

Niki's Done it Again

AKA: A Lyrical Analysis of Tokoyami Towa's FACT

January 9, 2022

By Mudkip, who had nothing better to do after being muted for 3 whole days from HFS

Disclaimer: I did this for fun, so *please* do not take anything I wrote below too seriously. This is pretty much an extended shitpost—please treat it as such.

Introduction

[Tokoyami Towa](#) stands onstage near the culmination of her 2nd anniversary YouTube concert. In one smooth movement, she expresses all of her gratitude and hope for the future through a single, heartfelt bow. Viewers and fans both new and old watch with bated breath as the Japanese Vtuber announces the final performance for the night—featuring yet another song from her soon-to-release first EP. The audience smiles as a familiar name is introduced—that of [niki](#), a Vocaloid composer who has worked with Towa before and was well-known for producing emotional, sincere, and vocally powerful rock ballads.

In fact, Towa herself is widely regarded for that very same reason, having made her name singing covers of niki's unique "church-like" rock ballads such as [brilliant](#), [-ERROR](#) and [Hearts](#) while her very own first original song [Palette](#) was produced in partnership with the same composer. Viewers knew what to expect hearing niki's name spill from her lips—people knew what was in store and what they had come to expect from a partnership between Towa and niki.

And so, with excitement and anticipation, the viewers watched as Towa took position and closed her glowing green eyes.

The lights slowly dimmed.

A centering beat carefully began...

And where the viewers expected powerful guitar chords and niki's telltale drumbeats, Towa and niki proceeded to slam a **sledgehammer** into their viewer's calcified expectations with a song named [FACT](#).

"Wait, Where the *FACT* Did My Power Ballad Go?!"

On the surface, the debut single of Tokoyami Towa's first EP [Scream](#) appears to be the opposite of niki and Towa's common fare—a deliberate and masterful subversion of expectations built on the reputation that the two of them have built in the Hololive community as a composer and vocalist respectively. Gone are the usual swinging drumbeats and natural-sounding and electric guitar-heavy instrumentals that niki has become known for—in its place is something *dark* and energetically *haunting*, accentuated as it is by heavy electronic tones and a more artificial timbre. And instead of prayer-like, beseeching vocals with the backing of every little drop of power that Towa has to offer—

which is a *lot*—what's left is no less powerful but has been redirected into an entirely different direction...

Seduction.

Whispering and the occasional bout of breathiness. A playful, casual tone that alternates with heavy, *sultry* vocals. Instead of a performance meant to touch the heart or draw a tear from one's eye, *FACT*'s expertly utilized vocal flourishes are clearly meant for...well, leaving an entirely *different* impression. (And let's leave it at that.)

It's certainly a change of pace compared to niki's usual power ballads, huh. Once, a fellow Hololive fan remarked to me about niki's songs all sounding the same upon the release of Towa's *Hearts* cover—I'm sure there's a fair bit of irony that can be found in that statement after *this*.

But hey—perhaps the song isn't as suggestive as it sounds. Maybe this is another case of a Japanese song whose arrangement and vocals completely contrast the meaning intended behind its inner core—its lyrics—much in the same way that Yoasobi's [Yoru ni Kakeru](#) hides a very dark and mature overarching theme behind an energetic dance beat. We English-only speakers are a poor lot, having an entire aspect of every non-English Hololive song shackled away from us unless a translation is helpfully made.

It's pretty fortunate then that one of the resident translators belonging to the Kenzoku Discord has very graciously shared his translation of *FACT* for all of us to peruse. Huge thanks to Lucotti, though he's told me to remind everyone of how unsure he is of his (contextual and not direct) translations and how a fan translation will never be able to stand up to any official one possibly created in the future.

