

A close-up illustration of a character with spiky white hair and a white mask covering the lower half of their face. The character has a slight smile and is looking towards the viewer. The background is plain white.

**WE DO *knot***  
**ALWAYS**  
**LOVE YOU**

**BLEACH**

kubotite matsubara makoto

## **WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU**

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

3 years have passed since the invasion by the Wandenreich. Many lives were lost, the scars of battle are not yet healed. Those who survived are finally beginning on the path to recovery.

One day Rukia KUCHIKI and Renji ABARAI announced to everyone that they will have their names entered into a family register\* (\*i.e. registration of marriage)...

A story about new bonds born from the end of the battle which were not drawn in the original story.

3 years have passed since the invasion of the Seireitei by the Wandenreich.

Normality finally returned to the soul society which was in extreme turmoil.

### **Prologue**

Squad 1 Barracks - Captains' Assembly Hall

"Then, I hereby declare this 13 Court Guard Squad's ordinary meeting of squad heads, officially open. Commander."

Prompted by the lieutenant of squad 1 - Nanao ISE, the captain of the same squad Shunsui KYÔRAKU gave a single nod of his head before moving forward.

"I'm sorry for bothering everyone when you're all so busy. It's only reports on the reconstruction efforts today so we should be finishing early."

He took an extensive look around the assembly hall where the captains and vice-captains of each squad were lined up in rows.

The recently reconstructed assembly hall looked as good as new and was filled with the aroma of fresh timber.

"Haa...the smell of wood is nice isn't it? Well then, Nanao-chan, I'll leave it to you!"

"Yes. Now then, the first order of business..."

Whilst turning over bulky documents, Nanao starts reporting on the situation surrounding the reconstruction efforts. As he listened to her voice, KYÔRAKU thought about the past three years.

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

The most significant damage suffered within the Seireitei was at the central 1st ward - more commonly known as "Spiritual Arts" - which included the squad 1 barracks and a great number of administrative facilities.

As a war time special exception, the lives of the people who evacuated were saved by opening the Pure Forest of Residential Towers, the enclave in which the Central 46 personally reside. However, what they saw when they returned to ground level after the war, was a whole surface of scorched earth exhausting the very limits of destruction. In the midst of all the shortages of both goods and manpower needed to rebuild structures, and whilst everyone was merely at a loss, it was Nayura AMAKADO, one among the Central 46, who was first to make advancements towards the reconstruction efforts.

Nayura became a sage by succeeding the position of her father who was murdered by Sôsuke AIZEN, she is still a young girl. She is also the head librarian of the Great Spirit Book Gallery where all events and information within Soul Society are accumulated under compulsion, she studies things like the Human World and soul reaper with a flexible attitude. Every day she searched for a solution, wondering what she could do to-change the current state of the old fashioned Central 46.

An opportunity for that arose with the assault on the Central 46 underground compound by the Sternritter. Half were killed, and even the ones that remained alive were wounded to varying degrees. Even if the body can heal, the fear from witnessing such atrocities cannot be dispelled, people resigned from their seats one after another, no longer were they able to expect work as a supreme judicial body like the pre-war central 46.

But in the face of those state of affairs, Nayura was optimistic that the time for-change was now. She scolded the disheartened sages, and in collaboration with KYÔRAKU, the Commander of the 13 Court Guard Squads, they were able to enact temporary laws in quick succession. This young soul was not afraid to progress forward and the sages who were inspired by that passion also started to-change little by little.

Following the war, Nayura first and foremost established a law which simplifies the procedure for obtaining a court travel permit. This court travel permit is a written document that must be presented to the gatekeeper of each Pure Soul Gate when entering the Seireitei from Rukongai. A court travel permit, which originally could not be obtained unless one went through a complicated process that requires several weeks, was made easily accessible, one only has to go through a simple procedure at the "special entry record management office" established in front of every gate.

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Consequently, it became easier for materials to be imported from outside the Seireitei, it was also made possible to welcome the people of Rukongai widely as a workforce. In addition, the special entry record management office, register fingerprints whilst simultaneously checking spiritual-energy, an invitation to the Spiritual Arts Academy, a training institute for soul reaper, is extended to those who have promising talent. The benefits given to Soul Society because of this law is unfathomable.

With natural resources and manpower all in place, the reconstruction efforts were proceeding rapidly.

“That concludes my report.”

Nanao bows down.” well!” KYÔRAKU says as he clutched both hands together in front of his chest.

“There’s another piece of good news today...now, please come out and tell us from your own mouths.”

Prompted by KYÔRAKU, with a nervous expression they walked out of the line.

It was 6th squad vice-captain Renji ABARAI and acting captain of the 13th squad Rukia KUCHIKI.

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### **The Report**

#### **1**

In order to produce a great number of talented persons who will go on to become soldiers of the 13 Court Guard Squads, Kidô Corps and the Covert Operations, the late Genryûsai Shigekuni YAMAMOTO established within Seireitei the Spiritual Arts Academy, a soul reaper training institute boasting a history of 2000 years.

In one block of that institute, the fourth-year students who had just finished their summer vacations were gathered in the large lecture hall which could feasibly accommodate all graduate students.

“You should all be aware that in the previous Protection of the Soul King Great War, the 13 Court Guard Squads lost approximately half its soldiers.”

Glancing over all who were present, the headmaster with a sturdy physique continues speak.

“It goes without saying, our Spiritual Arts Academy is a 6-year curriculum. However due to the soul reaper Apprentice program established the year before last, after the 4th years’ summer vacation, you will have belonged, as an apprentice, to each company of the 13 Court Guard Squads and acquired on site experience of soul reaper duties.”

The soul reaper Apprentice program is a new system created to maintain the 13 Court Guard Squads after it lapsed into a grave shortage of troops. The apprentice units study at the academy in the mornings while in the afternoons they are split into each squad and actually assist with duties. Prior to the advent of this system, students were assigned to each squad after graduation, in the first year they would follow around a senior officer as an apprentice and study the work of a soul reaper. On the other hand, the structure which allows one to complete that apprenticeship period while still an academy student, is this current soul reaper apprentice program.” Owing to a lack of manpower everywhere, work is being left undone! I hope we can replenish personnel as soon as possible! On this occasion, student or not, it shouldn’t matter!” faced with scenes of these sorrowful voices, the program was set up as a temporary measure only, but being able to observe their idols up close and personal increased their motivation and even the lessons became fun. Therefore, it seems the new program is highly praised among the students in question.

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“So today, we invited squad 3 vice-captain Izuru KIRA who is a graduate of the academy himself, in order to talk to us about the mental attitude one should have as a soul reaper!”

Hearing that, a burst of excitement was aroused among the students.

Captains and vice-captains in Soul Society are equivalent to first class celebrities of the Human World

“Well then vice-captain KIRA, thank you for your trouble.”

Encouraged to take the podium by the headmaster, Izuru KIRA scanned the lecture hall with a pale visage that lacked vitality. The entrance of an actively serving vice-captain caused the students’ eyes to sparkle.

— I’d never have guessed that a dead man would be preaching a soul reaper’s pride to young people in the future...

Casting his eyes down, Izuru heaved a small sigh.

After the lecture, Izuru passed into the guest room seating himself deeply into a sofa, he leaned back and exhaled a heavy breath. It seems the honest optimism in the young people’s eyes had greatly fatigued Izuru’s spirit.

“KIRA, thank you! I’m sorry for inconveniencing you when you’re busy!”

Headmaster of the Spiritual Arts Academy Isawa Genji gave a broad smile and deposited himself on a sofa that was opposite Izuru and across a low table.

“It’s alright. Both of my former classmates have accepted the invitation, I can’t be the only one to refuse.”

Last year, the lieutenant of squad 6 Renji ABARAI was invited to give a similar lecture and the year before that the lieutenant of squad 5 HINAMORI Momo was invited to do the same.

“I’m relieved to hear you say that.”

Genji exhaled a quick breath, “okay if I do a little paperwork?” He pulled out a box stuffed with paper bundles from under the table.

“Do you usually work here?”

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“The chairs in here are softest! The desk is also wide”

Watching the documents get piled up atop the desk one after the other, Izuru murmured “that’s not ‘little’ at all don’t you think?” seemingly in shock.

Much like Izuru and Renji, Genji is a graduate of the academy’s class of 2066. In contrast with Izuru who was assigned to the first class throughout his six years - an advanced class comprised of high achievers only - Genji was enrolled in the second class for six years. By all rights these two would appear unlikely to have any point of contact, however as a result of sharing the same living quarters in the student dormitories, they became close friends.

“...You were always the type to leave your assignments untouched till the end and then finish it all in one go, isn’t that right?”

Izuru recollected images of Genji’s back hunched over the writing desk until the late hours of the night whilst uttering complaints at the same time.

“For your information, this is all today’s portion you know!”

Genji spoke up in protest, his eyes still lowered on his documents.

“Huh? This much...?”

“The problem of insufficient manpower is the same everywhere right? Since I’m so good at paperwork, even the other teachers’ share is now handled by me. I was a member of the 5th squad after all, under the command of lieutenant HINAMORI known as the ‘tiger of paperwork’!”

“...Isn’t captain HIRAKO the one in command? In any case, HINAMORI-san had such a nickname...? I wasn’t aware.”

“By the way, the ‘dragon of paperwork’ is Sôsuke AIZEN and the ‘hawk of paperwork’ is me! You don’t think I’m going to be second-class forever do you?”

“Yeah, yeah. I know all too well that the 5th squad are proficient at their paperwork.”

Seeing Genji’s chest swell with pride with a “humph”, a small smile tugged at Izuru’s lips.

“Well...I’m sorry for distracting you from your work, I should get going now.”

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“Wait, wait, wait!”

Genji hurriedly restrains the rising Izuru.

“I haven’t seen you in a long time so let’s talk a little more!?! With the exception of going to the Technological Development Bureau once a month, I’m at the academy the whole time, so I’m starved of talk from the outside world~!”

Hearing that, Izuru’s movements suddenly came to a halt.

“Once a month...to the Development Department? For what reason?”

“Huh? I didn’t tell you?”

All of a sudden and without a care, Genji rolled up his hakama.

“Incidentally both of my legs were blown off during the Great War. I have prosthetics now.”

An artificial leg manufactured with smooth milky-white parts, peeped through his dark blue trouser hem.

“There are also legs that are practically indistinguishable from the real thing, but it’s not covered by the compensation of the Court Guards. Well, these however are just fine since they don’t prevent me from going about my daily life.”

Genji was the third seat of squad 5.

Because he had lost both legs when the sternritter invaded and had received artificial ones, Genji became unable to use Hohô - Shunpo that allows one to travel long distances in a flash which can also be regarded as indispensable for a top ranking soul reaper. Feeling that his current self was no longer suitable for third seat, Genji put forward a request to his captain, Shinji HIRAKO, stating that he would like for his seat to be lowered, whereupon it was suggested that he should become the head of the Spiritual Arts Academy instead.

“I was pretty confident in my Hohô, so my legs being like this came as a shock...but since starting this job, I’ve been enjoying myself despite being insanely busy every day. I was never the type to cut the mustard in the first place, so I totally understand what sort of place the students can fall into, or when they are feeling discouraged. I intended to play the sharp and able third seat in front of captain HIRAKO, and yet he was able to see through me I guess, see my true essence.”



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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

HIRAKO's words ring in his ear as he recalls it.

"Headmaster, I think that's fitting, don't you? ...You're able to put yourself in other people's shoes."

Understanding that this is a proposal made on the basis of recognising his attributes, Genji accepted with gratitude.

"That's the reason why! I don't get bothered about my legs anymore."

Clapping his knee, Genji grinned. Indeed, this cheerfulness of his is likely to aid many bewildered youngsters, Izuru thought.

"I see...it must have been very difficult, Isawa."

"No, not at all, the only one I don't want to be told that by is you KIRA! Is there any guy alive who has gone through more hardship than you!?"

"That's...I guess, you have a point."

"I heard that you were killed in action, information came in saying that you had apparently returned to the war front still in a dead condition, I was in a state of utter confusion!"

In the last Great War, Izuru died through a fatal injury where thirty percent of his body was lost. The fact that he is still able to freely manoeuvre himself like this is due to the experimental body remodeling surgery performed on Izuru's corpse after the captain of squad 12 Mayuri KUROTSUCHI recovered it from the battlefield. The surgical procedure, which was performed without the consent of the man in question, was a brilliant success and Izuru was able to live while still in a dead condition.

"I read captain KUROTSUCHI's research paper on the body remodelling experiment in the returning issue of Seireitei Communication, and I finally understood. 'So that's how it was?' I said to myself."

"Seireitei communication" is an informational magazine edited and published by the 9th squad, its publication system was out of order and had to be suspended for a whole year after the war. In the first reissue, a list of a vast number of war dead and the state of progress regarding reconstruction makes an appearance, Mayuri KUROTSUCHI's research paper is attached as an extra file at the end of the magazine.

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The successful surgical procedure of a departed soul on vice-captain Izuru KIRA! Relief even though he lost his life! The secrets of the surgical procedure of a departed soul is now made widely public!

Due to the contents of the report under this sensational headline, Izuru becoming the subject of the demonic experiments of the president of the Technological Development Department, was well-known within Seireitei.

“It doesn’t matter, whether you’re still alive...not alive...well anyway, I’m just happy I got to see you again.”

“...Thank you.”

A Denspiritual-matternki (soul reaper communication device) buzzed in the mumbling KIRA’s breast pocket.

Pressed on by Genji who said “check it. It might be urgent business, right?” Izuru scanned his eyes over the electronic correspondence being lit up by the words ‘new message’. The sender was Renji ABARAI.

“It’s from ABARAI-kun, can we gather this evening? he says.”

HINAMORI Momo’s name is also in the address field.

“Is HINAMORI-san also invited...? What about you?”

When he replied to the correspondence with a simple “okay” and then lifted his face up, Genji smiled broadly and placed his hand on the piled-up documents.

“Don’t you see this? Lieutenant KIRA.”

“...I will give your regards to everyone, headmaster”

With that said, Izuru also returns a smile.

As the two were talking about the situation, a woman with black hair flew in from outside an open window. Her shiny ponytail swayed matching the movement of her head.

“Having fun?”

With both hands at her hips she grinned, it was SHIHÔIN Yoruichi.

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“Thank you for your hard work today, SHIHÔIN sensei!”

“It’s been a while, SHIHÔIN-san.”

The two tried to stand up but were halted by her hand, with a thump Yoruichi lowered her back somewhere to the side of Izuru.

“KIRA, this is the first I’m seeing you in half a year, correct? In any case, are you getting along well with ÔTORIBASHI?”

Captain of the 3rd squad, Rôjûrô ÔTORIBASHI, has a deep understanding of music, not only for appreciating musical composition, but also enjoying the act of playing musical instruments as a hobby. When Yoruichi served as head of the SHIHÔIN family, Rôjûrô would sometimes commission the Gagaku\* band of the SHIHÔIN family to repair and tune musical instruments he had brought back from the Human World, the relationship that existed between these two is an old friendship. Once or twice a year Yoruichi would call upon the offices of the 3rd squad bearing gifts from the human world.

(\*TN: Gagaku is a type of classical Japanese court music)

On these occasions, they would exchange a few words and as a result, she was also acquainted with Izuru.

“Well, not too bad I guess. I’ve even grown accustomed to the musical performances in the middle of duties.”

“...You sure it’s okay to be accustomed to that?”

Izuru shrugged his shoulders at Genji’s question.

At the 3rd squad, many musical instruments are placed side by side not only in the captain’s room but also in the squad offices, depending on Rôjûrô’s mood, the musical performances can start even in the middle of professional duties with little regard for others. At first it was Izuru who criticised it, however after the musical performances he noticed that his work efficiency had improved remarkably, since then Izuru has come to tolerate it.

“You turn a blind eye to it! Why not just confiscate the instruments from that guy, leave nothing whatsoever behind!”

“It’s never going to be ‘nothing whatsoever’ you know.”

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With a nonchalant air, Yoruichi disregards Genji's reproving gaze. Izuru smiled inwardly thinking "these two seem to be doing well too."

"By the way...how are you finding the work of a lecturer? SHIHÔIN sensei?"

"Ha! It's just teasing youngsters anyway..."

After casting a momentary glare at Izuru, Yoruichi transferred a large scrap of paper from the palm of her hand to Genji.

"Persons who have their names here may already enlist in due form."

Glancing over the names that had been written down, Genji eagerly nodded his agreement with a "yes, yes, I see."

"What's up with the kids that have these circles affixed to them?"

"Oh, let those guys into the 9th squad. Their aptitude for Hakuda is limited, but they're intelligent and they have a keen interest for writing."

"Understood!"

Genji produced a notebook from his pocket and made a note of Yoruichi's words, placed the scrap piece of paper between it before closing it shut.

"I was surprised...you're taking your role as 'sensei' seriously aren't you?"

With a twitch, Yoruichi lifted one eyebrow at Izuru's manner of speaking.

"...Did you make fun of me just now?"

"Such a thing would be absurd...! It's just that, since I heard from my captain that SHIHÔIN-san wore a look that seemed as if she were troubled deep down at the time, she accepted the role..."

"It feels troublesome deep down even now."

"SHIHÔIN sensei...could you please be careful not say that in front of the students? You know, things like that."

Watching Genji with an expression that looked as if she wanted to say "I know", Yoruichi folds her arms and looks up to the ceiling.

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“Like I’ve said, since I’m a genius and all, I don’t know what teaching methods to use towards average people, but I was told to either undertake the responsibilities of guest lecturer once every half a moon, or restore squad 8 by becoming its captain, naturally I decided that I probably had no choice but to take up responsibilities in this place.”

If she refused to restore the squad then she would have to deliver a lecture on Hakuda and Hohô to the 5th and 6th year students every other week. That was the proposal handed down to Yoruichi from Commander KYÔRAKU.

“We probably can’t afford to leave people as talented as SHIHÔIN-san idle...after all, orders have been sent down to all squads, each squad elects at least one member for academy lecturer.”

“Because the original tutors passed away in great numbers during the Protection of the Soul King Great War, isn’t that so.”

At the time of the great war, all students were evacuated to their dormitories.

Due to the vast amounts of spiritual-pressure that was accumulating, the Wandenreich’s foot soldiers, known as Soldat, focused their attack on the dormitories, a defensive battle in which the lecturers put up a do-or-die spirit began to unfold before the eyes of the students. Each and every lecturer was skilled with the experience of a seated member, however it was difficult to overthrow the numerical advantage, and one after another they fell.

Under the desperate circumstances, a soul reaper donning a mask came into sight cutting through dark clouds.

“Here comes the superhero!”

It was Mashiro KUNA the ‘super’ vice-captain of squad 9, she executed a brisk pose atop a Soldat who was being trampled underfoot.

When departing for the battlefield in order to launch a counterattack on the sternritter, captain of the 9th squad Kensei MUGURUMA did not allow Mashiro’s attendance.

“No way! It’s not fair if you’re only taking Shû~hei~! Not fair, not fair, not fair, not fair~~~!”

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Naturally, Mashiro tumbled around on the ground and put up a resistance. Under normal circumstances the scene would be filled with a loud rebuttal telling her to "shut up", however this time Kensei knelt, levelled his line of sight with Mashiro and spoke.

"Go to the Spiritual Arts Academy, Mashiro. Go and protect the future of the soul reaper."

He grabbed her left arm to help her up. A lieutenant badge handmade by Mashiro herself was fitted there.

"I guess you're not a mere lieutenant huh?"

With a supportive push at her back, Mashiro leaps into the evening sky without turning to look back.

Her "SUPER 9" engraved stamp caught the last light just before sunset and glimmered red.

Although the students were protected by the actions of a hollowified Mashiro, the number of lecturers diminished to less than a third of the original, the training of soul reaper is urgent business now, it was no exaggeration to say that refilling lecturers is a matter of utmost importance.

"Protection of the Soul King Great War huh...what a nauseating name don't you think?"

Yoruichi spat out her words in disdain. Izuru was also of the same opinion.

"...It cannot be helped. If you tell the truth you won't be able avoid confusion and disorder"

After Ichigo KUROSAKI had triumphed over Yhwach, his remains were transported to the Soul King Palace at the hands of Squad Zero soldiers. Hundreds of binding seals were placed around the corpse which still contained a vast amount of spiritual-energy even after death, by storing it as the new lynchpin in the Soul King Greater Palace area, the world was spared from collapse.

The demise of the Soul King, as well as the fact that it is the mastermind of the great war who keeps the world tethered now, are both kept secret, the series of incursions by the Wandenreich was assigned the name "Protection of the Soul King Great War."

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“The Soul King Palace was safeguarded, and the Soul King was not assassinated...that’s what the students are being taught, I wonder if there were things that were falsified in this way within the history that we studied too.”

With a countenance that appeared to have mixed feelings, Genji shook his head a little.

“Distortion at the convenience of the hand that’s spinning it...History is like that.”

The eyes of Yoruichi who had muttered that, held a slight trace of anguish.

Hitting upon the fact that she is a person who was once driven out of the Soul Society which considered her a traitor, the other two fell silent.

“Don’t all go making that depressed face now! I’m not at all...”

A dissatisfied Yoruichi’s words were interrupted by a knocking sound at the door.

“Headmaster sir! I’ve been instructed to bring back the completed paperwork!”

A voice which appeared to belong to a male student could be heard through the door.

“I’ll take it myself so don’t worry about it...! I’d better get going soon. The matter of formal enlistment must also be discussed.”

Excusing himself from the pair, Genji tucked his processed documents underarm and exited the room.

Waiting for the sound of his footsteps to fade away, Yoruichi turns her face in Izuru’s direction.

“...Just the two of us then huh?”

Noticing the mischievous smile in her eye, Izuru shuddered.

— A frog being glared at by a snake\*...no, in this case, perhaps it’s a mouse being glared at by the cat...?

Toying with the idea, Yoruichi leaned in closer without a moment’s hesitation.

(\*TN: In Japan a “frog being glared at by the snake” is an idiomatic phrase that is essentially the equivalent of the English expression “a deer in the headlights” used to describe a person paralysed to the spot out of fear or surprise)

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“\*squeal\*”

Matching her advance, he retreated backwards at which point his back hit the armrest of the sofa, a dead end.

“According to what I’ve heard, you apparently have a large hole opened up on your body correct?”

“...W-whats this all of a sudden...?”

Izuru instinctively placed his hand over the right side of his chest. As a result of the cavity, that move only caused his hand to sink into his soul-robos.

Immediately following his surgical procedure, he was instructed to dissipate the heat of the body without covering the hole, consequently he had to live in a state of leaving one shoulder exposed. However, by way of an upgrade after the war, the problem of heat dissipation was resolved and it became unnecessary to expose the hole, Izuru was thus able to wear his soul-robos fully again as before.

“Didn’t KUROTSUCHI tell you? Nemuri is a masterpiece of artificial soul technology, KIRA is a masterpiece of body remodelling technology, isn’t that right? ...Now then, let me take a little look at that hole.”

“Whaa...!? I’d rather you didn’t!”

“Don’t be so square, I just want to see what’s going on with the cross- section. It’s nothing to fret about. C’mon, quickly”

Without any regard for the resistance Izuru was putting up, Yoruichi caught his right sleeve and tugged with great vigour.

“Please stop doing that!”

Just when he was struggling to remove the hands secured at his collar, an open door entered his vision.

“KIRA! These guys want to ask you some questions about...”

Genji who had returned accompanied by two female students, froze at the sight of the pair.

Izuru’s soul-robos was loose and dishevelled. Yoruichi half straddling him.



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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

Genji shut the door immediately.

“S-sorry KIRA!”

“Don’t apologise this is not what it looks like!”

Izuru pushed past Yoruichi and darted out of the room. From the hallways the voices of two people could be heard shouting “I’m sorry!” and “You’ve got it wrong!”

“Curious how it ends up like this from playing hard to get...”

