

小説... JUMP J BOOKS

BLEACH

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Spirits
Are Forever
With You

kubotite
naritarvohgo

Spirits Are Forever With You

summary translated by tenshiscave & edited by tari101190

Spirits Are Forever With You volume I

Preface (p10-11)

The story starts with the 1st page of an article written by Shūhei HISAGI for Seireitei Communications. His readers asked him to write about Don KANONJI. Why? Because there was a certain "incident" in the 17 months between Ichigo KUROSAKI losing and regaining his powers. Hisagi wrote an article to shed light on this incident — However, the rest of the article is missing. Central 46 replaced it with a censored version and the original one was burned.

Chapter #1 (p12-20) — Present day | Karakura Town, Tokyo Metropolitan Area

Keigo ASANO and Mizuiro KOJIMA are walking outside, heading back home after a Christmas party. Keigo lost a game during the party and got a mohawk hairstyle as punishment. He isn't exactly happy about it, but reminds himself that Robert De Niro looked cool with a mohawk in Taxi Driver — Orihime Inoue had told him this little fact to cheer him up. Mizuiro makes sarcastic comments and they bicker as usual. Keigo is afraid people will think he's some kind of delinquent. He sees a woman with black, shoulder length hair who has a sombre expression on her face. He reassures her: "Ah! It's not what it looks like, miss! I'm De Niro!" But then his smile freezes — covering the right part of her face... is a pure white skull. Cold sweat runs down Keigo's back. He realises she resembles the monsters that Afro-san (KURUMADANI) is always chasing. Chan and Inoue have told him that those are evil spirits (he forgot what they're called). Mizuiro also notices her and tells Keigo not to go near her. Keigo agrees, although he silently thinks that he would've jumped at her anyway if she'd had a larger bust. Then the woman suddenly looks distressed and, as if melting into the air, she disappears. Keigo freaks out and Mizuiro remains calm. However, they're not the only ones who had seen her. They're on a bustling shopping street and many people are pointing to the spot where the woman disappeared ("Did you see that!? She disappeared!?!"). Although he didn't really want to admit it, Keigo knew he had recently developed spiritual-sight. But it would be weird for all these people to possess that ability as well, wouldn't it? Why could everyone see her? Zennosuke KURUMADANI arrives on the scene. He came because he had sensed a suspicious spiritual-pressure, but he's too late. She's gone.

Keigo knows KURUMADANI is a soul reaper. He notices that the other people can't see him. Which means that those people don't share Keigo's ability to see spirits. So why could they see that woman earlier? Keigo and Mizuiro exchange a glance and continue their way back home, feeling unsettled. They didn't know this was just the beginning.

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Witness reports about a masked woman continued for over a year in Karakura and its surrounding towns. Time and time again, Zennosuke KURUMADANI, soul reaper supervising the other towns and the quincy Uryū ISHIDA would sense her presence, but then she would be gone before they could get to her. Someone eventually managed to film her. They put it on the Internet, and she became a nation-wide sensation. Rumours flew. Was it fake? Was she a ghost? An intruder from another dimension!? Eventually she also caught the eye of a certain spirit program producer. The producer suggested to record a special episode in which "he" will try to find out the truth behind this masked woman. Who will? The charismatic spirit medium: Don KANONJI.

Chapter #2 (p21-47) — 250 years ago | Soul Society, somewhere in Rukongai

On a plain, somewhere in the outskirts of Rukongai, there's the sound of metal clashing. Soul reaper are the protectors of spirits in the World of the Living and Soul Society, but they are also hunters. Hunters who slice down hollows with their zanpakutō. These hunters are currently dancing around the battlefield, slicing down a group of hollows that appeared in these outskirts. They're soul reaper. They're warriors. They're blade edges. They're swords. They belong to the 11th Squad; the squad most specialised in 'battle' amongst the 13 squads. They're smiling because they love to fight life-threatening battles, but also because they have absolute faith in their leader. This man seemed to radiate "danger". The height of the spiritual-pressure surrounding his body made the hollows' masks shake. The captain of the 11th Squad: Kenpachi KURUYASHIKI. He was the 7th "Kenpachi", a name passed on to the strongest soul reaper.

KURUYASHIKI fought the previous Kenpachi to the death in a duel. He has protected his title for several hundreds of years now. He was actually quite social and popular, even outside his own squad. A "crack" appears in the sky and a *menos grande* appears. KURUYASHIKI takes it out with one swing of his sword ("Not you"). He isn't interested in the gillian, no, there's something else inside the "crack". He tells it to come out. Countless white threads fly out of the crack. They intertwine, turn into rope and then knit together into one big net. The net wraps around KURUYASHIKI's sword and pulls him towards the "crack". There's a short tug of war. Then a small hollow is dragged out. It looks like a white spider. Its spiritual-pressure is stronger than that of the gillian, heavier. It's an *adjuchas*. Suspended on one of its threads, it hangs mid-air between the crack and the ground. KURUYASHIKI tells it, "Not you either. There's another one behind you. It might be a *vasto lorde*." The spider doesn't respond and attacks again. KURUYASHIKI stabs it. Still no response. KURUYASHIKI pities it. He says, "You have no contents, huh. I don't have time to be cutting dolls. Come out". He tosses the spider

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back into the crack. He knows there's "someone" inside there, but the crack closes. KURUYASHIKI is disappointed for a moment, but then happily re-joins the battle on the ground again.

— Several hours later

The battle is over and the 11th Squad is having a drinking party. The 4th and 8th Squads arrived to offer backup, but seeing as the battle was already over, they moved to leave again. However, KURUYASHIKI semi-forces them to join their party. The 11th Squad members are impressed with their captain's strength ("Only Captain KURUYASHIKI can take on a *menos* like that!"). KURUYASHIKI tells them not to forget about Captain YAMAMOTO, or 12th Squad Captain HIKIFUNE, or those from the KUCHIKI and SHIHÔIN clans. His members respond, "But you never hear about anyone taking down a *vasto lorde* like you did in the past, Captain." Shunsui KYÔRAKU is also present. KURUYASHIKI asks him if he could take down a *vasto lorde*. KYÔRAKU responds it depends on compatibility. He could win against a *vasto lorde* and lose against a *gillian*. You never know. KYÔRAKU asks if it's alright for them to be drinking like this. YAMAMOTO might yell at KURUYASHIKI again if he doesn't report back on time. And what will Captain UNOHANA say if he gets her soldiers drunk? KURUYASHIKI agrees that UNOHANA (he calls her *Retsu-neesan*) is scarier than any *menos* when she's angry. They discuss what happened earlier. It's strange for several hollows to appear, plus a *gillian*, *adjuchas* and maybe even a *vasto lorde*. Are the hollows starting to use battle formations and organise themselves? KURUYASHIKI thinks they might in the future, but not yet. Although he does remember the *vasto lorde*, which he had defeated in the past, yelling "*Baraggan-sama!*" before he cleansed it. A hollow general, hah. He'd like to fight it someday, but Ashido KANÔ might kill it before him. Ashida disappeared into Hueco Mundo a few years ago with a few subordinates, chasing a hollow.

The way KURUYASHIKI and KYÔRAKU spoke about him made it clear they thought he's still alive. KURUYASHIKI says that even if the hollows will continue to evolve, the 13 Court Guard Squads will improve as well. In two, three hundred years, all Captains and even Vice-Captains may be able to take on a *vasto lorde*. KYÔRAKU jokes they may have to retire then. KURUYASHIKI says he might already be dead by then. But that's no problem, the 11th Squad will always be led by a "Kenpachi". One of his members quietly asks him if it's true that the Zero Squad invited him. It's true, but he refused. He's not suited to protecting a king, hiding away in a different dimension until the enemy manages to get in. And it's not like he was officially ordered to join by Central 46 either. Furthermore, as "Kenpachi", he has to wait here until someone manages to surpass him. — "Excuse me. Can I have a second of your time?" A young man uttered

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those words. He spoke softly, but his words somehow resounded clearly in the partying soul reaper's ears. His appearance made it clear he was a noble. But he wore the bare minimum of decoration. Even KYÔRAKU, the second son of a high noble family didn't recognise him. KURUYASHIKI asks the young man what he wants. A drink maybe?

The young man hears a female voice behind him ("That's him! That's Kenpachi KURUYASHIKI!"). The black-haired woman laughs loudly. She's wearing a white kimono, worn in a way that exposed much skin, and an excessive amount of decorations. Two wide leather straps are crossed over her face, covering her eyes. The man tells her to not to state the obvious and to move away. She does as he says, although she calls him cold and says she hopes he'll lose. — "Kenpachi KURUYASHIKI. I heard that... if I kill you in front of over 200 soldiers, I will gain the title "Kenpachi" and the position of Captain." KURUYASHIKI confirms this. The young man says he'd like duel to the death right now. Although he doesn't mind waiting until KURUYASHIKI has sobered up. The other soul reaper laughs at his request. Does he have a death wish? But KYÔRAKU, the worried 4th Squad members and KURUYASHIKI aren't laughing. KURUYASHIKI says he doesn't need to sober up and stands up. His members are shocked, but quickly make room when they realise, he's serious. They send pitiful glances towards the young man. He'll lose. He isn't even carrying a zanpakutô.

They form a circle around KURUYASHIKI and the young man. KURUYASHIKI asks KYÔRAKU to act as witness. KYÔRAKU tells the young man there are other ways to become a captain. The man responds that he has no interest in small talk. The man's words may appear arrogant, but KYÔRAKU notes the lack of emotion in his voice. KYÔRAKU warns KURUYASHIKI to be careful. KYÔRAKU silently thinks that the man's lack of a zanpakutô doesn't necessarily mean he's weak. Leader of the kidô Corps, Tsukabishi Tessai, could compete with a Captain with the power of kidô alone. However, seeing KURUYASHIKI's smile, KYÔRAKU knows it's pointless to try and stop him. KURUYASHIKI has won many of these kinds of duels. The young man asks if the requirements for the duel have been met. KURUYASHIKI says they can start anytime. — "I see, then your life won't be pointless." The next moment, blood sprays out from all over KURUYASHIKI's body. It's as if a tornado of blades burst out of his body. No one saw the young man draw his zanpakutô, nor throw a kidô. He hadn't even moved. Even so, he was now the new "Kenpachi". A man stronger than KURUYASHIKI had appeared, just as KURUYASHIKI had wished for.

— Somewhere in Hueco Mundo

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The soul reaper weren't the only ones who had witnessed the 7th Kenpachi's demise. Even though, at this point in time, the sheer concept of "surveillance camera" didn't exist in the World of the Living yet, there were bug-type hollows that did possess this kind of ability. And a certain humanoid hollow, who had these small hollows under his control, had used them to watch the duel.

He was a vasto lorde and he was the one behind the hollow attack in Soul Society a few hours ago. — "This is Yammy's phrase, but.. this is truly suerte." He had planned on dissecting KURUYASHIKI's dead body. However, he doesn't mind this development either. He'll rewind the records of the recording-spirit-bugs to analyse what happened in the duel. The man lets out an insane laugh. Then he turns his eyes to the white spider-type hollow. He tells the spider to feel honoured. He had planned to kill it, but these events inspired him to try a new experiment. He'll let it continue to be his marmot. The spider lowers its head, feeling slightly happy. It expresses its gratitude towards the vasto lorde who will eventually become an arrancar and Espada thanks to Sôsuke AIZEN, — "Thank you very much... Szayelaporro-sama."