With that in mind, why don't we take a looksie at them while [listening to the song...?](#)

*While (you're) trapped in the darkness of the eternal world,
the scream that rings and echoes (=dances) out...*

(let me hear it)

--

*Now, if you brush your nails, (=filing your nails.)
for you who are still like a child
Ahh, If you wanna test yourself out,
then put those handcuffs on your own with your trembling hands*

*While (you're) trapped in the darkness of the eternal world
I was chewing sweet sweet gum
With a lot of regrets to offer*

--

*Hidden in nonchalant and casual signs,
I'll let you know what the real answer is soon enough
Covered with smiling lies,
I'll accept you while you are still rejected*

*Come on, **let me hear your scream***

--

*Now, if you snap your fingers,
For such a pretty kitten like me
Ahh, my throat's already dry...
Spreading my fingers on my light crimson lips*

*While trapped off in a narrow prison
(do) You (really) want to be chained by your neck?*

--

*I don't want to snatch (you) by worthless rules
The freedom (you seek) is right here, right now in these hands
I don't want to factor in love and affection
I'll let you choose it, while you're still weak and frail
Come on, **open your heart***

--

*Pretending not to understand,
Are you (really that) not awake?
Can you show me a more...hotter darkness?*

--

*Hidden in nonchalant and casual signs,
I'll let you know what the real answer is soon enough
Covered with smiling lies,
I'll accept you while you still are rejected*

*In this eternal world's darkness, etch out this name...
I'll show you how*

C'mon then, let me hear out your scream!

Don't (just) dream!

*C'mon and **let me hear (it)!***

...oh.

*Oh **dear.***

“Wow, TMD...?”

In what *once again* appears to be a complete subversion of Towa and niki's past adventures in lyric-writing, *FACT* initially appears to be *exactly* what it *sounds* like: a dark and deeply seductive sex appeal-

focused song where Towa invites her listeners to chain themselves eternally to the darkness as she savors their resounding screams.

To say that this is a bit of whiplash compared to Towa's image is an understatement—we've gone from [Palette](#), a message-laden song that paints the picture of the rainbow of colors that can be found in reaching out for a goal across a canvas of dreams to...well, *this*. It's no less of a shock compared to niki's [own solo compositions](#), which each seem to imply the poetic and fairly thoughtful nature of the composer. Each expand on some hidden devotion or feeling that culminates in a powerful outburst as his songs reach the chorus, which Towa has delivered time and time again to great effect. Sorrow, joy, hope, and belief—weighty emotions are his (and Towa's) mainstay.

Notably, niki serves as the main lyricist of *FACT* (as against Towa for *Palette*), so one might have assumed that the lyrics of another song under his gentle care to end out about the same way.

But, well...

*Now, if you snap your fingers,
For such a pretty kitten like me
Ahh, my throat's already dry...
Spreading my fingers on my light crimson lips*

...yeah.

(The extra sultry touches that Towa performs these lines with are absolutely A+ tier, by the way.)

Clearly, all is as it seems. Towa has decided that she wanted to do something entirely different and has *finally* taken the chance to shake off those pesky “TMT” memes once and for all with something unabashedly, 100% and unchallengingly devil-like.

Bow down to your new master and chain yourself to the darkness—for *there's no escape*. With this performance, Tokoyami Towa has unabashedly cemented herself as a full-on devil.

...

.....

...or has she?

Let's go and back up a little bit—here's three things to think about before I start analyzing the lyrics and the hidden story it tries to tell to give you some context in why I'm sure the case isn't closed on this being just a typical dark sex appeal song.

The Nature of a Scream

Towa's first EP *Scream* shares its name with her 2nd anniversary YouTube concert—a celebration that comes after another impressive milestone in her career as a successful Vtuber in an industry that is both extremely new and incredibly volatile. Was the EP named after the concert, or was the concert named after the EP? No direct answers have been given by Towa in the time since the concert stream and the EP's announcement, and you're free to try and figure out whether a concert or a short album would take longer to put together than try to piece together the timeline yourself. What I find undeniable is that the two are *connected* in some form—and from here we can get an inkling of where to start diving to get beneath the surface of this supposedly straightforward song.

[Towa has had a lot to say about the ups and downs and her overall thoughts about her successful production.](#) Among the things she talks about includes the meaning behind the title of *Scream*—[and the caption that English speakers might have missed in the introduction video before her first performance.](#)

「この声をあなたに届けるために私は叫び続ける。」 Something that can roughly be translated to "*I'll continue to scream, to have my voice reach out to you*"—fitting for a motto on a stream dedicated to her achievements and future as a performer in Hololive. Towa adds to this during her follow-up stream about the background of the concert, in her own words: "*I **want** to continue to scream so that my voice will reach out to you.*"

Despite this, “screaming” doesn't exactly have entirely positive connotations. Towa has faced many, *many* ups and downs during her career so far—her time hasn't been all sunshine and rainbows. There has been a lot of breaks, loss, along with blood, sweat, and tears. Other Kenzoku would likely know much about what I'm referring to, but I won't bring any particular incidents up for the sake of this essay. But it has—and continues to be—a struggle for Towa—to be able to reach out with her voice and touch the hearts of many is admirable. It is a mark of her passion and devotion as an entertainer...and a topic that has been touched on in [Palette](#) previously, if you've been a keen observer. (Seriously, give the lyrics a read—Towa wrote them herself and there's an official English translation besides.)

