

Have You Ever Told a Lie?

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Kiomi Natsuka didn't know of Kira until he killed her older brother. Now she's out for vengeance, with help from a Shinigami with mysterious motives. Can she separate truth from lies in time? Or will Kira add one more Natsuka to his list of victims?

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0 - Prologue

Have You Ever Told a Lie?

Written by: Ghost Wulf

Prologue

The graveyard was quiet at night. The light of a crescent moon filtered through the treetops, casting a pale glow.

Trying to see past tears, a girl stumbled around the gravestones. Her gasps broke the stillness as well as her cries of pain every time she lost her footing. Cuts covered her legs and bare feet from falling.

A strangled sob broke from her throat as she collapsed in front of a gravestone. She rested her cheek on the face of the stone, her clenched fists above her head on the top. Tears darkened the stone in ragged lines from her cheek.

In one of her fists, she held a kitchen knife that glinted in the moonlight.

“I’m sorry Kyon” the girl choked out.

Kyonchi Natsuka, the name on the grave.

The girl’s hand dropped, driving the knife towards her heart. No one would witness her final moments except the gravestones around her.

Then suddenly she stopped, jerking her head up as if she had heard something. Her eyes widened in horror and she scrambled backwards, now holding the knife out towards something else. Something invisible.

“W-who . . . ?” She couldn’t finish the sentence as her back hit a tree, stopping her escape.

The night remained silent. Anyone watching would have heard no reply, just the lightest whisper as a breeze snaked through the trees.

The girl's eyes widened even further, the knife slipping from her loosened grip and falling to the grass silently.

"Shi . . . ni . . . gami?" she whispered.

As the night deepened her whispers with no reply continued. Sobs racked her body once more before disappearing. Time continued to move and finally, with a single nod, she slipped to her feet.

"I accept," she said, the words barely audible even in the still night scene.

Police sirens sounded in the distance, coming closer. The girl turned, exiting the graveyard slowly, the same way she had come running, taking the knife back with her.

Her once brown eyes now glowed red.

1 - Pilot

5 Months Later: Chapter 1 - Pilot

Kiomi Natsuka bent over the papers spread before her, her brow furrowed in concentration. Each page was covered in barely legible scrawled handwriting. As the writer, Kiomi could read it but now her problem was memorizing it in time for her college entrance exams – which were coming up fast. She pulled a sheet closer to her, her eyes skimming the lines quickly, making sure she had all the crucial information down pat. Then she pushed it off the table onto the small pile already on the floor. She reached for the next page in line – they were all dated of course – but then paused, blinking. The page her fingers now rested on was a few days off. With a groan she realized what she must have done.

She slid to her feet and walked to the other side of the room – avoiding her stack of memorized papers – to grab her cell phone from its charger. Turning it on, she dialed a familiar number and waited as it rang.

“Hello?” said the guy who picked up.

“Hey Light,” Kiomi replied. “Sorry to bother you but I –”

“Left a few of your study papers here on accident again,” Light Yagami finished the sentence for her, a smile in his voice.

“If you knew, why didn’t you tell me sooner?” Kiomi asked irritably.

“Because I didn’t realize until I started studying a few minutes ago.”

“I see. Well, would it be too much trouble to ask you to return them please?”

“Actually it would,” Light said apologetically. “I’ve already signed up to help my mom today; she’ll need me in about twenty minutes. I wouldn’t have time to get to your house and back.”

“Ah, well in that case, since I can make it to your house in fifteen, do you mind if I come get them?”

“No problem.”

“Thanks Light, see you in a while.”

“Bye.”

She closed her phone and put it back in its charging cradle. Walking to the front door, she exchanged

her house slippers for normal shoes.

“I’m going to Light’s, I’ll be back in a while!” she called.

“Ok dear!” her mom replied from upstairs.

“Oooh, gonna go see your boyfriend again?” her brother Ryou asked playfully. He was upstairs, doing something with their mother.

“For the last time he’s not my boyfriend! He’s just a friend. And at least he’s trying to help me, unlike a relative of mine I could name.”

“How harsh!”

She smiled. Barely five months ago she and Ryou had hated each other’s guts, and now they could tease each other all the time. It’s funny how fast relationships can change, she thought.

Kiomi exited her house, shutting the door quietly behind her. They had a bad door that tended to slam if you didn’t close it properly.

The walk to Light’s house took her just over fifteen minutes. She knocked on the door, heard the shouted invitation to come in, and entered. She changed into a pair of the slippers they had at their door and walked in.