— Present day

The name "Kenpachi", after being passed to its 10th successor Kenpachi KINJANGÔ, is now held by its 11th successor, Kenpachi ZARAKI. However, there is no record of the 8th Kenpachi ever being defeated. There's not only no record of the fight, there is no record of the man himself either. All records were destroyed on order of Central 46. Even so, his existence was carved deeply in the hearts of many soul reaper. He was an extraordinary criminal who had exposed even Soul Society itself to danger.

Chapter #3 (p48-67) — Present day, Hueco Mundo

An endless sea of white sand. The home of hollows, Hueco Mundo. A young arrancar, Nell Tu, runs across the sand near Las Noches, crying out for help. She's followed by Dondochakka BIRSTANNE, Pesche GUATICHE and their pet, Bawabawa. They love to play eternal tag. Today, however, Nell isn't the only one being chased. All four of them of running for their lives. A group of more than a hundred arrancars is chasing them. They say they want to play with Nell. But, considering the way they sometimes released a Cero, Nell didn't feel inclined to stop running. Most of them resembled children, looking slightly younger than Nell. One of them was wearing something that looked like white headphones. There were also some who didn't look human, more like small animals. Even so, they all had the number #102 somewhere on their bodies. They were called Picarro, a name given to a group of child-type hollows. They didn't have individual names. They were considered one, lumped together under the number

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#102 as Privaron Espada. Pesche curses their luck for running into them. Dondochakka says the Picarro run free outside Las Noches now that Runuganga is gone. The Picarro have the intellect of a child and are loyal to their desires. They originally ran free under King Baraggan and there were briefly named Espada under the new king AIZEN, but were demoted to Privaron Espada and sent to Tres Cifras' Nest. Runuganga kept them there with his endless sandstorms so they wouldn't cause havoc in the World of the Living. But now the Picarro were free to roam around. Whenever they found a partner to play with, they'd play until their partner broke and could no longer move. They were a nightmare to the weak.

— "I-Ichigo! Help us, Ichigo!" Nell met Ichigo KUROSAKI 18 months ago. Nell remembers Ichigo being in trouble when faced with the Espada Nnoitora, but she doesn't remember what happened beyond that. She woke up to the sight of a scary soul reaper and ran for her life. Afterwards she heard from the quincy and the humans that Ichigo had already returned to the World of the Living. She had tried to go with the humans in order to express her gratitude towards Ichigo, but she had caught the eye of another scary soul reaper, Mayuri KUROSTUCHI, who wanted to use her as sample. She managed to run away thanks the quincy and the others stopping Mayuri, but when she returned, the quincy, humans and soul reaper were already gone. Until now, in order to stave off loneliness, she hadn't uttered Ichigo's name even once. Pesche and Dondochakka share a glance and decide to fight back ("Alright, brother. Time for Plan B!"). They mix sand and Pesche's Infinite Slime to create a quicksand-like substance, but their plan backfires when Nell nearly drowns too. They save her, but she's passed out. The Picarro also free themselves.

Pesche and Dondochakka release Cero Sincrético and hit the Picarro. The attack takes out roughly half of the Picarro. The other half release their own Cero's in response. Not just once, no, several seconds they each continue releasing Cero attacks, creating a large crater in the sand. Nell and the others are nowhere to be found. Did they vaporise? The Picarro think about who'll they play with next. Rudbornn? Nah, he's been putting on airs ever since Baraggan and AIZEN left. What about Luppi? Nope, he's dead. Kukkappūro? Don't know where he is. Gantenbainne? Don't know either. How about we go to the Firest of menos? They says there's a strong red-haired soul reaper there! Great! They head towards menos Forest, but then suddenly sense a strange spiritual-pressure. There's a lonely-looking woman with a mask covering the right side of her face ("Who?", "I've seen her in Las Noches!") They head towards her but she melts into the air and disappears. They try to find her using pesquisa and notice there was another familiar spiritual-pressure besides hers, but they can't remember whose.

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The Picarro decide on their next game: the first one to find the masked woman wins. They open the Garganta and, carrying their fallen fellow Picarro on their shoulders, head into the Dangai. Silence returns to the desert. Then Dondochakka jumps out of the sand. He had dug himself in the crater. He opens his mouth and throws up Bawabawa, Nel, Pesche and a large amount of sand. He had swallowed the three and dug himself deep in the sand by swallowing sand. They think this helped them to evade being picked up by the Picarro's pesquisa. They didn't know the Picarro had been distracted by someone else. Pesche decides to dub this Plan C. But then Pesche frowns. He can sense the remainders of two familiar spiritual-pressure, but he tells himself it's impossible. Then, Nell wakes up, asking where the Picarro went. Pesche can't sense them anywhere and assumes they used the Garganta to go to the World of the Living. Nell is worried for Ichigo, but Pesche reminds her of Ichigo's strength, which reassures Nell. She doesn't know that Ichigo has lost his powers. He wouldn't even be able to see her now. But she also doesn't know that there are others who can protect the people, in place of Ichigo. A stubborn quincy. A soul reaper with an afro. And one more person. A hero much more famous than the previous two. The hero's name is —

Chapter #4 (p68-87)

— "His name is, of course, Mister... Don KANONJI!" The host announces his name and the audience cheers. Don laughs and shouts, — "Bohahaha! Spirits are always with you!" The people in the audience cross their arms in front of their chests at the same time and laugh along, "bohahaha". Don, dressed in gaudy clothes and a pair of sunglasses, waves proudly to his audience. He's a spirit medium and a hero to children across the entire nation. His real name is Misaomaru KANONJI. Don's spirit program is starting to fall in ratings lately, but that didn't slow him down one bit. He'd be satisfied with just a single viewer. His producer and staff knew this, but still put all their effort into this Karakura Special. Even so, they couldn't give him the same spectacular entrance (skydiving) as the last time. That's because Karakura Town, famous as a spirit hotspot, had suffered many civilian casualties nearly two years ago. It had cast a dark shadow over the city. The city was hesitant to cooperate with a spirit medium show nowadays.

Many people had died due to Yammy's soul-inhalation technique, or simply by being into contact with AIZEN, who had merged with the hōgyoku. The "natural outbreak of gas" had been declared as the official cause of death to the civilians who had no knowledge of hollows and soul reaper. In the past, Don ran around Karakura Town, fighting hollows as leader of the Karakura Defence Force. But he has been busy shooting overseas for another program this past year. He hasn't seen the Defence Force members in a while. The purpose of the show is to exorcise the masked woman

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which had been appearing all over Karakura Town. Don surmised she might be connected to hollows in some way. And, although they had a bus to take him and his crew to the woman's location whenever she should appear, Don preferred to use his own beloved, imported, high-class, open car: Jeanne d'Arc. There was a sudden noise and Don felt a chill. He and his crew turn to the direction of the noise. But Don is the only one who can see the child with white headphones standing on top of the bus. Behind him, there's a large black hole, like a wild beast's open mouth. Then the hole closes. Don can sense that the boy is no ordinary spirit.

The boy murmurs, "Weird. I'm sure it's around here!" Noticing eyes on him, the boy talks to Don and his crew. Don responds. The boy realises Don is the only one who can see him and asks if he's a soul reaper. Don denies this and introduces himself. The boy gets his name wrong and calls him Donkan Onchi instead. Don is appalled, but quickly recovers and asks what the boy is doing here. Is he looking for his parents? Don will help him look! The boy says he's looking for a woman with a skull covering half her face. Don responds that they're probably looking for the same person. The boy proposes a race. Who can find her first? If the boy wins, Don will "play" with him. Don agrees, not knowing how dangerous "playing" with the boy would be. The boy is thrilled.

The boy taps his headphones and starts talking to the other Picarro ("Did you hear that?"). The other Picarro appear from behind trees, telephone poles and roofs. They chatter amongst themselves. Won't they get scolded if they play with a human? But Baraggan is gone. And so is TŌSEN. Won't HARRIBEL get angry? Let's just ignore her. Let's kill and play! He looks weak, though? The Picarro jump out into the night in search of the woman. Don mutters to himself. How should he play with so many of them? A soccer ball tournament? His producer, who didn't hear the conversation, is confused and worries whether Don has been possessed or something. Don assures him he's alright. He's ready to take on the boy's challenge. The producer doesn't get it, but he's happy that this will probably create a wonderful program. The head-phoned Picarro is looking for the woman using pesquisa. He notices she's no longer in the World of the Living. The Garganta opens next to him and another Picarro beckons him inside. Several Picarro have assembled inside. They use pesquisa again and sense something strange. Weird remains of spiritual-pressure were left in the area, different from the spiritual-pressure of hollows or soul reapers. It was also slightly different from what soul reaper call spirit-ribbons. It was thin like a spider's thread. And it stretched out into the torrent of spiritual-matter. Where does the thread lead to? One Picarro remembers, ""Qrrr... I remember... over there ...that's where AIZEN-sama came from... Qrrr." Soul Society. Led on by curiosity, the Picarro decide to go there. Not

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realising how foolish it was to go to their enemy's land. Their purity was both their weakness and strength. To which side will the scales fall?

— At the same time | In the Garganta, at unknown coordinates

The "void" exists between Soul Society, Hueco Mundo and the World of the Living. It's the Garganta, where storms of spiritual-matter swirl and rage. A darkness filled with heavy spiritual-energy. And a beautiful young woman, with a mask covering half of her face, was walking on the thin road she had made inside it. She's walking alone but there's another presence whispering in her ear. The voice asks her why she let herself be seen by the Picarro. Did she want to save Nelliel? She shouldn't pay attention to that outcast. But he'll forgive her. Those Picarro might work as decoy later. Nevertheless, the voice reminds her she's just a tool. She apologises. He says he'll let it slide. He's in a good mood. His research might bear fruit soon. But she mustn't be killed or else all will be for naught. He tells her to hide out in the World of the Living and to flee whenever she runs into a soul reaper, hollow or quincy. No need to engage in battle. Although the voice doubts that any soul reaper could kill her. The woman responds with a sad look in her eyes: — "Understood... Szayelaporro-sama."

Chapter #5 (p88-127) — Soul Society, Technological Development Bureau, under 12th Squad jurisdiction

Hiyosu is yelling at Tsubokura Lin to stop eating sweets. This is the heart of Soul Society. Seireitei, surrounded by the Rukongai, is the place where soul reaper live and work. And the Technological Development Bureau lies inside Seireitei. It's a place most soul reaper prefer to avoid, but it's also one of Seireitei's most important institutes. The Spiritual Wave Measurement Lab is vital to the soul reaper working in Soul Society and the World of the Living. It monitors the appearance of hollows in both worlds and observes the Dangai. Normally a few members such as Lin work in the lab, but the entire staff is present today. They're monitoring Karakura Town, because a few hours ago, over a hundred Garganta and arrancars were measured in that area. But the arrancars had disappeared before they could even declare a state of emergency. They didn't know what the arrancars were after, and Karakura Town was an important area to Soul Society. That's why the 13 Court Guard Squads was on strict alert, ready to strike, and why the Institute was monitoring Karakura Town.