Without even a hint of shame, Yoruichi left through the window in the same fashion as when she arrived.

The next day rumours of a “forbidden relationship between SHIHÔIN Sensei and Lieutenant KIRA” went around the academy. For some time after that, it is said that every time Izuru would come face to face with Suî-FÊNG the captain of Squad 2 who adores and respects Yoruichi, she would glare at him to the point where it seemed she was putting a deadly curse on him.

### **The Report**

#### **2**

Central 1st Ward - Spiritual Arts Library.

Nanao ISE devoted a long period of her days off to reading.

In the library which had just been reconstructed, there is no trace of the former building she would usually be accustomed to passing through, a slight feeling of unease came over her.

Even so, while turning over the pages engulfed in the smell of paper book by book, she became unconcerned about anything other than their contents.

She took a new book in hand. It was her favourite book; one she had read many times over. When she turned over the front cover, an emblem had been stamped there indicating that it was a book belonging to the library of squad 8.

— — This book, I’m the one who stamped it...

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

Next to the collection emblem, the name of the person in charge is filled in as "Nanao ISE".

It was her clumsy writing, still retaining its childlike nature.

A mid-size library was erected in the residential area of every 13 Court Guard Squads squad respectively. Although the damage caused by the great war varied in magnitude, every library was in a state of closure with the damaged sections left as is because reconstruction advanced from places that were indispensable to daily life. When she set out to inspect the reconstruction sites, Nanao was distressed by the state of affairs and made an appeal to the Commander, Shunsui KYÔRAKU, saying "even if it's only the Spiritual Arts Library, can they not be preferentially restored?"

The construction work began immediately, books that had overcome the war damage were gathered from each library and stored on brand new bookshelves.

— It was not burnt...that's a relief.

Nanao who had joined the 8th squad at a young age, was entrusted with organising the book collection belonging to squad 8 immediately after her enlistment.

Given that she was an unrivalled book-lover, Lisa YADÔMARU who was serving as vice-captain around that time, bought up all the books she could get her hands on using her squad's expenses under the pretence that it was for 'expanding the library's book collection'. But because the vice-captain would stuff the books she had finished reading into boxes and then throw them into a storage room, the storage cabinets of squad 8's library were always a disorderly place.

Having heard of a rumour that among the students who were to graduate from the Spiritual Arts Academy this year, apparently there exists an 'honorary member of the Spiritual Arts Library' — a title given to those who have checked-out more than one thousand books over the course of the years — Lisa advised KYÔRAKU that this student known as Nanao ISE who had expressed a desire to be assigned to the Kidô Corps, is a talented individual who needs to be summoned to squad 8 instead. KYÔRAKU stood motionless for a split second as if he were stunned, however a smile soon broke out on his face, KYÔRAKU hoisted up and revealed the procedural documents concerning Nanao's enlistment to Lisa which he had filled in just now saying "great minds think alike huh."

Regarding that coincidence, Lisa didn't hold much doubt. Of course, KYÔRAKU also caught on to the disastrous scene of squad 8's library, and it was clear to everyone

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that Nanao was the most suitable choice of candidate for its betterment. If the same 'honorary member' rumour that Lisa had heard about reached his ears, then KYÔRAKU moving to acquire Nanao seems only a natural course of events.

— At the time Lisa had no way of knowing about his ulterior motives relating to Shinken Hakkyôken within that decision.

In this way, Nanao was assigned to squad 8 and sent into the squad 8 library which had lost its order.

— How nostalgic...

She would take out a book from the stacks of boxes, briefly examine its contents before stamping the collection emblem. Information on the book is entered into the library's computer terminal, the books are then arranged in accordance with the classification system. It was a very enjoyable occupation for Nanao who loves books. She also became close with Lisa who would occasionally turn up at the storage room armed with a new book collection. On the first day of every month after work, the pair would come to the office bringing along books they'd recommend for the other, a reading circle consisting of two people only was held.

Even on the night Lisa had fallen victim to the hollowfication experiment due to Sôsuke AIZEN, Nanao called on the squad barracks clutching her books — however, from that day onwards, no reading circles have been held.

"...This book, it was on Lisa-chan's desk. It was probably prepared for the reading circle, for you."

Several days after Lisa's disappearance, KYÔRAKU showed up at the library to find Nanao, he handed over a single book. It was a textbook on advanced Kidô that only officially seated members could read. Nanao still vividly remembers KYÔRAKU's back as he was leaving, whispering to her in a lowered voice, telling her to "read it in secret."

"Without that book, I suppose it would have been impossible to become the likes of vice-captain right...?"

She was troubled by her limited aptitude for Zanjutsu, for her sake it was Lisa who showed her the path forward. Nanao who by nature was proficient in Kidô, took this as a cue to abandon the concept of mastering Zan-Ken-So-Ki\* (\*the four basic soul reaper techniques) in a well-balanced manner, in order to become a more outstanding

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

user of Kidô than anyone else, she continued to refine her skills by relying on this textbook.

The Kidô textbook that had become worn-out is Nanao's treasure even now, it was her support.

"Hello, Nanao-san!"

Her name was called in a small voice, pulling her out of her memories. When she turned around, HINAMORI Momo was smiling at her.

"Are you off duty?"

She took a seat opposite Nanao as she enquired.

"Yes, that's right. HINAMORI-san...isn't it still work hours for you?"

She glanced at the clock mounted on a nearby pillar. There was still around two hours remaining until work hours were over.

"By order of captain HIRAKO, I have 'already finished work for today.' He's always scolding me saying how can a young girl do nothing but work! Play hooky once in a while why don't you!"

"Come now, he's being kind."

"You may say that Nanao-san but, wouldn't you be vexed if the Commander appeared out of nowhere to scold you when you are trying to get some work done on the day you are off duty? Both captain HIRAKO and the Commander, don't you think they try to give us too much time off?"

"That's true! I'm glad that I'm able to read my books at ease in this way, but the thing I want him to understand is that if I have allocated this time to work, then I also get a bit of a guilty conscience..."

"Absolutely!"

At the concern of their superiors, the two heaved a sigh at the same time.

"Don't you guys like your jobs way too much?"

From behind a tall bookcase, Lisa YADÔMARU suddenly made an appearance.

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“Lisa-san...! ahh.”

Sensing that her voice was too loud, HINAMORI swiftly covered her mouth. Lisa subdued the flustered HINAMORI saying “Relax. It’s only us now.” She then sat next to Nanao.

“...Even now you’re so fond of it, reading that is.”

Looking towards the pile up of books on the desk, Lisa spoke in a murmur. With a start, Nanao gazed at the side of her face. She is a person of scarce facial expression, however sentimentality revealed itself within her eyes.

All the emotions she had buried in her heart until now gradually rose to the surface, Nanao firmly stifled those feelings.

“YADÔMARU-san...! I’ve...always wanted to thank you...!

“There’s no need for that sort of thing...Hey look, HINAMORI got startled because Nanao suddenly got all fired up.”

“Huh!? Not at all, please don’t fuss over me...! I’ll go read a book in some corner for you so...”

Waving both hands in front of her face, HINAMORI eagerly sprang to her feet.

“HINAMORI, sit down.”

“Yes...!”

Unable to defy Lisa’s piercing line of sight, HINAMORI took a seat right away. Looking at Nanao who seemed somewhat awkward and a quivering HINAMORI, Lisa released a small sigh.

“...I don’t know what Nanao is thanking me for, but whatever I have done for you, it is only a trivial thing to your life...it was nothing more than a cue for you at most. You became vice-captain as a result of your own efforts, right? That’s why, I don’t need something like gratitude. Got it?”

“YADÔMARU-san...”

“Answer!”

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“U-understood!”

Amidst this conversational exchange, Nanao felt a sense of nostalgia that made her want to cry.

— Ah, that’s right...vice-captain YADÔMARU always did find it difficult to deal with gratitude...

Whenever Nanao expressed words of gratitude or apology, Lisa always furrowed her brows and made a face that seemed uncomfortable. In order not to offend her esteemed vice-captain, in the moments she wanted to convey gratitude, it was done so without words, she remembers that she would simply bow her head.

Looking directly at Lisa, Nanao quietly bowed. When she lifted her face up, Lisa was watching her intently with eyes that looked as if they wanted to say “you finally remembered?”

“Buaaa...\*sniff\*...\*sob sob\*...!”

When the pair turned their faces towards the voice coming from the opposite direction, they were confronted with a HINAMORI who was shedding tears.

“Huh!? What’s the matter HINAMORI-san!?”

In a panic Nanao rushes over to HINAMORI’s side, handing over a handkerchief Nanao rubs her back.

“I’m...sorry...! Somehow...you can feel...the weight of time...when I think about...all those things that happened...between you two...!...!”

“Isn’t your empathy a little too intense...?”

Before an amazed Lisa, Nanao continues to console HINAMORI.

“Sure enough...does being poor at Zanjutsu incapacitate you as a Court Guards warrior...?”

Lisa recalls those young and tender eyes, tearing up as they looked up at her to the point they would spill any moment now.

On that night, it seems the Kidô textbook prepared for Nanao, had successfully crossed over into her hands.

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

— That little Nanao ISE, is now the vice-captain of Squad 1...?

Lisa smiled with a touch of self-depreciation wondering “has a hundred years really passed by already?”

Waiting for HINAMORI to stop sobbing, Lisa spread this year’s edition of the register containing all seated officers before the other two.

“I need both of you to cooperate for a moment.”

The names and photographs of each squad’s officers from captain to 20th seat is printed on the register

“Uh...Lisa-san, this is for...?”

“It will soon be half a year since I became captain of the 8th squad, however I’m constantly being told to nominate a lieutenant.”

Ever since KYÔRAKU and Nanao transferred to Squad 1, Nanao has been executing the duties of both captain and vice-captain of squad 8. Six months ago Lisa was finally inaugurated as Squad 8’s new captain, she happily took over the duties of a captain, however she stubbornly refused to handle tasks on behalf of an absent vice-captain, as a result squad 1’s Nanao was handling that share even now.

“It would be a great help for me too if I can be released from acting as a substitute soon...”

It is not impossible for squad 1 to undertake the duties of squad 8 because they have another excellent lieutenant in addition to Nanao known as Genshirô OKIKIBA, nevertheless, if that share of time can be invested in other work...then this consideration is also not irrational. Now that reconstruction is in full swing, one can never have too much time.

“If I tell the Commander ‘you have two lieutenants here so give me Nanao’, ‘it’s absolutely impossible!’ he’ll say.”

Feeling her cheeks suddenly getting warmer, Nanao cleared her throat hoping to regain her composure.

“Initially, it was squad 4’s 3rd seat Yasochika IEMURA-san who was supposed to be appointed to vice-captain of squad 8. With that end in view, IEMURA-san’s membership had already been pulled from squad 4.”

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During that time, it was the 7th seat of the same squad Hanatarô YAMADA who had been promoted to 3rd seat which IEMURA had departed from.

“However, IBA-san who took office as captain of squad 7 after the great war, informed me that 'IEMURA wants to take over as lieutenant under me'...consequently, the list of candidates for squad 8 lieutenant has ended up a blank sheet of paper...”

The captain of each squad is entitled to nominate their own candidates from lieutenant to 9th seat, this held the potency to overrule orders containing appointed names handed from Central 46. Since IEMURA's squad 8 transfer was the decision of Central 46, Tetsuzaemon IBA's nomination right was given priority.

“I had my eye on Akon only for him to be snatched away by Mayuri, and this 3rd seat of mine...ENJÔJI, I'm not going to move him up either.”

As she fiddled around with the tip of her braid using the fingers on her left hand, she used her right to point him out on the register. Even though half a year had passed since she took up her new post, Lisa had yet to memorize his name, it's clear there is an absence of interest in 3rd seat Tatsufusa ENJÔJI.

“Third seat ENJÔJI won't do?”

At HINAMORI's enquiry, Lisa shook her head from side to side confirming he was” no good.”

“Take a good look, this guy's face seems like that of small fry don't you think? Definitely not the look of a vice-captain.”

“A-ha...ha ha ha...”

In response to Lisa's harsh manner of speaking, Nanao and HINAMORI could do nothing more than laugh.

“Therefore, I want to ask the two of you. On this occasion it doesn't matter if they're lower seats, are there any individuals who would let me skip duties, is competent at their work and won't nag me either?”

Lisa spoke whilst tapping her finger on the register of all seated members. With the premise of” please feel free to skip work from time to time...”, HINAMORI indicated to 3rd seat Hanatarô YAMADA of squad 4.



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“How about Hanatarô-kun? He’s a hard worker, and despite his frail disposition he’s an exceedingly talented individual!”

“A YAMADA in squad 4 you say...is he perhaps related to Seinosuke?”

“Seinosuke...san?” At the unfamiliar name, HINAMORI tilted her head.

“It’s a name that brings back a lot of memories...vice-captain YAMADA Seinosuke. If I’m not mistaken, wasn’t he Hanatarô-san’s older brother...?”

“Huh!? Hanatarô-kun’s older brother you say, and he was a vice-captain!?”

In response to a surprised HINAMORI, Nanao gave a firm nod of her head saying “that’s right.”

“At the time YADÔMARU-san was serving as vice-captain of squad 8, he is the person who assumed position of squad 4 vice-captain. Seinosuke-san retired in the form of being replaced by Isane KOTETSU-san when she was promoted to vice-captain.”

“Hmm...if he’s the younger brother of Seinosuke, then he’d surely be capable, however...”

Lisa fixed her eyes unblinkingly on the portrait within the register.

The young man whose mouth hang partly open, eyebrows in the shape of the character for eight\*, was captured on the photograph with an awkward smile. (\*T/N: The Kanji for 8 used in Japanese known as “Hachi”, his eyebrows look like this -> 八)

“He’s got a depressing face that looks as if he’d drop dead at the slightest poke, this kid also doesn’t feel like vice-captain material...”

“It’s still a matter of appearance huh...?”

When Nanao gave a strained smile, HINAMORI also gazed intently at the register, she puzzled over the issue with a hum.

“How about this Yumichika AYASAGAWA individual? Although he looks like a narcissist, he seems up to the job.”

Lisa pointed to the 3rd seat of squad 11. The two who were questioned glanced at each other, they released a small sigh at the same time.

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Yumichika-san is certainly a very outstanding person, but...”

“Given that he has rejected all transfers to other squads thus far, I fear it’s likely that he’ll decline...”

Upon hearing the replies of the other two, Lisa rested her chin in her hand with a sigh.

“In the end, nothing but strangers to me as always huh...”

As she took an extensive view over the portrait photographs of all seated members, Lisa is made to realise that she is now in the position of newcomer.

“When it comes to those who have been in the field for more than a hundred years, I would assume they’d have already ascended to the appropriate seats...but after the war, a considerable number of seated members ended up being replaced...”

The more superior the seated officer, the more they did battle on the front lines. Many had lost their lives as a result, however in the minds of the people they had left behind, the responsibility and pride towards earning a seated position was seared into their consciousness with a burning passion. It is perhaps for this reason, that a solid resoluteness dwells within the eyes of the newly appointed seated members.

“Haaa, if Nanao has grown accustomed to the work of the 1st squad, I wonder if you could give me OKIKIBA-san?”

Lisa reclined her back against a chair, speaking whilst swaying her crossed legs to and fro.

“I’m not so sure about that...? At his own insistence, OKIKIBA-san is a person who is needed at squad 1 after all...even the monthly tea ceremonies are now hosted by OKIKIBA-san.”

Prior to his death, Genryūsai Shigekuni YAMAMOTO would gather the troops once a month and treat them to Matcha (powdered green tea) which he had prepared himself.

After his passing, the tea ceremonies were suspended as a result of the damage to the tearoom facing the gardens, however in accordance with the reconstruction of both the squad barracks and the tea room, the tea ceremonies resumed through the efforts of OKIKIBA.

“Squad 1’s tea ceremonies have resumed!? I had no idea...!”

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Upon her inauguration as vice-captain, only once did HINAMORI participate in the monthly tea ceremony accompanied by AIZEN.

Although HINAMORI was solely engrossed in nervousness from being in front of the Commander and couldn't remember the taste of his Matcha at all, she still vividly recalls only the form of Genryūsai who watched her through narrowed eyes.

“OKIKIBA-san has mentioned that he is not yet at a stage where he can entertain members of other squads, so he requests your patience until the tea ceremonies are made public...Moreover, at present I am learning about Kôcha (black tea). At the tea ceremonies, I think it would be nice if we could serve not only Matcha but Kôcha too.”

“I see, for SASAKIBE-san...”

Lisa muttered few words. Nanao revealed a sombre smile and gave a nod of her head.

“After work I read the material vice-captain SASAKIBE left behind for us, the more I learn the more I realise how deep the world of Kôcha really is...I now understand why he was so enthusiastic about it too.”

Chôjirô Tadaoki SASAKIBE, the vice-captain of squad 1 who passed away in the last great war, ardently admired Kôcha which stemmed from his yearning of Great Britain. Although the cultivation of tea leaves didn't go exactly as planned, his profound knowledge towards Kôcha is deeper than any other in Soul Society, his unique Kôcha blend was so exquisite that even Genryūsai who disliked western things admitted it was “delicious”.

“If the next generation are this considerate, then both Jii-san and SASAKIBE-san would surely be able to rest in peace~”

From the shadows of the bookshelf Lisa had been lurking behind not long ago, it was Shinji HIRAKO who made a leisurely appearance this time.

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Ca...Captain HIRAKO!”

“What in the world, how long have you been there...!?”

Whilst Nanao and HINAMORI fell off their chairs in surprise, Lisa alone was unfazed.

“I was here since the discussion around the tea parties. Obviously, I noticed you.”

“If you noticed us then please say something! Please come and call out to us with your voice immediately, captain!”

“You seem upset, Momo. Oh my, though it seems I have broken into a girl’s meeting, I was wondering whether or not it was okay for me to say something.”

“You’re only here to eavesdrop, pervert.” Lisa coldly stated.

“You can’t say that about me only!” HIRAKO refuted.

“That’s true but, just when you thought what kind of things three gathered women might talk about; ‘Genryūsai, OKIKIBA and SASAKIBE...’ we were merely talking about old guys were we not? One love story!”

“Please do not get upset because of your own arbitrary expectations...”

Nanao sighed whilst pressing her temple, the toll of a bell coming from outside could be heard, indicating the end of work shifts.

“It’s no good at such a time like this...! I’ll be back soon.”

Nanao swiftly returned her book to the bookshelf, moving in front of the doorway in the same manner.

“HINAMORI-san, YADÔMARU-san, thank you for today. Let’s talk again!”

The pair smiled sweetly.

“Yeah, let’s talk again”

HINAMORI waved her arm with a smiling face, Lisa, in silence lifted up her arm a little.

“And then...Captain HIRAKO, from now on will you please stop secretly snooping around near here?”

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

In the end she drove the point home, and Nanao left the library. HIRAKO gave a strained laugh whilst leaning against a wall by the window.

“That little Nanao-chan has grown up splendidly...”

Since the libraries that are constructed on the residential block of each squad is operated under the management of that particular squad, there are many books, for example, on the healing arts in the 4th squad’s library, and in the 6th squad’s library there are many books on noble aristocratic history and etiquette, it tends to be the product of a true reflection of the squad’s own style.

The 5th squad’s library not far from HIRAKO’s residence, boasts the 13 Court Guard Squad’s best book collection quantity, due to most of them being noteworthy academic books donated by Sôsuke AIZEN, HIRAKO had no desire for those.

Conversely, the 8th squad’s library had many multi genre books purchased by Lisa who bought whatever took her fancy, HIRAKO who also passed by frequently, saw a consequent-change in the young Nanao.

After the end of work hours, on their way back from work, the troops enter the library and begin to flip through books. Troops from all squads gather at the Spiritual Arts Library since this is the only Library that is still open.

After briefly bowing to the three people sitting in the seats close to the entrance, everyone headed inside.

“It’s the first time since the reconstruction that I was in order to come here, it’s a great success.”

“Yeah. Since the books have been gathered side by side from each squad, you don’t need to visit several places here and there, also reading various genre of books is popular. Captain were you also looking for something...?”

“No, I was looking for Lisa”

Lisa who was folding up the official seated members register, raised her head and said “Me?”

HIRAKO pulled out a mail order catalogue of “Seireitei Communication” from the sleeve of his

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

captain's cloak, he opened it up and folded the corner of a page. It was a page of expensive items handled by" YDM Book Sales".

After AIZEN's rebellion, Lisa earned a great deal of profit from soul reaper clients, by ordering books and CDs on sale in the Human World and then delivering it secretly to the buyer thus developing" YDM Book Sales".

In light of the expansion of the business after the great war, she accepted employment as a Captain on the condition that she be permitted to use the 8th squad's Senkaimon for the transport of goods.

By paying advertisement expenses to the 9th squad and obtaining a merchandise page in the monthly mail-order catalogue, the popularity of" YDM Book Sales" rose instantly and business was on an upward trajectory.

"I need ask a favour of you! This "Modern hairstyles encyclopaedia" five volume set, reduce the price a little more! Am I not always buying your things in the magazine? Huh? In some way or another give me a special customer discount!"

"Impossible! Everyone buys it at the established list price!"

"Both of you please lower your voice a little more...!"

Even though HINAMORI chided them in a low voice, they continued to talk loudly.

"That's cruel~~~~! I can't use the squad's expenses to buy books because my library is not restored yet~~~~!"

"In that case, until it's a good time to re-build your library then! At that time, I will begin to write a receipt for you at the 5th squad building without fail! However, by that time it may already be sold out!"

"...Captain"

HINAMORI placed her hand on HIRAKO's shoulder.

"What is it Momo...!? Mo...Momo?"

The corners of her mouth were rising but her eyes did not smile at all. She glared at HIRAKO with frightening eyes that pressed down like a dark night.

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“Please buy your personal preference in books with your own wages, am I right...? And then...Lisa-san”

With a \*whoosh\* she turned her head, those eyes captured Lisa. Lisa did not divert her eyes; she gulped and swallowed her own saliva.

“Not limited to just my squad...Please do not issue fraudulent receipts, am I right...?”

Watching as Lisa nodded at high speed \*nod nod nod\*, HINAMORI exhaled a breath, “If you are able to understand then that is good!” she laughed.

She went back to her usual soft smile.

“Well then, I will also go now! Today I have a meeting with ABARAI-kun and KIRA-kun.”

HINAMORI bowed her head and excused herself before leaving.

As soon as the door closed, the two people burst out chattering.

“Huh!? Just a minute...what!? That made my heartbeat extremely hard but...!?”

“A demon...A demon was here!”

“Her eyes went dark!? How can I return to everyday life after something like that!?”

“I don’t want to go against HINAMORI”

This will forever be carved into both of their heart’s as” The HINAMORI Incident”.

### 3

West Rukongai 1st District Junrinan.

The 10th squad’s captain Tōshirō HITSUGAYA, used his break to visit his grandmother’s residence.

The pair were snacking on amanatto\* (\*sugared red beans) bit by bit and having a chat.

For HITSUGAYA, who sets off hurriedly every day, time passes by peacefully, it was above all a healing experience.

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Daylight began to fade into darkness, and the end of work shifts bell can be heard coming from the Seireitei. HITSUGAYA who was laying on the tatami mats, lifted himself up and stretched out widely.

“I’ll go now grandma, I’ll come again.”

He tied the cords of his-sandals on the concrete floor.

“Come back home anytime. Grandma will buy amanatto again.”

“That’s okay you don’t need to. I’ll buy them when I return.”

“Is that so? Thank you, Toshiro.”

“Yup. Well then, I’m off see you next time”

Lightly waving his hand to his grandmother who came to see him off, HITSUGAYA walked into the midst of the sunset.

He went down the path along the outside of the Seireiheki\* (\*Pure souls wall).

When the Hakutomon\* became visible, his legs suddenly stopped. (\*White path gate aka The Western Gate that Jidanbô guards).

