflowing from the mouth of a bottle had not dried yet — absolutely it was littered here not long ago.

We held our breath and absorbedly listened to the sound coming from the warehouse.

"Hey! The chick must be a witch! I can't touch her at all!"

"Whoa—!!! I was bounced! Can't touch her... but she's already tied up!! what the actually fuck?!"

"Bah! Go away, you good-for-nothing jerks! Let me kick the chick's fucking ass!"

"Eunice!" I couldn't help yelling out and was just going to directly rush into the building, but Ryoko soon held my shoulder.

I clenched my lips as hard as I could, trying to restrain my emerging anger.

"Ouch!!"

However, for an instant that reckless man was heavily fell to the ground near to the door in front of us — he had been black and blue — what a disgrace! After seeing his appearance, I furiously stared at him because this tall bastard was the man who kidnapped Eunice on that day. Such a lot of scars all over him proved my guess, those wounds were probably caused by the fight with me.

"Well, she seems to have defensive magic so that these gangsters can't get close to her so far," Ryoko whispered to me, but I could not see her mood at the moment from her calm voice.

However, the warehouse was immediately in a mess, seven minions stumbled over to help their leader who was cursing on the ground. Many of them were also covered with wounds, and I clearly recognized some familiar faces — the ones I met that night when I worked in the Izakaya.

"Fuck..." the tall man spat and waved away others' helping hands. Then he led them back to the blind area of my limited vision.

"Take the socks out of the chick's mouth!"

Hearing this, I felt my body trembling wildly with the frequency visible to the naked eye, and Ryoko's hand that kept holding me was tighter.

Eunice's breathing came from the warehouse — a weak breath, mixed with whimpers.

"Who are you, and what's the fucking relation between you and the bloke!?" A disgusting creepy roar of the gang head reverberated in the whole warehouse.

"You... dream on..." I heard Eunice's intermittent revolt, she seemed to be too exhausted to complete a sentence. Thinking of this, my heart was beating harder with uncontrollable bitterness and anger.

"...You bitch! Take the gasoline and spill it on her!"

Then I heard the sound of the splash. —That reminded me! I smelled a lot of gasoline since I got here. Is that definitely...

“The ignoble witch deserves it! Burn her alive, and goodbye... you fucking bitch.”

Finally, I couldn't stand it anymore. I broke free of Ryoko's arm and madly kicked at the door to enter inside.

“It's him?! That freak!!”

“Go to hell, you shameless dregs!” Waving my fist angrily, I rushed into the warehouse and attempted to hit these aware gangsters, but soon I was thrown over my shoulder by one of them.

“Akiichi!” Eunice shouted as soon as she saw me, but my condition was too urgent to allow me to notice her.

“What a fool!” Ryoko also rushed in.

“You even dare to huh? Get ready for your death!” The mobs were all around.

In the next moment, a dazzling light came to us.

“Woo... Ah!” One of them vomited and fell to the ground immediately. The beam just now seemed to have hit his soft abdomen.

I turned my head and looked at it. —It turned out to be Ryoko, who lifted up one hand and a book full of spells in her right.

“Akiichi, NOW!!” in a flash Ryoko released several sharp rays without waiting for my thanks.

“Got—it—!!” I used my elbow to break away a few gangsters who were trying to hold me down. Then I jumped up and silently recited a slightly unfamiliar spell — I firmly believed that this time I would succeed, because Eunice was now in need of me!

“Purpura fulgur!”

A flash of electric spark was shot, even lighted up the night sky in the suburbs, followed by the continuous emission of lightning from my palm, stabbing like a sword against the struggling gangsters.

“Gee, ah—ahhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Three stout men fell to the ground after the scream, and the nauseous odour of burning hair came. Just as I was busy beating back the two other annoying underlings in my way, their head behind me took the opportunity to get rid of the knife and came out, as if a streamer across, my cuff split a big hole in a moment.

“Akiichi!”

“I'm fine! No injuries! Ryoko, get to Eunice!”

However, the gang head did not give me any time to respond. After his first attack was lost, then, I was suffering the second and third ones... As such an indistinguishable light blade came so recklessly at me, I had no choice but defended myself with my magic. Blade waving, sparks flashing... We were fiercely fighting in the sultry warehouse, due to the wider range of our battlefield, the broken shelves and the stacked containers successively fell on the ground. Not long ago, I found that I was gradually forced to the dead corner — our confrontation fell into a deadlock — the out of order's attack of the opponent made it difficult for me to deal with one by one, let alone keeping the distance.

