

Fuyu no Hanabi

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[lit.: Fireworks of Winter] When a human develops the ability to reverse time, what could possibly happen to her? What will Aizen do with this new chance?

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1 - Tsubasa

A tall shinigami stood in a gated pavilion above a high school, watching through the chain links. *She is definitely late.* Humans were expected to be late. They couldn't be punctual at such an age as 16. He felt her spiritual pressure getting closer though, so he shrugged and sat down heavily, considering how his gigai looked. The uninhabited body lay next to him, arranged as if it was sleeping. The school uniform adorned it, and Isredel sighed at the sight. But it didn't breathe. By his standards, he should definitely not be here. He was a captain from the Gotei 13! He was supposed to be investigating an arrancar presence. *Why would an arrancar be in a high school?* But if he could find it, it shouldn't matter.

He caught sight of a girl running towards the school building from across the field. Her shoulder length brown hair swayed side to side with her gait. She looked panicked. Isredel knew that he had asked her to be quite early, but he had shrugged, figuring if he could be here, she could as well. She might be able to help him find this arrancar, since she had a high spiritual pressure comparative to other humans. She could notice something like an arrancar.

"I'm really sorry Isredel-kun! I almost forgot," the girl exploded when she reached the top of the stairs. With unsure steps she came closer. She panted and smiled, dropping her bag next to Isredel. She then flopped down beside her bag and brushed off her school uniform. It consisted of a grey skirt and a white blouse; both now speckled with dust. Her black shoes had been turned light brown.

"Good morning, Katya." Isredel spoke coldly, his words sharp. "You're exactly twenty-one minutes two seconds late." His eyes were riveting around, only barely settling on his watch for a moment to tell the time. He sensed something, a reiatsu spike, a strong, harsh reiatsu. *Was this what an arrancar reiatsu felt like? Was the arrancar close? What was the sinister reiatsu in the background, constantly there? Why couldn't he trace it? Why did it seem to block every one of his senses? Did it know about him?*

Isredel didn't notice the random chatter that poured forth from Katya's mind as she talked to make herself less anxious. Her tone changed again, and she seemed mad. Then she was happy, after that it changed to irritation.

Katya rolled her eyes and sat up. "People are going to think I'm talking to a sleeping person if you don't get in your body. Or maybe they'll think I'm talking to thin air. *Please* do try to act alive, okay?"

"So what? It won't change anything. I'm not here to just talk with you about gossip, Katya."

"This is my first day of high school! It determines my reputation for the next three years today!" Katya hissed.

"You'll most likely do something else that gives you that insane or crazy reputation. The sooner you get it over with —" Isredel started to reply in a matter of fact voice.

"How dare you *imply* that! I am most certainly not crazy!" Katya nearly screamed at him.

“I was in no way *implying* anything. It was a cold fact.”

The angry wail uttered by Katya was punctuated sharply by the sound of someone slipping down the stairs and tumbling to the landing below. Isredel shrugged and replied nastily. “They probably can’t see me anyway, so there’s no point in me trying to help.”

Katya jumped up and ran over, to look at a mess of books and papers, as the bag that had held them continued to roll down the stairs. As the last papers settled, Katya started picking them up, practice of doing so showing clear on her face. Soon, most of the pathway had been cleared down to the fallen girl, and Katya was careful to pick up any stray papers. The books had gone down farther since they had stayed in the bag, and she leapt down the stairs to pick up all of the heavy textbooks. When Katya started replacing everything inside the bag though, she found it peculiar that the girl before her didn’t have a lunch with her. *Maybe it had fallen out too!* Katya went in search of the missing food, happy to be helping.

Kiptcha came around a few seconds later, and noticed a girl hovering about making sure everything was in order. She stood up slowly, and looked up at the top of the stairs. A presence with high spiritual pressure. Katya rushed to the top of the stairs.

“Get over here, since I can’t carry her myself!” Katya yelled. She turned back to Kiptcha, and she was obviously surprised that she was standing. Isredel appeared next to her, ready to help. However, he had not gotten into a gigai, so he presumed he couldn’t be seen.

Kiptcha forced herself not to look at the shinigami when he came, since she was supposed to be human. Normal humans can’t see shinigami. But her efforts not to look at Isredel were too obvious.

“You can see me, can’t you, human?” Isredel asked, gliding down the stairs as if he was a feather on the wind. He reached Kiptcha, but she was still pretending, although badly, to not see him.

Trying to get a response, Isredel touched her arm, just barely. Kiptcha’s gaze snapped over to him and she flinched, drawing her arm away by impulse. Her face was apathetic, but Kiptcha allowed their eyes to lock.

Isredel smiled. “I thought so.” His expression suddenly changed and he frowned, thinking deeply. “This reiatsu — it’s . . .”

Kiptcha put on a pretend smile, and she turned away. “I’m really sorry to bother you two, I’ll just go then!” With that Kiptcha allowed herself to dash frantically away. Her gliding down the stairs almost matched Isredel’s, but she had to hit more steps because of her bag.

Once she made it to the next level down, Kiptcha ran through the door and she spared a quick thought to dropping off her books and stuff in the classroom. She decided this was a good idea, and she ran down empty corridors to the classroom. She then entered, choosing a desk that sat against the windowed portion of the classroom, where early morning light streamed in. It was just now dawn. Kiptcha spared no thought to this though, and she emptied her bag, except for a few things, into her desk.

“Damn it! If that shinigami tries to get me to fight, Aizen-sama certainly will be more upset with me. This is unauthorized as it is — I’d better finish this up and leave . . .”