“\*clash/clang\*! Shuooooo...\*thud! \*”

“Ugiya— Damn! I have no choice you’re making me do this...!”

“I will not allow that! Shu-ba-ba—”

“Guaa! Sôgyo you rascal! I’ll get you for this~~~”

From a back-street alley, the voices of a young boy and a young man playing ‘pretend’, can be heard.

(That voice...Somewhere...)

There was something familiar about the voice of the man playing the role of the villain.

“Ahahaha! ‘Ganju nii-chan’ is really good at acting huh! I wonder if it’s because Kûkaku-sama is always being angry?”

“Ye-ah. Well, I’ll see you again, Ganju nii-chan!”



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“Alright! Take care!”

The young boy’s footsteps faded away. The man who was playing the ‘bad guy’ noticed HITSUGAYA on the spot where he had turned the corner of the private residence, with a “woah” he was taken aback.

“Y...You’re, Squad 10’s...!”

“I’m Tôshirô HITSUGAYA. You are...Ganju SHIBA was it?”

“Even though it’s practically our first meeting, my full name came out so well!?”

He doesn’t remember ever talking with HITSUGAYA face to face. In the photographs published in “Seireitei Communication”, the figure itself is familiar, but he’s only seen the real thing few times, in addition to that; it was to the extent of crossing him in a short instance or having seen a figure no larger than a child from afar.

(I’m quite famous amongst the soul reaper!? Huh!? No way, is that why this guy came to meet me too!?)

Ganju fantasized, being the imaginary leader of soul reaper, giving instructions to HITSUGAYA.

[“Younger brother of Kaien SHIBA!?”

Why does he solicit such superior talent to the soul reaper!? Captain HITSUGAYA, please go at once!”]

Whilst grinning and rubbing his chin, from his partly open mouth his voice spilled out “I mean, no way, no way, no way! I will not become a soul reaper~!”

He did not stop his voice, “What’s gotten into you?” HITSUGAYA inquired, throwing Ganju off balance, he shook his head if nothing else.

“I remembered you as someone from the Shiba family, when that child called out your name just now.”

“oh, that’s why...”

His fantasy rapidly disappeared. His shoulders dropped a little, “What you just saw...we were playing Sôgyo” he chided HITSUGAYA who was spying on them.

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Playing Sôgyo...?”

“Even though you’re soul reaper, you don’t know? ‘Sôgyo no Okotowari’, it’s UKITAKE-san’s masterpiece!”

Ganju then unexpectedly spoke from the bottom of his heart.

‘Sôgyo no Okotowari!’, it’s an action-adventure story in ‘Seireitei Communication’ serialised by the 13th squad’s captain, Jûshirô UKITAKE.

“Oh...That story”

“Your reaction is weak! It’s amazingly popular isn’t it?”

‘Sôgyo no Okotowari!’ is a self-contained story in which good is rewarded and evil is punished, the main hero Sôgyo protects the villagers and confronts baddies, it was a popular work amongst children. After the great war, the procedure of obtaining court documents was simplified so the comings and goings between Seireitei and Rukongai became lively. This work, which was prevalent in the Seireitei, also rapidly spread among the children of Rukongai.

Now no matter which district of Rukongai you go to, the stand-alone book of ‘Sôgyo no Okotowari!’ is entertaining children every day, even after it has become worn out after many times reading it.

“...Can’t read any further new works. ...”

The last ‘Seireitei Communication’ was published before the invasion by the Wandenreich began. The contents of ‘Sôgyo no Okotowari!’ that was published three months ago, depicted the shrine maiden/sorceress of the village falling into enemy hands, Sôgyo was injured with a severe wound whilst also rescuing her.

[The wounds I bear when protecting myself is painful, however the wounds I bear when protecting somebody else is not painful! ]

Sôgyo’s words seem like a direct reflection of UKITAKE’s spirit.

HITSUGAYA thought of that white-haired soul reaper and bit his lip a little.

“It was a story intended to be completed in one go, so I can’t say I felt a sense of discomfort when it ended.”

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

As he said that, Ganju sniffled a few times. HITSUGAYA removed his gaze from Ganju and stared at the Seireitei standing still in the evening sky.

“My older brother...Kaiei SHIBA, he served as the vice-captain of squad 13, when he came home, he would always talk about UKITAKE-san. At that time, I was still small so I can barely remember the kind of things he said but...I remember well, the side of my proud big brother’s face as he talked.”

“...I see”

Even as the past three years has flowed by, UKITAKE’s spirit lives on without fading in everyone’s memories, in stories left behind.

In that alone, HITSUGAYA felt a little secure.

“I’m sorry for keeping you. Looks like you were heading back?”

“That’s ok...it was good to be able to talk to you.”

He saw HITSUGAYA smile a little, Ganju also smiled.

“Hehehe, I see! See you then, Captain-san!”

Whilst his back was heading further away, HITSUGAYA picked up a faint sense of nostalgia.

[“Take charge while I’m gone, Toshiro!” ]

The former captain of squad 10 was a man who smiled heartily.

Isshin KUROSAKI, formerly Isshin SHIBA, father of Ichigo KUROSAKI and Uncle of Ganju.

(Ganju SHIBA...)

He turned his back and walked away.

We don’t know, someday we might be reunited with him, as a soul reaper in the Seireitei—HITSUGAYA vaguely thought.

4

6th sector - Ryotei\*” The safflower”.

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

(\*A fancy traditional Japanese restaurant)

In Eastern end of the 6th sector, there is a block of noble residences standing in a row.

The head of the KUCHIKI family - one of the four noble families - have for generations, shouldered the responsibility of squad 6 captain, the squad building for that squad exists in the 6th sector, and the KUCHIKI family are purveyors of various long standing shops that are lined up side by side there too. For that reason, nobles wishing for fine quality goods all set up residence here, the common soldiers have dubbed this wealthy sector" Kizokugai (Noble city)".

"Hey YAMADA...Is this really the right place!?"

The 4th squad's vice-captain Kiyone KOTETSU asked Hanatarô YAMADA, the third seat of the same squad, who was concealed behind her as they walked.

"It's a prime location, it should be right...but..."

Hanatarô timidly followed Kiyone whilst checking the electronic correspondence that he received from Rukia KUCHIKI, many times over.

As they passed through bamboo thickets and advanced on a straight gravel covered road, the Sukiyamon\* (\*Sukiya architecture style gate) came into view. Before the lattice door there was beautifully brushed lettering that said," The safflower" and paper covered lamps cast a soft light on its surroundings.

"Th...This is the place...isn't it..."

"We're already late for the get together, there's nothing we can do but go in."

As Kiyone made up her mind, she raised her hand to the lattice door. The wind blew, and bamboo leaves rustled.

"Lieutenant...I already have a stomach-ache...!"

"Keep a strong spirit YAMADA! Otherwise your internal organs will be twisting apart as soon as we enter!"

"Uuuu...I'm afraid..."

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“We are vice-captain and 3rd seat! So even if you are going in and out of such a high class establishment, it’s not at all strange! That’s right, it should not feel strange! It’s alright, it’s alright!”

Whilst encouraging themselves, they opened the sliding doors and took a step inside.

The entrance of the restaurant was at the end of a stone pavement where both sides were dotted with paper lamps arranged in a row, and before that a pink kimono clad nakai\* was waiting for them. (\*Nakai - like a waitress/hostess at ryokan restaurants)

As the figures of the pair entered her vision, the nakai respectfully bowed and said” welcome, please come.”

The pair bowed their heads slightly as they walked hurriedly on the stone pavement.

“uh...We have an engagement with KUCHIKI...”

“Yes, we have been informed, KOTETSU-sama, YAMADA-sama”

Without any doubt, their names were indeed invited to the restaurant as expected, they both exhaled a breath of air in relief.

“I will guide you, please, this way.”

Led by the elderly nakai, they advanced through the corridors facing the gardens that had been arranged to magnificent levels of detail. The amber of the polished floorboards shined.

After crossing the corridors where huge koi fish were swimming atop a pond, they were shown into a private room.

“Here it is...your guests have arrived.”

The nakai called out through the (fusuma) sliding panels, to which a reply of ‘yes’ came from the inside.

The nakai slid open the panels noiselessly, with smiles towards Hanatarô and Kiyone,” Everyone is here now”.

“KOTETSU-dono! Hanatarô!”

## **WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU**

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

Rising from her zaisu chair, Rukia greeted them. Beside her, Renji ABARAI also stood, with a bow he said, "Thank you for coming when you are so busy!"

"eh? What's this, what are you talking about!? Everyone is coming aren't they!"

The familiar soul reaper placed themselves around the extravagant low table placed in the middle of the spacious tatami room.

"Glad that you could make it~!"

"Thank you for coming, Kiyone-san, Hanatarô-kun."

Rangiku MATSUMOTO waved her hand and HINAMORI Momo swiftly bowed her head.

"Yo, KOTETSU! How's the 4th squad?"

"Isn't it fun working in the same place as your older sister?"

With a laugh, Kiyone said "fairly!" in reply to Ikkaku MADARAME and Yumichika AYASAGAWA.

"YAMADA-kun you were promoted. Congratulations."

Izuru KIRA congratulates Hanatarô who shyly touched his hand to his head.

"Th...Thank you very much, Lieutenant KIRA...!"

Observing that scene Shûhei HISAGI spoke.

"Oi, that was a while ago! Did you not see the seated members register that came out after the Great War? That was very hard to produce you know...!"

"I'm looking at it properly. It's just that his face is merely different since the promotion."

"That's true, today is the first time seeing you after the great war...I think."

"Did you not meet at the times of your physical examinations? It seems every soldier has been made to go to the coordinated relief station."

Renji asked Izuru who replied, "I'm exempt from physical examinations."

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“This guy gets examinations at the department for research and development, so it’s ok...Haven’t you read captain KUROTSUCHI’s research paper?” HISAGI asked.

“I have read it but...What’s it like coming back to life and then becoming amazingly strong?”

“You are truly an idiot.”

“Zero reading comprehension.”

Rangiku and HISAGI said in lightning quick remarks.

“e-eh? Why? what’s wrong?”

Rukia patted Renji on the back and said “I’ll explain later...”

“Well, don’t stand there forever Kiyone and co, sit here!”

That said, Rangiku pointed to two empty seats next to HINAMORI.

“But Rangiku-san, we cannot decide such things as our seating arrangements, can we? Like the head of the table or the foot of the table.”

“Now now, there’s no need to be so formal! I think it’s okay if we put the captains in front of the tokonoma\*! Right KUCHIKI?” (\*Tokonoma = alcove were art or flowers are displayed)

“Yeah...It is. If that’s alright with everyone...”

Opposite Renji and Rukia, a slightly disgruntled Tōshirō HITSUGAYA who was placed at the other end of the table, nodded in agreement indicating that it was no problem. Kiyone and Hanatarō sat down and all seats were occupied.

Curiously enough, against the tokonoma, the right-hand side of the low table was entirely male members, the left-hand side was three women + Hanatarō. Watching as Rangiku laughed saying “Hanatarō is also on the girls’ team!”, Yumichika shook his head thinking ‘good grief’.

“You’re a ‘girl’ yourself, you’re a bit old for that kind of thing don’t you think.”

“Hold your tongue Yumichika! Do you want me to knock you out!?”

“Come now, Rangiku-san! Yumichika-san also, please stop it’s no big deal!”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

Kiyone rebuked, Yumichika shrugged his shoulders and said "understood".

"Ahem." Renji stood up straight and puffed out his chest to speak.

(Saying "ahem" was clearly absurd)

(Should have said more than just cough "ahem" ...)

(don't think this "ahem" is a meaningful word...?)

Rangiku, HITSUGAYA and HISAGI thought.

Renji, with a nervous expression, looked around at all who were present. After also standing up, from the tension, Rukia's cheeks were slightly flushed.

"T-today, thank you for sparing your valuable time for us."

Rukia's voice sounded shrill and nervous. Her cheeks became increasingly red.

Renji inhaled a breath of air.

"Actually, about that, we..."

Everyone unconsciously stopped breathing due to the tension in the air, the pair's heartbeats could be heard.

"We, are getting married!"

Renji declared, together they bowed deeply.



## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

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A moment, of silence.

When the couple raised their faces, Rangiku grinned and applauded them.

“Congrats!”

“That’s great, ABARA!”

“Congratulations!”

Ikkaku and Yumichika also clapped their hands at the same time. One person after the other spoke words of congratulations and applauded.

“err...Thank you very much, we are happy. We’re happy but...Everyone isn’t surprised...?”

“We had intended to set up something like a surprise but...”

Rangiku smirked as she saw both of their expressions which was a complex mixture of both joy and confusion.

“Well, don’t you know?”

“There’s an important announcement’, I thought, when Rukia-chan didn’t include it in her message earlier, how can one think otherwise?”

To Yumichika’s words, HINAMORI also smiled and nodded in agreement.

“Since it was just me and YAMADA that were both summoned by KUCHIKI, I thought” what’s the announcement about?” until we came here, but...Everyone is here and at a place of this sort of ranking”

“That’s right. When I saw this place’s appearance, I also thought it was that kind of announcement.”

Kiyone and Izuru also agreed with everyone.

“I...Did not realise anything at all...”

As HISAGI muttered that, Rangiku quickly remarked harshly with” Thickhead! Uncool! Sleeveless!”

## **WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU**

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“huuuuh...Sleeves are irrelevant...!”

Directly opposite a moaning HISAGI, kiyone shook Hanatarô’s shoulder and asked “Hey, what’s up with you YAMADA?”

“Huh! I was so amazed that my consciousness went flying!”

Hanatarô whose eyes were left wide open, finally regained his senses.

“A-are you okay? Hanatarô!?”

Looking at her face anxiously, he replied “yes” to Rukia, Hanatarô bowed deeply to the pair.

“I’m sorry I lost consciousness when we were celebrating...”

Renji took no notice of the apology and instead showed him a smile that said, ‘it’s no problem’.

“uhh...Congratulations, Rukia-san, Renji-san...! The marriage of the two of you...I, am truly happy...! The fact is, I don’t understand why, even myself, but...I want to say” thank you”, I just feel like that.”

Hanatarô tried to reflect upon every little word so that he could convey his blessing to the best of his ability.

“Thank you, Hanatarô...”

“...Thanks”

Looking at the couple who earnestly expressed their gratitude, naturally everyone’s smiles grew.

“Once again, congratulations! KUCHIKI, Renji!”

Rangiku declared.

“May you both live together in happiness!”

As kiyone clapped her hands, a round of applause was given to the couple again.

Rukia smiled shyly, Renji displayed a toothy grin.

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

— — —HITSUGAYA thinks.

The road to restoration is still far ahead, there are many places where untouched wreckage is spread far and wide. Meanwhile, the appearance of these two people who will build up new connections, will become hope for everybody.

“What is it? You’re grinning~”

Rangiku laughed a little, poking HITSUGAYA repeatedly with her fingertips. There was no moodiness like there usually was in his voice that calmly responded with “nothing”.

“...It must have taken considerable effort to do all this, ABARA!”

HISAGI said looking around the wide room.

“No, I left the task of the restaurant up to Rukia...”

“Because I don’t know much about restaurants, I wanted the people of my household to book a restaurant with private rooms for me.”

“Well, it’s such a high-class restaurant that’s why.”

Rangiku said shrugging her shoulders.

“It’s my first time coming to kizokugai (noble city), I was insanely nervous~”

Kiyone laughed it off as Rukia apologised to her for that.

“It was reported to me that this restaurant was not pretentious, and that it was popular...”

Chiyo, a maid who usually performs miscellaneous chores around Rukia, is the youngest employee of the KUCHIKI family, she is a familiar companion for Rukia. For that reason, she entrusted the selection of the restaurant to Chiyo with confidence.

[“I will make preparations so that you have the perfect restaurant for today’s gathering!”]

She recalled Chiyo’s self-confidence, face brimming with a smile.

It is certainly a perfectly suitable place for a gathering. Apart from the fact that it is not actually ‘popular’.

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Well yeah, seems like it’s popular with the four noble families”

Ikkaku uttered, everyone nodded in agreement.

“But I think we are highly ranked enough for a place like this, aren’t we? There’s one captain, eight vice-captains and two 3rd seats?”

Yumichika said, looking around at all. Who were present?

“We don’t come to establishments like this because it’s not a question of status, it’s a question of money~”

Rangiku responded with a sigh.

“Uuh...I’m scared of the bill...!” Renji held his head in his hands, from the corner of the room, the nakai who lingered there approached to slide open the panels.

“...ABARAI-sama”

“Yes?”

“We have received payment”

“eh!? From who...!?”

“That is...From a certain ally...Nothing more.”

The nakai spoke ambiguously about that certain somebody.

(It’s Byakuya KUCHIKI...)

They guessed the person’s true identity.

“...I’m sorry, for inconveniencing my brother...” Rukia muttered, HITSUGAYA then spoke.

“I don’t think such a thing is any trouble for him...he’s happy you guys are getting married”

Raising her head, Rukia fluttered away tears that had filled her eyes.

“...we have to go thank him”

Renji uttered to Rukia in a whisper, who strongly nodded in assent many times over.

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“If the head of the family has paid for it, then do not hesitate to eat and drink!”

“Even if Renji paid for it, I don’t feel like holding back...”

“Yeah! I’m a man who doesn’t hold back when he’s being treated!”

Listening to the exchange between Ikkaku and Yumichika, an exasperated HITSUGAYA grumbled” Don’t throw your chest out like you’re proud of that...”

“...HINAMORI? What were you looking around for just now?”

Rangiku remarked, HINAMORI a little shyly pointed to the sideboard of the low table.

A beautifully carved crane was there.

“At first, I thought the carvings here are amazing. So then, if I looked around at only the celebratory things...”

In the tokonoma there was a hanging scroll suspended there with calligraphy, and white plum blossoms were arranged in a vase. There were splendid pine trees on the gold leaf covered folding screens and cherry blossoms in full bloom painted on the fusuma sliding panels.

“It’s a bit overkill for a celebration right...”

Isuzu said feeling a slight pressure in his forehead.

“Is this room normally used for celebrations?”

As HINAMORI asked, the nakai gave a relaxed smile and lowered her head whilst she replied.

“...We were able to make preparations like this with instruction we received from a certain ally.”

Surprise ran through everyone in the room as they all started to chatter.

“eh!? You were able to alter the interior design!?! Didn’t you book the reservations just this morning KUCHIKI!?”

To Kiyone’s inquiry, Rukia said” yes” and nodded.

“Everything today was down to my brother to begin with...”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

It may have been reported to him by Chiyo out of worry, Rukia thought. In contrast with a perplexed Rukia, everyone was lightly smiling.

“Captain KUCHIKI...is he not awkward at celebrating?”

Ikkaku remarked, followed immediately by Yumichika and Rangiku.

“He’s too excessive. The celebration feels congested.”

“He’s not exactly used to celebrating.”

“Captain KUCHIKI’s ‘cold demeanour’ image is unrivalled but...there must also be a side to him that’s in high spirits since his younger sister is getting married...”

HISAGI keenly stated.

“Haha...Although he might get angry if you said such a thing, I think that is very heart-warming.”

“That’s true.” Hanatarō chuckled, agreeing with HINAMORI.

“...I think he wanted to do something a little extra before KUCHIKI-san leaves his hands.”

Izuru looked at the interior of the room overflowing with good-luck charms, the true motives inside the heart of a reticent man, he thought. It was beyond imagination that this room came from his usual not very talkative self.

“Please accept it with the feeling that it is filial piety towards your older brother.”

Said HITSUGAYA. Rukia happily smiled ‘yes’.

When the couple conveyed their intention to marry to Byakuya, he only said a few words;

["I see...understood." ]

After saying just that, he left the couple behind in the room that he exited.

The next day onwards, especially because his attitude did not seem to-change and his demeanour was the same as usual when they encountered him, he did not object to the thing but it seemed he didn’t give much blessing either...the two were continuously worrying.

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

Today however, they understand that Byakuya, beyond all expectations, blesses their marriage fully, the couple felt relieved by that.

“Renji, let’s get everyone something to eat or drink soon.”

“Right! Please, we beg your assistance!”

Hearing Renji’s request, the nakai turned her body towards everyone.

“Then, we will begin...How about beverages?” She asked whilst bowing deeply in a seated position.

“It’s okay if we request whatever we want, captain KUCHIKI’s treat right!? Then let’s have your most expensive sake please~!”

Rangiku said in a cheery voice, Ikkaku also added” Bring bottles!”

“Both of you are shameless...ah, sake cups for each person please.”

HISAGI’s face looked as if he wanted to say” don’t you drink yourself after all, Yumichika!”

“The captain doesn’t need a sake cup~. It’s believed your growth will stop when you drink sake right? Captain.”

Looking at Rangiku’s broad grin, HITSUGAYA felt a twitch in his temple.

“...It is a special celebratory occasion. I will also drink.”

“Is that okay? ~ You won’t grow taller, isn’t that right? ~ No matter how much time passes, you won’t mature like that ‘Daiguren Hyôrinmaru handsome edition’ time? ~”

“Be quite MATSUMOTO! Besides that’s not the name of that form anyway!”

Rangiku is speaking about the appearance of HITSUGAYA’s Bankai at the time it was shown in the ‘Protection of the Soul King Great War’. When the ice petals that bloom in mid-air disappear, Daiguren Hyôrinmaru exhibits its true worth, corresponding with that power, HITSUGAYA temporarily grows into the body of a young man.

“That’s right Rangiku-san. That’s ‘Daiguren Hyôrinmaru version two~noble son of ice~’ is it not?”

“I conclude that it’s ‘Dai-Daiguren Hyôrinmaru.’ (\*Dai=big)

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“AYASAGAWA, MADARAME! Why are you both naming it as you please!?...And HISAGI! What were you writing down just now!?”

“Well umm...If I publicly advertise the name in 'Seireitei communication' it will raise up excitement, won't it...”

“Absolutely not!”

Elsewhere from the clamor of voices arguing back and forth, HINAMORI, with a smiling face told the nakai” some fruit sake for me please.”

“Hey captain~ please let me take pictures when you grow into an adult. At that time, I didn't have my divine-messenger\* because I was carried in the medical treatment pod, I couldn't take a photograph~!”

“I refuse!”

“The same as everyone else for me is fine” said Izuru.

“By the way, Rangiku-san what were you doing at that time? didn't see you on the battlefield”

“Me, well I was told by the captain, everyone was doing as they pleased, causing a scene and the destroyed Soul King Palace wreckage was falling down on Seireitei, I was breaking it up with Haineko until it became an okay size! Simple~! The fact is, I was doing my best!”

“Really? it was like that...! Since I was swiftly attacked and on the verge of death the whole time, I can't remember anything at all...pff that is pitiful!”

Next to Kiyone who raked a hand through her hair, Hanatarō whispered his request for some green tea to the nakai.

“[‘Great war - persons of distinguished service behind the scenes special feature’]...Not bad at all!”

HISAGI muttered, writing down his idea for a special feature in his notebook.

“...It's been a long time since things have been lively like this”

Renji laughed a little, Rukia also nodded in agreement “That's right”.



## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

Prior to the Great War, it was part of everyday life that troops from each squad would gather and drink sake together after work. But now, every squad is busy with reconstruction operations, even if you just drink with people of the same squad, troops of several squads gathering as drinking parties was extremely rare.

The couple were deeply grateful that these troops were able to accept their invitation under such circumstances.

— 1 hour and 3\_ minutes since the start of the banquet.

The drunkards, Rangiku, Yumichika and Kiyone, were persistent, only when they finished listening about the couples meeting up to the marriage proposal, information that they had inquisitively pried from them, did they finally set the pair free with a look of satisfaction.

“And? When is the ceremony?”

Ikkaku said whilst gulping down the expensive sake like water.

“I discussed it with Rukia, but we’ve planned to not conduct a ceremony, we will only register the marriage.”

“It’s such a time like this, so just being able to celebrate with everyone in this way...”

“You can’t do that!”