My physical strength seemed to be nearly exhausted, but my opponent was still energetic — no wonder that he was accustomed to being a trouble maker. Since his strength is a threat to me, on my side, however, though the released lightning could strike the blade so far, I was completely fell into passive defence. Damn it! If I could manipulate one more spell for fighting, I would have turned the situation around!

“Akiichi sama! Please hold on, please!” Eunice’s cry came in the distance. How was she now? —She must be held by Ryoko. I had no time to care for them but tried my best to resist the tough attacks over and over again, maybe it was only a matter of time before I was defeated.

But soon, the ferocious man’s eyes suddenly glared, the blood spilled from his fingertips, and his knife fell to the ground.

“Ryoko!” I yelled in surprise. Awesome, she came to aid me.

“Now, come on!”

It was just what I wanted. I lifted up with the help of the boxes piled up on the ground, spun myself in the air, and escaped from the corner. I had out of the dilemma. Then, I made my best effort to roar out the mantra I used all the time——

“Purpura fulgur!”

Finally, the last among them fell into the dusty corner of the warehouse. The scene returned to tranquillity; the sound of cicadas came from afar.

“Eunice!” I ran over, hugged the tiny body tightly, kissed her striking silver hair.

“Akiichi! Akiichi sama!” Eunice curled up in my arms in tears, and I could feel her trembling.

“Forgive me, I found you so late,” I just laughed with bitterness. —Although Eunice looked exhausted, she did not get hurt at all. It was a great fortune, after all.

“Akiichi, Akiichi! I... I am really useless... I wanted to meet you in the Izakaya, but didn’t realize they had sneaked to me... Then I was brought here... after I was dazed. That’s all my fault!”

“Stop talking, Eunice!” I put her head on my chest, feeling her violent heart-beating. Subsequently, I tried to adjust my mood and squeezed out a smile, “Just listen to my heart, Eunice, I love you. Love you, always love you. Wherever you go, no matter what danger you encounter, I swear, I will always follow you and protect you, until forever!”

My awkward words seemed to amuse Eunice who was still choking. In my arms, the corners of her mouth gently rose. She dried her tears, opened a charming smile again, then tiptoed, and gently dragged my cheek with both hands, “Akiichi! I love akiichi best! I’m really super happy as long as I can be by Akiichi’s side!”

Gradually, our lips were getting closer and closer, however, just at the moment when we put it on, a sudden cough sound came.

I looked up and saw Ryoko, she turned her head away on purpose, and said with a blush, “Mind your manners, you two, don’t make out here!”

“Ah... You’re right...” I stopped the motion quickly, so did Eunice. We surely felt extremely embarrassed now.

“...Let’s go back, it’s very late,” Ryoko raised her flashlight and walked ahead of us, followed by Eunice and me, holding hands in hand.

“By the way...” I looked at the angel shorter than me, and suddenly had a thought to tease her, “Sometimes, you really look like a child.”

“Nonsense! Because I... I am already an adult apprentice angel!” Eunice pouted as if she was protesting.

“Ha-ha,” I couldn’t help laughing and then said to her in a low voice, “so, tonight, let’s do something only adults will do... on our bed?”

“HEY—!!” The loud roar of Ryoko rang immediately. Eunice’s face was as red as a cherry.

“Ha ha ha ha — I’m just kidding!”

My laughter rang on the path, and the sky in the distance was already getting white, obviously, the dawn was coming. Ah, I had a feeling, today would be a happy day!

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“Hum—ah...” in the comfortable afternoon, Eunice stretched lazily, rubbed her bleary eyes, and slowly sat down from the bed.

“Ah, you’re awake,” I woke up long ago and had been staring at her. For my rare leisure time, this kind of lifestyle was really perfect for me.

“What will I do this afternoon, Aki-i-chi?” She got close to my ear and whispered, a sense of numbness but joy came. So I smiled and touched her silky silver hair with my hand and said, “it’s enough for me to enjoy Eunice’s lovely sleeping face like this.”

Her face quickly blushed. She slightly hung her and muttered, “Akiichi always bullies me, so evil! It seems that I must teach you a lesson tonight!”

“Please do it!” I said playfully. Ah, such a life of flirting with the person I love was really the best gift my parents have given me! Then, I moved the subject and said, “By the way, do you want to have afternoon tea with me together? You must be hungry, right?”