“Aizen?” Isredel asked. He stood at the door, blocking exit. He smirked, taking a few steps across the classroom. His black hakama swished around him, reminding Kiptcha painfully of her comrades. Yet her comrades were so unlike this boy shinigami.

Kiptcha looked at him, and she tightened her jaw. “You shouldn’t eavesdrop.” She walked to one of the windows and looked out, ready to jump if he should try and attack.

Isredel came closer trying to make sure that she didn’t take it as a threat and run. He needed to talk to her. *What does she know of Aizen?*

She considered how far it was down and how hard it would be to land in this school uniform. She finished her calculations and opened the window, glancing behind her at Isredel. She smiled. Then she jumped, landing safely on the ground. Without another glance back, she began to run.

Isredel had a second to make his decision. A second before she could hide herself and all traces of her reiatsu. He watched her run, and he suddenly realized that all of her books had been stored away, that her bag would be almost empty and light. He watched her, and he noticed that her movements were jerky. She wasn’t meshing well with her gigai. That explained the stairs earlier.

“No choice, huh?” Isredel said slowly. He walked over to the open window and perched on the sill.

“Where are you going, Isredel-kun?” Katya asked, halting Isredel. She stood in the doorway, where Isredel himself had been moments before, addressing Kiptcha. Katya stared at him, her expression worried.

“There’s not time for me to explain. I’m sorry, Katya. I’ll talk to you later at the same place we always meet, if I can get through this,” Isredel reassured her. Then he vanished, from the sill, dropping to the ground below. He then started to catch up to the running girl, using shun-po. With practiced steps he made his way across the field toward her.

“What do you mean—?” Katya asked, but he was gone. She didn’t ask fast enough. “If you make it through what?”

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Kiptcha sensed him, and she could see his darting movements behind her. She tried to speed up, but she realized with disgust that she was going as fast as her human body would allow. Sonido was not an option. Her gigai jerked randomly again. Kiptcha felt herself lose balance and start to fall. With a quick hand to catch herself and propel her faster, Kiptcha regained her balance, but she was going too fast. Her leg wouldn’t catch her in the next step. She flew, tumbling to the ground, helpless against the shinigami’s decision. Her breath was labored, and her body scraped up badly.

Isredel arrived less than a second after the girl fell, and he judged her movements carefully as she struggled to regain her breath and get up. He felt a small spike of reiatsu, which only solidified his opinion that this girl wasn't human. He unsheathed his zampaku-to and he aimed it towards her. "What'cha runnin' from, girl?"

Kiptcha looked up at him, her body was strained for oxygen and her vision kept blurring. Her arms felt numb and useless. Her side ached with pain that she couldn't place at all. She couldn't even sit up in this state. She saw the blade point suddenly come into focus, right under her chin. Kiptcha moaned, thinking about what Aizen was going to say to this.

"I'm late for something," Kiptcha muttered dimly, her excuse too obvious.

"Likely. An appointment with death, perhaps?" Isredel snarled. The blade nicked the side of her neck, drawing a bead of blood. Kiptcha gritted her teeth and glared up at Isredel. "Most human girls would have screamed."

"Should I scream then?" Kiptcha asked, her words bitter.

Isredel removed his sword from her throat and leaned down, resting one knee on the ground. Kiptcha looked at him carefully, taking into account everything. He had a handsome face with short, unruly, light colored hair. His black shinigami and captain cloak fluttered slightly in with the breeze. His zampaku-to was slender, but not long, not as long as her own. The hilt looked like a depiction of the sun or an explosion. She frowned, looking squarely into his deep blue eyes.

Isredel also examined his captive, but he began to wonder as he felt her reiatsu. It felt distinctly human. *Did that spike really happen?* Did he imagine it? *No!* Isredel bent further down to grab hold of her shirt collar. "What do you think you're doing here in the human world?"

Kiptcha laughed, finally getting her arm to come up. She placed a hand on top of his, grabbing at his thumb to try and pull the hand off. "What do you think I'm doing? I'm living my life as normally as possible here!"

It was Isredel's turn to laugh. "What are you then?"

Kiptcha smiled, and she focused her thought, pulling herself from the gigai. She fell out of it, and she jumped away, leaving the gigai. "So be it."

Isredel now looked at the real Kiptcha, though the gigai looked much like her it was not exact. There was a blue mark on her forehead like a diamond, and a red mark under her left eye. Her long hair had been pulled over her left shoulder. He didn't know that her Espada number was hidden under it. Her uniform was a pure white, and he instantly knew what she was. An arrancar. The arrancar who he had been ordered to find and kill. Her eyes were blue-green, and her flesh was pale. Poking out of her hair were two white horn-like ears, presumably the remaining bits of her mask. The cut of her uniform was strange, as it left her abdomen exposed. Black sleeves covered her arms down past her elbows, since the actual top piece had no white sleeves. With it there was a white, knee-length skirt and the traditional black sash.

“An arrancar, huh? Pleased to meet you,” Isredel said, dropping the gigai. He unsheathed his zampaku-to again, and started to walk towards her.

“What a perfectly horrible way to welcome somebody,” Kiptcha scolded. She then turned, giving Isredel a full view of her long zampaku-to that she slung on her back. “But let’s see how well you keep up, shall we?”

Kiptcha used Sonido, easily getting farther away from Isredel. Her steps were large, and she was in the town proper before she knew it. She then doubled back, going around Isredel and leaving a confusing trail of reiatsu. With a light noise, Kiptcha landed back at the school.

With darting movements, she sailed down the stairs and into the classroom that Katya stood in, watching the events.

“A white girl . . .?” Katya muttered. She walked closer to the window, looking out. She tried to search for Isredel with her eyes, but he was gone. “Where?”