Niko murmurs it's weird that the arrancars all had a very similar spiritual-matter quality and that they opened separate Descorrer instead of one big one. Hiyosu agrees and asks for Akon's opinion. He says they need more data first. Meanwhile Kon is being experimented on. He yells that they should at least pay him or something. Rukia

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won't let it slide if anything happens to him, you know! But he won't mind if Nemu or another female researcher experiments on him... The Institute's President isn't present. He's on trial. Central 46's court is the highest juridical organ in Soul Society, second in power only to the Soul King Office. Mayuri was summoned to court as the accused of a certain incident. But none of the researchers were worried about the outcome. Not because they didn't care. They respected their president. No, because they knew that Central 46 couldn't judge Mayuri currently.

— Central 46

The judges and sages of Central 46 are angry with Mayuri KUROSTUCHI ("Are you even listening!?"), but the man in question wasn't concerned in the slightest. He merely found the trial a waste of time and he didn't hesitate to tell them that.

— Technological Development Bureau

Hiyosu asks Akon what Mayuri is on trial for. He answers it's about Mayuri making several 12th Squad soldiers blow themselves up, during the time when Kurosaki first appeared in Soul Society. The 12th Squad also had members who weren't Institute researchers. Mayuri had deemed this to be a good way to make use of those soldiers.

This incident had happened quite a while ago, but Central 46 didn't have time and capacity until now. First, the previous members had all been murdered by AIZEN, then the arrancar ordeal happened and then, after AIZEN had been sentenced to the Muken, they had spent more than a year arguing about the fate of the Visoreds. The new Central 46 can't condemn Mayuri for experimenting on quincies because that had been authorised by the old Central 46. Akon surmises that the new Central 46's true motive is to try and strike their president down with this self-destruct incident. The other researchers agree. They're not impressed. Most of them were originally residents of the Nest of Maggots.

Lin admits that from a normal person's perspective, Mayuri may belong in prison. Akon says that Central 46 isn't thinking in ethical terms, not truly. It's the same as when they stopped the project of developing mod souls, Project Spearhead: They're simply scared of weapons falling into enemy hands. If they did care, they would never have ordered things like the execution of hollowfied captains without even checking the facts properly. Lin rebuts that that was done by the previous Central 46. Akon says nothing has changed. If it had, then Central 46 would call URAHARA back. But they're too scared that URAHARA holds a grudge for being falsely accused. Hiyosu adds that the current Central 46 is bringing Mayuri to court in order to dangle the promise of a reduction of penalty in front of him to make him their tool. Moreover, Central 46

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benefits a lot from the Technological Development Bureau. They wouldn't send its president to prison quickly.

Akon jokes that even if Mayuri was sent to Muken, he'd be happy with the opportunity to dissect his fellow prisoners. The others agree. Lin asks if they are other prisoners besides AIZEN in Muken. Akon says there should be a few. Muken was the lowest underground prison, level #8. It held the worst criminals who, due to circumstances, could not undergo execution by the Soukyoku. Another prisoner was AZASHIRO, a man sentenced to over 10,000 years in prison. But Akon's explanation is interrupted by the loud sound of candy being crunched in someone's mouth. Akon scolds Lin, but it's not him. No, it's the 11th Squad's Vice-Captain, Yachiru KUSAJISHIA. Akon asks why she's here. She says she's here to help Lin eat candy, but Lin refuses to give her any. Suddenly one of their measuring instruments rings. It signals the arrival of an intruder. It's the arrancars that entered Karakura Town earlier. They've appeared in various locations, spread out over Soul Society. The researchers quickly send out a warning to all areas. And Yachiru leaps out the window with a smile on her face. — "I'm gonna wake up Ken-chan!"

— Rukongai, Western Area, White Road Gate

There are four gates in the wall that separates Seireitei and Rukongai. The giant Jidanbō, the guard of White Road Gate, is on alert for the intruder. One of the Picarro appears before him and she tells him she wants to go into Seireitei. Jidanbō, who didn't sense any hostility from her and didn't know arrancars look similar to humans, assumes she's a Rukongai child and gently turns her down. 12 of 37 Oh, he's a guard? So, if she kills him, she can pass? How about they play a game? Jidanbō doesn't take her serious until he notices the sword hanging from her waist. ...Could she be an intruder? Suddenly the girl closes her eyes, tilts her head and, as if she's talking to someone, says, "No way. SHIBATA-kun? Really?" The girl tells Jidanbō she doesn't have time to play with him anymore and leaves. Jidanbō is happy he didn't have to raise his axe against a little girl and continues guarding his gate. A few minutes later, he'll hear a thunderous sound which will shake the air surrounding Seireitei.

— Rukongai, somewhere in the Western Area

— "Hey, could you be SHIBATA-kun?" Yūichi SHIBATA turns to the owner of the voice and stiffens. The boy in front of him is smiling innocently but has the faint air of a hollow. SHIBATA affirms that he is indeed SHIBATA. The boy smiles and calls the other Picarro ("Come over here, everyone. SHIBATA, who once turned into a parrot, is here!"). Several Picarro appear and surround SHIBATA. Amongst them are those who

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look like little animals with white skulls. SHIBATA is immediately reminded of the hollow who killed his mother, Shrieker. The Picarro start chatting amongst themselves, "SHIBATA? The boy we found when one of us slipped into the World of the Living? We talked about saving him and killing Shrieker for him once he became a hollow. But a soul reaper saved him, so SHIBATA never became a hollow... No fair... He could've become our new friend." Yūichi, not knowing what to do, tries to talk to them. The Picarro turn to him and tell him he was quite famous for playing chase with Shrieker. How about you become a hollow and play with us?

Yūichi is scared and thinks of Chan, the man who he had relied on before. But it's not Chan who saves him. A large shadow suddenly appears like a gust of wind, grabs him by the neck and tosses him to the roof of a nearby house. The man who tossed him has a bald head and a stern look on his face. A soul reaper. MADARAME Ikkaku, 3rd Seat of the 11th Squad. MADARAME had been on patrol in West Rukongai just as the alarm rang. All seated officers had been ordered to repel the intruder and/or to investigate their motives. He thought this meant it was his lucky day, but after seeing a bunch of children before him, MADARAME felt he was unlucky instead. Seeing as the arrancars weren't attacking anyone nor radiated any hostility, MADARAME tells them to just scram off back to Hueco Mundo. — "No, no, you can't just let them leave like that, you know? The mission also includes finding out the enemy's motives." Yumichika AYASEGAWA, 5th Seat of the 11th Squad, appears behind MADARAME.

The Picarro ask them if they're soul reaper. If so, can they take them inside Seireitei? MADARAME angers at the ridiculous request. AYASEGAWA explains arrancars aren't allowed inside. The Picarro say that's unfair. After all, "that lady" is an arrancar, yet she's inside. Their words surprise AYASEGAWA and MADARAME. Seireitei is protected by its Sekkiseki wall, which doesn't allow any spiritual-matter to pass through, and the Soul Warding Membrane. Yes, gates could be breached, or the dome could be pierced with great force, but for an arrancar to sneak in, unnoticed, was unheard of. — "After all, her "threads" continue inside the walls." MADARAME asks them what they mean, but then suddenly there's a thunderous noise and black smoke rises from Seireitei's centre. Where the Technological Development Bureau is located. Maybe there's really someone inside already? MADARAME turns back to the Picarro to ask them who "that lady" is, but they're already gone. Yūichi says they ran away and MADARAME tells himself, "I really am unlucky today..."

— 3 minutes earlier, Technological Development Bureau

None of the researchers had noticed "that". If Mayuri had been present, he may have, but he was currently on trial. A thin thread of negación, so thin it was invisible to the

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human eye. It crept further and further into the Institute. The researchers are chatting amongst themselves while analysing the data about the intruder that's being sent in. It seems KURUMADANI had also reported about the masked woman earlier, but they hadn't analysed his report yet. Akon suddenly felt a chill. Not only him. The others did too. They could sense a sinister spiritual-pressure boil up from inside the observatory room — the room which they were currently in. Everyone stopped what they were doing. And yet they heard someone typing on a keyboard from the corner of the room. From the president's desk. When they turned to the sound, they saw a man sitting behind the desk, with a faint smile on his face. — "I see... The man who killed me is the president of this place?" While looking at the data on the screen, the arrancar with a glasses-shaped mask, calmly uttered those words. One of the researcher whispers, "Isn't that the specimen that's being preserved in fluid..?" The word 'specimen' angers the arrancar. His corpse has been degraded to specimen!? How insulting. — "Even so, I think I'll take a look at this 'specimen'. You don't get the chance to observe your own corpse every day, you know. I don't clearly remember the moment I died, though." The researchers remember the name on the specimen's tag:

Szayelaporro GRANZ. One of the Espada. Akon and the arrancar, who looks identical to the specimen, exchange some words until the arrancar draws his sword. — "Enough chatter. If you want to know more, figure it out yourself. If you can survive long enough, that is." A few seconds later. Even though the following explosion in the Institute acted as a signal to everyone that an intruder had infiltrated Seireitei, only one person had actually noticed the negación thread. This person was locked deep underground. In a place for the worst criminals.

— In the dark

The criminal remained silent, only opening his eyes. As if on cue, a woman's laughter rang in his ears. — "Kyahahaha! It's been a while! When did you last open your eyes? 250 years ago? Or 500? Or maybe 20,000? Or was it 3 seconds ago? Kyahahaha!" The criminal slowly opens his mouth and says, "When Sôsuke AIZEN was locked up here." A small light, as if triggered by his voice, burns in the darkness. Left, right, up, down — darkness everywhere. The criminal sees a woman in a white kimono with a leather obi (kimono sash) covering her eyes. She remembers. It's true, the criminal last opened his eyes when AIZEN had been sent to this place. She retells the events that lead to AIZEN's downfall — receiving the orange-haired soul reaper Representative's massive attack, being sealed by Kisuke URAHARA, being sentenced for 20.000 years. She knew it all. So why did the criminal open his eyes this time? — "A thin thread... entered me. A thread of spiritual-matter...? No, of negación." He offered no further explanation.

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The criminal was a man of few words. — "...I'll take a moment to consider whether I should leave this place, the Muken."

Chapter #6 (p128-150)— Technological Development Bureau

The Institute is heavily damaged. The 4th Squad has arrived to take care of the injured researchers. The Szayelaporro-lookalike is nowhere to be seen. Mayuri's trial has been put on hold. He and Nemu (he had taken her with him to the trial) are back at the Institute. Mayuri is talking to Akon. Akon apologies for the damage, but Mayuri just wants answers. And why didn't the enemy finish them off? Akon answers it's because the lookalike had a strange reaction when he found the specimen.