“Hi Kiomi!” Sayu, Light’s younger sister, said, waving at her enthusiastically from the kitchen where she seemed to be helping her mother cook something.

Kiomi smiled. “Hello Sayu, is Light upstairs?”

Sayu nodded, giving her a lopsided grin. “He’s in his room – studying as always.”

Kiomi nodded and jogged up the stairs, knocking on Light’s door. He opened it and smiled at her, waving her inside. He had his study papers all neatly organized on his desk, hers sitting on the corner.

“I don’t even know why you study,” Kiomi muttered, folding her papers and sliding them into her back pocket. “You’re smart enough to just get right in.”

Light rolled his eyes. “Don’t be ridiculous, everyone needs to study.”

“Not you,” she insisted. “You were correcting the instructors when they gave us the information for heaven’s sake!”

“Only once,” he protested.

“That’s once more than anyone else.”

Light held up his hands in surrender. “Ok ok, I study because I’m bored then, how’s that?”

She shook her head. "You're not normal."

He laughed. "I can't win for losing can I?"

"No."

He shook his head with a light laugh. "So how's your studying coming?"

"Actually, better than I thought it would. Although my style is a bit more . . ." She looked at his perfectly organized desk once again and thought of her haphazard study table at home, papers scattered on the floor. "A bit different. By the way, thanks for the help earlier."

"No problem. I hope we both make it in."

She had met Light through cram school and the entry classes for To-ou University (she had already graduated high school, Light was in his last year). He could explain a subject better than any professor, and as much as she gave him crap about studying so much, she actually admired him for it.

He wasn't a bad guy to be around either, and he definitely wasn't hard on the eyes. She rolled her eyes at her own thought. As far as she knew, Light had never dated anyone seriously, and he wasn't her type. His idea of a good date was probably a night at the movies with a study session afterwards.

"Something amusing?" Light asked, noticing her eye roll.

She started to say "nothing" but caught herself just in time. It was still so hard to get used to that part of the agreement . . . She hurriedly pushed that thought from her mind and shrugged at Light.

"Just thinking of studying," she said. Not a lie.

He started to say something when they both heard a voice shout from downstairs.

"Light! Hurry and finish, I'll need you in a few minutes!" his mom said.

Kiomi glanced at the clock on his wall and sighed.

"I'd better go," she said.

"Sorry," Light replied.

"Nah, I have studying to do anyway." This time she really rolled her eyes about studying.

She left the room and Light bid her goodbye, closing the door after her.

"Is Light done studying yet?" Sayu asked as Kiomi started to walk by her and her mom again.

"It looked like he was almost finished," she replied.

Sayu smiled at her. "Thanks. It was nice to see you again Kiomi."

Light's mom smiled at her as well.

Kiomi nodded. "You too. See you later."

She turned to go when suddenly a sound caught her attention. The TV in the main room of their house had been on quietly ever since Kiomi had entered but she had barely noticed. Now though, the sound suddenly changed from the normal program to something that caught her attention.

"We interrupt this program to bring you a live international broadcast message from the ICPO, Interpol."

Kiomi spun to face the screen. "ICPO?"

It was a meeting of some of the most prominent police leaders of the world. And for them to suddenly be broadcasting a message . . . there was only one thing it could be about!

Without asking permission, Kiomi grabbed the remote from the table and turned the volume up, focusing on the screen intently.

"What is it?" Sayu asked, coming to stand next to her.

Kiomi motioned for her to keep silent as the screen changed to a well dressed man with black hair. A nameplate sat in front of him, facing the screen. It read Lind L. Taylor.

"I am the person who controls the world's police force," the man began. "My name is Lind L. Taylor. Also known as . . . L."

Kiomi ran the man's words through her mind again. Controls the world's police force . . . Who is this guy? Who would go by the alias of a letter?

"I am working with the police on the case of history's most unforgivable crime," Lind continued. "The case of a vulgar criminal called "Kira"."

Kiomi's eyes narrowed. I knew it, she thought. It couldn't be about anyone else.

"Kira, you are lower than the criminals you are killing. I can tell what you are thinking, but actions such as these are purely evil," Lind said harshly. "I will bring you to justice."

Finally, Kiomi thought. The police are finally going to do something about Kira! I don't know who L is, but I'm grateful. Despite the seriousness of the matter, a smile broke out on her face. The murderer would be brought to justice!