Kiptcha sat down on a desk behind Katya, and she spoke up, her voice silken smooth and carefully calculated to be reassuring. “He’ll come back here after he figures it out. You shouldn’t need to worry about him.”

Katya spun, and her eyes widened when she saw the white uniform and the dark hair that was draped down Kiptcha’s back. “You’re the white girl. The one who fell down the stairs?”

Kiptcha smirked. “I am Kiptcha Munae, Segunda Espada. Pleased to make your acquaintance.”

Katya looked at Kiptcha. “Are you . . . are you like Isredel-kun?” Her eyes were open and innocent.

“No. We’re kind of like rivals, I guess,” Kiptcha replied hesitantly. “Say, even though you’re human, do you possess any powers?”

Katya looked shocked. “Isredel-kun and I talked about that once. I have one.” She paused. “I can bring little origami creations to life to do certain tasks, like exploding, or creating a long slashing cut, or the shield. I developed a new power to surprise Isredel-kun with. I did that yesterday. And I was so tired I accidentally slept through my alarm.”

“What is it?” Kiptcha asked impatiently.

“I can heal things,” Katya grinned.

Kiptcha smirked and sighed heavily. “I’ll tell you a little about myself then, until Isredel — presumably — gets here.”

Kiptcha looked at Katya, wondering if she could handle the information. “Have you seen those monsters that occasionally come to this world? They come from my world, the dimension that I permit myself to call ‘home’. I think you should try to defeat one of these monsters yourself. Some are stronger than

others, granted, but you should be able to. All you have to do is slice their mask in half.” Kiptcha paused again.

“I have told you that I am Kiptcha Munae, Segunda Espada. My only loyalty lies with Aizen-sama, my father and master. The world that these monsters known as ‘hollows’ reside in is called ‘Hueco Mundo’. I however, do not reside in Hueco Mundo, but in the ‘Las Noches’ Palace. I am known as an arrancar.

“Arrancar are created by Aizen-sama using the Hougyoku. The Hougyoku is also known as ‘The orb of Distortion’. Aizen-sama uses it on the menos—” Kiptcha was cut off in her explanation by another voice, completing it for her.

“To make them a combination of hollow and shinigami. Menos are extremely powerful compared to the normal hollows. The menos are thousands of hollows folded into one being. There are three classes of said menos,” Isredel interjected.

“Your friend, Isredel, is a shinigami. I am only half shinigami, that coming last. However, arrancar cannot be easily mistaken for shinigami because they have remnants of their mask, from their time as a hollow. All arrancar have them, but they are not the same. Arrancar are also not guaranteed to look human, as I do.” Kiptcha said, trading off with Isredel again. She didn’t know how it was working so well between them, but for now she would go along with the flow.

“In the arrancar ranks there are the Numero. These are the weaker arrancar, given a two-digit number in correspondence to their birth. The oldest would be given 11, while the youngest 99. There are many different ranks other than the Numero, but they are of no consequence, except the Espada. This arrancar would better explain the inner workings of Aizen Sosuke’s army of arrancar than I.”

“True, shinigami. The Espada are the top ten fighters. We are given a rank pertaining to our strength, and that number is tattooed onto our bodies by Aizen-sama. We are the strongest of the arrancar as a whole. The only one who is above us is Aizen-sama.”

“The King of Bastards,” Isredel swore quietly, still standing behind Kiptcha.

“Aizen-sama is our God. We will die for him, as it was him who gave us this gift of life. He is our father, our idol, our god, our master, and our executioner. There are other groups or arrancar, but it is not necessary that you know them.” Kiptcha paused, carefully spinning in the correct direction as to flop her hair over her number. “If I were here with Aizen-sama’s permission, I would make your head roll in the dust. As it is, I can ill afford to provoke Aizen-sama.”

Isredel snarled, and he lunged, but Kiptcha daintily moved away. Her movements were perfect, unlike her gigai. She then turned around and laughed, her blue-green eyes dancing with light. “But be careful, human, if you ever enter Hueco Mundo. Because things aren’t as they may seem.”

Isredel made another swing, and Kiptcha seemed to reappear behind him. She waited for him to make another slash with his zampakū-to, and she moved slightly to the side. She placed a light hand on his arm, and she smirked when he attacked more, missing each time.

“You’ll never catch me, shinigami, not at that speed,” Kiptcha taunted, diving through the door and out into the corridor. She raced back to the roof, using fluid motions. Isredel was in hot pursuit, but Kiptcha was drawing away.

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Isredel panted, slowly. His energy was almost gone. The arrancar had almost gotten away, but he had finally found her, inside a small apartment. He stood outside the door, preparing himself for the battle he was sure to follow his entrance to the room.

As he glided through the solid wall, classic shinigami style, Isredel was shocked at what he found on the other side. Kiptcha was leaned against the wall opposite the door; four tiny kittens curled up beside her. Kiptcha herself was not asleep, rather she stared at Isredel.

“Long time, no see,” she remarked jokingly, not moving. Her hair was still hiding the number, which didn’t perturb Isredel in the slightest. He didn’t even know it was there.

“This will be your last day in the human world, arrancar.”

“Oh why do you go have to spoil my mood?” Kiptcha said, slowly standing. Her face was emotionless, and her voice was flat and monotonous. It was unreal.

“It is my mission. You need to die!” Isredel hissed, angered by her indifference.

“And you’re going to kill me?” Kiptcha asked, putting feigned surprise into her words.

Isredel hesitated. Is that what he wanted? But Kiptcha continued before he could speak.

“You’re friend, the girl—”

“Katya!” Isredel interjected.