— 30 minutes earlier

All the researchers had survived the arrancar's attack. He praises them. Seems they weren't as non-combatant as he had assumed. He'll be sure to study their corpses later. But he has something else to take care of first. The male intruder walks towards a pillar-shaped tank. The specimen which he's looking for is floating in a luminous fluid inside it. Usually, when an arrancar dies after being cut with a zanpakutō, its soul is purified and its body disappears. Mayuri made a special device to prevent this, allowing him to preserve his specimens. The man laughs when he finally gets a look at the specimen, "Hahaha, this matches the recording spirit-bugs' data. A dumb look on my face, not even realising my own death." He turns back to the researchers and says, "Rejoice. You get the rare chance to see the re-fusion of a soul and body that died once." Then he dips his hand in the liquid and touches the specimen.

Nothing happens. He curses Mayuri — he must've done something. He reaches for his sword, ready to take his anger out on the researchers, but stops. He senses the spiritual-pressure of the man who cut Nnoitora and Yammy. He doesn't want to take that beast on in his current condition. The intruder blends into the air and disappears, along with the specimen. At the same time there's a thunderous noise.

— Present time

Having heard Akon's retelling of the events, Mayuri grinds his teeth, "In other words... Captain ZARAKI is the one who destroyed the wall..." The 11th Squad had supposed to be near the gates. However, ZARAKI had probably gotten lost again, had seen the explosion and had headed towards the Institute. Mayuri asks if the arrancar blended into the air in the same way as the masked woman in Karakura Town. Akon says that,

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judging by the footage on the woman, it's the same. Akon asks if Mayuri knows "what" the intruder was. Mayuri says he can make a guess, but... — "I hope my guess is wrong, though."

— Soul Society, somewhere in Seireitei

Shunsui KYÔRAKU sees her standing near the little retreat where Jûshirô UKITAKE, the 13th Squad's Captain who suffers from a lung disease, tends to rest. UKITAKE hadn't attended the emergency captain meeting due to his health. KYÔRAKU planned to check up on him, and, if possibly, to discuss things. Commander YAMAMOTO had informed the attendees that they were now permitted to use their full powers and to carry their zanpakutô at all times. A white skull covered the right side of her face. An arrancar. KYÔRAKU lowers his spiritual-pressure as low as he can to remain unnoticed. He decides to wait and see what she'll do. KYÔRAKU feels both curious and cautious at how quiet her spiritual-pressure is. Everything in Soul Society is made up of spiritual-matter. Hers was as quiet as that of a stone lantern or a tree.

— "Are you lost, miss?" She turns to him in surprise, and at the same time, the kind of spiritual-pressure which you'd normally expect of an arrancar, does rise up now. — "You are... You are the person who was with Kenpachi KURUYASHIKI-san back then, aren't you?" Her words surprise KYÔRAKU. She starts to melt into the air. — "I... I'm sorry. The scenery was just so beautiful that I unintentionally connected to it. I'll disappear now, so please don't mind me." Why does she know KURUYASHIKI? However, the woman is already gone before he can ask her. UKITAKE pushes the bamboo screen in front of his retreat to the side and calls out to KYÔRAKU, "KYÔRAKU? What's wrong? I thought I sensed an arrancar for a second..." KYÔRAKU says it's nothing. And he really hopes it's nothing, but he has a bad feeling. Not because of the name Kenpachi KURUYASHIKI, but because he remembers the man who had killed KURUYASHIKI.

— North Seireitei, Black Ridge Gate

A few Picarro and soul reaper are in battle near the Black Ridge gate. The soul reaper are suspicious of how quickly these arrancars seem to heal. They do go down when cut, but then stand up again as if nothing happened after a short while. The Picarro suddenly stop fighting. They notice that there are suddenly a lot less "threads" inside the walls. The masked lady must've left. Some Picarro want to continue "playing" with the soul reaper, but the head-phoned Picarro reminds them of their race against Don KANONJI and they use sonido to leave. Meanwhile, the soul reaper receive word that

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ZARAKI is heading towards them to engage the enemy. But the enemy is already gone... ZARAKI isn't going to be happy.

— Underground Prison, lowest level, 8th prison: Muken

Darkness. Everywhere. Making you lose sense for what's left, right, up or down. That is the prison called Muken. There were only a few prisoners in Muken, but even so, Soul Society preserved this space at all costs. To make its criminals unable to feel "the world". And, at the same time, to hide its criminals from "the world". To make them be forgotten. To make them into beings which "didn't exist". There was barely anyone in Soul Society who knew who the Muken's first prisoner was, and whether that person still existed. But many knew its latest prisoner.

Sōsuke AIZEN. A soul reaper, yet king of the hollows. The traitor who tried to attack the Soul King. Immortal thanks to the power of the hōgyoku. And now imprisoned in Muken. His limbs, eyes, ears, mouth, the feeling of touch — everything had been bound and sealed. But a part of his senses was suddenly freed. Part of the cloth covering his face was peeled off, freeing one eye, one ear and his mouth. His freed eye saw darkness. But not pure darkness. In this place where there should be no light, there was a lantern burning brightly in front of his chair. There was also a man standing next to the lantern. Neither of these things seemed to surprise AIZEN. And while a normal person would've needed several hours to regain the ability to speak properly after being sealed for over a year, AIZEN spoke calmly, — "Should I be honoured to lay my eyes on such a senior prisoner? What should I call you? Your real name, Sōya AZASHIRO? Or the title given to the strongest soul reaper in Soul Society? The 8th Captain of the 11th Squad... Kenpachi AZASHIRO."

The woman standing behind AZASHIRO finds AIZEN's calmness hilarious. She suggests taking the hōgyoku from him. AZASHIRO tells the woman to stay quiet. AZASHIRO tells AIZEN that he has no interest in the hōgyoku, nor in AIZEN's crimes. He simply wants to ask about "the outside". AIZEN asks why, — "You can see through all of Seireitei, even while being in Muken. You're a man on who even my Kyōka Suigetsu's illusions will likely not work. What could I possibly tell you?" AZASHIRO remains silent, but the women laugh, saying it took AZASHIRO two days to see through Kyōka Suigetsu's illusion. He had muttered, "something is strange", the entire time. He silences her again. He says he wants to know about outside of Seireitei. And he also wants to ask about AIZEN's defeat. He hadn't expected him to lose against Ichigo KUROSAKI. The woman interrupts again. She says AZASHIRO had predicted AIZEN would be stopped by the Zero Squad. But it never even got to that point. Is he embarrassed he got it wrong?

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summary translated by tenshiscave & edited by tari101190

— "My defeat? If I look back on how disordered my heart was back then, I can say that defeat was a meaningful experience. You should experience it once." AZASHIRO disagrees with AIZEN's words. He sees no merit in experiencing defeat. But they will discuss it no further since he has no interest in meaningless chatter. AIZEN says he'll answer AZASHIRO's questions. AZASHIRO thanks him. After all, this serves no merit to AIZEN. AIZEN disagrees, — "On the contrary, predicting your actions and its outcome based on your questions will serve as a nice way to kill time." Having gotten answers to all his questions, AZASHIRO disappears by melting into the air. In the same way the masked woman and the Szayelaporro-lookalike had done. AIZEN closes his eyes with a faint smile on his face, imagining the outcome of AZASHIRO's actions. The Muken returns to being a place of absolute darkness once again.

Chapter #7 (p151-171) — Half a day later, morning | Karakura Town

Don is standing in front of the Kurosaki's home. Don was planning to look for the masked woman with his number-#1-pupil, Ichigo KUROSAKI. However, Yuzu tells him that her big brother is currently at his part-time job. Don doesn't know that Ichigo has lost his powers. He can't sense him anymore, true, but he assumes that Ichigo learned to mask his presence. He asks if Yuzu's father, Isshin, is home. He wants to ask Isshin's opinion about his new outfit. But, alas, Isshin is also gone — he's at a paediatrics conference. Yuzu assures Don he looks great, though.

— 10 minutes later | In front of URAHARA Shop

Don has a secret identity. He's Karakura Gold, the leader of the Karakura Defence Force — an organisation which fights hollows. He had planned to take two of its members, Ururu TSUMUGIYA and Jinta HANAKARI, with him in his quest to find the masked woman. However, the duo must watch the shop, because its owner is out. Jinta tells Don to hand the position of Gold to him. Don ignores him, dubs himself "Gold the Eternal" and agrees they should continue to watch the shop. Jinta gets angry at how Don slipped in the "the eternal" part, but Tessai catches him in a headlock before he can do anything else. Meanwhile, Don is impressed with Tessai's "fantastic hairstyle".

— Several minutes later | On the road

Don is driving in his car, Jeanne d'Arc. Yuzu gave him the phone number of Ichigo's part-time job, Unagiya. Don decides to order a meal. That way he can see Ichigo without actually bothering him at work. He calls the number and orders eel, but gets yelled at, "We're Unagiya, not unagiya!" Don is understandably confused. Don isn't good at fighting. He's powerless compared to a captain-class soul reaper. He can't use

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kidō, and he doesn't have various skills like a quincy. But he does excel at one thing. When ISHIDA first challenged Ichigo and caused a large increase in the number of hollows, Don was 30 kilometres away, shooting a program. Even so, even at that distance, he had been able to sense the increase in hollows. Before meeting Ichigo, Don didn't know that his methods to help spirits accelerated hollow- fication. Nowadays he tried to free spirits of any lingering regrets through conversation. Viewers had been surprised by the change, but the program could continue to run because its core — the ability to sense spirits — had stayed the same.

— Karakura Town, Mashiba Area, Sunflower Sewing Shop

The quincy Uryū ISHIDA is on the phone with Inoue, using the pay phone outside of Sunflower Sewing. Both had sensed the Picarro last night. They decide not to inform Ichigo, it would just upset him. And they haven't seen Chan around — he's frequently out of town lately. ISHIDA reassures Inoue that she should go and cheer on Tatsuki at her championships (they're being held in another town). He'll handle things here. ISHIDA had also sensed the masked woman time and time again for over a year, but she'd always be gone before he could get to her. Ichigo must've heard rumours about the masked woman, but he never asked, and ISHIDA, Inoue and Chan never brought it up. He felt frustrated at how Ichigo pretended not to care. ISHIDA knew what it's like to lose your powers. It had happened to him. His father had helped him get his powers back, but it seemed that that method didn't work on soul reaper. Heading towards the shop, ISHIDA passes a poster promoting Don KANONJI's show. As far as ISHIDA had seen during the public recordings, Don could indeed see spirits, but his exorcism methods have been all wrong. He takes one last glance at the poster and mutters, — "His fashion sense is pretty good, but... his colours lack uniformity. He should focus on cold colours."

— Several hours later

Don has driven all over Karakura Town in search of the masked woman. He "feels" something. It feels like a thread of spiderweb touching his skin. These threads are laid out all over the city. The sensation grows stronger as he drives in direction of Tsubakidai. That must be where the web's centre lies. He doesn't know whether these threads are harmful or not. And, as a hero, it's his duty to find out. The hero steps out of his car, having reached his destination: Matsukura Hospital. It's abandoned and no longer in use. This is where he first met Ichigo and learnt just how mistaken his exorcism methods had been. It was an important place to Don. He could sense that this abandoned building was the web's centre. From here, threads stretched out into town. With his beloved stick in hand, Don approaches the building. He briefly

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remembers the mysterious man who had attacked Ichigo's friends a year ago (AIZEN). He didn't feel such a life-threatening sense of danger as he had back then, but he did sense something mysterious on the hospital's roof. And although he was nervous, he would never flee.