She wanted to talk to Light about it. After all, he wanted to join the National Police Agency after he graduated college. She had never brought up the Kira case around him but surely he would have been following it as well.

She turned and took a step towards the stairs, back towards Light's room, when she heard Sayu gasp. Her heart sank and she jerked her head around to look at the screen again.

Lind L. Taylor was clutching his chest, over his heart. He let out a cry of pain and then collapsed. Officials rushed forward, asking if he was okay, and hurriedly pulled him away from the camera's view. The camera was now just recording an empty scene, frantic shouting in the background.

Fury welled inside Kiomi, evaporating her smile completely. Could no one stand up to Kira? Had he decided criminals were not worth his time so he was now killing police officials as well?!

"W-what happened?" Sayu asked hesitantly. She seemed hopeful that it would all turn out to be a joke, instead of a live murder.

Kiomi couldn't respond. She knew exactly what had happened; she had seen it before.

Suddenly the screen turned a blinding white. Kiomi blinked once or twice and realized a huge calligraphic L had appeared in the center of the white picture. What was . . . ?

"I don't believe it," said a shocked, synthetically altered voice. "I had an idea but Kira, you can actually kill victims without any physical contact."

Kiomi stared at the screen, shocked herself. Who was speaking now?

"You're trapped, Kira," the voice said. "If you really are responsible for the death of Lind L. Taylor, then you should know that he was actually a criminal sentenced to die at this time today, not me. His arrest and conviction were hidden from the media and the internet. Apparently, even you can't know about criminals like that. I am the real L."

The real L . . . whoever that might be. Kiomi's eyes widened. So . . . he had set a criminal up to die on live TV to prove that Kira really had a supernatural killing method. She couldn't say she approved . . . but L had proven for sure what she knew had to be true. Now the rest of the world had to realize its truth as well.

"Well then . . . kill me!" L said. "What's wrong? Try killing me!"

"What is he doing?!" Kiomi demanded in shock. Who in their right mind would taunt Kira? Did L have a death wish?!

"Hurry up and try to kill me!"

Light's mother moved to turn the TV off, probably afraid that there would be another murder on TV. She had a right to be scared.

"No, wait!" Kiomi said. "Please!"

Something in her voice made the woman hesitate, although she clearly wanted to turn it off anyway.

Kiomi stared at the screen intently.

L . . . if he had fooled Kira into killing when everyone was watching then he had to know something. Somehow, L had to be certain that Kira couldn't kill him. That was the reason he was taunting the murderer, to make sure he tried, positive he would fail.

There was a pause and then L said, "You can't, can you? So there are limits to your abilities as well Thank you for the information. In exchange, I'll tell you something as well. It was announced that this broadcast was worldwide, but in fact, it was only shown in the Kanto region of Japan."

Kiomi gasped, realizing immediately what that meant. In a matter of a few minutes, L had discovered that Kira could kill without contact, that there were limitations to his killing, and not only that he lived in Japan, but the exact region.

"I was planning on showing this in every region, starting with the largest," L continued, "but now it appears there is no need. You are in Kanto, Japan. Something that the police missed was a small case of the Shinjuku Street Slasher, your first kill. Compared to the other criminals who have died of heart attacks, this crime was very light, and it was only broadcasted in Japan. That was all it took to know that you were in Japan. You've been cornered, Kira, and I will send you to your execution."

The screen went back to the original programming but Kiomi barely noticed. Just from a few moments it was already apparent to her that L was exactly the person she had needed all along. The only person who could help her bring Kira to justice. She had considered Light before – like she had just a few moments ago – but he was just as much in the dark as her. But if she could meet L, she had no doubt that she could finally find Kira.

She had to find out more.

2 - Interview

Chapter 2 – Interview

The NPA headquarters building was only a short walking distance away from Kiomi's house. She went directly after cram school, still even wearing her backpack.

At the front desk an attendant asked her what she needed.

"Is Natsuka-san working today?" she asked.

The man checked in the computer quickly and then nodded.

"I need to speak to him," she said, "I'm his niece."

"I'll tell him you're coming," he said in return, picking up a phone. "Do you know where his office is?"

"Yes, thank you."

She walked down the hallway to her uncle's office, eyes following her the entire way. Now that everyone had realized the Kira threat was real it seemed everyone was a suspect. She tried to keep her aggravation in check, resisting the urge to look at someone watching her and snap, "Yes! I am supposed to be here!".

Her uncle opened his door on the first knock, smiling at her.

"Kiomi, I'm glad to see you again."