“—quite a special human. And she even possesses some powers. Do you value her at all?” Kiptcha finished.

Isredel looked horrified. “What have you done to her?!” Isredel couldn’t see where this was going, but he couldn’t believe that this arrancar had already gotten Katya.

“Nothing. She’ll do it all herself,” Kiptcha replied. She glided towards Isredel, but she made no offensive move. A crane drifted through the air close to the shinigami, and Isredel snatched it. He opened the paper, but Kiptcha needed no explanation of what was happening. Katya no longer resided in the human world at this moment. Isredel ripped the note to shreds.

Isredel easily jumped forward and pinned Kiptcha to the wall she had just been leaning against. The kittens had scattered. Isredel looked at the arrancar, confused. She wasn’t struggling. He tightened his

grip around her throat slightly, causing Kiptcha to gag. She gasped for breath, fighting his hand. Isredel blinked. Her zampaku-to wasn't on her back. Isredel looked around the room and spotted it through a doorway. *Too far to reach. She had planned this through . . .*

"What do you want to accomplish here?" Isredel demanded angrily. He stabbed his katana into the wall behind her, cutting part of her neck and shoulder. Kiptcha gasped and she reacted with lightning speed. Her hand clamped over the wound, not allowing any of the blood to spill. Her expression went from blank to pained in an instant. Her emotionless mask was broken.

"What – what do you want from me?!" Kiptcha responded. She cradled the right side of her neck, but she carefully kept her Espada number covered. "I'm not even supposed to be here!"

"Not supposed to be here—?" Isredel repeated. He looked at the arrancar. She seemed to be fading. "I'll see you later, on my terms. My blade has the property of numbing anybody it cuts, so you'll be out cold in a few moments. Maybe when you wake up you'll be more reasonable."

"If you think that, I see you've never really encountered any of the Espada, hmm-m-m-m-ah?" Kiptcha returned, lifting her face. She released her reiatsu, the sheer force sending Isredel back. He took his zampaku-to with him, though. Kiptcha swung her hair back, and she released the right side of her neck where it had been cut.

Isredel gritted his teeth. Here was his fight. He looked at his opponent, and for the first time, he saw her Espada number. *Aw, shoot.*

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Katya screamed at the building crumbled around her. A shinigami with bright orange hair leapt past her, attacking the offending hollow. Katya knew him – Kurosaki Ichigo. She blinked with surprise as someone touched her arm, an unspoken command for her to turn and run. Katya looked back, meeting the gaze of another girl. She had short black hair – Kuchiki Rukia. Then the girl dropped out of her gigai, and she also lunged forward. Another shinigami? Katya's head spun.

She turned and ran, fleeing with only the most important possessions. With all the adrenaline, she moved quickly, leaping down the stairs. When she reached the ground level, she joined the other screaming people in streaming out the door. As she emerged outside, she saw another hollow. She bit her lip, drawing blood.

"This is my turn, huh?" Katya asked herself aloud. She withdrew a piece of origami paper. Her fingers flashed as she folded, creating a swan. With a breath on it, the swan came to life in her hands, and it flew behind her, then pulling Katya up. She whipped out another piece of paper and folded another. She looked at it, making slight modifications. It was supposed to be a bomb this time.

She threw it, and Katya happily noted that the hollow was injured severely as it exploded. She got the

crane to drop her on its back, where she folded her last origami, a butterfly. It would slice the monster in half.

Katya smiled, thinking back to the person who had told her how to control her powers – Isredel-kun. Then she thought of the girl who had been dressed in white, with two cat ears, who had told her about the hollows. The ears looked very much like horns as well, but the girl had told her how to kill these monsters. She had told her all about them.

Katya gasped as she realized what was happening around her. The hollow was returning to its own dimension, and it was going to take her with it. All she had a chance to do was send the crane that had carried her to find Isredel before she was pulled into Hueco Mundo.

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Katya looked over the wide expanse of the desert. This must be the “Hueco Mundo” that the girl had spoken of. A palace sat on the edge of the horizon, and Katya instantly knew she had to get there. The girl had also spoken of it. It was call “Las Noches”. There must be someone there, if that girl had known about it. She had said that was where she lived.

Katya looked up at the sky, seeing only the crescent moon. This whole desert was bathed in its light. She looked around, not seeing any other life. Skeletons of plants scattered the landscape, but Katya knew that they were long dead. She began to get worried, so she started off towards the palace.

Even as she crossed the dunes, she could see everything that she had first spotted fading into the distance. A cold, sharp wind blew past, putting sand in her mouth. She spat it out and kept walking, running at times. The palace wasn’t getting any closer.

Katya began to wonder how far away she really was, and how big the sprawling complex was. She slumped down in the sand, wondering when dawn was. She had been here for a few hours, yet it seemed that the moon hadn’t moved. Would there ever be a dawn in this wretched world of shadows? Katya vaguely remembered the girl warning her about letting the hollow take her to the other side.

“But be careful, human, if you ever enter Hueco Mundo. Because things aren’t as they may seem.”

The palace must be one of those things.

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“I am Kiptcha Munae. Segunda Espada.” Kiptcha said, looking majestic. She was powerful, yet she did not want to fight this shinigami in any way.

Isredel raised his sword, stepping into an indiscernible fighting stance. He started to analyze. Just when he was about ready though, he saw Kiptcha start to walk towards him. He raised his katana a centimeter higher and tensed, ready to react.

Kiptcha grabbed the blade, feeling it against her skin. Now that her reiatsu was back, it didn't cut her at all. Moreover, it felt blunt. "Put this away, someone could get hurt, Mr. Shinigami."

"Well, arrancar, I'd say it have to be you that was getting hurt then, not I."