He looked up to the roof. He didn't see a monster or gigantic spider as he had feared, no, he saw a young lady with a skull covering half her face and a lonely look in her eyes. She was looking out over the town. She surprised him. She indeed had the air of a hollow, yet she could also be seen by normal humans. She seemed to own a nature of both Spiritual-matter and World of the Living matter. Nevertheless, Don struck his signature pose and shouted, "Spirits are always with you!" The lady — she looked somewhere between late teens and twenty years old — looked at him in surprise. Don approached her and said, — "Beautiful lady, rest assure, I am your ally. Please tell me, Don KANONJI, the reason behind your sad eyes." And so, the hero stepped into the girl's life, and — unbeknownst to himself — threw himself into danger.

Chapter #8 (p172-238) — Soul Society, Seireitei's shopping district, in front of the Silver Dragonfly Glasses

Half a day had passed since the arrancar attack. All the arrancars were gone now. The danger level had been lowered in all areas except near the Technological Development Bureau. Even so, the general populace was encouraged to stay inside. The shopping district felt deserted. There was hardly anyone outside and most shops were closed. However, the glasses shop Silver Dragonfly is open for business. It's run by SHIROGANE Ginjirō, the former 6th Squad Vice Captain. Mareyo ÔMAEDA — the youngest child of the ÔMAEDA nobles — enters the shop. Ginjirō warns her that she shouldn't be outside. She apologises, but says she really wanted to collect her order: a pair of glasses for her brother, Marejirōsabū. They exchange small talk. It seems Marejirōsabū has been invited to join the Technological Development Bureau. Many members of the ÔMAEDA family enter the Covert Operations, but Mareyo hopes to enter the 4th Squad someday. The glasses are a birthday gift. But it seems that Mihane — Ginjirō's granddaughter who works part time in the shop while also working as the 6th Squad's 9th Seat — forgot to refill the gift paper. He goes to the back of the store to find some more. He tells Mareyo to sit inside in case the intruder reappears. After a minute or so, Mareyo sees a white shadow. Briefly, she's afraid it's the intruder, but she's reassured as she catches the glimpse of a robe. However, she didn't know. She didn't know that the man wearing this robe wasn't one of the 13 Court Guard Squad's current captains. Nor did she know he was supposed to be locked up in the Mūken. The man approaches the counter. He places a cloth bag on the counter. It has money inside it, judging by the sound. He calls out to her, — "You're... Mareyo ÔMAEDA. Out

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of the good-for-nothing ÔMAEDA Family, you're the best one. You should leave that house right away if you do not wish to waste the rest of your life."

— Several minutes later | Somewhere in Seireitei

The vice-captain of the 2nd Squad, Marechiyo ÔMAEDA, is chewing on some rice crackers while whining about having to stay up all night. He's also the commander of the Patrol Corps of the Covert Operations. He will not be able to take a break until the danger level has gone down completely. He gets a call that his little sister is in the shopping district. Furthermore, she seems to be arguing with "a man wearing the robe of the 11th Squad" in front of the Silver Dragonfly. He rushes to the scene, under the mistaken assumption that little sister has gotten into a fight with ZARAKI of all people.

— In front of the Silver Dragonfly

AZASHIRO calmly left the store after his blunt remark to Mareyo. She followed him outside, assuming the man must have some misunderstanding with her family. AZASHIRO says he's never been directly wronged by her family, but they are a waste of space as nobles. They exchange some more words, but AZASHIRO has no interest in any further useless chatter. Marechiyo arrives, notices that the man is not ZARAKI, and tells him that falsely wearing a robe is a grave crime. AZASHIRO says he knows this, calling Marechiyo by his full name. When AZASHIRO moves to leave, the enraged Marechiyo tries to grab him, but he's suddenly lifted into air and thrown to the ground again. It's as if some invisible force had grabbed him. AZASHIRO hadn't moved, but his words made it clear that it had been his doing, — "I don't like pointless fighting. I hope this was enough to make you understand to the difference between our powers."

Marechiyo stifles his fear and gets back up. He draws his sword and tells Mareyo to run. Suddenly they hear another voice, ("bakudô #63!). Ginjirô immobilises AZASHIRO with a spell. Then, another man appears. Mareyo and Marechiyo's father: Marenoshin ÔMAEDA. He throws the binding spell bakudô #75 at AZASHIRO. Five pillars of light surround the criminal. Ginjirô throws another spell, bakudô #61 and Marenoshin finishes it off with bakudô #81, Dankû. Mareyo and Marechiyo are impressed with this serious side of their father, which they hardly ever see. It seems Marenoshin was warned by his subordinates about the situation. Both Marenoshin and Ginjirô are no longer soul reaper. Their names have been removed from the 13 Court Guard Squad's register at request. They had to hand back their zanpakutô at retirement, but they were former vice-captains. They weren't powerless in the least.

AZASHIRO asks them why they are doing this. Marenoshin tells him not to play dumb. He used to be in the Covert Operations, you know. — "You're a man who still has over

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summary translated by tenshiscave & edited by tari101190

19.000 years left in the Muken. I have no other choice but to do this when I hear word that a man like you is talking to my precious daughter." Marechiyo realises what his father's words mean. The man before him is a Muken escapee? A place that's even harder to escape from than Hell itself. Who in the world is he? AZASHIRO sighs. — "It seems I didn't explain my question well enough..." The 4 layers of bakudô melt into the air in an instant. — "I asked why you attacked me... while knowing that your attacks won't work on me."

— Somewhere in West Rukongai

One of the Picarro is surprised to see two large arms growing out of the ground. They're holding up a banner saying "SHIBA Kûkaku". — "What's that!? It's so cool!" Fascinated by the SHIBA's unique style, the Picarro walks around for a bit. Then he hears a voice behind him — Yoruichi SHIHÔIN. She's amused that an arrancar likes the SHIBA's style. The Picarro asks Yoruichi if she wants to play. Yoruichi says she doesn't mind playing tag with him. On one condition: She'll do the chasing. Then the Picarro senses another presence near him and...

— In front of the Silver Dragonfly

The laughing woman in the white kimono appears behind AZASHIRO again. She asks him why he — someone who hates wasting time on chatter — spent time talking to the girl. Is she his type? I know! It's because this sheltered little girl reminds you of "her", doesn't it? Are you worried this girl will end up the same way "she" did? AZASHIRO tells her to be quiet, again. He addresses Ginjirô and says he left money on the counter to pay the consolation money which he still owed his family 250 years ago, with interest. Please take it. Ginjirô knits his brows, it seems he understands what AZASHIRO is referring to. AZASHIRO leaves, melting into the air.

Then another person arrives on the scene, yelling at Marechiyo for leaving his post — Suî-FÊNG, captain of the 2nd Squad and commander-in-chief of the Covert Operations. However, Marechiyo's father scolds Suî-FÊNG instead (he used to be her superior). Does she, the commander-in-chief, not know what just happened? Kenpachi AZASHIRO was here! How could she, and her Supervision Corps, not have noticed his escape!? Has she been sleeping on the job since Yoruichi's return!? While Marechiyo thinks Suî-FÊNG will probably take her anger out on him later for his father's tirade, Suî-FÊNG contacts the Supervision Corps to confirm whether AZASHIRO really has escaped. Marechiyo tries to calm his father by praising him, "You were amazing, father! I wouldn't be able to throw spells like that!" But his plan backfires. His father now starts criticising Suî-FÊNG for not teaching his son bakudô properly. Suî-FÊNG

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admits her mistake and bows her head. This calms his father down. He tells her to train his son vigorously. Much to his lazy son's dismay.

The father picks up his daughter, says he'll report their experiences to the 1st Squad, and leaves. Ginjirō goes back to his shop. Left alone, Marechiyo drops to his knees and begs for his captain's forgiveness for his father's tirade. Suī-FÊNG tells him this isn't the time for such things. Marechiyo asks if AZASHIRO is really that strong. Suī-FÊNG says the AZASHIRO incident happened before even Yoruichi was captain. He committed a grave crime and all captain-level staff moved into action to arrest him. However... the Court Guards failed to capture him with their own hands. They couldn't even scratch him.

— 30 minutes later | 1st Squad Barracks

All captains, aside from UKITAKE (sick), ZARAKI and Mayuri, have gathered before Commander YAMAMOTO. Suī-FÊNG reports the situation: Kenpachi AZASHIRO has escaped the Muken. The other prisoners are still in captivity. Five captains reacted to AZASHIRO's name: Retsu UNOHANA, Shunsui KYÔRAKU, and the newly reinstated Shinji HIRAKO, Rôjûrô ÔTORIBASHI (Rose) and Kensei MUGURUMA. AZASHIRO was captured before HIRAKO was captain. Rose adds it happened over 200 years ago. And Kensei interjects they were still merely Seated Officers back then. UNOHANA whispers that she didn't expect to hear that name again so soon. And KYÔRAKU thinks back to the arrancar girl he saw earlier. Is she connected to this? Tōshirō HITSUGAYA says he never heard of him. Kenpachi? Is that a joke or a coincidence? Byakuya KUCHIKI says that the previous Kenpachi loses his title to the next Kenpachi when killed in battle, but he heard there was an exception. YAMAMOTO confirms that AZASHIRO is the exception.

AZASHIRO became the 8th Kenpachi after killing the 7th Kenpachi, KURUYASHIKI, in battle. But AZASHIRO was sent to Muken, undefeated. And the title of 9th Kenpachi was appointed to the vice-captain of the 11th Squad at the time. KYÔRAKU explains that the 9th Kenpachi was killed by KIGANJÔ, a strong warrior from the Rukongai. And ZARAKI is the one who killed KIGANJÔ, thereby becoming the current Kenpachi. KYÔRAKU explains they've never even seen AZASHIRO's zanpakutô. They knew he had one, but they couldn't see it. Sajin KOMAMURA asks if it was an illusion-type zanpakutô, like AIZEN's Kyôka Suigetsu. KYÔRAKU admits that that possibility exists, but when questioned by Central 46 during his arrival, AZASHIRO had said that "he was already showing it". HITSUGAYA is surprised Central 46 let this slide. KYÔRAKU says that the "Kenpachi" is a special case. The 10th Kenpachi, KIGANJÔ, hardly ever listened to Central 46 too. — "Well, in other words, you could say that the "Kenpachi" is a

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summary translated by tenshiscave & edited by tari101190

privileged class in Seireitei. ...Now that I think about it, AZASHIRO-kun may have decided to become Kenpachi with that in mind."