Rangiku shot up and slapped the low table with a \*bang\*. With eyes bulged open, she thrust her index finger towards the pair.

“You must absolutely conduct a ceremony!”

Rangiku spoke with hopeful eyes to Rukia who was at a loss for words.

“For sure, I want you to plan it because it’s such a time like this...! Everyday I’m receiving reports like ‘that squad house has been repaired, that facility has been reopened’, you know? I think this is bright news. But then again, everything is usually just” this is restored back to its former self”...!”

Hearing of the reconstruction advancement was a pleasant thing. That sentiment was no lie.

Although it was no lie—

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“When I received an email from Renji this morning, 'is this a marriage announcement?' That's what I thought, for the first time in a long while it truly felt like my heart was boiling over in excitement! I was so cheerful...! since you two made me feel so great, how you decided not to hold a ceremony...such a thing like that...I absolutely will not tolerate it!”

After saying that, Rangiku gave a tender smile. It was not merely a consequence of drunkenness, that the area around her eyes were slightly tinged with red. HINAMORI cried loudly as if the sake she had consumed had slackened her tear glands, “I also want you two to hold a wedding ceremonyyyyy...!”

“Oh~ there there...Hey ABARAI KUCHIKI-i! HINAMORI is crying like this! Take some responsibility, hold a ceremony!!!”

Kiyone barked embracing HINAMORI's head closely.

“I also agree! Besides, Renji...if you don't hold a ceremony, what if captain KUCHIKI doesn't remain silent~?”

Ikkaku emptied his sake cup with a gulp.

“At any rate, it gives captain KUCHIKI a reason to want to celebrate. If this one celebratory occasion is wasted, he'd be offended.”

Saying that, Yumichika with a confident expression looked at Renji. Blood drained from Renji's face.

“[The true revival begins from here—ABARAI, KUCHIKI, two vice-captains, marriage ceremony special feature]...50 pages, fully loaded opening spread wedding photos...not bad!”

“It's not good to connect anything to work right now, HISAGI-san”

Without paying attention to Izuru's candid advice, HISAGI reviewed the draft of the magazine's content from next month onwards.

“There are rarely marriages like this between fellow lieutenants. No one complains when you celebrate on a grand scale.”

HITSUGAYA said, calmly tilting back his sake cup.

“...thank you very much. Truly...how we are so blessed...!”

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

Rukia placed her hands on her knees grasping tightly, she looked at Renji.

“Let’s hold a ceremony, Renji! let’s allow everyone to celebrate this to the marrow of our bones!”

Though it could’ve been written off as a desperate proposal, Rukia’s eyes however were sparkling with happiness. Renji hit the palm of his hand with his fist” alright! Let’s do it!” he reciprocated with a smile.

“Everyone, we will have your attendance! Will you please accept this responsibility and come?”

Everyone gladly nodded to Renji’s invitation.

“If it’s been decided as such then I need to make preparations for a kimono in a hurry~! And putting in a booking for measurements!”

Rangiku excitedly took out her divine-messenger and began to send an electronic message to a familiar draper.

“MATSUMOTO...just the other day you said you have too many kimonos that you can’t wear them all, wasn’t a cabinet brought over to you from my office...?”

HITSUGAYA was uninterested in garments, he only had a few clothes himself. For that reason, originally there were two cabinets placed in the Captain’s office, now one remains without much use. It was absolutely no problem to have things that do not get used, but considering there was already twenty cabinets crammed into the lieutenant’s room; Rangiku’s passion to purchase even more new things whilst also possessing that many kimonos, was no small wonder to HITSUGAYA.

“I will also go for new kimono tailoring...!”

“Ah! Well then HINAMORI, shall we go together?”

“Uhh, is that okay!? I definitely want to go with you!”

Kiyone raised her hand” me too, me too!” At that exchange, Rukia’s eyes also shined.

“Lieutenant MATSUMOTO, me too...!”

## **WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU**

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“KUCHIKI you can’t! Isn’t it Captain KUCHIKI who should be deciding the arrangements for your kimono~? He will undoubtedly give orders for the highest quality things, so behave yourself!”

Rangiku said, Rukia feeling slightly abashed nodded her head in agreement.

“Err...I, have no experience in something like this.....what’s appropriate for a man to wear...?”

Hanatarô enquired after timidly raising his hand.

“Well, I think it’s okay for the guys to wear their soul-robos. After all this is acceptable uniform. Also, I have no money to buy.”

So, when he saw HISAGI laughing that it was okay and he need not worry, Hanatarô exhaled a large breath of air and said” that’s good...”

“It seems there is no money because HISAGI San does nothing but waste it.....YAMADA-kun, if you go to a draper store and tell them about the sort of budget you have and what kind of thing you want to wear, they will choose something precisely adequate for you. Try going there once.”

“Th...thank you very much, lieutenant KIRA”

Hanatarô bowed his head to Izuru over and over again until he was halted by Izuru who said,” that’s enough!”.

“I should wear Western clothes~! I wonder if you will invite Ichigo and Orihime-chan too?”

“That’s right...! Of course, we will speak with them!”

Renji replied to Yumichika, he then asked Rukia” is that okay?”

Rukia nodded ‘of course’ enthusiastically.

“...for a while, things will become busier now...”

Uttering that her face radiated bright with joy.

### **Marriage Registration**

**1**

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

6th sector - KUCHIKI family mansion

On a morning after one week since the gathering at the marriage announcement has passed.

“Nii-sama!”

Finishing squad preparations, Byakuya KUCHIKI exited his room only to be called to a halt by Rukia. She nimbly folded her knees and propped herself up with both hands on the plain wood of the hallway.

“Today I will leave for the nyuseki\* formalities”

(\*entering a family register as a married couple)

After bowing and then raising her face, Byakuya looked at Rukia with softened eyes.

“I see...has an appointment for going to the Kininkai already been settled?”

Rukia tilted her head at hearing this unfamiliar word ‘Kininkai’.

“Go to...Kininkai...? Don’t I simply submit a notification to the Personnel Record Administration Bureau...?”

Watching his younger sister-in-law who looked puzzled, Byakuya’s eyes widened in bewilderment for just a moment.

“...Chiyo”

“Yes, I’m here!”

Immediately there was a reply coming from the right-hand side behind Rukia. Turning to look over her shoulder, to her surprise, her maid Chiyo was kneeling there whilst lowering her head in a deep bow.

“Give a detailed explanation to Rukia”

Without saying what, Byakuya gave this command with only a few brief words.

Having no need to enquire back, Chiyo responded with “as you please.”

“...I will go now”

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Take care, Byakuya-sama.”

“Take care, Nii-sama!”

Chiyo said that whilst remaining in a low bow, Rukia stood up and watched his back until he was out of sight.

“Well then...Chiyo. What in the world is this 'Kininkai' that nii-sama was talking about?”

Rukia returned to her room accompanied by Chiyo, together with Renji ABARAI who had just come to pick her up, they sat face to face with Chiyo.

“Kininkai is an abbreviation for 'Kinin\* (\*Golden seal) noble assembly. In cases of marriages involving the four noble families it is compulsory to submit a document to the Kinin noble assembly, that document should be presented by the head of the family themselves.”

“I see...! So that's why nii-sama asked me if I had a fixed appointment for going to the Kininkai”

Chiyo nodded 'that's right'.

“Where is this 'Kinin noble assembly'?”

When Renji asked, Chiyo laughed” you should avoid being impatient, Renji-sama!”, she spread out a piece of paper with four folds that was kept in between her waist sash, in front of the other two.

“In which case, please allow Chiyo to deliver an explanation regarding the process of the nyuseki!”

On that paper that was entitled [Rukia-sama, Renji-sama course of events up to the nyuseki], there was beautifully brushed writing and a myriad of details were penned. Chiyo pointed at them one by one, she carefully explained the numerous formalities leading up to the nyuseki.

“It...it's this complicated!?”

“I even feel the ill will of someone who doesn't intend to get married...!”

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

The pair who had finished listening to everything, both had their heads resting in her arms, a summary of the nyuseki process is as follows.

1- For the marriages of persons residing within Seireitei - submission of marriage registration to the (7th sector) Personnel Record Administration Bureau.

2 - For the marriages of 13 Court Guard Squads soldiers - submission of regimental soldier marriage registration to the (4th sector) Court Guards Soldier Record Administration Bureau.

3 - For the marriages of official seats and above - submission of high spirit marriage registration to the (6th sector) Higher Order Spirit Rank Administration Bureau.

4 - For the marriages of nobles - submission of noble marriage registration to the (Central 1st sector) Noble Assembly.

5 - For the marriages of the four great noble families, a marriage certificate is presented to the Kinin Noble Assembly (Central 1st sector), the husband and wife are present under the head of the family who submits it.

6 - Report to the captain/vice-captain of the entire squad at the squad's headquarters.

"By the way, the reception counter of the Kinin Noble Assembly is only open from 9am to 11am, so please be aware of that! It is for that reason that Byakuya-sama was concerned about going to a Kininkai appointment"

"Is that so, that's no good I can't take half the day off...!"

Nodding a 'yes', Chiyo looked at her pocket watch.

"If you are going to face this process from now...because you are both well accustomed to using shunpo, Chiyo thinks you will be just in time to present yourselves for regimental soldier marriage registration!"

"Even if we use shunpo we can't visit more than two places!? Right now it's still..."

"It is seven minutes past nine"

"It is!?! I understand that the Kininkai is compulsory, I hope I can go as far as submitting a document to the Noble Assembly!"

## **WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU**

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Renji-sama...the offices have a waiting time, that part is unavoidable. Since there is no way that each administration Bureau will simply do marriage registration at the reception desk...”

The Personnel record Administration Bureau that deal with people going in and out of Seireitei is particularly busy, it was famous for its long waiting times, it is said that they handle all procedures throughout the whole day.

“Renji, I wonder if there is no help for what you were saying to Chiyo...? Chiyo do you mind if I take these instructions?”

“Of course not!”

Chiyo gladly folded the paper up and respectfully held it out to Rukia. Putting it into her pocket, Rukia clapped Renji’s shoulder and stood up, “let’s go”

Marriage Registration

2

pages 96-113

7th squad barracks.

Whilst walking Goro the pet dog at the back of the squad building, the 7th squad’s captain, Tetsuzaemon IBA, went around the premises to collect the previous day’s paperwork.

The typical collection method is that after work, each soldier submits their paperwork of the day to the collection box in front of the office, but the former captain Sajin KOMAMURA did this in a specific way, “Morning collection walk”, which IBA continued to this day.

Upon finishing the collection, IBA returned Goro to his pen, he took a seat on a bench that was placed next to that pen. The bench was right under the growing shade of a Yamamomo tree, and a refreshing breeze was blowing. IBA took out a bundle of reports from the document’s container, he shifted his sunglasses to his forehead and eyed the contents thoroughly, he then inked areas of concern in red.

When the paper bundle reached half its original amount, Goro who was sprawled out by IBA’s feet with a white fur coat that swayed in the gentle breeze, pricked up his ears, and then raised his body.



## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“What’s wrong, Goro?”

Goro barked once as if to bring attention to something, he gazed intently at the alleyway beside the squad building and wagged his tail excitedly. Before long from that alleyway appeared two young werewolves wearing student’s hakama indicating they were students of the Shino Academy, they started sprinting into a tumble.

“Urui! Shôma!”

“Tetsu-saaaaan!”

The older brother Urui, who’s grey fur fluttered, jumped at IBA’s right leg as he stood up from the bench.

“Tetsu-san, Tetsu-san!”

The younger brother Shôma who had an ivory-white coat of fur, clung to the left leg also. Goro delightfully ran laps around IBA.

“What have you been up to so early in the morning?”

After patting their heads, IBA grasped the back of their collars, peeled them off of him and then lowered them back to the ground. The pair playfully followed and pet a slightly dishevelled Goro whilst talking.

“Since we are starting the apprenticeship from tomorrow, throughout today we are learning the path leading to the barracks of the squad we are temporarily affiliated with, sensei told us to examine what’s around us!”

Shôma declared, “it’s the last day off before things become terribly busy!” Urui added.

“So then, Tetsu-san! We...”

Pulling Urui’s sleeve whilst breaking him off mid-sentence, Shôma said “Big brother that’s unfair! I will also say it!”

“Well then, let’s say it on go! Ready, set, go!”

“We were assigned to the 7th squad!”

From around his waist height, two sets of cute round eyes stared up at IBA.

“Both of you! That’s amazing!”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Right! It’s awesome! Since it’s 1 out of 13 and 1 out of 13...err...”

“1 out of 169!”

“Ah! That’s the probability! Big brother calculates fast...!”

With a “that’s right!” Urui placed his hands on his hips and threw out his chest. The thick bushy tail that protruded from his hakama swayed left and right.

Normally, the former apprentices were selected at random, the head of the academy probably allocated them both to the 7th squad whilst considering their feelings, IBA thought.

“Ah, that’s right! We wanted Tetsu-san to make us a tail hole again, today we’ve brought our soul-robos’s hakama given to us by sensei!”

Urui tucked up his sleeves, from a bag he took out a black hakama accompanied by a small sewing box which he then handed over to IBA. “Mine too” Shōma also took a hakama out from the bag.

“Of course...even though I’m not your mother...”

Despite uttering that complaint, IBA opened up the sewing box and began working. Contrary to that manly appearance, IBA was nimble fingered, from carpentry to housework and sewing, he could do anything. It was also IBA that made a hole in their student hakama for their tails to pass through which the wolfman brothers were currently wearing.

Urui and Shōma sat on both sides like they were-sandwiching IBA, they watched fixedly, captivated by his skill.

“Hey, Tetsu-san. We went to meet Sajin-sama last night. We informed him that ‘we are starting our apprenticeship from the day after tomorrow’.”

Urui said whilst focusing his gaze on the tip of the needle sowing forward with a \*prick-prick\*.

“You snuck out of your dormitories again...! Then, was Sajin-dono doing well?”

“Uh huh! When we went and hunted such a plump pheasant!”

Shōma spread both of his hands widely with a complacent smile.

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

"I see. that's good"

"It was still warm and delicious"

Urui watched as Shôma licked his lips, "That's bad manners!" he chided.

"Sajin-sama wanted us to tell Tetsu-san that as a leader of people you must, more than anyone else, take care of yourself"

As Urui said that, IBA's hand suddenly stopped moving.

"Tetsu-san was at the training field late at night and was discovered by Sajin-sama" Shôma giggled.

"...He can see through anything.....I'm no match for Sajin-dono..."

IBA sighed and then laughed a little.

Sajin KOMAMURA did battle using the secret "Humanisation technique" handed down to him by his wolfman family in order to strike down the enemies of Genryûsai, in the end, the price he paid for that was transforming into an animal that could not speak.

Along with becoming a wolf, KOMAMURA survived through the Great War, he remained hidden in the hills behind the training fields, IBA reported to everyone that "Captain was killed in action".

All the existing captains and vice-captains felt the spiritual pressure of KOMAMURA - although it became much smaller and could not compare to before - but respecting the decision of IBA, they dealt with it as if he were killed in action.

Even when it became a popular topic of conversation that a large wolf had settled in the hills behind the 7th squad's training grounds, everyone in the inner circle thought "it's Sajin KOMAMURA..." whilst maintaining an air of indifference towards the subject.

One night, after half a year had passed since KOMAMURA began living on the hillside.

IBA thought that it seemed as if Sajin was summoning him, he jumped up from his futon. He grabbed his cloak and rushed out the front.

"It's going to be getting reasonably cold..."

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

IBA walked upon the training grounds, KOMAMURA sat at the foot of a grass covered hill. When he caught sight of IBA's figure, he got up and gave a small bark, he then led IBA up the hill. As he followed, he treads firmly on the soft ground where fallen leaves had accumulated, he was guided before a hole, approximately one meter in diameter, dug directly into a steep slope.

"Is there something inside...?"

IBA stooped down and concentrated his gaze inside the pitch-dark hole.

"Who is it? Sajin-sama...?"

He thought he had imagined hearing the small voice coming from inside. KOMAMURA barked towards the inside, there were sounds of something stirring about, two young wolfman boys crept out. They were wearing clothes that were similar to rags, their fur was slightly dirty, only their eyes were a breath-taking vibrant orange colour.

"This is...! Are they wolfman children...!?"

Looking at the surprised IBA, the two werewolves with cute eyes said "Woow!" in a raised voice.

"It's Tetsuzaemon IBA San!"

"Awesome, awesome! It's the real Tetsuzaemon-san!"

The pair delightfully ran around IBA.

"Sajin-sama called him here! Thank you very much!"

The young boy with grey fur threw his arms around KOMAMURA's neck. KOMAMURA responded with a sniff and softened his eyes.

"Tetsu-san! We came here because we want to become soul reaper!"

The other young boy with ivory-white fur, jumped about whilst grasping IBA's clothes, he tore himself away and said "hey! When people meet people, they introduce themselves first!"

The pair kneeled alongside each other whilst resting on both hands in front of IBA.

"It's nice to meet you! I am Urui of the wolfman family! I'm this guy's older brother"

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“I am called Shōma! I’m the younger brother!”

In unison they voiced a “pleased to meet you” and bowed.

“I’m Tetsuzaemon IBA. 7th squad captain.”

IBA bowed sternly, “we know!” Shōma laughed.

“We read this and decided we want to become soul reaper!”

Urui carefully took out a worn-out magazine that was inside his pocket, he showed the front cover to IBA.

It was a squad 7 special feature issue of ‘Seireitei communication’ published many years ago.

IBA carried the two back to the squad house, they both took a bath first of all. Meanwhile, he quickly prepared rice balls and soup in the kitchen, the pair got up from the bathtub and put on new clothes, they then sat in front of the hibachi\* (\*traditional Japanese heating device) and ate their meal. KOMAMURA hated the idea of heading inside, but he was pulled in regardless given no choice by the brothers, thinking “good grief” at the situation, he settled himself down in the corner of the room.

“So you guys, how did you come here?”

IBA asked the two who were now completely clean, whilst he was warming up with hot sake.

“We were packed into uncle’s\* cargo!” (Note: this ‘uncle’ person is not actually their uncle, ojisan is not uncle in this context but using other words like ‘mister’ didn’t flow well with the text so he will be referred to as ‘uncle’)

“Shōma, he won’t understand if you just talk about that all of a sudden! Tetsu-san, is it okay if this becomes a little long?”

Watching as IBA nodded, Urui put down his soup bowl and began talking.

“Because our wolfman family normally live inside a den, we almost invariably don’t know anything about the situation of the outside world. Even if we ask adults, they say they don’t know, so I thought I should go see for myself, together with Shōma, we secretly sneaked out of our den at the dead of night...”

## **WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU**

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“We went to a nearby town! The stars that came out were amazing!”

“The wolfman family live on top of a large mineral deposit where various gems are mined, they are extracted for business. Since we knew that once a month, an adult takes the gems to a nearby town to exchange them for clothes and other supplies, we followed the scent and went there. It was night so there was no one on the streets but, the both of us got to take a look around for a while.”

“Then, we met uncle!”

At the edge of town, a large refined looking man with a muscular build, was happy to see the two small werewolves and gave a broad smile.

“That person, he always carried out the gem transactions with our wolfman family, he was uncle goods transporter.”

“This book, he gave it to us!”

Shôma put aside his food and instead picked up and embraced the “Seireitei communication” magazine.

“Since we knew uncle would be in town in the evenings of the days the adults would go bartering for goods, we went to meet up with him many times, we heard about the outside world...stories of the Court Guards squads. The fact that a very powerful ryoka came, that there was a battle to protect a human world town, that there was an awfully huge war and a lot of soul reaper lost their lives...”

“Apparently, a lot of the 7th squad soul reaper also passed away. Sajin-sama too...we were told he was dead. However, we would not believe that! Such a big, strong and cool person like Sajin-sama could not be dead...!”

“So then, we decided to go and confirm it. If he had truly died, at that moment...we said, let’s become soul reaper in Sajin-sama’s place!”

The Hibachi’s glowing embers were reflecting in the eyes of the two who looked directly up at IBA. The original orange mixed with red, it appeared as if the insides of their eyes were set ablaze.

“If we said that to our mother, she would tell us ‘don’t say such reckless things!’ She’d get so angry that she’d lock our bedroom door from the outside at night...in the daytime the adults are watching and we can’t sneak out, we were worried about what to do, on the day our father had bartering duty, he took us with him to town”

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

Before departing, their father said” since they’ve been secluded in a den the whole time, they’ve started talking about becoming soul reaper. If I show them around outside a little it may calm them down.” He persuaded their dissenting mother and then took the pair out.

“Our father did the business transaction at the edge of town with uncle goods transporter, at the end he said,” won’t you transport these guys to Seireitei”.

“At that moment father handed over a red gem wrapped in a cloth; I saw it!”

“It was a ruby, I think. I guess that was our transport fee...father said, 'shrewdly follow down the path that Sajin-sama has opened up' with a smile he sent us off.”

Watching his father’s figure as he waved his hands enthusiastically, Urui suddenly thought that their father also might in fact have wanted to become soul reaper. 'Did he give that up when we were born’.

As they both remembered their father, they seemed lonely, their ears turned downwards. The quiet room resounded with the noise of crackling charcoal.

“Uncle gave us cloth to hide our faces, so we wore that and walked through Rukongai for several days...we were then concealed inside a wooden box and loaded onto a cart before a huge gate.”

“We were taken in swiftly without being exposed but, we were told we couldn’t be unloaded in a place where there were people watching, so we went to uncle’s delivery destination! It was a very big workshop called 'ÔMAEDA Jewels’.”

“The ÔMAEDAS’ company buy gems from our wolfman family...!”

‘ÔMAEDA Jewels’ is one of soul society’s Jewellers run by the ÔMAEDA family. The second squad’s vice-captain Marechiyo ÔMAEDA serves as the manager of the precious metals department; it was a familiar company IBA thought, but he’s never heard of there being any relation to the wolfman family before.

“To start with, we thought we should meet Tetsu-san, we asked uncle about the location of the 7th squad. In order to not be discovered by people, we only travelled at night time, we passed through mountainous terrain and forests...on the night of the third day, in the middle of the forest we detected the scent of a fellow wolf...!”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“We thought, Sajin-sama is alive after all! We followed the scent and arrived at that hole, finally we found Sajin-sama!”

At that moment their excitement returned, Shōma stood up and started hopping up and down on the spot.

“We explained to Sajin-sama about everything until we came here, 'Tetsuzaemon will surely be of help to you' he told us...”

“Wait a minute! You guys can understand the captain’s speech...!?”

“Eh? Tetsu-san doesn’t understand?”

“Shōma, people don’t understand wolf language. That’s normal.”

Urui declared, Shōma sadly lowered his tail and walked towards KOMAMURA. Sitting beside him Shōma said “Sajin-sama is there anything you want to tell Tetsu-san? I can relay it for you”, he brought his ear close to KOMAMURA’s mouth. After pondering on this for a little while, KOMAMURA gave several low barks, catching his words, Shōma came back in front of the hibachi with a smiling face.

“What did captain say...?”

“First of all, he wants you to stop calling him 'captain'! Since Tetsu-san is the captain now, it’s uncomfortable to be called so”

“I, I see...! I apologise, ca.....Sajin-dono!”

Facing towards KOMAMURA, IBA bowed his head, “you saved it at the last moment just now!” Urui said.

“And one more thing, 'Tetsuzaemon is well suited for parenting' he says!”

“Huuuuuh...!?”

“Hahaha! I also think so too Sajin-sama!”

“Me too I also think so!”

Watching as the pair rolled with laughter, a slightly embarrassed IBA took a gulp of his sake.

“What in the world do you think the time is right now...captain IBA!?”



## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

Vice-captain Yasochika IEMURA, who came to give a warning to what seemed like soldiers staying up late, was lost for words when he saw the line-up of faces illuminated by the Hibachi.