"But, if I am hurt, I shall refuse to take you to Hueco Mundo to save your little human friend," Kiptcha pointed out.

Isredel's eyes widened. "How do you know about that, arrancar?!"

"Please. Call me Kiptcha," she replied, ignoring the question.

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Isredel sat across a small table, staring alternatively at Kiptcha, then the tea she had prepared. He finally picked up the tea, but he discovered that it was truly better warm. He sipped it, but instead of being revolted, he found it quite nice.

"Did you expect me to poison it?" Kiptcha chided.

"You might have!" Isredel snapped without a second thought. Kiptcha looked hurt.

Instead of snapping back at him, she sighed quietly. "So let me get this straight. You came here to kill me, correct?"

"Yes."

"And you met Katya along the way, and you hoped she would be able to tell you about me, correct?"

"Yes. Bu why do you care?"

"I've been here for two weeks, scouting out these kittens." Kiptcha gestured to the cats. "They will become my personal honor guard."

Isredel looked a bit shocked, but he decided it would be best that he didn't say anything about it.

"So, do you have a place to sleep? Because I certainly won't be returning to Las Noches tonight," Kiptcha pointed out.

Isredel looked at her strangely, but he shook his head. "I only got here yesterday, and I slept on Katya's roof."

“You can the futon in the other room, since I’ll just sleep somewhere else, not that I really need to . . .”

“I couldn’t take your bed!” Isredel exploded, his anger obvious. “It would be – impolite, to say the least.”

“Then I’ll stay up after all. I might be able to train my pets. Goodnight to you, Shinigami-kun.”

Isredel looked up, suddenly uncomfortable. “I’m Isredel Shimazaki, Captain of the 5th squad. Please call me Isredel.”

“Alright then, Isredel. Off you go. I promise I don’t bite, for now at least,” Kiptcha said tauntingly. She stood up and walked around the table. Her hand brushed his shoulder, but she then swept out of the room, gathering the kittens. She went into a small room that wouldn’t shed light into the only bedroom. She turned back once more, and her gaze met Isredel’s. She held it for a few seconds before going about her task.

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End of Chapter 1: Entitled “Tsubasa”
All credit is Kalliel’s. Except for the whole Bleach idea . . . you get it.
Please Comment!

2 - Odori o Mashou?

Kiptcha woke abruptly to a sharp jab. Her mouth opened slightly, her breath coming faster as she came out of sleeping mode. She couldn't relate this to anything, and she opened her eyes, clearly confused. Isredel noted the color of her eyes was fluctuating, and they had turned from a dark blue to a warm brown.

Isredel stood above her, his zampaku-to aimed at her throat. Kiptcha didn't move in the slightest, but her eyes started flashing different colors as different emotions engulfed her, and she snapped her eyes shut again.

"Open them."

Kiptcha shook her head. Her weakness lay in her eyes. She would show her exact emotion through them, and she couldn't risk it. Couldn't risk being read so easily. "Why do you insist on bothering me?"

Isredel allowed himself a small laugh. "Well, well, arrancar. Seems you don't fully have control of the situation any more."

"I never did. I simply didn't care enough to take that from you. Yet." Kiptcha's reply was calm, but she still refused to open her eyes.

"You make it sound like you could. But right now, I'd like to see those eyes of yours again," Isredel said, prodding her with the tip of his zampaku-to.

"If you're going to kill me, would you please carry on?" Kiptcha asked softly, opening her eyes. They were pitch black, the color of fear. "I'm not one who stands up to torture well. And I won't face Aizen-sama to tell him why I fought you."

"You don't like torture, hmm?" Isredel laughed. He removed the sword from her throat, and stabbed it down into her left shoulder. The wooden boards underneath gripped at the sword, pinning Kiptcha there. She gasped, and her whole body trembled. Her left arm wouldn't move well, and pain dominated her mind. Her eyes violently changed to orange. Tears leaked from them, and as she looked up at Isredel, her eyes accused him.

"So is that the color they turn when in pain? Interesting. What color do they turn in death, I wonder?" He yanked the sword out, covered in blood.

"White," Kiptcha whispered.

"What was that?" Isredel asked cautiously, his sword raised in position to strike.

"They turn white, Res. Pure white, like snow."

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"I'm really sorry, ya know," Isredel said, feeling uncomfortable. Kiptcha sat at the opposite side of the table from him, calmly wrapping her shoulder with bandages. Isredel watched her, and he suddenly realized her eyes had changed colors again. He couldn't remember what they had been yesterday, but he noticed that they were a beautiful pinkish-purple right now.

Kiptcha finished and pulled her sleeve back up her arm. She didn't smile, not even in the slightest bit. "It doesn't matter."

"Why are your eyes that color?" Isredel asked, picking up his tea. Kiptcha had made it for him, despite being injured. It tasted quite good, and that somehow surprised him. Were arrancar all that bad when they weren't attacking you? He looked at her, and for the first time, he saw her plainly. She was an Espada, but she was female. Fragile. Unwanted in many ways. She was surrounded by the other nine Espada that were male.

Kiptcha closed her eyes, blushing slightly. "A cursed gift I have. It allows my emotions to read perfectly, doesn't it?"

"It's not necessarily a curse," Isredel pointed out. "But I was just a bit curious. Forgive me."

"I have my orders as well. I'm to take you back for questioning or kill you. I'd prefer to kill you, but the shinigami captains want you alive. Obviously." Isredel finished his tea and stood, loosening his zampaku-to in its sheath. "Which will it be?"