"You too Uncle," she said, returning the smile and closing the door after her so they were in private.

"What brings you here today?" His expression turned apologetic. "I don't want to shoo you out or anything but the department's rather busy these days."

No sense beating around the bush now that he brought it up.

"Actually, Uncle, that's what I wanted to talk to you about."

He sighed heavily, his face going blank.

"Kiomi, you know I can't disclose information about the Kira case, I've said that before."

She shook her head. "I'm not here about Kira today."

That caught him by surprise.

"Then, why . . . ?" He trailed off, at a loss.

"I saw the broadcast on TV yesterday. I'm just here because I'm really glad that the police are finally doing something," she said, setting her backpack in a chair at his desk. She pushed the chair forward all the way so that her backpack was completely under the desk top.

His look was disapproving. "Kiomi, you know that we have been working on this case from the very start."

"But you were insisting that it was some epidemic, or coincidence," she said, looking back at him coolly. "It seems everyone's finally opened their eyes to the truth of these murders."

She knew she was walking a razor edge here. Her Uncle was very sensitive to her criticism of the police force – a bit would provoke him to talk but if she pushed it too far . . . well she'd done that before. It wasn't fun.

And of course the biggest problem was keeping her emotions in check. She couldn't afford to mess this up by letting her hatred for Kira cloud her words and observations. And she couldn't let memories leak through, crying would be even worse than anger.

Her uncle sighed. "Have a seat."

It was that tone. She would have to be extra careful. She pulled a chair up to his desk, next to the chair with her backpack. He sat across from her, by his computer.

"What you have to understand is that, even though we've seen it ourselves, it's still not logical for someone to be able to kill with a heart attack without even laying a finger on the victim," he said.

Kiomi's eyes flitted to the corner of his office where she knew a camera was embedded. Policemen weren't watched normally but if anything suspicious came up, there were always tapes that could be looked at. She had to make sure nothing suspicious would be on the camera today.

Carefully, making sure it simply looked as if her hands were resting in her lap, she pulled a small notebook and pencil out of her backpack. The top of the desk hid her actions from view and she opened the notebook in her lap, holding the pencil loosely so the muscles in her arm wouldn't tighten visibly (she normally couldn't write with pencils because her grip was naturally tight and she wound up breaking them nine out of ten times; even pens sometimes fell before her grip of doom).

"You've seen it now though, thanks to L," she said.

Her uncle's mood instantly darkened. It surprised her.

"Well, L has his own unconventional methods," he said coolly.

“You don’t like him?” she asked, her curiosity genuine.

She was now taking down what they both said in shorthand, making sure to only write while one of them was talking so that her pencil wouldn’t be heard. Normally, there were only about three people, including herself, who could read her writing, and since she wasn’t looking at the paper it would be even more indecipherable. She was running the risk that she would lose parts of the conversation but it was worth it, just in case she lost the notebook somehow. Maybe she was just being paranoid but she felt like it wouldn’t be good if some people found out she was trying to find L.

“I’ve never met him,” her uncle said flatly. “No one has. Well, no one but Watari. And even then I wonder if he’s actually seen L or if he can just contact him.”

Kiomi snorted and made her voice sound unconvinced. “People have to meet him or else he couldn’t work with the police.”

Again, she was treading a knife edge. She could be acting a part but she had to be sure not to lie completely.

“It isn’t that he works with the police,” her uncle said, disdain in his tone, “it’s that we’re forced to work with him. The truth is, on cases like this, the leaders automatically turn to L. He’s solved some of the toughest cases to date, including the Lost Angeles BB murder cases, and now people have come to depend on him in cases like this, regardless of certain other facts.”

Kiomi kept her face carefully composed, not showing her shock. Her uncle never talked about anyone in his line of work like this. He really hated something about L. What would make him . . . ? An idea clicked and she decided to try it.

“Like the fact that L let a criminal be killed on live TV. He even set it up to happen You think he’s just like Kira don’t you?” she said.

As the last word was leaving her lips she focused on her uncle’s eyes, tuning everything else around her out until the only clear thing left in her vision were his brown orbs. If he would have looked closely, her uncle would have seen her own brown eyes suddenly gain a hint of a crimson glow.

“It’s not that,” her uncle said.

His answer was so smooth, so immediate. Anyone else would have probably believed it. But Kiomi didn’t. In the deepest part of his eyes, red light flashed for a split second. It was enough to know her uncle was lying.

“Let me ask you, Uncle,” she said quietly. “Before L came into the picture, how much did the police know about Kira?”