How interesting that an EP titled *Scream* has a song that centers itself on the topic of screaming, then—though on the surface niki's lyrics seem to bring to mind that of a different type of scream that one usually associates with his songs. (...you know, the lewd kind. On the surface this song is a *real* homage to masochism with all the chains, being trapped, and relishing in screams, etcetera etcetera.)

A scream can be many things: sometimes an exclamation of joy, other times of sorrow or anguish. Perhaps of the *titillating* kind of passion, yes—but of passion for a craft, for an achievement, or of triumph. Whatever the case, Towa's view of a scream—*her Scream*—is that of an exclamation that allows her to reach out to her viewers with her voice. Towa has always worn her heart on her sleeve, so this comes as no surprise—and her voice has certainly touched many with the amount of power and emotion she can bring to bear during her performances. Sheer emotional catharsis instilled into one amazing and increasingly refined voice.

Hm...

Japanese is Hard

...yeah, *boy* is it ever.

One of the things that makes Japanese so difficult for English-speakers to grasp is how context-reliant it is. English is a very denotative language—when naturally spoken, it’s easy to pick out markers amidst the little details between slightly different sentences to pick out specific details. One of these markers that are easily taken for granted are *pronouns*: “*I ate a sandwich in the coffee shop*” means that the speaker of that sentence ate a sandwich in the coffee shop, and no one else.

But proper Japanese isn’t quite as strict about needing pronouns, and so in different contexts this sentence can be stretched as far as to mean “*She ate a sandwich in the coffee shop*,” “*You ate a sandwich in the coffee shop*,” and “*My dad ate a sandwich in the coffee shop*” among other variations as the *actual* Japanese sentence does away with the pronoun altogether and forces you to rely on the previous parts of the conversation to figure out what exactly is being said. 「喫茶店でサンドイッチを食べました。」

Examining *FACT*’s untranslated lyrics reveals *barely any pronouns* to be found. In fact, specific pronouns are only used *twice*—you’ll see that later on.

Much like many other Japanese songs, the general unspecificity of the language leaves much room for open interpretation, and not just in *who* is being referred to at all times. This is something that I’ll be exploring as we go line by line.

Obvious Breaks and Signs

“Oh, but *Mudkip!*” you might be thinking to yourself. “Aren’t you just reaching for stuff? It’s pretty friggin’ obvious that this is just a lewd song and Towa and niki are spicing things up for the album. *Lmao TMT is finally dead XD XD lul :P*”

And yeah, you’re probably right—but it’s 12 AM, I’m bored, and I’ve found a few hints of something hidden underneath the surface *already* without recontextualizing the entire song. Take these few lines for example:

While trapped in the darkness of the eternal world

I was chewing sweet sweet gum

With a lot of regrets to offer

Regrets? That sounds pretty random after singing about being trapped in darkness and such, even more than [the sudden mention of chewing gum](#).

Or take this first chorus here:

Hidden in nonchalant and casual signs,

I'll let you know what the real answer is soon enough

Covered with smiling lies,

I'll accept you while you still are rejected

Hidden signs? Answers and lies? Rejection? What’s all this silliness about?

Upon reexamination, there's a surprising depth to this song—especially when taking into consideration both the allowances of the Japanese language together with Tokoyami Towa as a person and her story so far.

Alright, that's enough context presentation. Let's go ahead and dig in.

Line-by-line Analysis: Screaming is a Good Thing

While (you're) trapped in the darkness of the eternal world,

the scream that rings and echoes (=dances) out...

(let me hear it)

The intro lines to the song are fairly succinct when introducing the tone of the whole thing. Towa once again sneaks in her name for everyone for everyone to hear, if a bit more subtly than last time (***Tokoyonoyamini Torawaretemama***), we come across a case of an assumption over pronouns (for the reason why “you’re” is in parenthesis is because no object is directly stated), and we’ve found a case of a dual meaning for a Japanese term *already*.