"Aizen-sama would understand either way I decide to go. However, if I let myself fall into your hands too willingly, Aizen-sama will simply send one of the others to kill me. Sadly, I find that I must either fight to kill you, or I must fight to give you some sample of my power. Either way, you will be hurt." Kiptcha stood as well, and she sighed heavily. I could have loved you, but only if we weren't on opposite sides. Please don't make me do this."

"Damn arrancar aren't supposed to be able to love. You neither. I'll kill you for such a comment as that, insulting those who really do have feelings other than hate and lust for power. Maybe that'll teach you." Kiptcha took a step back from Isredel, and she jumped up, sliding through the ceiling. Isredel followed. They both stopped at the roof of the complex.

Kiptcha knelt, and a low hum resonated. Four kitten-like shapes appeared, the hollow-form of the kittens' souls. She tapped them each on the nose, and one by one, they disappeared into the hollow realm.

"Aizen-sama will be aware of what is to come now, and what my final decision is. Please, you attack first. That should make it fair, considering our power levels." Kiptcha stood, her back facing Isredel.

"I'm going to honor you about this, as well you should, so turn around and fight," Isredel snarled.

"You're going to fight me, without a katana? And you want to call that fair? Fine by me."

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Isredel stepped back, slightly out of breath. Kiptcha stepped forward, her shoulder's bandage already red with blood. Her eyes were closed, as they had been for the entire fight. Even so, shining tears were illuminated by the moonlight. A deep cut had been slashed across her lower back, just below her hollow hole. It bled openly, and she made no move to notice it.

"Open your eyes."

Kiptcha was startled. She stopped four steps away from Isredel, contemplating. "Or what?"

"I'll continue to slowly slice you to ribbons, unless you can persuade me otherwise, hmm?"

Kiptcha sighed heavily, and she drew a white blindfold out of her hakama pocket. She slowly opened her eyes then, revealing shattered colors. It scared Isredel, so many slivers of color. Each represented a different emotion. She then closed them again, and tied the blindfold across them. "My curse as it is. And being an arrancar, I shall accept that what I define as love is not truly love at all. I'll accept that my affection towards something is a desire for power. But I'd like you to prove that to me."

Isredel looked hard at her, at her thin, blindfolded figure. It reminded him strangely of one of the Roman goddesses. What had been her name? Fortuna: The goddess of fate. Fortune is blind, and she therefore wears a blindfold. He looked at her carefully. Was she planning something against him? "Prove to you that you've always been wrong?"

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Katy gasped for breath. The last hollow had been stronger. As she had thought, the moon never went down, and the palace never seemed to get much closer. She looked down at the origami cup that held some water, and she sighed, thinking of her last ten pieces of paper until she would be totally out of paper. The paper that Isredel had given her when she had first met him. He had said something about the paper being made from spirit particles. Or something.

Another presence loomed up in front of her, but she couldn't see it because of the dunes. It was too strong for her to handle, but she drank the rest of the water, and unfolded the paper carefully. It dissolved between her fingers.

"What are you doing there, woman?" The voice belonged to a solitary arrancar, standing on the rim of the dune. He had black hair and a mask with a horn curling off it. Two green lines traced the path of tears down his face. However, his face was apathetic. "I am ordered by Aizen-sama to bring you back to the Las Noches palace."

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Kiptcha twirled around Isredel in the air, dodging an attack perfectly without actually seeing the movement. It was like an elaborate dance that had to be practiced to perfection before it could be attempted with a sharp weapon. The weapon that could take both lives away.

"Damn, you're good Kiptcha. Mind telling me how you dodge things without seeing them?"

"Because I can see them." Isredel laughed at the comment.

"Shall I test that? Hmm-m-m," Isredel snarled. He held up three fingers and continued. "How many fingers am I holding up?"

"Certainly a well thought out question, if not totally irrelevant."

"You're avoiding the question."

"I don't know, you stupid shinigami! What do you want me to do? Guess?!" Kiptcha had snapped. She lunged, as Isredel thought she was incapable of. But she didn't hit him. She grabbed his zampaku-to with her bare hand, and then she pulled her hand up the blade, cutting deep into the flesh of her palm. Isredel stared at her. "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

"I ten."

All Isredel could do was stare. One shouldn't be able to summon their zampaku-to. "What the hell? Did you really just —"

"You're being annoying and dense. Please spare me from such. You started this fight, and Soul Society might actually think I tried with this. Maybe."

Isredel grimaced under the insults, but since he was sure that she didn't see them, he brushed his anger off. What could a damned arrancar know anyway? He then lunged yelling out his release at the same time. "Blind and deafen, Raikouno Kami." Light shrouded her blade for a second, and he didn't even start to consider that he was outlining himself perfectly for Kiptcha's senses.

She could already tell he was angry with her. She was just sensitive to emotions. A dangerous power in itself.

"Calm yourself, and don't do something reckless, hmm-m? You're representing me with a bright bull's eye. And I don't want to make it obvious I'm missing you. If it helps, I'll even apologize for my earlier insults —" Kiptcha didn't have time to complete her thought, as she was sharply cut off by the total disappearance of his reiatsu. It was no longer in one centralized blob. It was . . . all around.

The blindfold fell fluttering to the roof. Blood leaked slowly down the right side of her face, a red line across her temple. Her eyes went wide, taking in the sight. Isredel's gaze had locked with her own, and the tip of his sword was poised at her neck. For the third time. Her eyes seemed to suddenly blanch to a light beautiful brown, once she had fully realized her situation.

"Please just do it this time. That would make it easier on both of us, you know," she commented dryly. "That color . . . what is it?" Kiptcha stared at him as he slowly lowered his katana. Her eyes widened, and she realized she had a second chance.

"You bastard. Aizen-sama doesn't need a defeated warrior."