— At the same time | Somewhere in Seireitei, the ruins of an execution site

Yumichika AYASEGAWA is in a bad mood. That's because this place reminds him of his defeat against Ganju SHIBA. The old execution site is a large and deep hole. With walls of Sekkiseki and the top sealed with Soul Warding Membrane. It had been a large prison. There were two large doors at the bottom. One to release criminals into the hole, and one to release hollows. Fighting to the death as form of spectacle. One of Soul Society's dark sides. It was no longer in use, but many soul reaper and nobles had fallen prey to hollows in it. When Yumichika and Ikkaku had returned from the Rukongai, they had sensed a suspicious spirit-ribbons. It was from a soul reaper, but it was something they had never felt before. It felt ominous. The spirit-ribbons split in two halfway, into different directions. Yumichika and Ikkaku had split up and Yumichika ended up in this place. The spirit-ribbons had been cut off. It had probably hit the Soul Warding Membrane halfway down the hole and vaporised.

Suddenly Yumichika hears the voice of a young man, asking when they'll fill up the hole. It's a waste of space, really. The man tells Yumichika he could've win his fight against Ganju SHIBA. He talks about the fight as if he had seen it himself. But that's not what angers Yumichika most, no, the man was wearing the robe of the 11th Squad. The robe that only ZARAKI could wear in his eyes. AZASHIRO says ZARAKI doesn't deserve the name "Kenpachi". He never cut down a real Kenpachi, after all. And he lost to Ichigo KUROSAKI before the boy had even mastered his bankai. Those are the facts. Insulted on his captain's behalf, Yumichika releases Fuji Kujaku and attacks AZASHIRO. But it fails. Then his foot sinks into the stone pavement. An illusion? He can't get it out. Then his sleeves wrap around him like a snake, immobilising him. The grip on his zanpakutô weakens. What's happening? As if pulled on by an invisible thread, his zanpakutô moves in midair and eventually lands in AZASHIRO's hand. It returns to its pre-shikai state. AZASHIRO asks Yumichika why he continues to hide Ruri'iro Kujaku's true nature from his allies. Fuji Kujaku absorbs its opponent's spiritual-energy. The 11th Squad tends to look down on kidô-based zanpakutô. That's why Yumichika refused to use its power in public, even at cost of his own life.

— "ZARAKI and MADARAME Ikkaku don't seem like the kind of men who would hold you in contempt merely for using a kidô-type zanpakutô, though?" AZASHIRO didn't utter those words to anger Yumichika. It was purely a question. Yumichika answers that even if those two wouldn't mind, he himself would not be able to forgive himself for bringing shame to the 11th Squad's name. AZASHIRO assures him that he will not

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expose his secret. However, he will borrow Fuji Kujaku for a little while. Yumichika objects, of course, but he can't move.

AZASHIRO sighs and turns his heel, ready to walk away. But the woman reappears before him, laughing as always. She says that for someone who dislikes pointless chatter, he sure does it often. Lingering attachment? You did work properly as a captain the first year, after all. Did you think that that would make them agree with your ideas? No way! Kihahaha. Maybe if you had cut down KURUYASHIKI with a sword fair and square. But you used a sneak attack in their eyes. AZASHIRO irritably answers that this is the 3245th time she's told him this. It makes perfect sense for him to have done his work as captain properly. After all, the extermination of hollows is his wish. She's amused he actually bothered to keep the score. He tells her to disappear. Then Yumichika, still immobilised, speaks, "...Can I ask one thing? Who are you talking to?"

— 1st Squad Barracks

Marenoshin ŌMAEDA finishes his report to YAMAMOTO. But then he remembers one last thing: AZASHIRO had turned to a direction where nobody was standing, and had said "be silent"...

— The ruins of the execution site

AZASHIRO tells Yumichika that he was simply talking to himself, something like that. Yumichika asks him why he won't finish him off. AZASHIRO says there's no need; soul reapers exist to exterminate hollows, to guide spirits and to maintain the balance between Soul Society and the World of the Living. There's no need for bloodshed amongst themselves. He says he'll return Fuji Kujaku once he's done with it and disappears once again.

— 1st Squad Barracks

From a corner of the room, Yoruichi suddenly speaks, — "Kenpachi AZASHIRO was talking to Urozakuro." YAMAMOTO says he doesn't recall summoning her, but she might as well stay if she's here. Yoruichi says she had wanted to come earlier, but she was busy playing tag. Suì-FĒNG asks who or what Urozakuro is. Yoruichi answers it's the name of AZASHIRO's zanpakutō. YAMAMOTO asks her why she knows this. Yoruichi answers that she heard it from Urozakuro herself.

— One hundred years + several decades ago | Soukyoku Hill, underground training grounds

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summary translated by tenshiscave & edited by tari101190

URAHARA shows his new Divine Transfer Body doll to Yoruichi. It's a human-shaped doll that can materialise a zanpakutô when stabbed with said zanpakutô — a training tool. His current model can only do it for 30 minutes, but the finished one should last 3 days. URAHARA is about to test it out with his own Benihime, but the doll starts to change before he has even drawn his zanpakutô. It turns into a lively woman, whose eyes are covered by a leather obi. She laughs, "Kihahaha! I wanted to see you, Kisuke-chan! Did you miss me? Or were you too busy with Yoruichi-san, forgetting me?! Kihahaha!" But URAHARA doesn't know her. She introduces herself, she's Urozakuro. They've never met before, but she knows everything about them. Kihahaha! Yoruichi wasn't captain yet at this point in time, but she was part of the Covert Operations. And she couldn't ignore Urozakuro's next words, — "I'm the zanpakutô of Kenpachi AZASHIRO, who is currently in the Muken. Nice to meet you!"

— Present time, 1st Squad Barracks

Yoruichi says they got on wonderfully for the remaining 30 minutes. Urozakuro had talked freely about her own abilities, saying she'd enjoy seeing her wielder fall into crisis. YAMAMOTO says he never heard about this before. Yoruichi answers she had reported it to the head of the Covert Operations, who in turn had reported it to Central 46. Central 46 had ordered to keep it quiet to prevent an outbreak of panic. She probably won't get in trouble for saying it now, though. The Central 46 sages from that time are all dead now — by AIZEN's hands or by illness and accident even before that. HITSUGAYA asks whether AZASHIRO's powers are really that great. Yoruichi answers he might make a good match versus AIZEN's Kyôka Suigetsu. In shock, Marechiyo yells, "Eh— Wha— He's on the same level as AIZEN!? Are you serious, Yoruichi-san!?" Suî-FÊNG promptly kicks him. Yoruichi explains AZASHIRO's powers. His internal world is constantly fused with the outside world. They couldn't see his zanpakutô, because he was always in bankai mode. His power is "the power to fuse with all of his surroundings and to control it." The air. The ground. Everything.

She had tried to determine his coordinates back when he had been a wanted man. But she could never pinpoint his location to something more specific than "he's in Seireitei". If he could fuse with the air itself, you could not cut him. Furthermore, it meant he could kill his opponents simply by expanding the air in their lungs. HITSUGAYA asks how far his range is. Yoruichi says she has already answered that question: His location couldn't be pinpointed to something more specific than "he's in Seireitei"... Marechiyo asks if that means he's already fused with all of Seireitei. Yoruichi explains that AZASHIRO can sense everything that happens in the space he's fused with as if it's happening inside him. In other words, he could even hear the conversation they were currently having. KOMAMURA says AZASHIRO should've been

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able to escape Muken earlier if that's true. Yoruichi answers that the Muken isn't that weak. It has countless seals to weaken the zanpakutô powers of its prisoners. If Urozakuro's words were true, AZASHIRO could see and hear everything in Seireitei, from inside the Muken, but he was weakened to the point that he couldn't control anything.

So how did he escape? Suî-FÊNG says it's because of the intruder attack on the Technological Development Bureau. When URAHARA was captain of the 12th Squad, part of the sealing mechanisms was transferred to the Bureau. Because it seemed safer to spread their locations out, rather than to control all seals in one spot. But this has now backfired. Normally, prisoners entered the Muken unarmed, separated from their zanpakutô. A slight weakening in the seals shouldn't allow them to escape. But AZASHIRO was different. He had always been in bankai mode. His zanpakutô had never been taken. The seal had weakened enough for him to be able to control the outside slightly. HIRAKO mentions one concern: AZASHIRO could use his powers to release AIZEN and the other Muken prisoners. Yoruichi assumes he won't. His aim isn't to cause destruction or chaos, — "Isn't that right, Kenpachi AZASHIRO?"

AZASHIRO slowly melts into the room. YAMAMOTO asks him how he, Sôya AZASHIRO, dare enter this room (purposely using AZASHIRO's real name). Then he asks, — "For you, who once linked himself to prison, to break out of prison. Tell us what you want." The Commander's sharp tone didn't seem to affect AZASHIRO in the slightest. AZASHIRO is surprised YAMAMOTO even bothers to ask him. In the past, YAMAMOTO would've tried to take him out on the spot. He says he respected YAMAMOTO for doing anything if it was in Soul Society's interest — even if that meant playing the villain's role. But Ichigo KUROSAKI has changed him. How unfortunate. YAMAMOTO has no interest in chatter. The other captain can feel the air in the room starting to sting as his spiritual-energy rises. AZASHIRO says his goal hasn't changed. He doesn't mean to bring harm to Soul Society. He simply wants to fulfil his mission as soul reaper, that's all.

— "As a foothold to the complete annihilation of hollows... I will first "deal with" the arrancar who has half its face covered with a skull. That's all." KYÔRAKU interjects that AZASHIRO's answer isn't exactly persuasive. And what is he planning to do with the arrancar's powers? (Having met her, KYÔRAKU was the only one who knew which arrancar AZASHIRO was referring to.) AZASHIRO confirms that it's true that the intruder attack accidentally helped him regain his powers, but he hasn't colluded with the intruder. Even so, if he can take in the girl's powers, it'll bring great benefit to Soul Society and the World of the Living. If possible, he wants to work together with her. YAMAMOTO asks what "benefit" he's referring to.

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summary translated by tenshiscave & edited by tari101190

— "The eradication of hollows and the mediation of spirits. I'll purify Hueco Mundo and I'll slightly alter the hearts of the people in the World of the Living. That's all. Resentment, greed, instinct — those obsessions destroy the chains of the Plus and they become the seeds that create hollows. I'll remove those, that's all. They also teach this in World of the Living studies: In the World of the Living, you have something called psychosurgery." Psychosurgery. Also known as lobotomy. A healing art where they remove parts of the brain to heal mental illness. It has many side-effects and is no longer in practice in the World of the Living. But AZASHIRO felt no problem raising it as example. AZASHIRO says he intends to do something similar. He'll improve part of the brains and spirits of humans in order to remove all those things which can lead to the birth of hollows. Eventually, no one will ever need to go to Hell again.

His words could easily be reworded to "remaking mankind." HIRAKO was the first to react, "Are you an idiot?" Even if he did, it would take forever. Does he know how many billions of people exist? But AZASHIRO counters that if he had the female hollow's powers, he could do it in one year. The blink of an eye in the life of a soul reaper. Although the captains didn't know the exact nature of this hollow's powers, they assumed — based on AZASHIRO's words — that her powers would increase AZASHIRO's "fusion" power immensely. HITSUGAYA says it's ironic for AZASHIRO to borrow a hollow's power even though he hates them. AZASHIRO corrects him. He doesn't hate hollows. He just sees them as beings that need to be purified. YAMAMOTO says Soul Society and the World of the Living are two sides of the same coin. AZASHIRO's plan lacks respect towards the World of the Living. It also lacks respect towards the justice that his predecessors in Soul Society have built up. AZASHIRO counters that respect is a pointless burden. — "The soul reaper should merely be a gear that keeps the world spinning, nothing more. Including me." Then, noticing that his explanation has been a waste of time, considering everyone disagrees with him, AZASHIRO heaves a sigh and disappears again, fusing into the air.