Take a look at “rings and echoes”: 「奏でる」 (kanaderu) is actually a verb that means “to play (an instrument),” with a secondary meaning of “to dance” at the same time (and once again, whichever meaning being used depends on context that we don’t have, which makes interpreting things fun). Note that the “to dance” definition [is noted down by Jisho.org as obsolete](https://www.jisho.org/en/kanaderu), though that doesn’t mean we still can’t use utilize it for this.

Of course, the connotation that screaming can somehow be compared to the beautiful music that can come out of an instrument *proooooably* doesn’t help my case in trying to dispel the lewd vibe that these lyrics give off—but remember how Towa has spoken about *Scream* in relation to her passion as a performer and a vocalist. The “scream” that is at the center of this song is an *emotional* one—and remembering how Towa uses her voice and singing talent to reach out to people with her heartfelt emotions casts this line in a different light. The idea of “dancing” only adds onto this connection to the overall concept of *performance*, like that of a certain entertainer on a stage baring her heart out to an audience.

Letting out your emotions, both positive and negative and allowing them to reach out to others—such is a scream in this case.

A whispered “let me hear it” ends this overall introduction, and so the essence of the song is laid bare to us. Screaming is a *good* thing, and Towa would very much like if you (and *she herself*) continue to do it.

Now, if you brush your nails, (=filing your nails.)

for you who are still like a child

Ahh, If you wanna test yourself out,

then put those handcuffs on your own with your trembling hands

Brushing or filing your nails in the sense that 「磨く」 (migaku) means “to polish, shine, burnish” and [a bunch of other related things](#). It also means “to refine or improve” but that isn’t as important here. (Or at least, I don’t think so.) The following line is one out of two times that a specific pronoun is used, establishing that the speaker of the song is speaking to a “you”—someone childlike in nature, as noted in a teasing lilt.

This third line is interesting, for “test” in this case can be expanded upon to mean [“to attempt; to try out.”](#) Towa tells this new, immature individual to *handcuff* themselves if they really want to try something. You know, while they’re trapped here in “the darkness of the eternal world.”

While (you're) trapped in the darkness of the eternal world

I was chewing sweet sweet gum

With a lot of regrets to offer

Yeah, like that.

Compare this “you” with supposed “trembling hands” (Luc might have translated this into “trembling,” but the original meaning of the word used, 「愚か」 (oruka) appears to mean [“foolish; stupid; silly”](#)) to Towa, who is off on the side casually chewing gum for no reason. And while these translated lyrics appear to mark this “you” like a repetition of a reminder that this inexperienced “you” remains trapped—the Japanese lyrics doesn’t utilize specific pronouns. Could *the speaker* in these lyrics also be trapped in this place? (Actually...what the heck is this eternal world of darkness *anyway*?)

If so, unlike the immature and childlike person that they’re speaking to, this speaker is pretty used to being trapped in here already—experienced enough to have plenty of regrets to offer (well, [“to offer, to devote, to lift up, to give, to sacrifice”](#)...Japanese, man).

(Unless of course it’s the individual that’s being spoken to that has “a lot of regrets to offer” after getting trapped in this place since it’s Japanese and once again, no pronouns. I’ve realized at least thirteen times in the past several hours that I’m nowhere near smart enough to do this analysis, but I’ve gotten this far already...)

Hidden in nonchalant and casual signs,

I'll let you know what the real answer is soon enough

Covered with smiling lies,

I'll accept you while you are still rejected

This is our first chorus—a set of lyrics that repeats near the end, so you *know* it’s important.

Take the horny out of your brain and this sounds almost mentor-like—for it’s never specified *who* has done the hiding and the covering of signs and lies, much like it’s never specified who has done the trapping at the start of this song. All that seems to be concrete is that it *happened* and that the person being spoken to got trapped at some point. (Please stop thinking about Towa locking you in a cage.)

The speaker, while teasing, acts very much like a guide and someone worth trusting—this world of darkness seems pretty harsh with all these hidden things and lies after all, and an experienced person can show an immature and inexperienced one the way through these things. They're even seeming to act as a confidant or a *companion* to accept the other as they are while they're rejected or refused by something or someone else.