Her uncle didn’t answer; instead he turned to look at his computer screen, breaking eye contact with her. She blinked a few times to let her eyes adjust to seeing everything in the room again.

“I’m afraid I have to get back to work, Kiomi,” he said, his tone saying that the discussion was over and also proving that she had hit the subject right on the nose. The police hadn’t even known whether or not Kira existed before L came into the picture.

She slipped the notebook and pencil back into her backpack and stood up.

“I’m sorry I took so much time Uncle,” she said. “I’ll leave you and all the police with just one request – make sure Kira dies soon.”

“We’re bringing him to justice,” he said, looking at her once more.

“That’s what I said,” she replied, slipping an arm through one of the straps on her backpack and shouldering it into place.

“Kiomi . . .” He paused and then plowed ahead, “I know you miss Kyonchi – we all do. But you can’t let that cloud your judgment. If you were to find Kira and kill him you would be no better than him, you have to leave it to the police and the courts.”

“Don’t give me a “revenge isn’t the answer” speech, Uncle,” she said. Her voice remained normal – it wasn’t a threat, just a request. “If you want to race me to Kira, that’s fine. You get there first; he can go to court and get the death sentence. I get there first; he can die on the spot. Either way it’s the same outcome.”

“Kiomi –”

“But let me ask you this,” she continued. “How do you convict someone who kills remotely by a heart attack? What evidence will you present to the court that will guarantee that “justice is seen”?”

“It will work out,” her uncle insisted.

His eyes caught her gaze for a minute and she looked into them thoughtfully. She could see something in them that took her a moment to identify. Fear. Her intent scared him.

“Yes it will, Uncle,” she agreed. “Yes it will. Stop by for dinner sometime, mom wants to see you again.”

Then she left, not waiting for or wanting a reply. She was one step closer to Kira thanks to her Uncle. He had given her the best clue possible, a name.

As soon as she got home she locked herself in her room and turned on her computer. Pulling up her web browser, she typed in “Los Angeles BB murder cases” and hit enter.

It was time to begin tracking down L.

3 - Followed

Chapter 3 – Followed

A beeping sound woke Kiomi in the morning. She groaned and reached her arm out, feeling for her alarm clock. Then, suddenly, she realized it wasn't her alarm. She had fallen asleep looking things up on her computer and so, somehow, her cheek had wound up on her keyboard and it was beeping in protest.

She sat back – blinking since the light in her room was still on – and rubbed her cheek. She probably had an imprint of all the keys on it and she was stiff from sleeping slouched in her chair. As she glanced at the clock she winced; she couldn't have been asleep for more than half an hour. And she had to be at her job in about that much time.

After she dragged herself through a cold shower her head cleared more and she was able to think about the research she'd done.

The Los Angeles BB murder cases were about a serial killer known as Beyond Birthday that had occurred not long ago at all. All the records were still fresh and plastered all over sights on the internet. It wasn't hard to find out the story.

In all the information she had found a woman named Naomi Misora, an FBI agent, was listed as the person who cracked the case. There was no mention of an "L" at all; it was like he had never been involved. Except that it was obvious to Kiomi that someone had been working backstage.

Apparently, keeping his face hidden wasn't just something L did for the Kira case, it was his trademark. That proved a problem. If he never revealed himself to anyone, how was she supposed to meet him?

There was only one answer she could come to. She had to meet the only person she could think of that might have met L – Naomi Misora. And she couldn't stand to wait long.

Sitting at her computer again, she glanced at the clock. She had roughly twenty five minutes before she had to leave for work. Could she track down an FBI agent in that amount of time?

Only one way to find out.

She started with the obvious, a simple search on Naomi Misora's name on Google Japan. The search results were mainly about cases on news sites and such where Naomi had been involved. Kiomi wasn't interested in the cases; she was merely looking at dates. Barely two months ago, Naomi had been in Los Angeles solving the BB murder cases. But was she still there?

Unfortunately, none of the cases she saw so far had been more recent than that.

“Kiomi!” shouted her mother suddenly. “What are you doing up there? It’s time for breakfast!”

“I’m looking something up,” Kiomi called back, continuing to scroll down the list. “I’ll be down in a minute!”

After skimming through another page of search results, a news site caught her eye and she paused. The summary read, “. . . causing the FBI agent to take a paid leave from duty. Naomi Misora was not out of the game even on leave though and her most famous case came up as she worked independently, solving the BB murder mysteries. A warning to criminals, this woman is beginning to show the potential of the greatest FBI agent of her time.”