Chapter #9 (p239-257) — 1 hour ago | Karakura Town, Tsubakidai, Matsukura Hospital site

Why am I alive? This thought was on the mind of the masked female arrancar, Roca PARAMIA, as she stood on the roof of an abandoned hospital. Her master, Szayelaporro, had told her, "Don't think you have any will of your own. When you aren't useful to me, you are the same as those roca (rocks) over there. ...Ah, that's the perfect name for you." That's how he had named her — a spider-type adjuchas — right before AIZEN had turned her into an arrancar. She was a tool and yet she had a "self". Why was she alive? Roca was the result of Szayelaporro's experiment in which

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he intertwined countless souls together and artificially created a *menos grande*. Her life was supposed to end as foil against Kenpachi KURUYASHIKI, but he had spared her. She figured Szayelaporro would end her life anyway. She felt relieved. This meant she would no longer have to think about her own existence. But Szayelaporro had gotten a new idea after watching KURUYASHIKI's death. He would continue to experiment on her for another 200 years. Her body would be chopped up endlessly. He eventually gave her anaesthesia when he grew tired of her screams.

In the end, she got a new power. The power to connect with all matter via her *negación* threads, and to share spiritual-energy and information. She felt happy to be useful to her master. But it didn't last long. After Szayelaporro perfected his own ability, Gabriel, he no longer had any interest in Roka. She had once again lost her reason of existence. In the end she did chores and worked as nurse for the other *arrancars* as Szayelaporro's *fracción*. She had met all the other *Espada*, but none of them had needed her either. When she worked as nurse for Yammy, he smashed her head in. She should've died. By becoming an *arrancar*, she had lost the hollow ability of High-Speed Regeneration. But what laid at the heart of her ability was "Backup" — external storage. Duplicating her own soul and memories, she could pull those from her body whenever something happened to revive herself. As part of his research on immortality, Szayelaporro had connected himself to her "threads", constantly backing up his memories inside her. Or, to be more exact, he had dispersed information to all matter in Hueco Mundo (stones, quartz trees etc.) via her body. But then he achieved Gabriel. He didn't need her backups anymore to resurrect himself. Even so, he didn't kill her. He let her exist as some handy memo pad.

Through countless experiments, Roka had threaded her soul with a large part of Hueco Mundo. When she was about to die from getting her head smashed in, the information she had dispersed in the stones, quartz trees and the palace's walls regurgitated via her threads, regenerating her body, soul and memories. After a long time, her broken body was reconstructed. And she knew. While she had been busy being put back together, AIZEN had left Hueco Mundo and Szayelaporro had been killed by a soul reaper. Without any purpose, she wandered and wandered. She also visited Karakura Town, the town which her master and AIZEN had often monitored. But she found no purpose there either. Her *negación* threads connected with everything around her, automatically. That's why she'd frequently join her soul with the matter of the World of the Living, becoming faintly visible even to humans without *reikan*. She was empty. So empty. And then she heard her master's voice, — "Can you hear me, fool?"

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summary translated by tenshiscave & edited by tari101190

She didn't know that her negación threads had kept sending information about Hueco Mundo into her while she was restoring herself. And so, she had continued spinning thread, creating her master's persona in her giant network of stored information. The voice talked about needing a new body. But he wanted a suitable body. And so she returned to being Szayelaporro's tool. Freedom meant nothing to her anyway. She wanted purpose. Back to the present: A hero has appeared before her. She could run, but this man wasn't a soul reaper, quincy or hollow — the things Szayelaporro had told her run away from. She didn't move. She didn't talk either. But the man grabbed her hand and said, — "Beautiful lady, rest assure, I am your ally. Please tell me, Don KANONJI, the reason behind your sad eyes."

Chapter #10 (p258-278) — Soul Society, Technological Development Bureau

— "Look, look!" Torue, a female Technological Development Bureau member, shows her price in her arms to the others: one of the Picarro. She had captured it while playing tag with Yoruichi and Kūkaku. It was asleep, under anaesthesia. — "Wait a minute!!" Kon appears from under some rumble, complaining about the difference in treatment. Why wasn't he captured via Torue's "sweet" trap? He throws himself at her, but she sends him flying. Torue asks Akon where Mayuri is. Apparently, he's on minor business (he took Nemu with him). They couldn't contact him about the captain meeting because there are no communication lines where he's heading.

— Somewhere inside the Garganta

Hollows use the Garganta as a pathway. And the Szayelaporro-lookalike, who has created "a room" in that space, is staring at the corpse of Szayelaporro GRANZ with a frown. Why can't he merge with it? Did Mayuri alter his corpse in some way? He grabs a scalpel, ready to dissect his own corpse, when Mayuri and Nemu appear behind him. Mayuri tells him it's not nice to mangle other people's experiments. In turn, the intruder praises Mayuri for having found him here in the Garganta. — "By the way, who are you?" Mayuri's question annoys him. Who is he? He's Szayelaporro GRANZ! His nemesis sighs and changes the question, — "Well then, what are you?" Is he joking? Or had he already forgotten Szayelaporro's name? — "Hundred years. After administering the superhuman drug to Szayelaporro GRANZ, at least a hundred years should've passed inside him before being penetrated by my blade. Did you experience that passage of time?" What?

— "I took a tiny part of your spiritual-matter from your soul. I've already confirmed that your soul has passed the gates of Hell." Mayuri asks him if he escaped from Hell. If so, then he'd like to know more. The intruder is in shock. It feels as if he can see a row

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of locked doors in the back of his brain. This can't be... — "It seems my guess was correct. Tell me, when did you first start thinking you were Szayelaporro GRANZ?" This can't be true! The intruder tries to flee via the "threads", but Mayuri tells him he already cut the intruder off from the negación threads before entering the room. Mayuri tells him he could still run by foot, though. Mayuri won't give chase — he's not interested in him anymore, knowing that his guess was correct. — "You're not Szayelaporro GRANZ. You're just... a lump of spiritual-matter of incompletely duplicated memories and information. You're just a computer virus in the masked woman's web." Yes, that masked woman, that's who Mayuri is interested in now. The intruder is insulted. He's below his own tool!? He's below Roca!? ("Oh, that's her name? I'll write that on her name tag later.")

The intruder falls silent, thinks and then... accepts the facts. And when he does, a certain "chain" inside him is released. His spiritual-pressure swells up. Mayuri turns to him, but the intruder is already gone. Leaving a giant hole in the room. Mayuri orders Nemu to measure the residual spiritual-pressure. The results interest him. The figure exceeds the spiritual-pressure of Yammy LLARGO — the strongest Espada with the number #0.

— Somewhere in the Rukongai

The Picarro are missing one member. They can't sense him. They guess that means he's inside Seireitei. Should they save him? The opinions are divided. They need to hurry up or they'll lose to Don! Although they now consist out of more than a hundred children, the Picarro used to be one adjuchas. Long ago, there was a human community. All the caretakers had died and only the children had been left. Those children eventually died by starvation and became earth-bound spirits. No soul reaper appeared to send them to Soul Society. And so, they eventually turned into hollows. They started eating each other, and one hollow was left victorious. Having filled his empty stomach, some of his reason returned and he realised what he had done. The hollow wandered Hueco Mundo and the World of the Living, in search for the friends he had eaten. He eventually evolved into a menos, a gillian and then into a adjuchas. The adjuchas — having now regained intelligence to a degree — would look for other earth-bound spirits of children. He'd propose to become friends. And after they had turned into hollows, he'd feed them with part of his own body, believing there would be no more fighting as long as their empty stomachs were filled. Eventually these hollows also evolved into gillians and then into adjuchas, possessing the same power as him.

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summary translated by tenshiscave & edited by tari101190

And after becoming Szayelaporro's experiment subjects, they were named the Picarro — a group of children-type hollows. The wish of "wanting friends" had been granted. The Garganta opens above the Picarro and the Szayelaporro-lookalike appears. They greet him as Szayelaporro. They realise he was the spiritual-pressure they had sensed when they met Roca in Hueco Mundo earlier. The Szayelaporro-lookalike asks if half of the Picarro will play a game with him. They agree. What will they play? King's game? Treasure hunt? The man says they'll indeed look for a treasure. And they'll use that treasure to create a king. Once that's done, they'll look for Roca PARAMIA. He gives a sinister smile. The unrest which he had felt during his meeting with Mayuri is long gone. The Picarro don't notice how the #8 on the man's body fades. And how the number #100 appears on his left eyeball.

Epilogue (p279-291) — 11th Squad Barracks

The 11th Squad. The squad most specialised in battle. In the past, when Kenpachi KURUYASHIKI was captain, the Squad was seen as a group of brilliant military men and women. After Kenpachi KIGANJŌ came on, the Squad got its image as a bunch of crude bandits. Nowadays there were hardly any women in their ranks, aside from vice-captain Yachiru KUSAJISHIA. Yumichika has lost his zanpakutō. But rather than looking down on him, his fellow squad members were merely interested in the strong man who had managed to beat their 5th Seat. Yumichika and Ikkaku exchange some words. Ikkaku understands Yumichika's frustration. Just remembering how Ichigo once healed his wounds during their fight still ticks him off. Why did AZASHIRO steal Fuji Kujaku? Yumichika thinks it might have to do with Fuji Kujaku's abilities. But he can't share this guess. After all, he's hiding the truth behind Fuji Kujaku's powers. But he's worried. Very worried. Outside the barracks, they hear the faint sound of bells ringing. It draws closer and Kenpachi ZARAKI enters the barracks.