She turned her head away as if in a temper, seeing this lovely behaviour, I could not help laughing.

“Well, if Akiichi invites me, of course, it’s OK,” Eunice replied, and somehow, her mood seemed to be particularly good today, but that was not a bad thing, after now.

We came to the sunny courtyard. Quite a lot of delicious dessert that was sent by Ryoko as gifts had been prepared on a little table in one corner. In front of the two chairs, there were also two cups of hot coffee. Eunice and I were sitting on both sides of the table, basking in the sun, sipping the fragrant coffee. The bright sunshine shined on me, although the weather was still very hot, I only felt a kind of happy warmth wrapped around my whole body — I would never do this before. I smiled bitterly and remembered me one month ago: gloomy, depressed, and indifferent. I only locked myself in my room day and night. Even in my working time, I was still like a walking corpse, and having instant noodles for three meals every day... Therefore, Eunice really made a big change in my life, so did the incredible book, I didn’t know how much

salvation they had given me. I sincerely used my thankful eyes to look at Eunice, who was tasting the coffee gracefully, but after she noticed me, she shook her head at me shyly, “Akiichi, please don’t look at me like this, I’ll be embarrassed...”

“Well, Eunice, by the way, you have no problem with drinking coffee?” I asked curiously, “because I heard that girls don’t like to drink something too bitter...”

“Ah, no problem, it’s all right,” She seemed to be very confident, “Here, come and get closer. Would you like to have a taste of my coffee?”

“Ah? If you don’t mind... I’m willing to do...” honestly, I am a little bit nervous, because sharing a cup of coffee with my girlfriend could be too much for me, and I am not used to such intimate behaviour. But as soon as I said that, she handed her cup to me.

“Then... I’m going to drink it?” I took a natural sip.

“Whoa—!! So sweet!” The sweetness of this coffee had already caught up with the sugar water! I couldn’t help but make complaints about it, “Hey, how much sugar do you actually put on it?”

She gently rested her chin with one hand and say, “I have no idea... Maybe... about a dozen bags of sugar?”

“Pooh!” I laughed and said, “You should know, that’s not coffee anymore.”

“Ah, huh? But I just can’t stand the bitter taste of coffee.”

We kept talking and laughing in the courtyard in summer, and the sun gradually slipped from our heads to the West.

After enjoying the tasty cake, Eunice leaned on the table and asked me, “Well, Akiichi, aren’t you going to work tonight in the Izakaya?”

“Well, yeah.”

“Then I’ll go with you. Because...” Eunice was about to continue, but saying nothing at last with an unnatural smile.

I cared about her words, but I did not think much about it, because it had been too late now. As Eunice reminded me, I had to go back to prepare and finish my daily routine — turning a page of that old white book before going to work.

“Well, now I shall pack up first, and... You know~” I winked at her. The fewer the people who knew the secret of the contract were, the better.

“Akiichi...” she deliberately turned her head away so that I couldn’t see her face, “Well... please, don’t turn the book tonight...”

“Eh? But why?”

“Because...” she said, and her voice seemed to be full of trouble, “thus we may delay...”

“Delay for what? Ah! You’re afraid of wasting time, aren’t you? It doesn’t matter, I’ll be back soon, so see you!” I ran back to the house without looking back.

“Well, goodbye...” Eunice’s voice came from behind. However, if I was able to detect her trembling voice and her eyes wet with tears at that time, I would never do that.

It was dark in the house, but due to the lack of time, I just fumbled back to the room under the darkness, seeking my work clothes.

“Ah, I forgot where I put my work clothes again... She may be worried if I spend too much time...” I searched around in the Attic — I would store my things in an orderly way next time, I swore. I looked around, but my hand inadvertently came across the white book. The surface of the book was emitting a shallow white light, which seemed to be tempting me to explore.

“I’m going to work all night today, after all. Well, I think I should read the book now,” I was persuaded by myself and thus picked the book up.

“Mm-hmm, this page has been read, so does this one, and this...” I flipped page by page, finding that there was almost no page left that I hadn’t read before, “Eh? Is this book so thin? I remember it used to be thicker before...”

Soon, I happened to turn to the last page of the book——

Inexorable afterglow stains the summit, contract relieves. Divine mission thus accomplishes, angel of redemption is entailed to leave.

“What?”

I was shocked.