(Who are those wolf children!? And could that big wolf in the corner possibly be Sajin KOMAMURA-sama then...!? So does that mean those wolf children are members of Sajin-sama's family...!?)

"Ah! I know this guy!" Said Shōma pointing at IEMURA whose mouth was agape.

"He's the person that's third seat of the 4th squad!"

"If I'm not mistaken...that is IEMURA-san! Hey Tetsu-san, why is there a 4th squad member here so late?"

"You both might have read in 'Seireitei Communication' that this guy is in the 4th squad, well he's my vice-captain now"

Hearing that, the pair exchanged a glance at each other's faces" vice-captain!?" they rushed over to IEMURA.

"Nice to meet you! I'm called Urui, of the wolfman family!"

"I'm called Shōma!"

Together they said," Pleased to meet you lieutenant IEMURA!" and they bowed.

"Th-that's very kind.....I'm Yasochika IEMURA, vice-captain of squad 7..."

"These children, I will take responsibility over these wolfman brothers"

"Tetsu-san, you're accepting us!?"

"Hooray!"

The two kicked off the floor, flying past the hibachi to embrace IBA. Behind his sunglasses, IBA looked fondly at them, he gently placed his hands on the two heads.

"What are you mumbling about IEMURA, it's off-putting! Spit it out clearly!"

"No, that...it's just that captain IBA makes that kind of facial expression too..."

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

It was the first time in half a year seeing IBA with a smiling face. Naturally he was a man who didn't smile very much, after the Great War and since the captain's inauguration, his face was always tense and stern.

"What, you have the cheek to say that...!"

IBA tried to throw his sake cup at IEMURA after feeling embarrassed that his smiling expression was seen but was stopped from doing so by KOMAMURA. KOMAMURA barked several times in a row, before long Urui translated the contents.

"You get too worked up. You need to loosen up the tension in your shoulders some more"

Dropping his raised arm, IBA apologised to IEMURA," sorry".

"Please don't apologise...it was on the spur of the moment. I will understand if I get a scolding right now however, if you will just allow me to say this..."

IEMURA came closer to the hibachi, he sat on his heels in front of IBA and pushed his spectacles up.

"Captain IBA, I believe you have the tendency to be a little too stubborn. You train until late every night, regardless of the late hour I must wake up to heal your wounds. It seems as if I was seated as vice-captain because I was from the 4th squad. Even if I tell you to take a little rest, you do not listen, you relinquish your day off to train again and again...watching the captain being like that, the troops also train all the time until late, they barge into my place to fix their broken arms and fractured bones. Even when I have vice-captain duties. Everyone says, 'I want to be strong like captain someday', 'I want to be able to support the captain someday', truly...you are a wonderful captain. Except in just one place, you don't seem to appreciate your vice-captain much."

IEMURA said almost without taking a breath, he fearfully raised his face, IBA silently held out a sake cup for him.

"...thank you very much"

IEMURA accepted it and remained quiet as the sake was poured.

The werewolves who were exhausted fell asleep atop IBA's knees; their light snoring could be heard. Settling against the Hibachi's embers, the two continued to drink together in peace.

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“Look! How do you like it?”

Having completed sewing holes for their tails to pass through, IBA handed over the hakama one by one to each of the two.

“Thank you, Tetsu-san,! Is it okay if we also wear them now?”

Shôma said hastily, raising his hands to the cords of his student hakama,“ wait wait” he was halted by IBA.

“Keep it for tomorrow! I have to return to work already”

“Okay...”

Shôma disappointedly put the hakama back into the bag.” Hey Shôma, let’s go!” Urui urged, whilst waving enthusiastically at IBA they dashed towards the alleyway beside the squad building.

Rukia and Renji who received a numbered ticket at the reception desk of the Personnel Record administration Bureau, decided to use the lengthy waiting time to visit the 7th squad barracks which was nearby to the administration bureau, they ran into the other pair in that alleyway.

“Wh-what! Those are the kids people have been talking about...!”

The young brothers of the wolfman family who pass through the academy are rumoured to be ‘super cute’, they were particularly quite famous amongst the female troops who liked cute things.

“Awesome! Two vice-captains!”

Shôma’s eyes sparkled as he looked up at the couple.

“Tetsu-san! Lieutenant ABARAI and Lieutenant KUCHIKI have arrived!”

Urui went back to the rear of the squad building to call out to IBA.

“Yo, wolf kid! What’s your name?”

Renji bent down, his line of sight connected with Shôma’s.

“I’m Shôma! From tomorrow, I’m an apprentice soul reaper of the 7th squad!...cool! I wish I also had that sort of hair colour!”

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Hehe, you think it’s a nice colour? My real hair?”

Looking at Renji’s crimson hair, Shôma wagged his tail.

“Yeah...!”

Rukia approached closer as though she was being drawn in by that fluffy tail, Shôma suddenly pricked up his ears and began sniffing. Following the source of the scent, his nose was brought near Rukia’s body.

“Hey, hey!”

Renji caught the back of Shôma’s collar and held him up.

“You can’t just go boldly sniffing a woman like that! If you sniff around like that it will look bad!”

“...Don’t sniff around in the first place”

“I’m sorry! But I did that because there was a sweet scent, I instinctively...”

Hearing ‘sweet’, Rukia said “I see, was it the scent of this?” from her sleeve she took out a small pouch. Opening the mouth of that pouch, she showed the inside to Shôma.

“Candy!”

Looking at the multicoloured candy, Shôma unconsciously licked the tip of his nose whilst sticking out his tongue. Rukia closed the pouch and handed it over to Shôma.

“Eat it together with your older brother”

“Yay!”

Shôma hoisted up the pouch and hopped up and down, from behind him Urui, who had returned with IBA in tow said, “Thank you very much Lieutenant KUCHIKI!”

“We must go now! Shall we look around the premises?”

“Oh yeah, right! Tetsu-san thank you for the tail holes!”

“Tetsu-san see you again tomorrow! Goodbye, lieutenant ABARAI, lieutenant KUCHIKI!”

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

IBA urged them forward, ahead of him the pair looked as if they were competing as they left.

“The brothers are very pleasant...”

“They seem quite popular at the academy from what we hear.”

“I strongly understand that feeling...!”

“That fluffy tail, it’s making me want to touch it or something”

Rukia’s thoughts ran away to that wagging tail, as if it had seared itself into her memory just now.

“So, what did you guys come here for? By the looks of it, it seems like you’re off duty but...”

Renji was wearing his soul-robos but with his vice-captain badge removed, Rukia was clad in a cool, pale blue-green kimono.

IBA put his hand on his chin whilst looking in the direction of the pair who lowered their heads together.

“We’re going to be getting married now, so we’ve come to pay a visit”

“We will continue as lieutenants together with being a married couple, so we came to say, please continue your support towards us”

“I see, right! Fellow vice-captains getting married, this is a joyous thing!”

IBA clapped his large hands, applauding the shy couple. However, suddenly attaining a thought about something, his hands stopped.

Marriage, marriage registration, Personnel Record Administration Bureau, waiting time — inside IBA, everything linked together into one.

“Right now the both of you, you’re under the Personnel Bureau’s damned long waiting time?”

“That’s right! Really, how is it this long!?”

“We thought we’d use the opportunity to come here, sorry to disturb you, captain IBA...”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

"I don't mind! I suppose we're busy with one thing or another, thank you for showing up!"

IBA clapped Rukia's shoulder with a pat, he struck Renji's shoulder with a fist.

"Ouch!"

"Keep it up, ABARA!"

IBA grinned. Renji answered back with a "yes sir!" and a bow.

"I have to return back to work, since I'm still in the middle of filling in paperwork. I wish you happiness!"

IBA glanced at the documents tucked under his arm, he then lightly raised his hand at the pair as he went to return back to the squad barracks.

---

When they returned to the path leading towards the Personnel Record Administration Bureau, Rukia asked Renji a question.

"Renji...captain IBA, was he always that way from the beginning...?"

"Even though I was told he was 'a certain way'.....I didn't think anything in particular about it you know?"

"I see..."

Rukia appeared as if she was thinking about something, "what is it?" Renji enquired.

"I don't have that much of a deep relationship with captain IBA but.....I suppose I was surprised by how easy it was to talk like that.....I had the impression that it would be difficult for me to talk to him"

"Well.....he's not the easy to talk to type"

"What would be good to say...uh...amicable...like he's become gentle..."

Rukia shifted both hands, trying to represent something fluffy and round.

"That shape...are you thinking about those small wolf kids...?"

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“That’s right, that’s it Renji! Perhaps captain IBA had-changed because he has become the acting parent of those children...!”

Even though it was through sunglasses, when IBA looked at the wolfman brothers, his eyes were very gentle.

(.....certainly, if such a fluffy thing is wandering around near oneself, it’s impossible to come off as being unapproachable forever...! )

Rukia strongly thought whilst at the same time deeply lamenting the fact that their apprenticeship was not at the 13th squad instead.

### **Marriage Registration**

#### **3**

Squad 4 barracks office.

After finishing her patrol of the Coordinated Relief Station, Isane KOTETSU returned to the squad barracks, “I’m back~!” she called out whilst opening the door of the office.

“Wel-come w-ack w-ig sis”

The younger sister Kiyone who was grappling with piled up paperwork on the tabletop lifted her face up and replied whilst her mouth remained stuffed with suzu castella\*. (\*Bell shaped Japanese sponge cake)

“Oh! Eating sweets during work again!”

“It’s fine! It’s only us! I need to consume enough sugar because I use my head for paperwork”

“You did that at the 13th squad too right? Without eating sweets”

“No no, the amount of paperwork at the 4th squad is different! I absolutely cannot do without eating this~”

Kiyone said whilst tossing the suzu castella up into the air, catching it with her mouth before eating it. She did not stop herself from eating even as Isane chided her” Ugh! Can you not spill any sugar on the documents?”

“Oh yeah, before coming here just now, I saw KUCHIKI-san and ABARAI-kun!”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Oh! they said they were getting married right?”

“Yup! They’ll both keep up as vice-captains so, they said they appreciate your continued support. It looked like they were in the process of going to file their marriage registration at the Court Guards Soldier Record Administration Bureau.”

“Oh, it’s near this place”

“I was asked if the wait for the Soldier Bureau was long, so I informed them that it’s quick around there”

As the name suggests, the Court Guards Soldier Record Administration Bureau, is the administrative office that manages the information and data of soldiers belonging to the 13 Court Guard Squads, and since it is only off duty officers who visit the reception window, the waiting time is remarkably short compared to that of the Personnel Record Administration Bureau.

“When I became vice-captain, I also went there to adjust the record of my squad affiliation.....it’s already been three years since then...”

After the death of former captain Retsu UNOHANA, Isane was urgently appointed as squad 4 captain. It was a compulsory appointment where refusal or putting it on hold for later could not be permitted. Squad 4 is a facility that includes the Coordinated Relief Station which is a hospital for soul reaper, it was impossible to proceed forward in the absence of a leader at a time when they had numerous wounded people from war.

[“It may be difficult but, I have no choice but to request this of you.....I’m sorry” ]

KYÔRAKU himself visited Isane, he left behind a written appointment letter. For a short while, Isane stared in blank amazement at the letter, snapping up she chased after KYÔRAKU, she caught up with him at the spot he had exited the squad barracks, she put forward her wish to have Kiyone KOTETSU installed as her vice-captain at the same time as her own inauguration as captain.

“Hey, big sis. Your vice-captain, why was it me?”

Kiyone asked without pausing her hands from her task.

“What’s this all of a sudden?”



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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“Come to think of it, I believe I’ve never asked you. Since we grew accustomed to working around each other as soon as I took office, we were able to do our best, right? Both of us were feeling down on top of that...”

“.....that’s why, I wished that”

Isane muttered those few words whilst processing the paperwork one by one.

“At that time, I...wanted to stay close to Kiyone, and I wanted Kiyone close to me so I can be there for her”

Isane with UNOHANA, Kiyone with UKITAKE. They had just lost partners that they had felt a mutual sense of reverence for. Isane thought they could not overcome it unless they supported each other.

“Of course, not only that! Kiyone’s recovery-arts\* (\*healing kidô) ability was also taken into account!”

“Yeah, thanks.....but is it enough to be nominated for vice-captain?”

Kiyone laughed and turned her head, becoming a little shy at the serious tone of the conversation.

“What are you talking about! You were number one out all your classmates in recovery-arts!”

“I guess so~ but learning in a classroom as opposed to practical training was completely useless”

“seems that it was written in the data of the academy that your recovery-arts ability was so high that they had to supplement that more...captain UNOHANA put off saying it all that time. In truth, Kiyone, you were supposed to be assigned to the 4th squad.”

“Really!? If I remember correctly, I wrote down my wish to join the 4th squad on the course evaluation report...”

Isane revealed that her younger sister wished to work at the same squad, UNOHANA smiled softly at Isane and informed her of the true state of affairs.

“Just before the official decision was made, Genryûsai-sama suggested to the head of the Academy and captain UNOHANA that Kiyone be assigned to the 13th squad. Captain UNOHANA said that they wanted to place a young person whose speciality is

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

recovery-arts near captain UKITAKE.....particularly at that time, Captain UKITAKE's health had become discouraging, captain UNOHANA would frequently go up to ugendero\* for his medical treatment."

(\*ugendero - UKITAKE's quarters where he would often go to rest)

"Right it was like that...! At the time, though I also talked about it to you big sis, it was strange that they immediately sent in a fresh recruit to be the captain's personal guardian. I see...Genryūsai-sama..."

Kiyone once again recalls how truly loved captain UKITAKE was by everyone. New recruits themselves as well as veteran soldiers alike held deep admiration for UKITAKE whenever they encountered him, Kiyone instantly came to love him a lot.

"When Kiyone joined squad 13, captain UKITAKE started to gradually recover.....and when captain UNOHANA returned from her house calls, she would speak highly of Kiyone, I was very happy"

"What a wonderful younger sister" she would say as Isane remembers being beyond ecstatic about that herself.

"Because Kiyone has the seal of approval from Captain UNOHANA, she can confidently bear the title of squad 4 lieutenant, so that's enough!"

"It's not that I'm losing my self-confidence but...thanks big sis"

Kiyone smiled reaching her hand out towards the suzu castella. However, the inside of the paper bag was empty already.

"Oh, it's all gone. Big sis, don't you have anything sweet?"

"You're still eating? Don't you have dinner?"

"Even though I'm full I still have room for dessert, so it's fine~"

Whilst she said that, Isane opened a cupboard which was tightly packed with sweets.

"There's so many! Does my big sis really eat sweets like this...?"

"Those are snacks for the flower arrangement class. Everyone has tea and sweets whilst observing the flower arrangement"

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

UNOHANA used to host monthly flower arrangement classes, now Isane continues to do so. Kiyone does not participate because her legs get too numb whilst sitting on her heels, however it is a popular class where most of the female troops of the 4th squad attend.

“Even so, it looks like a lot...”

The shelves were crammed full of a variety of sweets.

“...I just had to buy those. They were sweets that Yachiru-chan liked.”

-----

It was the last words Isane exchanged with Yachiru KUSAJISHI.

As she applied the spiritual-pressure healing treatment in both of Yachiru’s arms which ended up broken and fractured by sternritter V ‘The Visionary’, Gremmy Thoumeaux’s ability, Kiyone was finally able to release the breath she had held in.

“Phew...with this, you should be able to move one way or another”

“Thank you Kote-chin! \*”

(\*Just in case you’ve forgotten Yachiru calls Isane ‘kote chin’)

Smiling and getting up, Yachiru looked up at the “stage” Gremmy had produced. Kenpachi ZARAKI and Gremmy battled on top of an enormous cuboid that was formed by raising up the ground.

“I have to go!”

“Aah, please wait lieutenant KUSAJISHI! You shouldn’t move around so vigorously yet...”

Isane’s outstretched arm slipped through quickly as she broke off into a run.

“Finally...Finally Ken-chan can call out to me...”

She faintly murmured.

Those were Yachiru’s words, the last that Isane had heard.

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Since there is no longer a chairwoman, the soul reaper women’s Association meetings do not take place anymore...vice president Nanao-san is busy, and Research and Development is in charge of Nemu-san who is currently still a baby...”

Kiyone resumed her work whilst gulping down konpeito\* (\*a type of Japanese candy), Isane leant forward with an “ eh!?”

“Nemu-san, she’s already grown up to the state of a baby!? The last time I saw her she was not yet completely...”

She recalls being absolutely perplexed at being introduced to “ Nemuri Hachigō”, a clump of flesh floating around inside a transparent cylinder filled with culture fluid.

“Because everyone was saying they were scared and they didn’t want to go, during this time I had to take the medical examination results from those guys at the Technological Development Bureau, right? So, I saw Nemu-san at the time, she was wildly crawling around the department. When I greeted her, she stopped and bowed her head...it was cute”

Hachigō was created based on the brain retrieved from the artificially created soul Nemuri Nanagō, although the body is different, Nanagō’s memory and spirit is being taken over.

“Haa...I want to see...! I wonder if it’s okay if I also go and see her?”

“Why not? I got the impression that Captain KUROTSUCHI can’t help but brag about her”

Isane instantly broke into a smile and said” I wonder when is good” she happily turned over the tabletop schedule book, suddenly she lifted her face as if something had just struck her mind.

“Shall we also invite everyone when we go to meet Nemu-san...? The soul reaper Women’s Association”

“...yeah, I think that’s a great idea!”

Kiyone nodded in agreement and gave a broad smile.

This was the first step towards the launch of a new order of the soul reaper Women’s Association.

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

### **Marriage Registration**

#### **4**

6th Squad Barracks - Lieutenant's room.

After they finished submitting their documents to the Higher Order Spirit Rank Administration Bureau earlier than expected, they had quite some time left until the Noble Assembly reception counter was opened which they had to visit next, Renji who was accompanied by Rukia, came to pack things up at his private quarters.

“You haven't tidied up at all!?”

As soon as she opened the (fusuma) sliding screen, Rukia was dumbfounded by the disastrous scene before her.

Surrounding the futon that was laid out at the centre of the room, clothes, books, a soccer ball to muscle training goods, every possible item was scattered about in utter chaos.

“It's because I was occupied one way or another It couldn't be helped you know!? There's a box over there, so you can gradually pack everything in however you want”

“It's okay to do it however we want? But shouldn't we consider sorting it out...”

“Nah, right now speed is essential! We'll sort everything out at our new home!”

Whilst wondering whether that would be the reality, Rukia began packing things up off the floor and into the box.

Officially seated members who are 9th seat or above, are given private rooms within the squad barracks. Most people go to sleep and wake up there, however people wishing to live outside the squad barracks are given a class of housing appropriate to their station. No more than one room of a housing complex is rented out to those up to 3rd seat, but when it comes to captains and vice-captains, they are provided with detached housing large enough to be called 'mansions'.

Until now, Renji was living at the squad barracks, Rukia at the KUCHIKI mansion, after the establishment of their marriage they will both utilise that system and move into a mansion together built in the central first sector.

“This looks okay! I'll tidy up bit by bit later myself. Thanks, Rukia!”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“This is...enough?...alright”

To Rukia, the place still seemed like it was cluttered, but she convinced herself it's good enough if the person himself says it's okay.

“There's still a little time. Drink some tea or...”

Breaking Renji off mid-sentence, “Renji-san!”, the third seat of the 6th squad, Yuki Rickichi came running down the hallway whilst waving his hands.

“That's good! Made it in time!”

“What is it Rickichi? What do you want with me?”

“Well both of you rather than just Renji-san. And not me but my younger brother”

“Me also?”

“Younger brother?”

“Younger brother, I'll call him”, the pair turned their heads as he left them on that spot, Rickichi continued to run through the hallway. Not even a minute had passed and Rickichi had returned accompanied by the 13th squad's Ryûnosuke YUKI.

“You.....you're Ryûnosuke YUKI!? Aren't you stationed on duty!?”

“Heh! I apologise! Shino-san should be undertaking those duties sufficiently, so please pardon my intrusion~~!”

Ryûnosuke said, energetically dashing to kneel on the ground before them.

“URAHARA-san wants to convey to the vice-captain that you should feel more at ease than usual because Tessai TSUKABISHI-san will join in aiding Shino-san...”

Shino MADARAME is Ryûnosuke's companion, they are a two-person set-up stationed on duty in Karakura Town.

“That being the case there is no need to worry...”

“Do you know each other?”

“I am a soldier of the 13th squad. I am tasked with an on-going mission in Karakura town”

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“And he’s my brother! It seems this guy has a package for the two of you from Kisuke URAHARA-san.”

Prompted by Rikichi, Ryûnosuke removed something wrapped in a (furoshiki) cloth that he was carrying on his back, he held out a box that was inside it to the pair.

“For some reason, I’m afraid to open it...”

Renji who accepted the case, placed his hand over the lid.

“Yeah...because it’s a gift from that guy...”

Rukia who appeared as if she was being hidden by Renji’s body, watched intently as his hand worked to open the box.

Just before the box was completely opened, a puff of white smoke appeared from inside, URAHARA’s voice began to play out, “Hell~o~! It’s been awhile since I last contacted you~!”

“Whaaa!?”

“Huuuuuh!?”

Regardless of the fact that Renji had thrown down the box in shock, the voice continued to stream out. Ryûnosuke crouched down appearing to be protecting his head with both arms, Rikichi, unable to remain standing due to the surprise, fell on his backside.

“KUCHIKI-san, ABARAI-san, congratulations on your marriage!”

Sounds of a fanfare reverberated in addition to his voice.

“Did you tell him about it?” Renji inquired, Rukia shook her head from side to side.

“It’s the second day off duty together for you both, so that must mean today, to start with, you should have gone to the High Spirit Bureau, after experiencing the trauma of the waiting time at the Personnel Bureau, the two of you set out from early morning, however you unexpectedly finished early, since there is time until the next public office is opened, this time you should be returning to the 6th squad’s barracks to tidy up the lieutenant’s room, seeing as ABARAI-san is well acquainted with Rikichi YUKI-san, I thought I’d get Rikichi-san’s younger brother Ryûnosuke-san to go there~”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“You’re practically a psychic aren’t you!”

Renji yelled whilst sweating. Of course, URAHARA couldn’t respond because it was a recording.

“Because I am indebted to you both, I have also prepared a special gift for you from URAHARA Shop!”

In an instant the white smoke cleared away and its contents became exposed.

“Tenikui\* (\*lit. transfer posts) Warp Assistor~!”

Inside, there were red pegs and blue pegs, eight of each no bigger than one’s palm, and fitted into the space that was empty, there was a silver coloured plate with ‘Tenikui Warp Assistor’ carved onto it.

“Those pegs were made using the technology of the Tenkai Kecchu\*, with this you are able to transfer items instantly between two points when you enclose something with four of these pegs of the same colour! I have sent two sets for the two of you who will be living together outside of the barracks after this, so now you are able to move things between your house and respective barracks in an instant!”

(\*Tenkai Kecchu - think back to the fake Karakura Town arc, it’s the device URAHARA created to swap out the real KT with the fake i.e. those four giant pillars)

“Teleportation!? That’s insanely convenient isn’t it!”

“It’s certainly convenient but...”

Rukia feeling precautious, thought it was too good to be true.

“I’ve made similar things in the past but, the Commander scolded me saying ‘What if our enemies manage to use that to crowd us and attack!’...well for that reason please use this secretly~”

“It’s for that reason he shouldn’t spread such a thing...”

“Well, but still...! It’s okay if we use it secretly...”

“We can’t possibly use something Genryûsai-dono said no to can we!?”

“Incidentally, KUROTSUCHI-san has used and installed something similar to this throughout the Seireitei~”



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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“See I told you so!”

“What do you mean 'I told you so'! Captain KUROTSUCHI can go as far as using experimental things like this because he's in a position where he's expected to develop technology...”

“Which reminds me, the soul reaper Women's Association also used a warp device installed by Nemu-san when going to their hideout.”

“...huh?”

“But...!”