"I think you suit that image well, actually," Isredel commented. Kiptcha felt like she had been slapped. She backed up a step, her eye color fading to a dominant blue, which seemed to sparkle. The same color as the tears that she silently let slip down her cheeks.

Isredel was about to remark about it when Kiptcha's eyes violently turned a blood red color. He backed away, wishing he had taken her advice, just once. "I'll kill you, shinigami. I'll offer your lifeless corpse to Aizen-sama, as a gift!"

Isredel had no time to react before Kiptcha attacked, her blows fast and merciless. Isredel was forced back wards, and he realized that the only way he could get out of this would be to call on his bankai. It would be a tough fight if he did that, as she would most likely take it as a challenge and do her own release. He thought about each, considering the consequences. Every plan that he could think of required at least another captain. He was at a loss, but he had only one choice if Kiptcha didn't stop.

He pulled a small headset out of his pocket and spoke hurriedly into it. "This is Isredel Shimazaki, requesting the limit release be lifted. Arrancar has been found, and engaged."

There reply came a second later. "This is Souls Society. You have authorization. Arrancar has been noted. Espada level, Please proceed. Backup is being sent."

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Isredel had been able to hold back from bankai, but Kiptcha clearly was gaining the upper hand as she danced around effortlessly. She was slowly draining all of Isredel's energy. He stepped back, and held his sword out in front of him.

"Ban. . . kai."

Lightning crackled around him and gusts of wind radiated off of him, spinning. Kiptcha watched lazily, resting her sword on her shoulder. The dust cleared, and Kiptcha stood face to face with Isredel again, except he had two brightly glowing wings and his sword was long and black. It hurt Kiptcha's sensitive eyes to look at him, and she was forced to close her eyes. Isredel took the opportunity to attack. Kiptcha didn't catch the movement, and the bolt of electricity struck her squarely. Blood flowed freely from her side, and Kiptcha fell, writhing. Isredel walked over daintily, and he looked down at Kiptcha.

"You're bleeding, arrancar," he said simply. He kneeled down, careful of her movements.

Kiptcha clutched her zampaku-to suppressing her pain. She opened her eyes, shattered shades of red. She snapped her wrist, sending her blade into Isredel's abdomen. She then pulled it back out, relishing the color of blood.

"You're bleeding, shinigami," she laughed. Kiptcha jumped away, leaving Isredel clutching the wound. Her expression was a combination between a snarl and a glare of hate. A perfect replica of Grimmjow's smirk.

"The first Form: Baile Resonante."

Isredel had no time to react, as Kiptcha flash towards him, and he didn't have time to realize he'd been cut before she set another foot on the ground. Blood seemed to seep from everywhere, and Isredel stood again, just to face her.

"How the hell did you manage this?!" he snarled.

Kiptcha turned towards him. "I'll give you a rare treat, just for you still being able to stand. Take it as a gift, before I use it to kill you." Kiptcha planted her katana firmly in the roof, and she reversed her hold on the hilt. With a explosion of reiatsu, she released it. Isredel watched in shock as the hilt extended and the blade shortened and curved out. A double-handed zampaku-to became a scythe. "My favorite weapon. And my weapon's true form. Most times I suppress it into a sword though."

“CAPTAIN!” a shrill female voice screamed. Kiptcha’s head snapped up to watch a younger shinigami sailing down through the air. Her hair was a right shade of red-brown, and her figure was small, fragile. She landed, and the first thing that Kiptcha noticed was how annoyed Isredel looked about this, and how short the girl was compared to her captain. “Fyrita Phalae, lieutenant of the 5th division.”

“I don’t have the time for this. Isredel, call off your pet. Well, unless you want her dead,” Kiptcha said, clearly amused.

Hitsugaya Toshiro and Matsumoto Rangiku followed the excited lieutenant down, also landing to block Kiptcha from injuring Isredel. Kiptcha had conveniently flipped her hair back over her Espada rank.

“So there’s more of you, eh?” Kiptcha looked up, catching sight of a few other shinigami. “And you, Hitsugaya Toshiro – kun, Aizen-sama has spoken of you. A young kid with white hair: the prodigy of the Soul Society. Nice to make the acquaintance, shinigami.”

“State your purpose here, arrancar,” Hitsugaya snarled at her, offended at the mention of ‘kid’ in the same sentence with himself.

Kiptcha laughed lowly, the sound coming out closer to a grimace of pain. She spun her scythe right side up, and toyed with the blade, testing the blade. Her finger was easily cut, and she stuck it in her mouth to drain off the blood. There was an uncomfortable silence, and finally, Kiptcha spoke up. “I’m here to do nothing official, and I was supposed to stay out of any and all fights. I had personal matters to take care of.”

Isredel spoke up then too: “Something to do with some kittens.”

Kiptcha kicked off, and she shrugged. “I’m not going back to Aizen-sama until I kill one of you or I die. It would be dishonorable. So this fight hasn’t ended.”

Isredel pushed Fyrita off of him, who was poking at injuries interestedly. He then followed Kiptcha up, who looked at him curiously. “Are you not going to call for help?”

“No, of course not. This is between just us.” Isredel seemed to have regained composure, and he stood tall.

Kiptcha nodded. “The second Form: La Agilidad de Aire.” She leapt forward, careful to adjust to the new weapon. Isredel fended off some of the blows, and he struck out, but she carefully danced away from him. However, she left herself open after she had finished, presenting a good target. Isredel took the invitation, and another bolt of electricity soared at her.

Her scythe easily spun on her palm, but it only blocked the stuff that came into direct contact with it, and she hadn’t enough time to spin it faster.