“A paid leave” Kiomi murmured, clicking on the site. What was the cause?

“Kiomi!” her mother shouted again. “You won’t have time if you don’t hurry!”

“Almost done!”

She read the article quickly, leaning back in her chair when she was done.

Naomi Misora, possible of being “the greatest agent of her time”, had been unable to pull the trigger on a thirteen year old drug dealer. Because of her, a dangerous criminal had escaped. There was no excuse for her having not acted – regardless of age she had been facing a criminal that was otherwise unapprehendable, and she should have known something like that would come up in her chosen line of work.

But Kiomi didn’t blame her.

Not that she was worried about pinning blame or not, what she was most interested in was the very end of the article.

It was an edit that had just been added in the past few days. The content was disappointing for Kiomi because it said that Naomi had retired from FBI work just recently. But, the reason for her retirement opened another door. It was Raye Penber, a fellow FBI agent, and, according to the article, Naomi’s fiancé.

Naomi would naturally be with her fiancé, especially if she quit work to be with him. If she couldn’t find Naomi, then perhaps she could find Raye.

“Kiomi!” Her mother’s voice was bordering on aggravated so she reluctantly closed her search window. Looking up Penber would have to wait.

“Coming!”

She deleted her browser history just in case and shut her computer down. Then she grabbed her purse and went downstairs for breakfast.

Two skulls and a rib. How disappointing.

Kezu dropped his hand of cards on the rock table before him and pushed himself to his feet.

“Out already Kezu?” the Shinigami next to him asked, sounding triumphant.

“I have business,” Kezu growled. Losing to worthless Shinigami below his rank never failed to rouse his temper.

“What business could you possibly have?” another card player asked, his voice bored. “There’s no one for you to keep in line now that Ryuk’s in the human world.”

Kezu hissed at the statement.

“Careful there, Garke,” the first speaker said, grinning maliciously. “You might make his majesty angry.”

“Riiiiight,” Garke agreed, his tone still bored. “Please don’t kill me mighty one.”

Cackles sounded all around the table at that. Kezu’s hands clenched into fists at his side. He would like nothing more than to kill them all off – and he knew how to do it too. But, unfortunately, it would require a little cooperation on their part. Cooperation they would never give. They were too busy playing cards.

Maybe I’ll get lucky, Kezu thought as he turned and began to walk off without another word. Maybe they’ll all spend so much time playing cards that they’ll forget to kill humans to extend their lifetimes. With idiots like that it’s downright probable.

“Oi! Kezu!” another one called. He paused momentarily and they continued, “Iz’ it true ya gave the eyes to a ‘uman?”

“Sure, it’s true,” Kezu said, moving again.

More cackles erupted behind him, no doubt at his “stupidity”.

Let them think what they will, Kezu thought. His lips parted into an evil smirk, revealing long fangs among small, dagger-like teeth. Those fools were thinking he had given away the eyesight to see human names and lifespans, but that would have served no purpose. Kezu had given a certain human a much different power than that. One available only to a select few Shinigami descended from the leaders who used to exist among humans.

Passing unseen among humans had been very long ago though, and almost all Shinigami had forgotten the stories of the abilities that accompanied those times. Kezu hadn’t. He had the power and, without ever using it himself, had passed it along to a human girl.

The power to tell truth from lies.

Kezu chuckled quietly. That idiot Garke had brought up Ryuk – a Shinigami that had existed thinking everything should suit him and his interests. Kezu had always hated him but had been unable to do anything against him.

Until the fool had based his interests on humans.

As soon as it had been clear to Kezu what Ryuk was doing in the human world, he had begun thinking of a way to spoil his fun. If Ryuk was no longer interested in the game with humans he would be forced back into the same rotten existence Kezu was forced to put up with day after day. So he had given a human girl the power to spoil Ryuk's enjoyment – if only she would use it correctly.

Well of course he didn't have much faith in human intellect so he had waited plenty of time for her to figure out how to act. Now, he decided, it had been long enough.

It was time to pay another visit to the human world.

"Hey Kiomi."

Kiomi looked up from the text message she had been writing to her brother as Light fell into step beside her.

"Hi Light," she said with a smile. "What's up?"

He shrugged. "Cram classes were extremely boring today don't you think?"

"If I was a walking encyclopedia like you, I would probably agree. Since my brain is put into overdrive everyday here and I'm running on zero hours of sleep, I'm going to have to say no," she replied. She sent her text and slipped her phone back into her purse.