“And then, ÔMAEDA-san also paid KUROTSUCHI-san a great deal of money, making it possible for him to warp between his home and his squad barracks”

“Alright, let's use it! This device is already being widely used!”

When Rukia declared as such, with a \*woosh\* Renji posed victoriously.

“...I think by this point KUCHIKI San would have also given in, so the explanation of the product is now over!”

Knowing her thoughts were being read perfectly, she let out a groan in annoyance.

“Well then, KUCHIKI-san, ABARAI-san, I wish you everlasting happiness!...please talk to me if you have any worries. I can offer advice, whatever I am able to do”

“We should have nothing to fear if we could get advice from the founder and former director of the Technological Development Bureau! Should we?”

“Ah...really...”

How many times has this person helped them? No matter how desperate the situation was, he always devised countermeasures, and managed to show them the path forward.

Rukia's heart overflowed with gratitude.

“Furthermore, please note, this voice recording will not automatically terminate, as long as the box stays open it will loop repeatedly...Hell~o~! It's been awhile since I last contacted yo-”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

Rukia quickly closed the box. Renji silently took it, without pause he tied the lid with a spare hair cord so that it would not open.

“...I get the impression that URAHARA-san is ‘that sort of person’ huh...”

Rikichi muttered with regret. For the soldiers who have never actually encountered URAHARA, their knowledge of his remarkable feats comes from ‘Seireitei Communication’, and there are many people who see him as a hero. Rikichi was also one of those people.

“I was also inspired by him, until I actually met him...”

Hinting at the implication that he isn’t inspired by URAHARA anymore, Ryûnosuke sighed. As for, Rukia it was easy to imagine the possibility of him being put through various practical jokes by URAHARA whilst he was stationed on duty.

“There is no other person who is as reliable as him when it came to times of war...”

“If URAHARA-san isn’t being revered by this guy, then that must mean there is peace in the Human World too, am I right? It’s a good thing, don’t you think?”

Renji said with a laugh.

“That’s true...” Rukia said with a soft expression whilst nodding in agreement.

### **Marriage Registration**

#### **5**

6th sector - KUCHIKI family mansion.

On the morning of the day they were to head to the Kinin Noble Assembly, Renji passed through the KUCHIKI family’s huge main gate with a nervous expression. As he advanced on the stone pavement that had been swept clean, he was greeted by an old man with white hair wearing a pair of round spectacles - Nobutsune SEIKE, an attendant attached to Byakuya.

“ABARAI-sama, we have been expecting you”

Calmly bowing, he opened the door of the (genkan) entryway, “please come inside”

“Nah, I’ll meet her in front of the entrance...”

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“I have been informed to tell you that you are to join Byakuya-sama for breakfast”

“With the captain!? U-understood”

Renji became increasingly nervous, moving awkwardly, he followed behind SEIKE.

Three food trays were placed in the banquet hall, Byakuya, Rukia and Renji silently moved their chopsticks. The tray's lacquerware was lined up with a variety of small bowls overflowing with side dishes and white rice, appearing as if he couldn't resist it any longer, Renji posed a question.

“Is it always this quiet...?”

He felt awkward that nothing but the sound of him eating stood out, given the fact that the other two were eating almost without making a sound.

“We usually eat separately. Nii-sama eats here, I eat in my room. Since the 13th squad is quite far away from the mansion...If I don't finish breakfast beforehand and depart earlier than Nii-sama, I won't make on time for the start of work”

When Rukia calmly put down her chopsticks, the waiter, who was standing by at the corner of the room, immediately removed her food tray and placed down another tray with Mizugashi\* (\*a type of Japanese Jelly dessert) and tea on it. Rukia responded with a “Thank you”.

“You could live in the lieutenant's quarters, couldn't you? It's more comfortable being able sleep until just before the start of work isn't it~? Captain, you also stay overnight when it gets too late right? In the captain's office”

“...I do not stay overnight”

“I see...pardon me”

“...are...-licious...”

“...huh? What was that?”

Renji turned his face towards her, Rukia's head remained lowered as she murmured something.

“The meals are delicious...in this house...! I think It's normal to want to eat here every day right...!”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

Her face became bright red as she said this. SEIKE and Chiyo who were waiting back wore smiling expressions that looked as if they wanted to say 'goodness!' and 'oh my!' Appearing as though he was suppressing the expression in his eyes, the waiter was overcome with emotion.

"That's rather gluttonous..."

"Shut up!"

"But yes, it's certainly extremely tasty. I'm not surprised if you'd want to come back here every day just for that"

After emptying out his 4th bowl of rice, Renji set his chopsticks down, he brought his hands together showing appreciation for the meal. Looking at Rukia who was eating a pear whilst her cheeks were still stained with red, Byakuya coughed once.

"It's fine if you want to come back here to eat anytime"

"Awesome! Thank you very much, captain!"

"...I wasn't talking to you"

Looking at an astounded Byakuya, Renji laughed and said, "I understand that!" In a loud voice.

"Nii-sama, thank you very much...!"

As her eyes lightly filled with tears, Rukia smiled. Seeing Byakuya's eyes tenderly narrow in a soft expression, Renji's mouth gaped wide open.

"Ca...c-ca...ca- captain smiled...!?"

"What do you mean 'C-c-c-ca'...? Even Nii-sama smiles sometimes..."

"Rukia"

Perceiving the will in Byakuya's voice that 'no more has to be said', Rukia held her tongue.

"I have finished affixing my seal on these documents.....I will go now"

Byakuya promptly exited the room leaving the other two behind. Without a sound, SEIKE also follows.

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“...Captain, he was feeling a bit embarrassed, wasn’t he?”

As Renji uttered that, Chiyo who looked as if she was unable to restrain herself any longer, burst into laughter. “Hey” the senior waiter chided, with a bow of her head she apologised. However, her shoulders were still shaking.

“We should get going too, Renji...Chiyo don’t keep laughing forever, please help me with this kimono”

“Certainly!”

Chiyo quickly walked up to Rukia who had stood up, carefully she adjusted her clothes which were slightly disheveled.

“ABARAI-sama this way”

An elderly servant who was in front of a (fusuma) sliding screen that lead to an adjoining room, called out to Renji.

“Huh? Even me?”

Saying that Renji looked to Rukia, but she inclined her head like she also knew nothing.

When Renji stood before the sliding screen, two servants immediately drew back the panels.

Placed at the center of the room was a beautiful clothing rack with two mounts, there a five crested kuromontsuki and haorihakama\* was hanged up. (\*Traditional Japanese formal wear for men)

“Cool...!...huh? Is this for me!?”

“It is indeed. Byakuya-sama ordered that you receive this.”

“Nii-sama...!”

Finished with her adjustments Chiyo stepped back, Rukia stood lined up beside Renji.

“Come to think of it.....on the evening we reported to Nii-sama our intention to marry, after Renji had returned home, I was asked” does he have a ceremonial suit to wear?” but I answered that well, at any rate he probably doesn’t have one...”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Why’d ya make up your mind on something like that, you don’t know maybe I do have one!? I don’t have one but still!”

Rukia looked at Renji with an expression that said, 'I thought so'. Renji turned his face away, he then approached the montsuki.

“These crests...they’re camellias?”

Attached on the black fabric there were crests, dyed in white, representing the 6th squad’s squad flower, the camellia.

“We were informed that ABARAI-sama doesn’t have a family crest...but if it’s the squad’s camellia flower, then it’s suitable as a crest is it not?”

Saying that, the servant calmly bowed.” A camellia crest was SEIKE-sama’s idea” Chiyo added.

“Ah! That old guy!”

“Byakuya-sama said everything including this crest is fine...”

“Even if that was kept private, he would accept it wouldn’t he...?”

Picturing Byakuya with an extremely troubled expression, Renji let out a small sigh.

“That was so thoughtful of him...this is great, Renji”

“Right!...’but well, in the end even with this montsuki, Rukia hopefully won’t feel awkward walking next to him’, that’s what this probably means am I right?”

With a” eh?” Rukia looked up at Renji.

Renji laughing, pat her small back and said,” ...everything he does, it’s for you, Rukia”

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Central first sector.

When Rukia and the others arrived with the documents at the window of the reception desk of the Kinin Noble Assembly, one of the officials, who appeared to have been contacted already, greeted them with a respectful bow.

“The head of the family, this way”

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

The man opened up the massive double doors that were at his back, Byakuya proceeded inside.

“The two of you, please wait there”

Rukia and Renji sat-down side by side on the dark green sofa he indicated to. Making sure they were seated; the official headed inside the room and closed the doors.

The waiting room fell silent. Although the space wasn't that wide, Rukia thought the place was built too large for merely four families.

“Before they see to us, he has to affix his seal, right?”

Unaccustomed to wearing montsuki, that are apparently quite uncomfortable, Renji turned his head several times.

“This morning Nii-sama said that he had already finished affixing his seal on the documents, so because of that...here, he only has to submit those documents isn't it?”

“If he's just submitting a document then it's not necessary to go into a separate room, ya kno-...”

Quicker than Renji could finish talking, the doors of that inner room were opened up again. Entering the waiting room themselves, the male official passed through the doors followed by Byakuya.

“You've finished already...!?”

He looked at the clock that was hanging on the wall. Not even five minutes had passed since the two had entered that separate room.

“Renji ABARAI-sama, -ABARAI- Rukia-sama”

Watching as Rukia's shoulders sprang up with a start, the man smiled softly.

“Congratulations on your marriage”

Saying that, he presented a single sheet of paper before the two.

It was a 'Certificate of Marriage Acceptance'.

“Thank you...very much...”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

As a consequence of the fact that the formalities had gone by so fast, it was Renji who listlessly accepted the certificate, but as soon as he saw the characters 'Rukia ABARAI' written there, he stood up from the chair.

"We did it Rukia! With this, we were finally...finally able to get married!"

Taken aback at being named "ABARAI" herself, Rukia's mind went blank, but she regained her composure when Renji shook her shoulder.

"Rukia ABARAI-sama"

"Ye-yes!"

Rukia looked in the official's direction whilst willing herself to stay in control so as not to lose that composure she had just regained.

The man took out a yellow coloured form that said "Notification of Court Guards soldier name-change" before speaking.

"If you're going to be using the surname 'ABARAI' whilst on duty from now on, then please submit this form to the 'Court Guards Soldier Record Administration Bureau'..."

"It's fine, I will keep the KUCHIKI surname as it is"

"What? You're not-changing it?"

"I absolutely cannot-change it!"

Although Renji seemed to be somewhat dissatisfied with this, Rukia decided to refuse altering her gotei soldier registered name as she thought there was a real danger that her mind would get distracted if person after person that encountered her called her 'ABARAI'.

Giving a slight nod to the official, Byakuya headed outside. The couple also followed suit.

(My last name is ABARAI now)

Rukia thought it was quite strange how her family name had just changed in a matter of minutes. As she walked, Rukia wondered whether or not a day would ever come where she'd get used to being called 'ABARAI', Byakuya who was walking several steps ahead of them, stopped abruptly.



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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“.....You two are husband and wife now”

He said this whilst his back remained turned towards them. They instinctively straightened their posture.

“...Renji”

“Yes!”

Renji’s facial expression stiffened as he waited for Byakuya’s next words. Slightly lowering his head, Byakuya spoke.

“...Take care of Rukia”

Bowing deeply, Renji answered with sincere conviction, “of course...!”

Rukia held back her tears and bit her lip.

“Captain...! I will, absolutely...at all costs for Rukia-...”

“I’ve made arrangements for you to be able to announce your marriage at the captain’s meeting this afternoon...don’t be late.”

Byakuya coolly spoke, interrupting Renji who was about to say something good.

“This...afternoon...? Eh...!”

“...Eh? Eeehh!? Today!?”

Feeling a sense of vertigo from their emotions, the pair fell into a slight state of panic.

“But...about that...I still have to prepare myself...!”

Losing the senses in her teary eyes, Rukia’s gaze darted about.

“I-isn’t this a bit too sudden!? Perhaps after we’ve settled down a bit more...”

“Are you saying...my efforts have been rendered futile...?”

Byakuya slowly turned his head to look over his shoulder, he looked at the pair with eyes that had cast aside emotion.

“We’ll announce it today”

## **WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU**

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Please accept our sincere apology for your troubles”

At that moment, the pair had collected themselves again.

“If that is the case, then make haste”

With a final sharp look, Byakuya immediately shunpo’d away.

For a moment they stood there in a daze before coming to their senses, in a mad dash they headed back towards the KUCHIKI mansion to-change into their soul-robos.

### **Marriage Registration**

#### **6**

Squad 1 barracks - captains’ meeting assembly hall.

Finishing her report of the reconstruction situation, Nanao ISE bowed down. Shunsui KYÔRAKU walked out to-change places with her,” Well!” he said bringing both hands together in front of his chest whilst surveying all who were present.

“There’s another piece of good news today”

“This is it...” Rukia thought to herself, quaking with nervousness, she balled up her fingers and breathed deeply.

“...now, please come forward and tell us from your own mouths”

Prompted by KYÔRAKU, the pair passed behind the line-up and stood side by side in front of the entrance of the assembly hall. As everyone’s gaze settled on the pair, their throats went dry.

“Uhh, I...”

As Renji was about to continue talking, Rukia poked his side with her elbow.” Oh, I see” Renji murmured, clearing his throat with a single cough he started again.

(Note: it’s impossible to translate to English, but here Renji used his normal pronoun ‘Ore’ which is very casual and rough, Rukia elbowed him to speak formally, he uses ‘watakushi’ in the following line which is a very formal pronoun along with other humble vocab)

“Right, I Renji ABARAI along with Rukia KUCHIKI, completed our nyuseki today!”

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“We will both continue to proceed with our current professional duties as a married couple, so we appreciate your continued support and guidance from hereafter”

The two bowed at the same time, KYÔRAKU took out a party-popper that was concealed up his sleeve and pulled its strings. A dry crackling sound echoed through the room.

“Wow! Congratulations~! How about everyone else!? Aren’t you all surprised?”

KYÔRAKU looked around at everyone’s faces as the confetti fluttered about all over the place.

“...oh my, really? Everyone’s not very surprised at all huh...?”

“It seems everyone already knew? That probably means those two didn’t keep it hidden...I was also already aware of it because I heard it from HINAMORI-san.”

“Whaaat...everyone already knew...?”

Suî-FĒNG then spoke to a somewhat dejected KYÔRAKU.

“I have no interest in these matters but, it’s only natural that I’d have information coming in”

“I heard from Izuru. Congratulations. If you need celebratory music for the ceremony, you can consult me at any time”

Rôjûrô ÔTORIBASHI also known as 'Rose', gestured as if he was playing the violin.

“I-I received word of it from them both personally”

Isane hurriedly spoke presuming that they were making their statements in order of squad number.

“I heard about it from Momo. Congrats to you both! This one was in such high spirits saying how she was going to buy a brand-new kimono for the first time in ages you know?”

HIRAKO pointed his thumb at HINAMORI who was standing behind him.” Do you have to talk about me right now...!?” HINAMORI said as her cheeks reddened.

“Both of them came to give me their greetings too, so I was also aware”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

IBA continued the discussion, skipping over a silent Byakuya.

“I also knew. Congratulations...Rangiku has requested that I purchase a pearl hair accessory from the Human World before the ceremony, but is there any other person here who also needs something too?”

“Don’t do business at the captain’s meeting, Lisa! Shûhei is very eager to do a special feature in ‘Seireitei Communication’ on your marriage. But If you don’t like the sound of that you can refuse him ahead of time right?”

Behind Kensei, HISAGI brought his hands together and prayed” please allow me to do it! I beg you...!”

“I also heard from those two first-hand.....It’s good you were able to complete the nyuseki successfully”

HITSUGAYA had been concerned about whether or not such formalities would be completed without any problems, as he had heard from Rangiku that the far too troublesome process could appear to make both of them lose heart.

“I also knew. Since Ikkaku and Yumichika kept yapping on and on about it”

As he said that, Kenpachi picked at his ear with his pinky finger. Behind him, Ikkaku pursed his lips tightly with an expression that looked as if he wanted to say that he didn’t kick up that much of a fuss.

“Of course I knew as well. I also know about the device that was gifted to them from URAHARA...”

When Mayuri cast a glare in their direction, the pair broke out into a cold sweat and swiftly averted their eyes.” Oh my” KYÔRAKU said whilst shrugging his shoulders.

“If everyone already knew, then it would have been agreeable to just skip over this marriage announcement...but, I suppose we can’t leave things as it is without discussing the ceremony properly”

“...ceremony?”

Together, they both tilted their heads.

“But we haven’t made arrangements for the ceremony yet...”

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“We were thinking about making arrangements for the ceremony after this, and then making an announcement again separately”

Hearing this, KYÔRAKU tilted his head this time.

“Eh? But I was just told that the ceremony will be held in two weeks time”

“Eeh!? By whom!?”

At Renji’s enquiry, KYÔRAKU pointed to Byakuya and said” by captain KUCHIKI.”  
Byakuya’s facial expression did not shift in the slightest, his eyes were cast down as he remained silent.

“I’ve arranged for you to have three days off around that time since it seems the two of you will need it to prepare”

“Hyu~! Nanao-chan, you’re so thoughtful~!”

“P-please wait a moment...! My heart still needs to gather itself...!”

Rukia clutched her heart firmly. She was unable to completely calm the palpitations in her chest.

“Captaaiiii! Why do you never consult us on these matters—!?”

The several people amongst those who happened to be present, who also knew about Byakuya’s ‘poor celebration skills’ thought” looks like he’s done it again~”, whilst finding the scene amusing at the expense of the couple.

“Huh...you mean you both truly didn’t know? Despite the fact that you’re the bride and groom?”

The pair fiercely nodded many times over at KYÔRAKU’s question, confirming what he had just said.

“Captain KUCHIKI~ you should really Inform the people in question as one would expect, otherwise it’s pointless you know~”

Responding to KYÔRAKU’s mild chiding, Byakuya opened his mouth to speak in a somewhat astringent manner.

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

"...I also know from my own experience that the marriages of the four noble families is a series of complicated procedures..."

It had taken as far as two months for the nyuseki with his late wife Hisana to be accepted, Court Guards soldiers also had few days off back then compared to now.

"In addition to that, I could not possibly believe that you two oblivious ones...would be able to put in order the appropriate ceremony arrangements and such"

Watching as the pair who were at a loss for a response, sank into silence, KYÔRAKU laughed.

"Well to sum it up, what you mean is, 'everything up till the nyuseki must have been very difficult, so please leave the bothersome ceremony preparations up to your big brother' am I right?"

"Truly quite the troublemaker aren't you"

Byakuya glared at HIRAKO's exasperating grin, "oh how scary!", he said whilst shrugging his shoulders.

"Nii-sama...truly...thank you very much...for everything!"

After Rukia had said that, the couple bowed low. Byakuya exhaled a small breath, "Commander...please continue" he said urging on KYÔRAKU.

"I discussed it with captain KUCHIKI not too long ago.....it's not very often we get to see things like fellow vice-captains getting married, so what this means is, expressly for the ceremony day, the end of work hours will move up to around two hours earlier. I suppose there will be many amongst the troops who would also like to attend."

"Whaa!?! You'd do something like that for us!?"

Renji exclaimed in surprise, at the same time, Rangiku delightfully raised her voice "you mean it!? Hooraaay!"

"...MATSUMOTO"

At HITSUGAYA's reprimanded, Rangiku half-heartedly apologised, "Yeees, sorry!"

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“Well even though it will be two hours earlier, the time of the ceremony will still be a little late but...I think an evening bride will undoubtedly be just as beautiful”

KYÔRAKU said this with a warm expression. Enveloped in a whole flood of emotions, Rukia bowed.

“Indeed, how peaceful this all is...if we are already done here then I will go back now”

Separating himself from the line, Mayuri heads towards the doors. Rukia and Renji hastily forked out left and right, clearing the path for him.

“Because your cute little Hachigô-chan is waiting right~”

At HIRAKO’s teasing, Mayuri suddenly stopped walking.

“O-ho...it seems you do not value your life...?”

As turned to look over his shoulder, his golden eyes were lit with murderous intent. Renji who was standing nearby instantly felt goosebumps on his back.

“Now now, don’t quarrel~”

KYÔRAKU spoke as he clapped his hands.

“Although it’s true that we will be breaking up this meeting now, captain KUROTSUCHI will not kill captain HIRAKO! Okay?”

Kensei looking rather astounded mumbled” what sort of warning is that...”

Mayuri snorted with a \*hmp\*, Akon followed as he left.

“Well then, I now declare this 13 Court Guard Squads captains’ meeting session over. Thank you for coming”

Nanao’s voice sternly proclaiming the captains’ meeting over, echoed throughout, as for the couple, it was a captains meeting that the pair would never in their life be able to forget.

### **The Ceremony**

#### **1**

Human world.

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

Karakura Town - Sakurabashi park.

This park constructed on the hills overlooking the railway track was Orihime INOUE's favourite place. Even though it is only a small park with a few dozen or so trees and couple of benches, every bench is placed in front of a great view and there is no disappointment wherever you sit. Amongst those, Orihime particularly liked the bench facing opposite the railway track, she loved watching the trains and the town from there.

Rukia KUCHIKI and Renji ABARAI were currently sitting side by side on that very bench. The time was around 10 p.m. and the small night view of Karakura Town was spread out below them. Because Renji was not as familiar with the Human World as much as Rukia was, every time a train would pass by he would curiously follow it with his eyes.

"KUCHIKI saan!"

Orihime dashed up the stairs leading up the hill whilst waving her arm. When the pair stood up and waved back, she raised her voice in surprise, "huh? You're here together with ABARAI-kun too!?"

"Yo! You're looking well, INOUE!"

"Yup, I'm well!"

Orihime replied whilst ascending the final few steps on the staircase, "fuu, I've arrived~" she said, recovering her breath when had reached the top.

"I'm sorry for taking up your time this late"

With Rukia in the middle, the three of them sat down beside each other on the bench.

"Not at all, don't worry about something like that! I'm so happy you came to see me!"

"How about the store? Is it still thriving as usual?"

"Uh huh! Business is already booming everyday!"

Orihime currently works as a regular employee of a bread and cake shop called 'ABCookies'. After her older brother INOUE Sora passed away, she was getting along by receiving assistance with living expenses from a distant relative; but because of the fact that the relative had originally declared that they would only provide assistance up till high school graduation, since the summer of three years prior, Orihime had



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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

been searching for a job placement for after graduation. During that time, she was working at the shop part-time, the shop manager who had learnt of her situation insisted that Orihime be fully employed by the company.

“Rangiku-san and Suî-FÊNG San have also often come to buy things”

“Lieutenant MATSUMOTO I can understand, but captain Suî-FÊNG too...!?”

“...Yoruichi-san gets her to buy it for her, am I right?”

“Ah that’s true” Rukia thought, understanding completely.

“So then, what’s happening today? You’re even here together with ABARAI-kun...”

Orihime observed the couple. For some reason or another, she felt that the air that flowed between the pair had become even more intimate than before, Orihime stood up, “oohh!” she said in a loud voice.

“Ehh! Wait, could it be!? Ah, perhaps the two of you...the two of you...!”

With eyes wide open she stared at them in round eyed wonder, Orihime’s cheeks were instantly coloured red. Smiling with her whole face, Rukia tried to convey the message without saying a word but—

“S-s- sta- started dating!?”

—Orihime’s intuition was off the mark twice as much.

“Pfft! Hahahaha! Dating...no, but in a sense it’s somewhere along those lines!”

Orihime looked blankly at Renji who had burst into laughter, Rukia then spoke.

“INOUE, me and Renji...today, we completed our nyuseki”

“Eh.....eeeeeehh!? Nyuseki...that means, you’re married...right!?”

Rukia nods, ‘that’s correct’. Orihime inhaled a deep breath, she began to sob even as a bright smile remained on her face.

“INOUE!?”

“Haaa...uuu...pardon meee...! This is such a pleasant surprise.....I’ve become an emotional mess...!”