Acceptance from the speaker in the face of rejection from unknown others is an interesting topic to bring up. After all, Towa has faced her fair share of naysayers and antis in the past...and the present. Rejection from multiple people for all sorts of differing reasons (like say, her deep and non-moelike voice or her fondness for APEX).

And of course...

*Come on, **let me hear your scream***

"Screaming" and honestly opening your heart to others is a *good* thing.

Now, if you snap your fingers,

For such a pretty kitten like me

Ahh, my throat's already dry...

Spreading my fingers on my light crimson lips

As we veer off the first chorus, our playful speaker here continues to tease.

It's interesting that I'm writing this hot off the heels of [Towa bullying Koyori extremely hard in a collab stream](#) because you can easily read these lyrics as a mischievous "senpai" having some fun with a bumbling "kouhai." The person being spoken to is being made to snap their fingers on command, for one thing. Suddenly mentioning that their throat is dry can easily lead to being told to run off and buy some water for the speaker, which is something I've seen both in real life and in anime. (At least *I* was never the gopher...)

Funnily enough, this is that aforementioned second and final time that a specific pronoun is used throughout the song. One of the most concrete details we can pick up from the lyrics is that the speaker teasingly refers to herself as a "kitten." *Amazing*.

While trapped off in a narrow prison

(do) You (really) want to be chained by your neck?

Oh lordy, this is a *fun* pair of lines.

Once again, a reminder of being trapped, followed by a question. It's funny, since at the beginning of this song the speaker was being teasing whoever they're speaking to while challenging them to handcuff themselves, and yet their tone suddenly has this bit *explicitly* as a question. Do they *really* want to be chained? Is being trapped in here a *bad* thing? That's the sort of impression that comes up with this line, and so the next chorus has lyrics that have accordingly *changed*:

I don't want to snatch (you) by worthless rules

The freedom (you seek) is right here, right now in these hands

I don't want to factor in love and affection

I'll let you choose it, while you're still weak and frail

Suddenly, the speaker talks about *rules*, *freedom*, and *choices*. You know, concepts that intrinsically have a connection to the theme of being trapped.

This first translated line is actually a little misleading as (yet again) no pronouns are explicitly mentioned—in my very amateur view, I think this can easily also be read as “I won’t be snatched by worthless rules” or “*You* won’t be snatched by worthless rules.” Either way, rules are worthless, snatching is *bad*, and freedom can be found in the speaker’s experienced hands.

(...that came out wrong but yes, I’m deliberately calling to the speaker’s built upon mentor-like and experienced denizen of this eternally dark prison status here.)

“I don’t want to factor in love and affection” can easily imply not factoring in the speaker’s love and affection or *the person being spoken to’s* love and affection, the latter of which makes more sense with the following line of allowing choice. The second, constantly being spoken to character of this story has been set up to be in a lesser position since the very beginning of the song, and yet the speaker gives the choice of following the speaker’s lead to *them*.

Oh, and don’t forget:

*Come on, **open your heart***

Opening your heart and “screaming” is a *good* thing.

Yes, the lyrics deliberately use 「心を開いて」 or “to divulge your true feelings; to open your heart” in this part. I planned this from the *very* beginning as during my analysis, running across this line after hearing Towa talk about what “Scream” meant to her pretty much set off a spark in my brain. My literary over-analysist side is *pleased*, to say the least. The build-up was *perfect*.

Pretending not to understand,

Are you (really that) not awake?

Can you show me a more...hotter darkness?

We’re now at the bridge before the final chorus. “Not awake,” “half-awake,” either one of those work.

Ah, “hotter”—specifically, 「熱い」 (atsui) is used here, a word that carries [many different connotations](#) depending on the situation. “Hot” in this case *can* be used to described suggestive subjects, but it also encompasses passion, tension, enthusiasm, and zealousness. Which reading to use depends on how you’ve read this song so far. On the surface, it’s *very* suggestive. With the recontextualization I’ve been building up on all this time and the relationship between “scream” and passion as Towa conceived of it

for her album and concert...well, it paints a different picture. Can you put more passion into whatever you aim for...?