"Oh? What kept you up so late?" he asked, conveniently ignoring the encyclopedia comment.

"Internet surfing," she said, wondering if she should have come up with something a little less honest. Of course, she didn't know exactly what she could have said without crossing the line to straight out lying.

He gave her a wide-eyed look of disbelief.

"No way, a future To-oh University student up all night looking at porn on the internet!"

She growled and swung a kick at him. "Idiot!"

He sidestepped and held his hands up in a gesture of surrender. "Geez, so touchy! I was only joking."

She turned to the left suddenly, cutting across the cram school's yard. She heard him laugh behind her.

“Trying to lose me?” he called.

She turned to look over her shoulder and grin to let him know that was her intention exactly. Something caught her eye as she did and she flicked her gaze towards it, still smiling at Light. What she saw surprised her but she managed to keep it off her face.

Light jogged forward so he was next to her again and she continued walking, turning to look straight ahead.

“So seriously, what were you on the internet all night for? Surely not studying.”

Kiomi shook her head, still thinking about what she'd seen.

“Looking up a case” she murmured.

He turned to look at her in surprise. “A police case?”

She nodded absently; making it seem like it was no big deal.

“You remember I told you my Uncle Shinji works in the NPA? I was just seeing if I could help him on a minor case. Something he'll actually let me do.”

“Ah,” Light said, nodding. “I know the feeling. My father will allow me to work with the police to solve minor cases as well. But anything too big and he “doesn't want me involved”.”

“Exactly. But” She held up a finger, resting it on her chin in the odd habit she had when thinking ahead. “Someday, you'll show them. When you're director of the NPA, right?”

“And when you're the investigator I turn to for help on cases,” he added, giving her a sideways smile.

She shoved his shoulder playfully. “As if I have a future like that. You're the only one smart enough to solve criminal cases effectively.”

“And you're the only one with a level head who doesn't over-analyze things, as you say,” he replied.

“Well you do!” she said indignantly. “Sometimes you think so hard you overlook the easy answer.”

“You're right, .01% of the time it's possible to think too hard.”

She rolled her eyes. “You're impossible.”

“No, merely thorough.”

She growled good-naturedly. It annoyed her sometimes how Light had to be right. The problem was, as he said, 99.99% of the time, he was.

“By the way” she said quietly after a moment.

He looked down at her – he was a good two inches taller than she was – a questioning look on his face.

She snagged his cell phone from his pocket, quickly switching it to her left hand so he couldn't steal it back.

“Hey!” he protested.

She waved him off. “Yours has a feature mine doesn't, I need to see something.”

He sighed in aggravation but stuck his hands in his pockets, not reaching for it anymore. She tossed the phone back into her right hand and held it up between them, turning to his camera mode.

Light's phone was a special model with the camera lens actually above the display screen, unlike hers with the typical style of having the lens on the back. His allowed her to see behind them without having to turn around. It was very handy considering what she had seen earlier.

And what showed up on the screen now.

Light leaned closer slightly, focusing on the screen.

“We're being followed . . . ?” he said quietly.

She nodded because, sure enough, the camera allowed them to see a blurry figure moving well behind them.

“I noticed him earlier,” she said. “Although I don't know if he's following you, me, or both of us. And I have no idea why.”

Light pursed his lips and reached up, snapping a picture with his phone before taking it back and putting it back in his jacket pocket.

“I don't know either,” he said, his voice low, “but I'm going to find out. For now, just act normal.”

4 - Text Talk

Chapter 4 – Text Talk

After parting ways with Light it became obvious to Kiomi who the man behind them was stalking. But what was it about Light that caught the man's interest? Over-achieving, top-scores-in-the-nation, genius high school student – interesting to follow because . . . ?

“Looking for tutoring sessions or something?” Kiomi muttered as she doubled around, now following Light's pursuer.

The man never looked behind him; his attention was focused completely on his target. Not very smart, Kiomi thought before realizing that she was doing the exact same thing. She darted a look over her shoulder, suddenly feeling paranoid. No one was following her though so she turned back to focus on the man ahead of her.

Light acted completely normal, not walking any faster and not taking a different route home than usual. Kiomi didn't know whether or not it would be better to act normal than to just turn around and face the man but she trusted Light on this. Maybe he even had an idea why the guy would want to follow him. Unlikely, but who knew

As someone passed her on the street, giving her a weird look, she realized she was being too obvious. Naturally it would be a little creepy to see a girl almost tiptoeing down the street in broad daylight, focusing intently on a man in front of her. Suddenly she had become the stalker.