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Standing up, Rukia tenderly embraced Orihime's shoulders leading her to sit on the bench again.

"Con...gratulationsss...KUCHIKI...sannn..."

Orihime was heaving with sobs as Rukia rubbed her back whilst nodding and uttering comforting words.

"...You fool, what are you grinning at...?"

Rukia said knitting her eyebrows together, noticing Renji smirking whilst looking their way.

"It's kinda nice to think...You're going over the top to take care of someone like that just now, since I've never seen you like that you knowww..."

Although he didn't say it, he actually thought that her face full of affection was beautiful.

"Haa...I'm okay now...thank you, KUCHIKI-san! I truly congratulate the both of youuu!"

Orihime smiled sweetly.

"...Thank you, INOUE"

With a finger, Rukia gently wiped away the single trickle of a teardrop that had just escaped.

After completely hearing and laughing about the troublesome story around the nyuseki from the other two, Orihime casually asked Rukia, "you've told KUROSAKI-kun about it already right?"

"No, not yet. We were thinking to go and announce it to Ichigo after this but...I wonder if it's too late now"

Saying that, she looked up at Renji. "He probably stays up late anyhow" Renji stated definitively without any sort of basis.

"It's really okay that I was told first...?"

Feeling a little shy and fidgety, Rukia hesitated a few times as she replied to Orihime.

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“Th-that’s because, INOUE I consider you...my...b-best girl-friend! So therefore...I thought...I should tell you first...”

She spoke as her last few words became a little mumbled.

“...your face is redder than the time I asked you to marry me ya know”

“Sh-shut up!”

Watching as Rukia grew red to her ears, Orihime laughed and became teary eyed once again.

“Thank you, KUCHIKI-san! I admire you very much too!”

After seeing the couple off, Orihime hurried back to her house. Saying “I’m home” to the portrait of her late older brother before catching her breath, Orihime put in a phone call to Riruka DOKUGAMINE.

“...Hellooo?”

After four rings, Riruka’s somewhat displeased sounding voice could be heard.

“Sorry for calling so late! It’s me Orihime”

“When I went to your shop last week, I told you didn’t !!? I said I’m busy with the launch of a new brand right now! Does this mean you didn’t listen when I was talking!?”

Riruka is currently working as a designer in the apparel department of an enterprise managed by Yukio Hans VORARLBERNA. Jackie Tristan also works at the same business, but she is constantly flying all over the world because she is engaged in work concerning the aid of developing countries, therefore she is almost never seen.

“Of course, I was listening to you! But this is a bit of an emergency...”

“Emergency...? In that case, please tell me about the matter quickly!”

“Yes! Thank you, Riruka-chan! Well...”

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Whilst annoyed that she did not speak with haste, Riruka listened as Orihime talked about Rukia getting married, and the fact that the ceremony that was to be held two weeks later, is fast approaching.

“So then, I want to give her something, a gift, but what would be good...? Something handmade...that can be used at the wedding ceremony, I think something like that would be nice...”

“It has to be something suitable enough for a beginner to make...”

The sound of fingertips tapping on a table could be heard through the phone.

“What about a bouquet or a ring pillow...but that world has standard traditional style dress for a Shinto ceremony, doesn't it?”

“Oh, right! .....Eh, well then that means, KUCHIKI-san, in a Shiromuku\*...!? Haaaa, that would be absolutely cuuute...!”

(\*Traditional Japanese white Kimono for brides)

“Don't lose your cool...moreover that Rukia girl is a noblewoman, isn't she? Since everything will probably be prepared to the highest of quality, if an amateur decides to make things like traditional style dress accessories, it may pale in comparison...”

“Ohh!”

In response to Orihime's loud voice, Riruka complained with even more volume, “be quite! Don't suddenly burst out into a ridiculously loud voice!”

“Sorry sorry...well, how about a dress? A weddingdress!”

“Huhhh!? There is no way a beginner would be able to properly make something like a dress in just two weeks you know!?”

“But if I try my very best...!”

“Abso-lutely impossible!”

“Uuu...! I wanted to see KUCHIKI-san in western style garments too...”

Orihime muttered with deep disappointment.

“...in that case, how about a veil?”

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

The sounds of rhythmical tapping on a keyboard could be heard clearly through the earpiece," I looked it up just now, it seems there's a fair amount of people who like to combine western hairdressing with a Shiromuku nowadays" Riruka informed.

Orihime imagined Rukia's form.

A wataboshi\* (\*traditional bridal hood-like headdress) will surely suit well with that elegant small face of hers she thought. However, it seemed to her that the people who would be assembled there could more fully enjoy and appreciate Rukia's beauty if she could be seen through a veil that was completely transparent rather than a wataboshi that would cover a great majority of her head.

"I think that's a very good idea...!"

"If it's a veil, then you basically just cut soft tulle, even an idiot can do it. And then, how about adding on some embroidery with fine thread around the hem? If you do small embroidery, even if it's somewhat poor, as long as it's seen from a distance it will be unnoticeable"

"Yes yes, I want to add on embroidery!"

"I'll write down a set of instructions and send it together with the materials first thing in the morning. Your address hasn't-changed has it?"

"Eeeh!? No that's fine, thank you very much for your help! I'm extremely grateful just because I was able to get advice from you! Afterwards, I myself will go and look for..."

"Huuuh!? You called me when I'm busy, don't hold back now!"

Riruka held her phone in one hand, with the hand that was vacant, she had found what she was looking for," hm, this will also be of use..." one by one she had ticked off the materials.

"Thank you Riruka-chan, but really it's okay..."

"shut up, I told you to be quiet!...I'm almost done! I've already disappeared twice with the intention of not having to deal with you lot anymore! And yet, since we met again three years ago, you've been using every possible pretext to call me about things like...a new stock of tasty doughnuts, and whatever else! You understand me Orihimeee!?"

"Yes, sorry!...but Riruka-chan, you always come to buy..."

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“I only pass by that shop because it’s tasty there, things like whether or not you are working there does not concern me in the slightest!”

“Pardon me~~~!”

Phone calls with Riruka always eventually becomes a lecture. Orihime witlessly calls Riruka who likes scolding her like this. Listening to an angry Riruka’s voice who was full of vitality as she spoke, ‘ah, we’re not so lonesome anymore’, she’d think as her heart would become warm.

The following day, a package arrived from Riruka, it contained a great deal of materials and a document with a set of instructions, and——

[I spoke a bit too harshly yesterday

Sorry]

——Written down on a note.

### **The Ceremony**

#### **2**

Eight days since the evening the announcement of the nyuseki was made.

When Ichigo KUROSAKI who had just finished afternoon classes returned home, the genkan entryway was filled with shoes of various sizes.

“They’ve already gathered here huh.....I’m home”

Removing his shoes, he headed towards the living room. As he reached his hand over the knob of the door to open it, in an instant, the door opened from the inside and Arisawa Tatsuki came flying out.

“Whoaa, watch out!”

“Oh, sorry Ichigo! Since I have a karate class, I’m going now!”

“Ahh, you said you were teaching at the community centre right...”

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“Yeah, that’s right! See you!”

Tatsuki hurriedly slipped on her shoes, “ thanks for your hospitality!” she said as she left through the genkan entryway.

“Ah, onii-chan welcome home!”

Ichigo paused a step before the living room as Yuzu greeted him from inside.

“Orihime-chan brought a lot of cakes from ABCookies for us! We were all eating some just now. You can choose the ones you like too onii-chan, they’re in the refrigerator!”

“All right”

With a nod he entered the room, they were seated in a circle on cushions laid out on the floor when they all looked over at Ichigo at the same time. Spread out in the middle was the wedding veil they were all in the process of making.

“KUROSAKI-kun, welcome home! Thank you for your hospitality!”

Orihime smiled at him whilst clutching a plate of chocolate cake in her hands, Yasutora SADO who was next to her, raised his arm slightly in greeting “ it’s been a while, Ichigo.” In his other hand, he was holding a cupcake with rabbit shaped candy and plenty of cream on it.

“You’re late aren’t you Ichigo! Arisawa has just left!”

“Welcome back Ichigo. You’re taking classes on Saturdays too, that’s great”

Keigo ASANO and Mizuiro KOJIMA who appeared to have already finished eating their cakes, were relaxing by drinking black tea and stretching out their legs.

“Ichi-nii welcome...ISHIDA-san, how do I do this last thread here?”

Raising her face as she spoke, Karin glanced up at Uryû ISHIDA who was next to her, he showed her the embroidery he had sewn on before giving her advice. From the opposite side, Isshin also peeped over at the way he manoeuvred his hands.

“You’re doing it too!?”

“It’s okay isn’t it! Daddy wants to congratulate Rukia-chan as well!”

## **WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU**

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

After replying to Ichigo, Isshin continued to prick at the embroidery with a serious look.

“Here! Onii-chan’s portion!”

Yuzu handed over a mug containing black tea to Ichigo, she then sat down next to Karin before resuming her work again.

It was on a morning, a week ago, that Ichigo received a message from Orihime on his mobile phone. She had sent all the participants that were here now a group message detailing how she wanted to gift a wedding veil for Rukia and Renji’s wedding celebration and asked them if they could help her add the embroidery. Orihime compared and adjusted everybody’s schedules, Ichigo offered that they use his house as the location and thus it was decided that they would assemble at the KUROSAKI clinic.

“wow...you’ve already completed a fair amount huh”

When he looked at the wall clock, he noted that it was around 3 o'clock in the afternoon. They were told in advance to meet up at 1 p.m. and only two hours had passed since then. Nevertheless, the veil was about seventy percent complete already.

“During this week, INOUE-san went around to everyone’s places and got them to do the embroidery” Mizuiro stated.

“Everyone?” Ichigo enquired to which Orihime replied -

“Eh let’s see, I believe I started with Hiyori-san~ and then I went to Hachi-san and Love-san, after that I went to URAHARA Shop~ URAHARA-san and Tessai-san and Ururu-chan and Jinta-kun! Then, the day before yesterday, I went to Kûkaku-san’s place...”

“You went to Soul Society too!?”

Orihime casually nods ‘yes’ to a surprised Ichigo.

“URAHARA-san lent me a sort of mantle that extinguishes spiritual-pressure so I wouldn’t be exposed when I went there, I think the two of us weren’t caught out...?”

“That’s not really what I’m concerned about but...well, never mind, and then?”



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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“When I had Ganju-kun doing his embroidery, Yoruichi-san came saying 'I heard about it from URAHARA! ~' Yoruichi carried me on her back whilst shunpo'ing all around the Seireitei...I was able to get practically all the people I knew to do the embroidery~!”

“INOUE, I don't expect him to but...did Byakuya KUCHIKI also...?”

At Chad's question, Orihime regrettably shook her head from side to side.

“Byakuya-san...he watched”

“Watched...?” Uryû muttered, cocking his head in puzzlement.

“His attendant...old man SEIKE-san, but...that SEIKE-san said 'I cannot allow the head of the family to do something like needlework!' so then, SEIKE-san sewed instead and Byakuya-san watched him...look, this very pretty one is SEIKE-san's embroidery!”

Looking at the patch of embroidery Orihime was pointing at, everyone raised their voices in administration saying” oohh~!”

At that moment, a voice calling out” pardon me!” coming from the entrance of the clinic could be heard.

Yuzu hurriedly rushed towards the reception desk,” yes, I'm coming now!”

“Daaad, it's a patient!”

“Yeah, yeah”, being called in the direction of the clinic, Isshin stood up.

“Will you save my part for me!?”

“No one is going to steal your part you bearded basket-case! Go quickly!”

Karin coldly dealt with Isshin who pouted as he exited the living room. Yuzu returns in his place and joins the circle.

Ichigo who had just finished eating a fruit tart whilst everyone worked in silence sat down in an empty spot,” so, where should I start?”

“Here! There's a set of instructions written down on this, you can do your embroidery around here KUROSAKI-kun!”

Written at the very top of the piece of paper handed over from Orihime it said” Strawberry Flower Sewing Technique”.

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“This embroidery...they’re strawberry flowers?”

At the centre of the five white circles imitating flower petals, there is an asterisk pattern stitched with golden thread representing the stamen and pistil.

“It’s a flower I’ve liked since long ago...”

Orihime adds gold embroidery to the middle of the flower petals everyone had already sewn, one by one she completed the flowers.

“The strawberry flower in hanakotoba\* (\*the Japanese language of flowers) means 'Happy family' as well as 'Respect and love'...I think both are perfectly suited as a motif for a bride to wear”

Uryû spoke whilst stitching the petals with accuracy like that of a sewing machine.

Surprised, Orihime then said, “I only knew about the 'Happy Family' part...!”

“Why do you know the language of flowers...it makes me feel uncomfortable”

“You shouldn’t say such things to your friends!” Yuzu chided a frowning Ichigo.

“Shut up...! I don’t forget information after having seen it once!”

“Really!?” Keigo said lifting his face up at Uryû’s words.

“Is there like a trick to it or something? I’ve become awfully forgetful recently~ Yesterday for example, I couldn’t come up with the word 'socks', so I looked it up with the terms 'Foot' 'Wear' 'Bag'! Then it retrieved the word 'tabi'\* (\*split-toe socks) so I became all the more confused!”

As Orihime and Yuzu laughed aloud, Mizuiro smiled and said “oh? I wonder if it’s a brain disease?”

“Would you please stop trying to hand down such a scary medical diagnosis! Doctor ISHIDAaa~! please tell this guy that an unqualified person shouldn’t make such arbitrary judgements~!”

Uryû completely ignored the matter Keigo had brought up.” Don’t cry ASANO-kun!” Yuzu who was sitting next to him said in encouragement whilst patting his back.

“That reminds me, you got into a medical school...med school costs an insane amount of money doesn’t it? Are you sure that’s okay even though you’re poor?”

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

Ichigo asked whilst his gaze remained lowered on the shape of the flower petal he was carefully sewing.

“...I considered getting a scholarship but, my father paid for my tuition expenses. If it was the old me, I might have rejected such an offer but...my relationship with my father has improved to the extent that I can accept his money with gratitude.”

Watching as Uryû calmly spoke about the matter, Ichigo quietly nods.” ISHIDA was quite an unpleasant guy in the past, wasn't he?” Keigo said, only to be ignored and then comforted by Yuzu once again.

“Sorry but, it's about time I get going too...”

Checking his wristwatch, Chad stood up.” What, Chad too?” Ichigo said disappointedly.

“Yeah. I was asked to be the sparring partner...of the heavyweight champion of Japan.”

“Huuuh!? The heavyweight champ is Daniel ANDÔ isn't it? Do you go to the same gym!?”

“No, different gyms...it seems he is an acquaintance of the chairman of our gym. He wanted to fight 'a big guy'...”

“So that's why he called for Chad then huh...better not let the champ lose his confidence” Mizuiro said shrugging his shoulders.

“Muu...! It won't be like that...I think, probably...”

Whilst whispering to himself with shaky confidence, Chad headed towards the genkan entryway.

“Go easy on him!” Ichigo called out to his back.

On this day, Andou had come accompanied by his legendary coach who was captivated by Chad's talent, it would take some years of persuasion before Chad decided to go pro after initially saying it's not something he had in mind, in one fell swoop he was guided to the position of world champion but—that is a tale a little further into the future.

As time went by, Keigo, Mizuiro and Uryû also returned home, only the KUROSAKI siblings and Orihime were left in the room. When Uryû left Orihime also tried to

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

leave," I'll finish this up later at home..." , however Yuzu held her back saying she wanted to help a little more.

Now, Yuzu was standing alongside Orihime in the kitchen, seeming to enjoy herself as they prepared dinner. Ichigo and Karin continued sewing the embroidery on the floor whilst also absentmindedly listening in. Karin took over the task of adding the final touches Orihime was doing earlier with the golden thread.

"Yuzu, seems like she is having fun huh"

Karin spoke at a volume that only Ichigo could hear.

"Oh yeah...it feels like she's more high-spirited than usual"

"...That girl, she behaves as if she were a mother, she should take it easy and let others help her instead of doing everything herself don't you think? So that's why, I think she's very happy whenever Orihime-chan comes around."

Continuous cheerful laughter coming from the other two could be heard.

"...how about you?"

"Me? As for me...well, I'm also happy...because, Orihime-chan, she reminds me of mother...just a little"

Karin's hands stopped moving, she looked up at the portrait fixed on the wall. At the center of the oversized poster, there is a portrait of their late mother Masaki laughing brightly.

"Haa, it's impossible to get properly sentimental when her picture is like that"

"Certainly not with a picture like this huh"

The two looked at each other, together they laughed a little. The door connecting to the clinic behind them opened and Isshin had returned," are we having dinner soon~?"

"Yup! Orihime-chan is also helping! Aren't you glad, Yuzu!"

"Uh huh! Most of it was prepared by Orihime-chan! Isn't that right Orihime-chan!"

Yuzu smiled." I have confidence in this dish!" Orihime said puffing up with pride.

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“You had fun huh! So, what kind of dish did you cook?”

“Tonight’s main, butter and soy sauce stir-fried...”

“Ooohh, that sounds good~~~~!” Isshin interjected.

“potato salad omelette gratin hot-pot!”

Orihime smiled brimming with confidence, the somewhat unknown concoction was boiling down in front of her.

“Th...that sounds...good...doesn’t it, Ichigo?”

“Don’t ask me...”

—As the five people who encircled the butter and soy sauce stir fried potato salad omelette gratin hot-pot, proceeded with their meal, it was said that the pot of food was immensely delicious.

### **The Ceremony**

#### **3**

Soul Society.

6th sector - KUCHIKI family ceremonial shrine.

Many soul reapers were gathered at both sides of the path extending between the gate of the shrine to the shrine itself. Some came rushing in their usual soul-robos, others wore their hair up and were dressed in beautiful kimonos.

Because there is no god in Soul Society, religious shrines or temples do not exist within the Seireitei. Many people revere the Soul King like a god; however he is only a King, not a god. In Rukongai, several temples have been built to enshrine the gods and buddhas that the residents had worshipped during their lifetime, and all of them are temples into which the residents had brought over their beliefs from the Human World. The KUCHIKI family have built a shrine in front of a mausoleum dedicated to the spirit of their ancestors, it is used as a venue for rituals and ceremonies. From family meetings to wedding celebrations and funerals, every possible KUCHIKI family event is held at this shrine.

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Uu...I’m feeling nervous...!”

Orihime whispered standing next to the black suited figure of Ichigo. Orihime was wearing an airy, light pink dress made from chiffon material, its prettiness coupled with the rarity of western clothing caused all the surrounding gazes to gather on her.

“Why are you nervous...?”

“I don’t know anything at all about this world’s customs...I was thinking, what if I do something discourteous...”

Orihime cast her eyes down feeling uneasy, Uryû then spoke.

“I heard from HISAGI-san just now, it seems that only those from very wellborn families hold ceremonies in Seireitei. Typically, people will just invite their close family and friends for a celebratory banquet after registering the marriage...so the ceremony proceedings and customs differ from family to family, this means there are no set rules.”

“...ISHIDA, that information isn’t resolving anything is it...?”

With a wry smile, Uryû then responded to the issue Chad had pointed out.

“Well, that may be so. But what I wanted to say is that most people in attendance here also know nothing about ceremonies, so that means there’s no need for INOUE-san to get worried either.”

“You could’ve just said that from the beginning you know...”

As Uryû opened his mouth to refute what Ichigo had just mumbled, the clear sound of a bell echoed far and wide, coming from the direction of the gate. In an instant, the noisy surroundings fell silent. Standing on the other side of the gate where a silver coloured bell was hoisted up, the shrine maiden spoke with a commanding air.

“Bridegroom, proceed!”

The gate slowly opens.

Everyone steadily gazed at the person who had come into sight, it was Renji ABARAI clad in Kuromontsuki-Haorihakama\* (\*-black- traditional formal-wear for men). At the same time as Renji stepped through those gates, the gagaku\* band began their musical performance (\*Classical Japanese court music).

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

The elderly head priest guided Renji in time with the elegantly tuned rhythm. After proceeding down the path, taking one step at a time, Renji stopped before the stairs leading up to the shrine. Prompted by the priest, he turned to face the gate. The bell rang out again.

“Head of the family, bride, proceed!”

The shrine maiden’s voice resounded, Byakuya KUCHIKI appeared before the open gate, dressed in a grayish-blue montsuki-haorihakama.

Byakuya held up a red umbrella in front of the palanquin that pulled up outside the gate. The bamboo blinds were lifted up, from inside, Rukia stepped down.

At her appearance, the crowd rose up in cheers with ‘hurrahs’.

Her body was wrapped in a Shiromuku\* (\*white bridal kimono) made from a pure white material that looked as if the fabric itself was emitting light, and on her head, she wore her wedding veil. The veil swayed gently, matching Rukia’s movements and each time the gold of the embroidery would sparkle as it reflected the setting sun.

Rukia slips under the red umbrella that Byakuya is holding up and the two-start walking side by side on the path approaching the shrine.

“...she’s wearing it”

As Ichigo talked to her in a whisper, Orihime was already crying aloud, overcome with emotion.

“She’s wearing it even though...I said...it’s okay...if she shows it off...by wearing it later...in the ceremony! I’m ha...ppyyy...! KUROSAKI-kun...please...!”

She handed the SLR camera she was holding to Ichigo. It was Orihime who had purchased it especially for this day, she repeatedly took test photographs at home to make sure it was in perfect working condition to deal with today’s event, however she did not expect that she would cry so much to the point where she could no longer hold up a camera.

“...I’ll take the pictures for you, so at least you can cry with some peace of mind”

Ichigo looked down the viewfinder, “Th...ank...you...!” Orihime said whilst pressing a handkerchief to her eyes.

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

Ichigo repeatedly pushes down the camera shutter taking photographs as the figures of the two people gradually drew near. Using the zoom function, he could see well through the veil as Rukia wore a smile. Byakuya, was the same as usual with his calm demeanour.

(He should at least smile on such an occasion...)

'There's no help for that guy' Ichigo thought, smiling wryly as he operated the camera.

The two passed by in front of Ichigo and the others who were standing right in the middle alongside each other, by one side of the path approaching the shrine. Rukia looked at the sobbing Orihime and smiled at her affectionately, with a smile on her face she then turned towards Ichigo, who was pointing the lens at her. The sound of the camera shutter set off. Byakuya shot Ichigo a look as if to say, 'you shouldn't bring such boorish things with you'.

The two calmly walked down the path along with the music, they finally reached Renji who was waiting in front of the shrine. Renji bows and Byakuya closes the red umbrella he was holding before handing it over to Renji.

"...I want you to be happy"

It was said in a voice that only reached Rukia.

She looked up at Byakuya. His solitary eyes were somewhat narrowed.

"Nii...sama...!"

Her eyes filled with tears. Byakuya exhaled a breath, he formed the words 'don't cry' with his mouth, placing his hand on Rukia's shoulder he gently sent her in Renji's direction. Renji held up the red umbrella and welcomed Rukia under it. From under the umbrella, Rukia bowed deeply to Byakuya.

Urged on by the head priest, the couple ascending the stairs of the shrine one step at a time.

Byakuya gazed at their backs engulfed in emotions.

The priest recited the norito-sôjô\*, and after the couple exchanged sake cups during the-san-san kudo\*, all the marriage rituals were completed without a hitch.



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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

(\*norito-sôjô - a ritual that includes announcing the marriage at the shrine + prayers/blessing the couple)

(\*san-san kudo ~lit. 3-3-9 times~ - exchanging ceremonial sake cups three times with three different cups, taking three sips from each cup)

### **The Ceremony**

#### **4**

After the ceremony, a banquet was held, a reservation was made at Renji's favourite bar and eatery, 'Daruma Bar', not far from the KUCHIKI family's ceremonial shrine.

Based on reflection of what had happened last time, this time it was Renji who decided to conduct the arrangements for the restaurant, but complaints arose from Rangiku immediately, "if only you had left it up to KUCHIKI, we might have been able to drink at a high class ryotei restaurant again~!"