“Contract relieves? And Mission accomplishes...?” I pondered over the words in the book repeatedly. For a moment, I even felt that my eyes might have something wrong. Then an ominous premonition came into being. I looked close to the book and looked at each beautiful letter carefully. However, I subsequently read the most reluctant words to accept——

Angel of redemption is entailed to leave.

Tick, tick... Time passed by quietly. The arrangement and combination of this series of concise English characters in my brain, through the rapid and accurate analysis and operation of this advanced human organ, the simplest meaning between the lines is gradually resolved——

SHE WILL LEAVE.

“It must be kidding...” I laughed out as if I had heard a hilarious story, nearly madly laughed out. For a moment, I felt my whole body’s blood flowing so slowly with a distinguishable chill — why? Why did my hands begin to tremble, and the sense of a stabbing pain in my heart immediately occurred, just like... like... like I was losing the most precious matter of mine?

In the next moment, I burst into running fiercely. I left my work, kicked open the closed door, and had no time to take care of everything at home. I went through the

empty courtyard and ran to the direction of the back mountain — the summit. The more I savoured the words in the book, the more bitter and uneasy I felt. Why, why? It was a Book of redemption, wasn't it? Why did it make such a ridiculous joke on me? Eunice was leaving? Very impossible, right? It must be an absurd and stupid prank, right? I didn't believe it. I didn't want to believe it. Now Eunice must be waiting for me on the top of the mountain, waiting for me to rush to find her, and then we would go to the Izakaya together in laughter. Yes, it must be!

With my fastest speed, I left the town, crossed the wheat fields and the wilderness, and came to the foot of the mountain where the shrine was located. I was about to arrive, Eunice. My tired body was an obstacle to my progress, but it was strange to say that I felt myself still full of energy now, as if someone was giving me a blessing—— But that was good, because I did need to meet Eunice as fast as I could. I wanted to clear up this misunderstanding written in the book — I had to do that.

I reached the top of the mountain soon. Sure enough, a cordial figure appeared in front of me — Eunice. The striking silver hair of hers was fluttering. She seemed to have noticed my coming, so she turned her head and said to me with a smile, “you’ve come, Akiichi. What a pity... because I just wanna leave quietly...”

“I... I finally found you,” I bent down and gasped. I was really tired. My lungs seemed to burst now.

“But... Maybe I’m also looking forward Akiichi to coming, so I’ve been singing a mantra for you... Well, leaving without saying goodbye to you... is really cruel for me.”

When her sad expression came into my eyes, the idealized illusion of mine seemed to be completely shattered, and the annoying reason gradually occupied my heart, warning me of the final outcome — the fact that I was most reluctant to accept.

“...Are you going to leave?”

She did not speak, just slightly nodded, I then noticed that her normally hidden wings had unfolded now, the setting sun dotted this charming angel, as if the next moment, she would fly.

I wanted to hold Eunice, but this time she pushed me away with a look of sadness.

“Eunice...?!” I didn’t know what I should do now. At this time, I extremely longed for her to give me a smile of relief and told me that all this is just a prank! Then, I could take her hand to go down the mountain, go home together, prepare the new day together, taste delicious meals and dessert together, and happily live together.

However, Eunice’s sorrowful eyes were just staring at the exquisitely carved Amulet in her hand — the certificate of our love. Slowly, she said softly, “Akiichi, please remember my next words.”

I held my breath uneasily, suspiciously, but still curiously... All kinds of feelings were lingering in my mind at the moment. I waited quietly for the truth to the surface——

“Once upon a time, there was a wizard couple. Because of the changes of the era, the increasing public opinion made them spurned by the world and even became homeless people. In the process of wandering, their only son suffered from hunger and cold, which made the guilty mother very painful.”

Eunice put her hands together, as if reciting a prayer, and closed her eyes to

continue to say:

“When their child grew up, begging and contributing for drudgery had become routines for him. Nevertheless, the news of his father’s death soon was like a sharp blade, completely destroyed his weak heart. He lived in despair and agony every day.”

“Such unfortunate, but what does that have to do with me?” I couldn’t help interrupting.

“Later, after selling out their only little property, the mother gained extremely limited magic materials. Despite the hard conditions, in order to inspire her decadent son again, she decided to try a folk recipe handed down from her ancestors, that was, to compose a contract to redeem the desperate.”

“Ah?! Is this...”