Note to self, she thought with a sigh, practice stalking skills. She pulled out her cell phone and opened a text message – something normal for a twenty year old to do. And while she was thinking about it, she could use it to her advantage. She typed in Light's cell number and a short message that read: *I doubled back. I've become the stalker now, any suggestions?* She sent it and waited, continuing to fiddle with her phone while glancing up to watch Light's follower.

A moment later she faintly heard Light's ring tone. Light pulled his phone out of his pocket and flipped it open. It disappeared from view as he moved to answer her.

Hers vibrated in her hand and she opened the message.

Idiot, I could have handled it myself. What if he notices you?

She snorted quietly, her fingers already typing the reply. *I'm not **that** obvious. Besides, it's not like you can do anything about him unless you want to turn around and face him.* She moved to hit send and then paused, quickly adding: *And who're you calling idiot? Idiot.*

They were only a few blocks from Light's house now. Kiomi bit her lip, wondering if the man was going to act before they got there. Was this the first day he had followed Light?

Her phone buzzed.

Could you please be a little more mature? And if you insist on following him, have you at least picked up on anything that might let us know who he is?

Kiomi couldn't help a smile. Light was complaining about her help and yet he slipped into the term "us" immediately. She looked up at the man once more, her fingers flying.

Not really, but whoever he is, he means business. You refused to give answers to someone again didn't you?

There was a shorter pause this time.

Remember: mature. I'm positive I've never met this guy before. It's too bad he saw you with me before or else you could have just approached him.

She smirked. *Now you want my help? Too bad indeed So what do you think this guy'll do once you get home?*

Light's answer was immediate, he'd obviously already thought about it. *He'll either leave or stake out my house.*

Why's he following you?

If I knew, this wouldn't be a problem.

She rolled her eyes. *No duh, I was wondering if you had any guesses.*

Not a clue.

Fastest response yet She sent him her reply.

That was awfully fast, did you lose some of those famous thinking skills?

Apparently he didn't like his intelligence being insulted because she saw him take his phone out and then put it away a moment later. Her phone never vibrated.

Hey, don't ignore me! She typed angrily. *I was kidding, I can't think of anything either.*

You never can.

Kiomi glared at his back. *Smooth. Shut up.*

I win. Kiomi paused in her reading, wondering briefly if it was possible to smirk through a text message.

With Light, anything was possible. *And I'm home; disappear before he turns around will you?*

Ok, she replied, I'll tell you if he hangs around.

She slipped her phone back in her purse and watched the man. As Light turned to go into his home, she ducked around the corner of the house closest to her. Then she watched as the man crossed to the other side of the street. After Light had disappeared inside, the man settled back to watch, standing in the shadows of a house across the street.

After she was sure he wasn't going to leave she sent Light a message reading: *Well, the creepy stalker's still here. He's across the street, watching your window.*

A moment later he responded. *Creepy?*

Stereotyping: stalkers are creepy.

I see. Not that helpful.

She smiled slightly. *Sorry. I swear, does this guy have nothing better to do? He's just staring at your window like this is his job or something.*

There was a long pause and then Light replied, *What if it is?*

She frowned and typed, *You're saying someone hired him to follow you? Why?*

Who knows? It's just a possibility.

I think you're paranoid.

You're not the one being stalked.

Ah, point taken.

A movement caught her eye and she looked up at the stalker again – the man had pulled out his own cell phone.

Hmm, are we all sending texts today? She wondered, watching him carefully.

But he didn't send a text; he dialed a number and raised the phone to his ear. It gave Kiomi a sudden idea and she quickly sent Light one more message before shoving her phone in her pocket.

I'm moving, don't text me until I say it's ok.

She knew he would listen, even if he didn't want her doing anything else. She slipped her backpack off her shoulders and jammed it against the side of the house. Then she stuffed her purse in her backpack and looked around the corner of the building carefully.

The stalker was on the other side of the street; there was no way she could cross without being seen. He wasn't talking yet though so she still had a bit of time.

Looking around, she spotted somewhere that would give her a good view and moved towards it, staying in the shadows. She passed behind two houses, including Light's, and crouched behind the shrubbery in the new yard she had come to.

It was a great view; the man was holding his cell phone to the ear not facing her so there was nothing blocking his mouth. Perfect, she thought. It was everything she needed to figure out what he was saying.