"High class restaurant? what do you mean, lieutenant!?"

When the 13th squad's third seat, Sentarô KOTSUBAKI pressed Rukia for a reply, he received a shoulder tackle from Kiyone who interrupted the conversation.

"Get away! Snot nosed gorilla woman!"

"But I also went~! Both the alcohol and the food were delicious at that place~!"

"Why were you invited, and I wasn't!?"

"Because it was a gathering of the marriage announcement for close friends! Where close friends gather, get it!"

"Lieutenant...could it be you really...dislike me...!?"

"She surely dislikes your gross bearded headband wearing self!"

"It's not like that at all, I do not dislike you! The only reason I didn't invite KOTSUBAKI-dono is because of the fact that I had already informed him of the news at the squad barracks! It was an unforeseen set of events that the place turned out to be a high-end restaurant...!"

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

Orihime clicked the camera shutter looking at Rukia who appeared flustered as she acted as a mediator between the other two.

“Flustered KUCHIKI-san, you don’t see that too often...! Hee-hee...I just took a cute picture...!”

“You only took a picture of KUCHIKI just now...? you can take a picture of me too you know?”

“Really!? I want to! I want to take a picture of you!”

She wanted to show off her newly tailored Kimono, unable to help herself, Rangiku posed before Orihime. Rangiku’s golden locks of hair suited well with her light violet coloured Kimono that was adorned with large peony flowers.

“Alright! Let’s take a picture with all the girls surrounding KUCHIKI!”

“Waa! Good idea~!”

At Isane’s approval, all the female soul reaper that were sitting about the place gathered around Rukia.

“Captain~! Please could you press the camera shutter for us~!”

“Why me...!?”

Whilst complaining, HITSUGAYA received the camera from Orihime, and snapped several photos as instructed.

When the band of girls brought their faces together to check the photographs on the Camera’s LCD screen, Shunsui KYÔRAKU came in saying “ Pardon me for disturbing you”.

“Commander! You came!?”

Rising off his seat, Renji greeted KYÔRAKU.

“Oh my, isn’t this splendid sight~”

KYÔRAKU’s line of sight skipped over Renji and focused on the group of female troops dressed in Kimonos. Rukia walked out from the middle of that circle of girls and bowed, “ thank you very much for coming, Commander.”

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“Aah Rukia-chan! I’ve come to talk to you”

“With me?” Rukia tilted her head. KYÔRAKU nods and indicates to the entrance of the restaurant.

“Let’s step outside for just a moment. ABARAI-kun, could I borrow your bride just a little?”

“Eh? Ah, yes! Go ahead!”

Renji watched their backs until they were out of sight whilst wondering what they had to talk about.

In front of ‘Daruma Bar’ there is a large pond and placed by the bank of that pond there are several benches for sobering up on. Rukia sat down on one of those benches as instructed by KYÔRAKU.

“Here, for you”

KYÔRAKU sat down next to her and handed her a sizeable package wrapped in a furoshiki cloth. It contained something soft inside it.

“What’s this...?”

“Please, open it”

With a nod she untied the knot.

“This...is...!”

The characters for “13” jumped right into her vision.

“...to you, from UKITAKE”

It was squad 13’s captain cloak.

“From...captain UKITAKE...?”

“Before UKITAKE used ‘Kamikake’, he handed this over to me and said,” appoint Rukia KUCHIKI as the next captain in my place” ...I hit back telling him not to say such ill-omened things, but he laughed and pressed on saying” I must ask you to keep this a secret from KUCHIKI. Since I may still be bearing this cloak again right”

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“Aah, ‘again’ it is”, KYÔRAKU thought.

Again, a person has entrusted me with something of great importance and passed away.—

“Something like...me being the likes of captain...the sort of capacity required for that...”

Rukia places her hand over the '13' and bites her lip. 'To take on this responsibility myself...' the mere thought of that made her body tremble to the point where her back teeth were chattering. Despite this, the fact that UKITAKE had personally left this behind for her, made her heart burn passionately with gratitude.

“...This cloak was originally tailored for Kaien-kun”

“Eh...?”

Rukia's eyes widened at the sudden mention of that name.

“Though I think you'll know this better than me...UKITAKE had a very high opinion of Kaien-kun...he was planning to retire and hand over the position of captain to Kaien”

UKITAKE had visited the 8th squad's barracks with tea cakes where he confided in KYÔRAKU about those plans.

“I have such confidence in my knowledge of medical treatment techniques, so how about I become a consultant at the coordinated relief station?”

They appeared to have fun at the talk of UKITAKE's future course after retirement, four days later— Kaien SHIBA would battle a hollow and lose his life before UKITAKE's eyes.

“...I didn't know he had gone as far as ordering a captain's cloak”

That day, KYÔRAKU had only taken UKITAKE's talk of retirement half seriously. It simply seemed like an extension of their usual chats over tea.

(You were serious huh...)

After Kaien's death, he couldn't bear to part with it for decades, so the cloak lay idle in a corner of the captain's office. When he decided to re-tailor it to fit Rukia, UKITAKE was most certainly smiling and laughing again like that day.

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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“I didn’t give this to you till today, because I was waiting for your heart to grow”

“My heart...?”

KYÔRAKU nodded a yes.

“You are strong. If we look at your abilities alone, it is at the sufficient level required for captaincy...however, your heart was not catching up. Being able to rise to the responsibility of taking leadership over a squad...that sort of heart”

“...I see...”

“...Nevertheless!”

KYÔRAKU stood up, with a smile on his face he looked down at Rukia.

“I was thinking, looking at the young people of the 13th squad who were in attendance at today’s ceremony. Within themselves, they feel your heart has already grown...that as a captain, you have a heart that will hold up the squad.”

“Everyone thinks...I’m...?”

“I wonder whether it was because UKITAKE was the captain all that time...there were many amongst the young people of the 13th who were ready to lend their support...”

“Yes...that’s right, really...they’re always helping”

Since Rukia had become the acting captain of her squad, she was of the opinion that her work would probably increase to correspond with that, but despite the fact that Kiyone had even transferred to the 4th squad, Rukia’s workload had barely-changed. KOTSUBAKI had informed her that from long ago, at squad 13, the troops had devised ways to decrease the captain’s workload in order to lighten the burden on UKITAKE’s shoulders.

“That way, everyone can give their support...and it seems that everyone wants to give their support, even if it may be on the captain’s terms...”

Rukia fixed her eyes on the cloak.

To give support and be supported — I wonder if I could also become that kind of captain myself.

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

"It's okay you don't have to do this right now. I'll wait for your decision...but I think at this point in time, you are capable enough for captaincy. Just don't forget about it alright?"

"...Understood! Thank you very much...!"

Rukia stood up whilst tightly clutching the cloak, she bowed deeply to KYÔRAKU.

"Oops, I almost forgot...here, congratulations on your marriage!"

KYÔRAKU takes out an envelope from his sleeve before handing it over to Rukia. The envelope was thick enough to feel the weight of the heavy banknotes inside.

"I...I cannot accept something like this!"

"Now now, please accept it thinking that is from both me and UKITAKE!"

At KYÔRAKU's words, her hands ceased its shaking.

"Ah, Commander...!"

Rukia extended her arm to return the envelope, but as soon as she did, KYÔRAKU had disappeared using shunpo. With a huff, she carefully tucked the captain's cloak back into the wrapping cloth.

"Captain UKITAKE...please give me a little more time. At any rate, I won't fail...!"

In the not so distant future, I'll surely be ready.

Rukia made a vow at the cloak and then returned to the restaurant in a half run.

Four hours have passed since the start of the banquet, when the people who were drunk began to leave, Uryû stood up and said "I have to go soon...ABARAI, KUCHIKI-san, thank you for today. May you be forever happy."

He came close to the couple and gave a slight bow.

"Also...I wasn't sure when was appropriate to give a celebratory gift since the reception was not held at a ceremonial hall but...is it still okay now?"

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Uryû spoke, lowering his voice, he then held out a special envelope, containing his monetary gift, to Renji. Chad who was watching them said "me too..." before taking out his gift, in a chain reaction, Ichigo and Orihime also gathered their own gifts in hand.

"Every single one of you brought something!? We don't need all of this you know! Because, just the fact that you went to the trouble of coming here from the Human World for us, that is more than enough!"

"Well you have no choice! You have allowed us to eat and drink like this...inside you'll find Human World money, so the next time you happen to go there, please buy clothes or something for your gigai with this"

Uryû forcibly pushes his gift into Renji's hands.

"Because I feel that way too! Here!"

Imitating Uryû, Orihime also slips her gift into Rukia's hands.

"It would be discourteous if I had to take this back home...please quietly accept this"

"This one's from me, and this one's from my old man"

Chad's, Ichigo's and Isshin's gifts were piled into Renji's hands.

"Even Isshin-dono...!?"

At a surprised Rukia Ichigo then says -

"That guy...when Kaien died, he really wanted to cheer you up. He regretted it so much at the time. So, he says he wants you to be the most happiest a person could be"

Isshin is Kaien SHIBA's uncle.

Isshin was the captain of squad 10 around the time of Kaien's death. That his proud nephew had passed away, it was naturally a shock, he had heard from UKITAKE about the details and circumstances leading to his death, Isshin thought that Rukia needed a helping hand the most, he visited squad 13 many times. However, when he saw her much too pained face from the side, he found it impossible to call out to her no matter what.

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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

“...I see...”

Rukia thinks about herself back in those days. From the day she ended Kaien’s life with her own hands, when she was closing her heart up into a deep, dark place, she wanted to tell herself, “you are cared for by many people, and are kept in their many thoughts.”

“It’s not good to have you open the Senkaimon so many times for us, I think we’ll also be leaving then?”

At Ichigo’s suggestion, Chad nods in agreement.

“Eeeh~! Going home alreadyyy~? It’s okay if you stay with us right, Orihimeee~?” Rangiku said looking somewhat intoxicated. Next to her, HISAGI and Izuru were completely passed out drunk.

“Thank you, Rangiku San! But since I have to work tomorrow morning...”

“Well, I guess that can’t be helped...how about you Ichigo? Stay with us?”

Rangiku narrowed her eyes and smiled devilishly, “th...there’s no way I’m staying!” Ichigo replied in a hurry.

“What! Suuuch a pityyy!”

Rangiku giggled whilst waving her hand next to her face a little, “well then, see you again next time huh~”

“I’ve just called someone and asked them to open the 6th squad’s Senkaimon now!” Renji said returning his divine-messenger\* to his pocket. (\*soul reaper mobile device)

“Rukia, hold on just a minute, I’ll escort these guys up to the gate. You should remain here with all of our other friends!”

“Alright...everyone, thanks for today. I received such a wonderful veil, and yet, you even went as far as giving us celebratory gifts...thank you”

She gave them a quick bow.

“I’ll see you again in the Human World!” Rukia said with a smiling face, she then turned back, heading inside the restaurant.



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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

### The Ceremony

#### 5

Along the road heading towards the Senkaimon, Renji who was at the very back of the group he was escorting, called out to Ichigo who was walking directly in front of him.

“...what is it?”

The distance separating them from the other three people ahead widened meaning their private conversation could not be heard.

“...Don’t you think you should make things clear soon too?” said Renji.

“Huh?” Ichigo said, tilting his head in puzzlement.

“Don’t play dumb...I’m talking about INOUE.”

“Whaa...!?”

Although he knew she wasn’t close enough to hear them, Ichigo reflexively looked for Orihime’s reaction. Orihime seemed to be having fun talking about something with Uryû and Chad who were by either side of her.

“You’re in love with her, aren’t you?”

“...That is...!”

At Renji’s blunt manner of speaking, Ichigo tried to force his words out one by one.

“Don’t keep such a nice girl waiting too long.”

“...I understand that” he said responding with a voice that seemed to disappear.

“...but...don’t act so patronisingly all of a sudden...! And anyway, you were so slow it took you many decades yourself...”

At Ichigo’s grumbling, Renji ran up to the three people walking in front. He called out to Uryû and Chad and ushered Orihime away with a wave of his hand.

“That guy...! What is he up to!?”

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190

Feeling dejected, Orihime dropped her shoulders and walked in Ichigo's direction.

"We're having a conversation just between the men, so you should go that way..."

"R...right..."

"Is KUROSAKI-kun going too? I'll walk at a distance from you all"

"No, I..."

He watched the group walking ahead of them. Renji looked at Ichigo and gave him a firm thumbs up as if to say, 'good luck'.

"...seems like I don't have to go over there"

"Oh, are you sure...?"

Orihime looks up at him in a questioning manner. "I'm too bad at expressing my mind!" Ichigo thought, feeling like he wanted to tear his hair out.

"KUCHIKI-san was so pretty huh..." Orihime whispered keenly whilst completely unaware of what was truly on Ichigo's mind.

"The veil suited her extremely well don't you think...? Haa..."

Recollecting the scene, Orihime seemed to be overcome with emotion, yet again her eyes began to fill with tears.

"KUROSAKI-kun, thank you for taking over the camera for me today! I'm looking forward to seeing the photographs...I'll arrange them properly into an album and then send a copy to everyone too!"

Orihime smiled at Ichigo whose face remained tense as he replied "yeah".

"...what's wrong, KUROSAKI-kun?"

In response to Orihime frowning in concern, Ichigo shakes his head saying, "it's nothing".

Whilst they were having a silly talk, the Senkaimon could be seen in the distance. The three people who were ahead, were already before the gate having a friendly chat.

Ichigo takes a very deep breath.

## WE DO knot, ALWAYS LOVE YOU

written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO

“Hey, INOUE”

Standing still, he looked at Orihime.

“What is it?”

Tilting her head to the side, Orihime looked up at Ichigo.

“There's...something I'd like to talk to you about, so next time, do you think you could you make some time for me?”

END

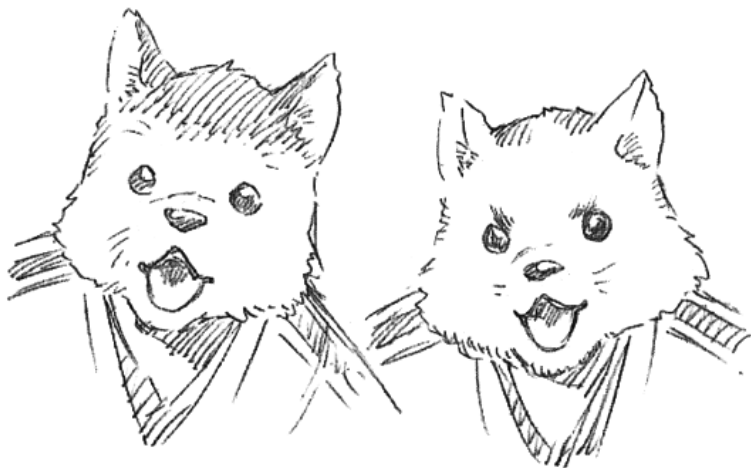
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translated by missstormcaller & edited by tari101190



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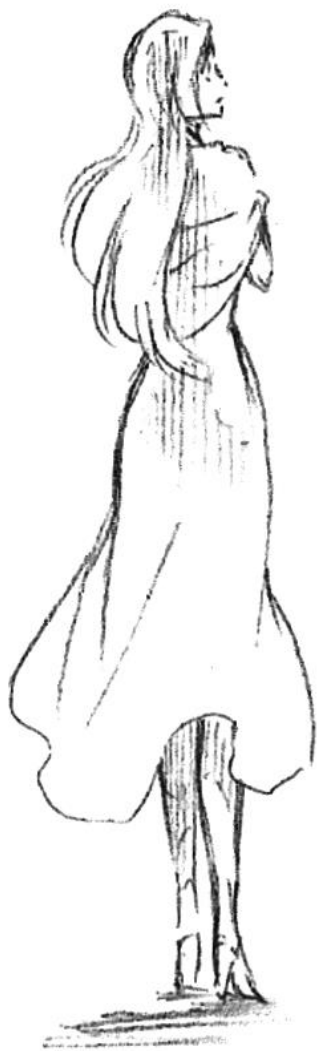
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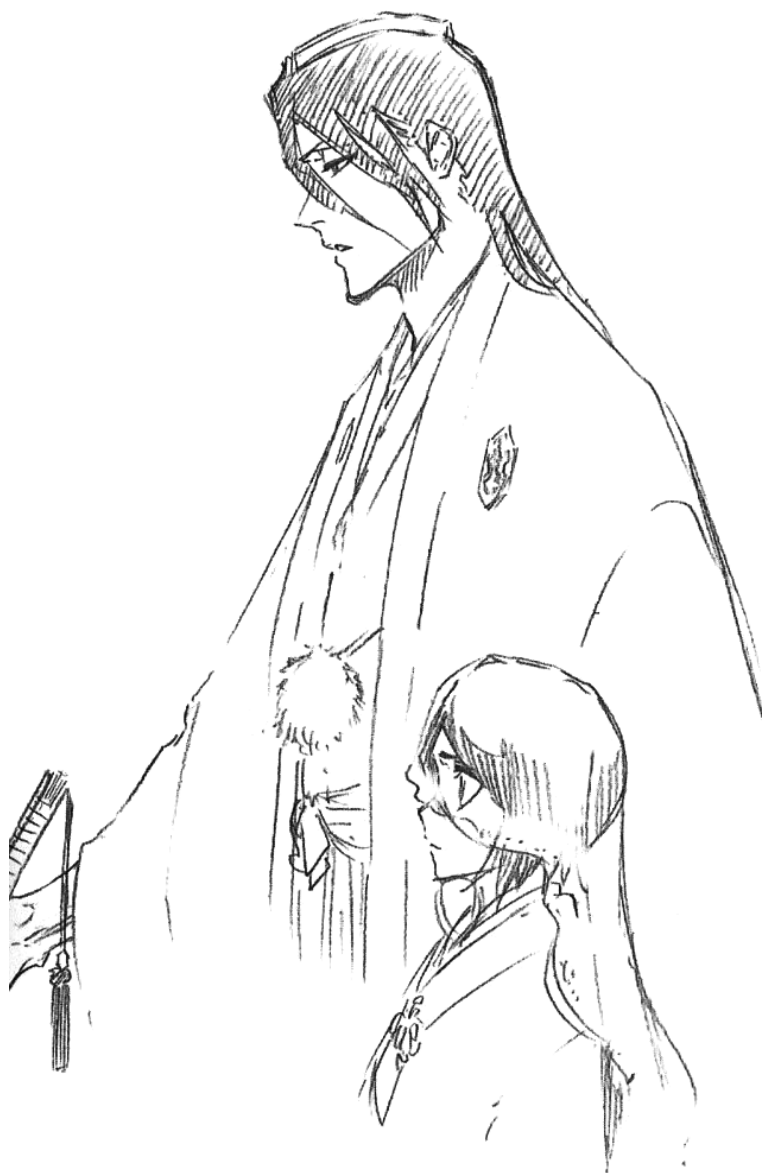
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written by Makoto MATSUBARA & Tite KUBO





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

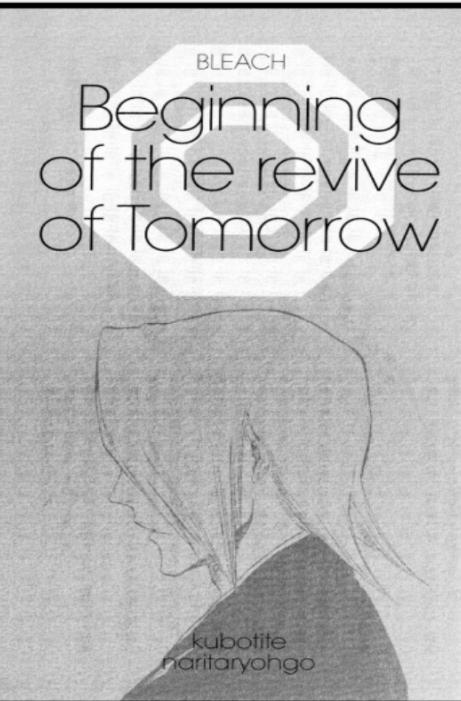


**Nestle to Night**  
MAKOTO MATSUBARA × TITE KUBO

小説 JUMP J BOOKS

**BLEACH**

**I**  
Spirits  
Are forever  
With You  
kubote naritaryohgo



kubote naritaryohgo

小説 JUMP J BOOKS

**BLEACH**

**II**  
Spirits  
Are forever  
With You  
kubote naritaryohgo



Can't  
Fear  
Your  
Own  
World

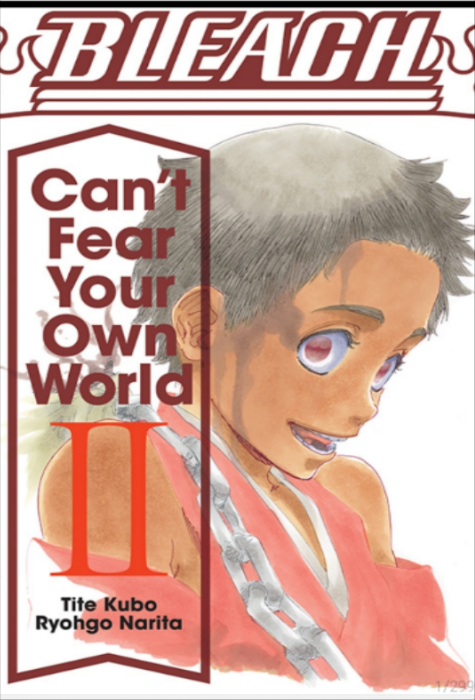
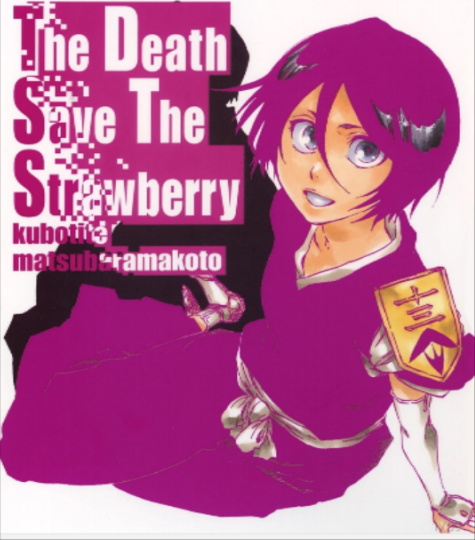
**I**

Tite Kubo  
Ryohgo Narita

小説 JUMP J BOOKS

**BLEACH**

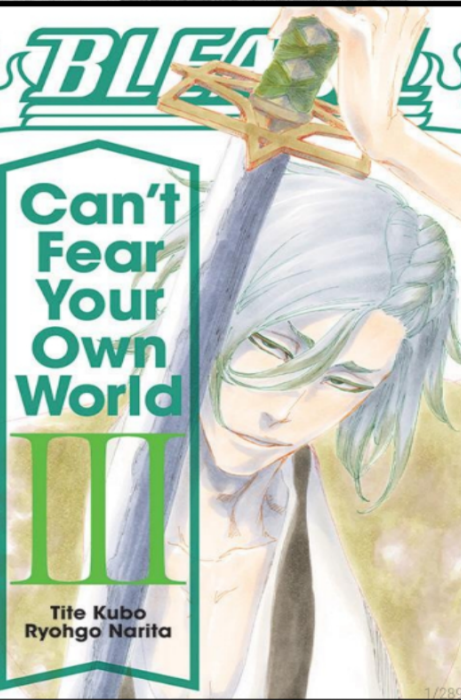
The Death  
Save The  
Strawberry  
kubote matsubaramakoto



Can't  
Fear  
Your  
Own  
World

**II**

Tite Kubo  
Ryohgo Narita



Can't  
Fear  
Your  
Own  
World

**III**

Tite Kubo  
Ryohgo Narita



WE DO **knot**  
ALWAYS  
LOVE YOU

**BLEACH**

kubote matsubara makoto