“Yeah, that great mother is Akiichi’s grandma,” Eunice said, opening her bright eyes and staring at me sincerely, “Grandma finally succeeded. According to the legend of her ancestors, she wrote three books, one white book, one black book and one golden book. Her son, Akiichi’s father, chose the golden one. Then, the golden light came and brightened, and a fairy maiden appeared to the world to announce the establishment of the contract. Then, with the help of her, your father gradually perked up and became fond of the fairy maiden who gave him redemption.”

I was shocked. Although the protagonist in the story was my father, his experience was really...

“Just like us,” Eunice said for me, “however, such a taboo relationship was doomed to end in failure. Soon after their baby was born, the magic of the book was exhausted, the curse came, and finally, the two lovers who fell in love died.”

“Ah, so they...?!”

“Akiichi, that’s why your parents...” Eunice paused, and her eyes had already given me the answer.

“Well-well, but why do we end up with your leaving?!!” I asked eagerly, this result was more difficult for me to accept than death.

“Grandma was so heartbroken after they died, she thus decided to bring Akiichi up. However, grandma’s health was getting worse and worse. Just a year ago, grandma predicted that the tragedy was about to be repeated, so she found out the two taboos (because another book had disappeared with the magic gone). But Grandma learned the last lesson and made a readjustment to the contract. So...” Eunice’s voice started to tremble, and her eyes were gloomy, but she went on saying, “So... Even if the magic’s gone, only me need to leave.”

Eunice’s words aroused bitter and cruel facts in my heart, but I laughed again with a farfetched smile, “Impossible... The joke is not funny, Eunice.”

In response, she shook her head and stepped back a few steps back.

“Time’s coming... At sunset, I will return to heaven. From then on, there will be no more incompetent angel in the world like me.”

“Eunice! Stop it! You are not incompetent at all!! I want you to stay... STAY!!” In a flash, I stepped forward, held her tightly into my arms, deeply felt the warmth of body contact, interweaved breathing, and heavily beating heart. In this eternal moment, we were one, inseparable, and anything could not separate us. However, I had a few hot tears

on my arm.

“Sorry, Akiichi... I’m so sorry...” Eunice tried her best to keep smiling, but helpless tears ran down her cheek.

Suddenly, a strong wind blew, it was so wild and afflicting that the trees in the mountains then swayed violently, branches were disorderly as if to be uprooted. In a moment, I noticed dozens of silver pillars coming from the red sky, which were getting closer and closer until they focused on us——

“EUNICE——!!!”

“Goodbye, Akiichi sama. I cheated you at the end, but, I... I really like you from my heart!” Eunice smiled, her tears were clear and her toes were raised, accompanied by the dazzling light column, she gradually left the ground and ascended into the boundless sky.

I ran forward but finally captured nothing. The end of the cliff restricted my steps. I could only look at Eunice, which was still laughing with clear tear stains, rising higher and higher under the cover of the holy light.

“Akiichi, please live well, keep healthy!”

After her final tones, Eunice, the true love of mine, stretched her snow-like white wings, bathed in the brilliance of the world, gradually faded out of my vision and even my world.

The wind ceased, only me and that Amulet dyed red by the setting sun were still on the chiff.

Back Cover

The sun quietly set, leaving with the infinite darkness to the world.

I walked home from the top of the hill.

“Who would believe that...”

I wry smiled, my eyes were already swollen, and every time I blink, it will give me a sense of pain, but that offered me a sense of reality.

One by one, tears fell from my eyes, and I did not want to dry them or stop crying.

Soon the overalls were wet. The deep, pale colours on the overall smiled at me with the smell of dark and mocking.

“Ah...”

So tired, so annoyed, so troublesome.

I tucked into the covers.

Sleeping until 11 p.m., as if that was the way to escape everything.

“Ah... It’s nine o’ clock...”

I ruffled my hair like I was going to work today.

I got dressed and rode my bike out of the house.

“.....”

“.....”

I passed by the crossing.

“The intersection... where she and I used to wander together...”

I shook my head and clear my mind.

When I arrived at the Izakaya, the uncle came out to greet me with a big smile,

“Hey, you’re late! Oh, forget it... Where’s your little girlfriend, after all?”

Just like a sharp knife, his words accurately inserted into my heart chamber.

“She...”

“She...”

“She.....”

I moved my lips a few times but found myself unable to put together a decent speech.

“With no work for today... I thought you would bring her along.”

“Oh, not today?”

“Well, I suppose something happened to you...”

The uncle looked me in the face, then grinned, “Well, how about you coming to drink here today?”