This last line also gives us the best hint we can get at what this whole “darkness” is—something related to the fields of which we place our “heat” or passion in, where we’re likely to “scream” and put all of our heart into. In Towa’s case, it’s probably the Vtubing world...or perhaps the music industry as a whole. Either way, struggling for relevance in fields like this is no sunshine and roses stroll—it’s difficult. It’s *harsh*.

It’s...**dark**.

Especially so for Towa, someone who has spoken at length about wanting to cast off the pressure of adhering to strict “idol-like” and “cute moe” Vtuber stereotypes...which can be seen as chains in a way. Something that *traps* her. A fellow Kenzoku remarked that “screams” and yells seem to double as verbal analogies to not just struggle, but *rebellion*—and how fitting it is for a devil to fight against the grain.

Hidden in nonchalant and casual signs,

I'll let you know what the real answer is soon enough

Covered with smiling lies,

I'll accept you while you still are rejected

Bringing back the chorus at the end of the song, as is typical for a usual composition framework. It’s a reiteration of what was said at the beginning—the promises that were made to be a positive, guiding force and someone who accepts you despite what flaws others might find in what you do. Perhaps that’s really what this song has been about, all this time—I’m convinced of it at very least. The fact that the MV at this point of the song has replaced imagery of bound chains with *broken* and *shattered* ones implies that of being encouraged to struggle until one’s chains and limitations break...

...but it’s half-past 2 AM now and time has no intrinsic meaning, so is my brain *really* functioning anymore? Sorry mate, I don’t have all the answers.

In this eternal world's darkness, etch out this name...

I'll show you how

“I’ll show you how” here uses the same wording as previous “I’ll let you know”s and also means “I’ll make you understand,” by the way. Whose name is being etched out isn’t specified—the speaker’s...or the second character’s? I’ll leave that to you to think about.

Regardless, this mentor of a speaker continues to act as a role model to the inexperienced other individual—being willing to show the way on how to make a mark on this world’s “darkness.” How fitting, considering our discussion of what “darkness” means in the song’s context just a couple of paragraphs ago.

C'mon then, let me hear out your scream!

These final lines once again return to the main thesis of the song.

Don't (just) dream!

An interesting sentence, considering how *Palette* was all about the struggling in chasing a dream. I agree with the contextual addition of “just” in this case—in light of the entire song, this seems to be a reminder to not *just* dream, but to actively work towards one’s goals. Such is a concept associated with “screaming” in this context after all.

C'mon and let me hear (it)!

And with that final reiteration comes the end of the song.

Final Roundup, Conclusions, and a Last Mystery

Taken all together, *FACT* appears to be a song about encouragement at its heart.

Towa has sung about her own dreams and her own struggles in chasing them in *Palette*, and this song appears to be about encouraging others to follow her lead.

Of course she’s acting like a smug little devil the entire time, but for those used to her silliness...well that brand of cheekiness is just par for the course with her. As a song that centers itself on the concept of screaming (and as the penultimate piece in the entire *Scream* EP), there very much seems to be *something* below the surface and initial impressions that this song seems to offer. What’s hidden is an encouragement for passion and heartfelt enthusiasm even as one voluntarily gets themselves into a dark world with plenty of obstacles and struggles.

In short...a song full of wordplay about baring one’s heart out in the face of strife? Welp, stop the presses—*niki’s gone ahead and done it again*.

Good show, you two. *Good show*.

Now, we’re left with a final mystery, however...

...for just what is the **FACT** being referred to in here? Is it the truth that striving towards one’s goals being a harsh and dark journey? Is it that to make one’s mark and a struggle for achievement, you have to bare your heart and put all of your passion into your work? *Is it that Towa is “a pretty little kitten???”*

One thing’s for sure—regardless of how you interpret *FACT*, it’s undoubtably a strong and impressive showing from Towa and niki after an amazing opening like *Palette*. It’ll be on loop in my playlist for the next few months for sure.

(...also, regardless of any hidden interpretations or analysis, Towa sounds pretty hot.)

Afterword

Wow, you actually read this whole thing? I’m impressed. This bloody essay is 12 pages long after all and more than five thousand words besides. You must’ve been pretty bored to do this.

Anyway, thank you for wasting your time on this. I promise I’ll try not to break the server’s rules anymore. Go ahead and watch Towa-sama, stream *FACT*, and remember that Brando is terrible at cooking rice.

Thank you for reading!

- *Mudkip*