ZARAKI asks Yumichika about his fight with the Muken escapee. Yumichika says that technically it wasn't really a fight — they didn't even cross swords. Yumichika tries to explain something about AZASHIRO's abilities, but Ikkaku stops him, telling him not to pull a face like he's about to die. ZARAKI follows this up by stating that he doesn't want to know his opponent's weakness. That'd be boring. Yumichika realises he was worried for nothing. These men want to enjoy battle. That's all. And ZARAKI just wants to know one thing, "Is he strong?" He smiles when Yumichika answers yes. The Commander has ordered him to go to Karakura Town to find a female arrancar with a skull on her face. ZARAKI doesn't really understand why, but... the Commander told him he could fight to the death with this AZASHIRO guy once he did. ~~ And so, three devils turn their eyes to Karakura Town. Kenpachi AZASHIRO, the Szayelaporro-

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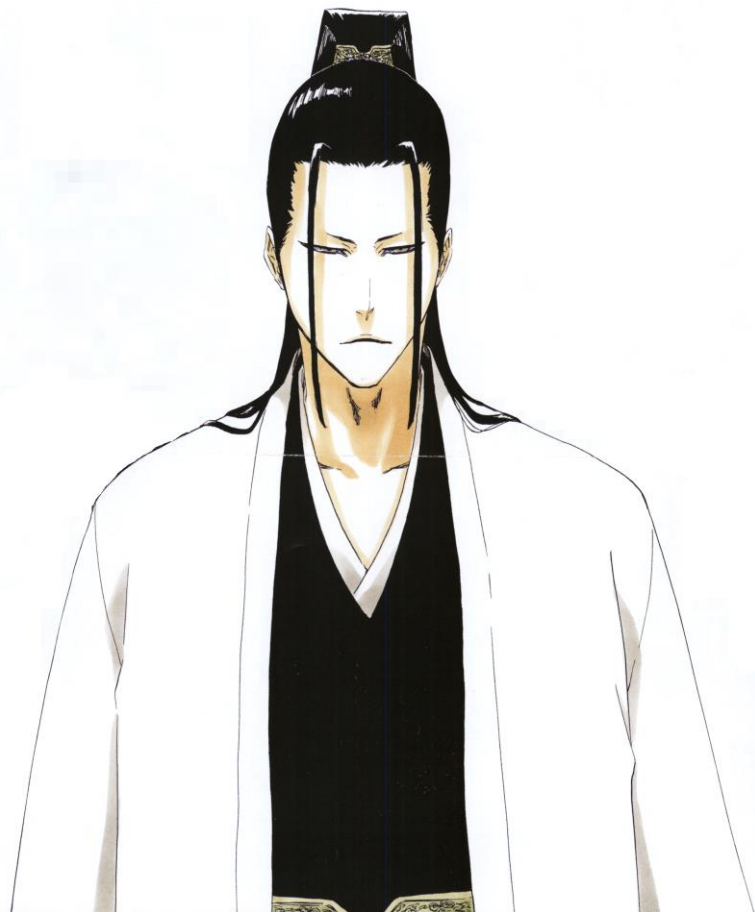
written by Ryōgo NARITA & Tite KUBO

lookalike and Kenpachi ZARAKI. To find one frail, masked, female arrancar. But she has a hero on her side.

END

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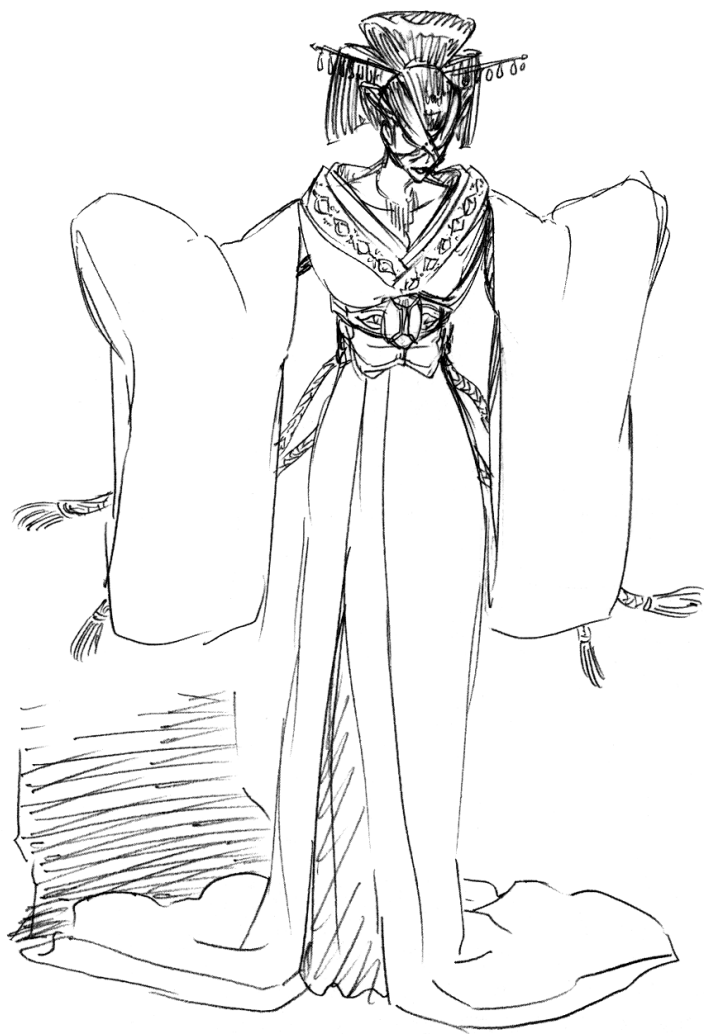
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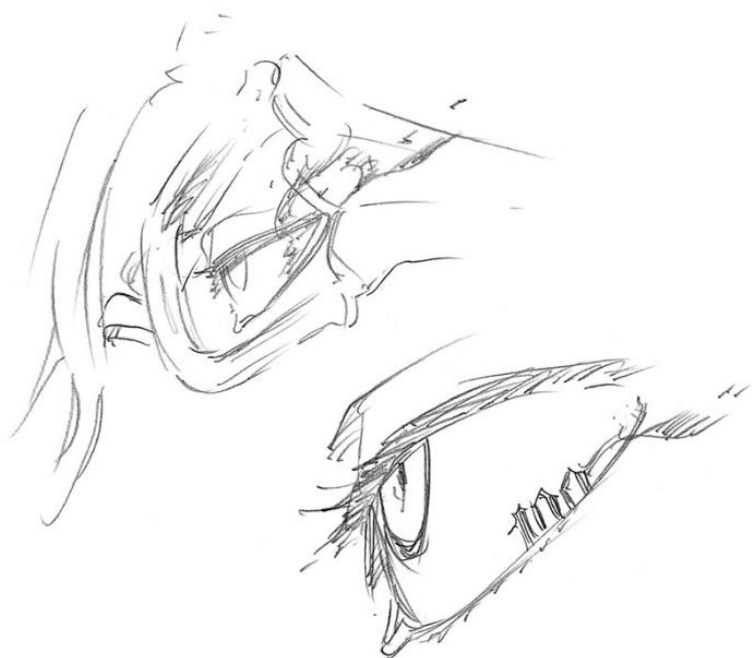
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YAMMY- YAMMY-
IT IS NIGHTTIME IN OUR WORLD AGAIN...



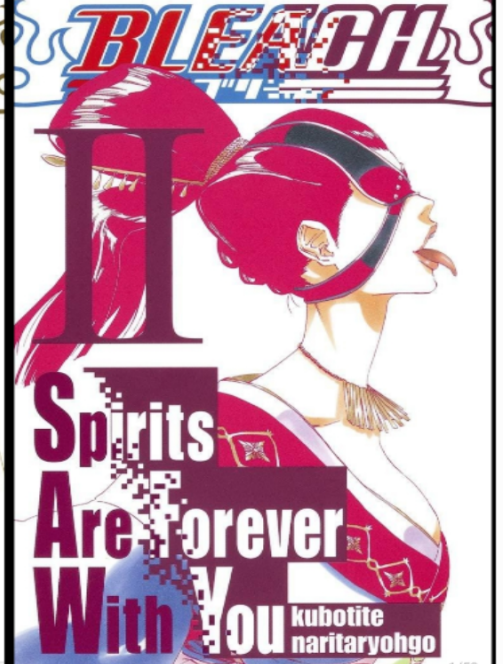
Nestle to Night
MAKOTO MATSUBARA × TITE KUBO

小説 JUMP J BOOKS



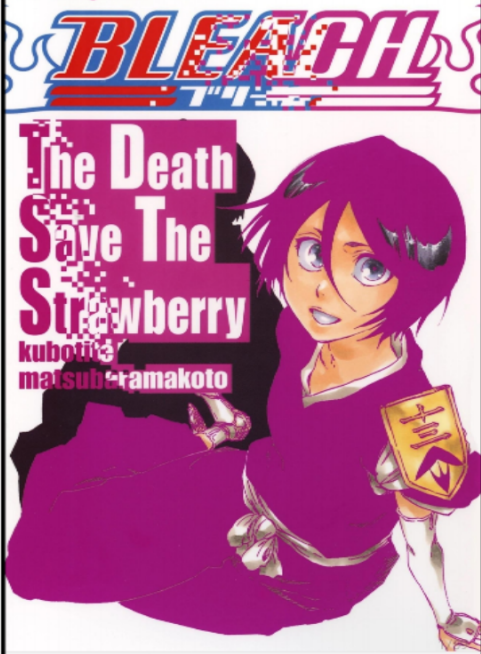
kubotite
naritaryohgo

小説 JUMP J BOOKS



kubotite
naritaryohgo

小説 JUMP J BOOKS



kubotite
matsubarakamakoto

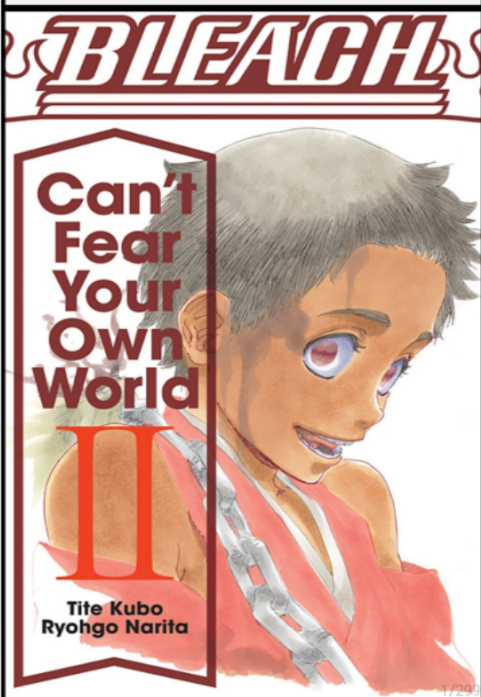
BLEACH

Beginning
of the revive
of Tomorrow

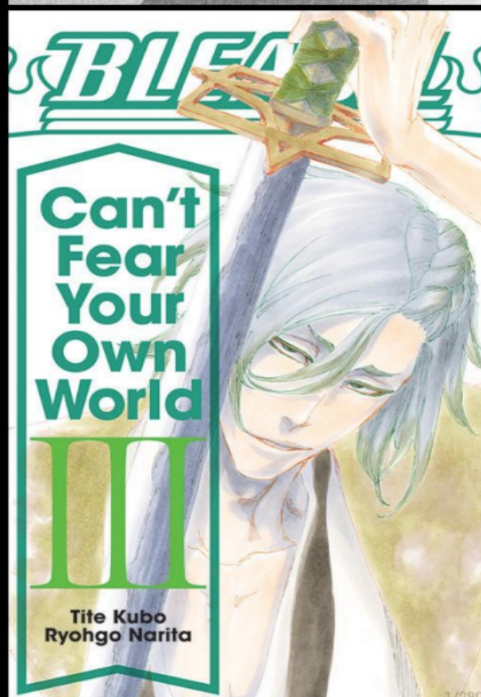
kubotite
naritaryohgo



Tite Kubo
Ryohgo Narita



Tite Kubo
Ryohgo Narita



Tite Kubo
Ryohgo Narita



kubotite matsubara makoto