

# Shiki: A Detailed Analysis of the Risen

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The one-season-long anime series Shiki, originally a horror novel by Fuyumi Ono, later turned into a manga by Ryu Fujisaki before finally being serialized into an anime, revolves around the rural village Sotoba, and the literal rise of the undead. The shiki (or risen as they're called per the local folklore) can only survive by consuming human blood. What ensues is a struggle between the Shiki's desire to continue living, and the humans' will to keep theirs.

The concept is simple enough. But, several ambiguities exist within the story, and this document serves to define those aspects as thoroughly as-is practically possible, using a more scientific approach and relying less on superstitions.

## Physiology

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The Shiki's physical appearance are the same as their living human forms (even cosmetics such as hair color), with the exception of sharpened fangs, blackened eyes and reddened irises, and their almost-white pale skin.

The shiki are not dead. Yes, they are *undead* in the sense that they show almost none of the major signs of life, including the ability to breed directly with one another. However, they are not completely dead. The use of an electrocardiogram shows minor vital signs from their bodies, and their skin can rapidly heal itself.

The shiki are weak against any normal dosage of UV radiation, causing their skin to burn when exposed to direct sunlight, and they must drink human blood in order to survive. Consumption of regular food that is edible by humans will lead to regurgitation of the consumed contents. No urinary nor excretive abilities have been observed among them, however, it is possible that consumed human content can be excreted by a shiki if regurgitation is suppressed with mechanical forces. No substance-based methods of any purpose have found to have any effect on any shiki whatsoever. The shiki can only be affected by physical and psychological methods.

Vision is likely significantly enhanced due to the shiki spending almost all their waking moments at night, and they have not been found to struggle navigation through relatively complex areas in pitch-black darkness. Taste and smell has not been confirmed to function, but their hearing is as good as any living human, assuming no prior loss of hearing such as from old age.

The shikis do not breathe, do not emit heat, have no pulse, and cannot digest food. Essentially, all their smooth muscles are inoperable. The only involuntary muscles that are seen to be controlled by the shiki are lungs, allowing them to perform ventilation and in turn actions such speech and blowing some air. It is believed that their post-mortem breathing is possible because ventilation of lungs is already controllable in a human, living state, while aspects such as heart beating and digestion were never possible to consciously control solely by thought. The shiki are capable of controlling all voluntary muscles as usual.

It is believed that they *are* blood; that their bodies serve merely as husks to be controlled by the actual, viremic blood mass that is contained in them. All shiki are "dead" bodies suffering from viremia. Shiki multiply by spreading this disease to other living hosts through bites when consuming blood; viruses from their saliva is believed to infect their victims through the bloodstream. And, they individually keep themselves alive by replacing dying blood cells with the living ones they consume from live humans.

Furthermore, there exists a sub-species of the shiki called Jinrou that suffer *none* of the aforementioned disabilities, while exhibiting temporary superhuman strength and "twice the fineness"<sup>[1]</sup> of all five senses when consuming human blood on a regular basis. Jinrou are far more rare than the usual shikis.

## Psychology

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Certain aspects of their brain have been confirmed to be functional. The pain-signaling system, for example, works just like their pre-mortem state, as induced damages such as cuts, battery, burns, and even emotional damage, all result in observed pain. Shikis are also found to observe senses of touch, and their spacial awareness seem to remain the same.

The reward system appears to also remain largely intact. Some shiki are found to seek out other desires beyond basic survival, such as love, entertainment, or the company of fellow family members. It is therefor believed that hormonal changes still take place in their bodies, with the hormones themselves being supplied from the consumed blood of their victims.

One particularly odd behavioral disability that shiki exhibit is an involuntary loss of consciousness at dawn. The shiki remain unconscious for the remainder of the day, until dusk. Hormonal changes are believed to be the cause here as well, however, how exactly is unknown.

It is almost impossible for shikis to go without eating for an extended period of time. As existing bloodcells die out, the host body starts breaking down, leading to the brain being signaled to eat no matter what, and any and all existing mental inhibitions begin to disappear. An incredibly low number of shikis have ever been found to restrain themselves in a state of severe hunger.

Outside of life-threatening circumstances, the overall personality and mentality of each shiki largely remains the same; the nervous system therefor must have remained intact, including the neural connections made in the brain throughout the person's previous life. Unlike their biological aspects, shiki's neurological connections can -- and likely will -- change as they go on living for what may be eternity.

## MVR

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With the prior information in mind, the arise of shiki is hypothesized to be the result of an unknown virus, which, for the purposes of this document, will be referred to as "Mortuus Vita Reanima", or just MVR for short.

MVR is believed to be a weak, opportunistic virus that cannot take control of its host until all their autoimmune defenses are rendered null, either by death or any other form of weakness, at which point the virus will immediately start taking over the host's body before it's irreversibly deceased. Infection mainly occurs via bites from other infected hosts. MVR can only survive the human body's autoimmune systems for a few days at best, and the host has to be repeatedly reinfected on a daily basis until the virus has properly cultivated itself. MVR "inherits" the existing genetic data of the host, and uses it to keep the host at the most optimal state possible.

MVR is believed to exist in three different types, labeled MVR-1 through 3, described as follows:

### MVR-1

The virus exists in the host, but is unable to take over any control either due to existing autoimmune systems, or complete failure at cultivation prior to severe decease of the host.