With that, the uncle arranged for me a seat in the most.

“If you can’t stand that feeling, just cry that out, crying out the words will be much better,” the uncle forcefully patted the shoulder.

Such a joke — I already lost the ability to cry.

One glass after another, one can after another.

I drank numbly as if I could escape from reality by drinking.

I knelt and wept bitterly and hammered my hand with both hands, “Why do I always start to cherish it when she’s gone!!!” My mind is filled with the memory of her.

“She already mentioned to me, about that...”

A tear fell drop by drop, fell to the ground and broke into countless pieces.

My eyesight became a bit dim. Is it swollen? I do not care about that anymore.

“She changed my life, but I did not mention my thank you to her yet.”

“My life is a piece of shit except for the time I spent with her.”

“One cup, two cups...” I forgot how many glasses of liquor down, but my stomach already felt like fire.

At that time, a familiar figure suddenly appeared before my eyes. So beautiful, like an angel from heaven — Maybe I had begun to hallucinate.

“Eunice, please! Do not leave me alone,” I cried, like a baby.

“Bang!”

So clear, so loud, so powerful. I was slapped, and the bar suddenly became silent, leaving only the pain of being beaten and the buzzing sound that still reverberated.

“Her leaving was not to bring you down!” She yelled. I finally realized it was her, Ryoko Shimizu.

The friend I spent with countless days and nights, pal, and his childhood sweetheart. Memory flows through my heart.

“Ah, ah, ah...” I replied as if I am a robot. I said with the numb tune, “Everything is gone, whether her, my grandma, or my parents, I’d better choose to die...”

Suddenly, a drop of tear fell on the desk, it was Ryoko’s. She had been crying into a fearful person. My heart suddenly became painful after I saw her behaving like this.

“I... I don’t want you to become decadence again anymore, let us go to the future

hand in hand!”

“But...” I was stuttering said.

“If you forget your magic, you can learn it again; if you made any mistake, you could compensate for it. What can’t be created by our own hands!” She looked at my eyes directly, the deep blue eyes like ocean, so deep and never can see the bottom of it, “If you made any fault, it is never too late to mend.”

“Yes indeed,” I stood up with a clenched fist, I understand that now. I should relearn the magic and started to work on the magic book to bring them back!

“No time for me to stay in a mood like that from now on,” I whispered.

The bar suddenly filled with warmth and brightness, the people from the bar looks so amiable. I heard my boss said, “Hey, if you met any trouble, just tell us, OK? Your guys are still young, what cannot you do! Remember, the future is created by your hands.”

With strong gratitude, I looked at them gratefully and made a deep bow, “ありがとうございました!” (Thank you)

Forward The Future

— Ten years later in one of the most famous magic individual labs in Tokyo

“Hey, Akiichi, come and check this!” Ryoko yells.

“Coming~” I answer.

Yes, I and Ryoko became a working partner and built the biggest magic lab in the whole world. And we are doing research about the Taboo book. Well, we are near to completion.

“OK, May all go well with you, Akiichi.”

“Of course. I’ll try my best.”

“Eunice-Magic-foundation test on Taboo book-test number-4983-test date-203Kiyohime.6.3Kiyohime”

OK, Relax. Relax. Relax.

“I’m ready,” I wave to show Ryoko that I am ready to make the spell.

“魔法が始まる。(Magic Start,)” She smiled, “Let’s see the miracle created by you, Akiichi Kito.”

I nodded.

“Equipment ready.”

I glanced at the clock, just on time.

“I’m ready, for now.”

*“Angels of love and beauty, I call upon you this day to help ease my burden.
With your inspiring power and influence, show me the solutions I seek.*

—Itaque Fiat Semper, Carissimi Tua Eunice Certus.”

(“So, mote it be, dear Eunice.”)

With the blinding light, the familiar figure that I have been dreaming of for years appears. She remains like who she looks like before.

The time zips by, at that moment, I had a feeling that I went back to that summer that I first met her.

Angel-like girl, spread out her snow-white wings, in the dazzling white light half hanging in the air. As the energy fluctuation still not dissipated, her silver-white hair was whipping in the wind, her skirt as white as the divine wings were also gracefully swaying as well.

I yell out her name delightedly, with tears of happiness, “EUNICE—!!”

Bathed in the holy light, she smiles at me, “We’ve met again, Akiichi.”

Fin.



The Taboo Book
Eunice Part