## **MVR-2**

A partially successful cultivation of itself in that it was able to take over the host, but not while in an undeceased state. Host will suffer aforementioned weaknesses, but will stop aging.

## **MVR-3**

The rarest, and most powerful variant, where the virus has achieved complete cultivation prior to any significant decease of the dead host, and successfully transmuted the body into a superior state. Host suffers no weaknesses, attains temporary superhuman strength when consuming human blood, and does not age.

The above hypothesis would explain the existence of shikis, jinrou, and why some people do not get reanimated in the first place, all under one common explanation; some form of genetic disposition would be required for the maximization of MVR's cultivation, and the physical well-being of the victim likely has a great deal of effect in what of the three outcomes they end up in. The time allowed for MVR's cultivation prior to host's death is also a major contributor, as the time between decease and reanimation can be greatly reduced, increasing the likelihood that the host becomes a jinrou.

## **Inexplicable behaviors and abilities**

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Shikis have been found to possess the following, unexplainable abilities and handicaps, with jinrou being immune to the handicaps:

### **Hypnosis**

Shikis who are first to bite their victims during the victim's current infectious period are able to mind-control them. The possible imposed effects on the victim by the shiki or jinrou include, but is not limited to: lying, coercion, and outright homicidal acts of violence towards other human beings, irregardless of social relation to the mind-controlled victim.

### **Invitation**

Shikis must be invited into any home they wish to enter. They cannot enter any building, no matter how easily trespassable it would otherwise be. The invitations themselves can be both formal and informal, as long as the intended meaning is to welcome/tolerate the shiki into one's premises.

It is unknown whether or not an invitation can be redacted, and in turn prevent a previously invited shiki from entering a home. It's also not clear what determines if a human can give out a valid invitation in the first place. Do they have to own the residence in question? Merely live in it? Either way, the exact level of authority over a home or area required to hand out invitations to shikis is yet to be determined.

### **Fear of divinities**

Shikis are scared of any and all objects and physical locations with religious connotations. This includes, but is not limited to: Holy scriptures, religious symbols such as the Christian cross, and places of worship like temples, churches, etc.

Shikis are however not affected by exclusively folkloric symbols such as garlic necklaces and silver bullets.

## Hierarchal power structure

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The undead's organizational power structure is characterized by a top-down hierarchy, where any level of authority can exert control over its direct subordinate and subsequent subordinates, irrespective of their specific operational branch within the organization.

The absolute ruling authority over all of the known, currently existing shikis, jinrou, and allied humans, is Sunako Kirishiki herself. Membership in the Kirishiki family is otherwise the primary determinant of status, regardless of whether an individual is human, shiki, or jinrou. Following the Kirishiki family, influence is ordered by the presence of existing jinrou, regular shikis with noteworthy status, and finally regular shikis that lack any significant characteristics.

## Ethics of existence

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The viewpoint of this essay's author(s) is that the care and protection of mankind takes priority. Any and all comfort and well-being for shikis is secondary, unless it entails the sacrifice of unsavagable criminals.

Coexistence with jinrou is likely impossible. While they themselves do not need any particular accommodations in order to survive in human society, their ability to infect others with the virus puts humans at risk. This can even be done unintentionally via actions such as kisses, hugs, or just talking and having microscopics specs of fluids with MVR travel to the other person. Jinrou would either have to be treated as infectious victims and be quarantined, or be given land where they can live in isolation with their kind and their kind alone. Said land should be overseen by humans from a distance to ensure not a single jinrou escapes.

Regular shikis are an even bigger complication, for not only can they infect others and require additional accommodations, they even become outright homicidal when hungry. Regular shikis can absolutely not coexist with other humans, and should be killed as painlessly as possible. Alternatively, they ought to live with jinrou, and be provided humanitarian aid in the form of blood donations from both willing and incarcerated individuals.

However, should jinrou or shikis attempt to rebel against humans in any capacity, the offending ones are to be immediately killed.

## Public discourse

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Other essayists have argued for the accommodation and caretaking of shikis, and their arguments have often revolved around the fact that, shikis in particular, still feel pain and sorrow. It's often also stated that shikis have as much of a right to continue living, if not more so than humans, with various destructive actions committed by mankind throughout history being referenced to support this.

What a lot of other literary and visual works surrounding the series miss is that humans do not need much in order to merely survive. The average human can live off of a vegan diet alone. Furthermore, humans do not pose a risk to other, equally intelligent creatures.

Additionally, the hierarchal structure of shikis, while only observed at a sample size of literally one (1), is prone to the extinction of humans. The kirishiki family dismissed any internal attempts at co-existence with humans and saw them as cattle, and each shiki within the organization actively sucked blood from the same victim multiple consecutive times daily, killing them. Shikis committed *preventable* atrocities towards people.

## Final thoughts

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As the author of this essay, I'd like to apologize for the cold viewpoint portrayed here. However, given the nature of the discussed beings, the actions taken by them, and how it all could've been easily avoided, I believe that there is no need to show sympathy. Of course, all subjective opinions laid forth are done so on a humanist basis, so if you're more of a biocentrist, your dislike for the above proposals is more than understandable.

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1. put video reference here dumbass! ↩