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In the end, everyone had teamed up against Kiptcha, and Isredel, who was badly injured, had subdued her. She was now laying acquiescent in Isredel’s arms, bridal style, as they prepared to return to Seireitei. Kiptcha had allowed herself to be badly injured, and she knew that they would think something was amiss if they figured out her ranking.

Kiptcha laid her head against Isredel’s chest as he passed through the portal, closing her eyes against the scene. Isredel seemed upset at her doing that so blatantly.

“Kiptcha!” Isredel hissed. She looked at him slowly. Their eyes met, and Isredel realized that her eyes were that same pinkish-purple. “What color?”

“Simply put, humility, as Ulquiorra described for me,” Kiptcha replied, putting her back down and going to sleep.

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Aizen looked murderously happy, and Katya tried to shrink away from him. Ulquiorra prevented her from doing so, however, and she was forced to stand straight and look directly at Aizen.

“Welcome to Las Noches, Katya. Were you seeking to come to this place?”

Katya shook her head vigorously. “I thought I’d never get here though. . .”

Aizen redirected his attention, turning his head towards the other two Espada in the chamber besides Ulquiorra. “Nao, would you be so kind as to take care of this girl? I’m sure she would prefer you to Grimmjow or Ulquiorra.”

Nao yawned, looking disgruntled, but she didn’t voice her dissent out loud. She nodded solemnly and walked towards Katya, and dragging the lost human away. Aizen watched the two leave.

Ulquiorra looked up at Aizen as well. “Where’s Kiptcha? She obviously tricked that girl to coming here, but she didn’t say anything of the human girl’s talents.”

“Notify Szayel. I don’t have a use for a human,” Aizen said pointedly to Ulquiorra. Szayel bowed lowly and left. Grimmjow made to leave as well, however, he was stopped very quickly. “Grimmjow. Organize a team to go to the Soul Society. Kiptcha will need a distraction to get out of her current dilemma.”

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Katya looked in awe around the living quarters that Nao had entered, wondering how the female arrancar was able to live in such a messy place.

“So these are your quarters?” Katya asked tentatively. Nao nodded. “And the number on the door was your rank?” Another nod. “And Kiptcha is number 2?”

“So many damn questions. I’m amazed you care. But since you met Kiptcha, she will have told you some of this, didn’t she?”

It was Katya’s turn to confirm the information. “But I’d like to know — ”

Nao cut off Katya with a wave. “Please just shut up. I hate questions.” She turned, her strawberry blonde hair swinging lightly. She walked out of the room, and Katya was left in silence. The image of the thin, although slightly short, arrancar was burned into her mind. The long black sleeves and the slashed white fabric she attempted to hide the black below it. The way that the black fragment of her mask contrasted to the pale skin that never saw sunlight.

Katya didn’t notice really when she curled up to fall into slumber, and she didn’t notice the others that entered and took her away to the Octava Espada.

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End of Chapter 2: Entitled “Odori o Mashou ka”

All credit is Kalliel’s. Except for the whole Bleach idea . . . you get it. Please review! :3

3 - Bells, Carosels, and Time

ptchawoke up, or at least she assumed she had re-attained consciousness. All she could see was black. And it greatly troubled her that she couldn't hear anything or touch anything. The only thing she seemed to be able to do was think. Everything else seemed unresponsive. She thought she had her eyes open though, but she couldn't tell. She tried to curl up in a ball, and she didn't know if she had succeeded. She was scared. She wanted to be back in Aizen's care, but Kiptcha knew that she was doing him a favor as she did this.

Was she even alive? Because this could well be what death felt like. She mentally shuddered. Death seemed boring, if this was it.

Another thing occurred to her. Was she breathing? She couldn't tell. She couldn't even tell if her body existed, which would explain whether she was breathing or not. Body = breathing, because of the thought processes. No body = no breathing, and total confusion. But, with these thoughts came terror, Kiptcha was totally unused to this new feeling. Did she exist? Non-existence scared her.

She continued to try to determine if she had a body, but she lapsed into mentally cursing and alternatively pleading Aizen to help her. She was lost. Completely lost. She got the idea in her brain that as she tried to move it would hurt her. But she didn't even know if she existed anymore. Mental tears streamed. Mental screams echoed.

Her mind finally came to the conclusion that this was the doing of the shinigami, and they were the ones to blame. Kiptcha knew she had to make it through this so she could return and tell Aizen of their attempts to make her talk. This was interrogation, wasn't it?

She snarled at nothing after a while, except her own helplessness. But then it hit her. One of her senses wasn't taken away. She could use her reiatsu to give her mind a crystal clear picture of what was around her, since she could still feel it as a presence in her mind. Along with that came Iken, her full hollow form. Reiatsu burst from her body, and she calculated and she was able to pull everything into clear focus. She swore mentally, but now that she knew that thing existed, she could move them if she thought about it.

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Isredel looked sadly at the spectacle set before him. Kiptcha was suspended in a cylindrical tank filled with a clear, deceiving liquid. One drop on any part of your skin could make you believe that the contaminated area didn't exist. You couldn't feel it, and you couldn't look at it without averting your eyes away. So being suspended in a tank of it meant that all senses were suspended. A total vacuum for the mind in every possible way.

A sensory deprivation chamber.

He found it disgusting, but slightly amusing at the same time. Kiptcha looked helpless, and panicked. Mayuri had been able to identify that her eyes changed with emotions, and based on heart rate and amount of the chemicals in her body, he had identified some of the colors already.

She had needles and wires connected to her body, all over. This was for monitoring purposes. Chemical levels hinted at emotions that should be present with that level of chemicals, and Mayuri wasn't wasting this chance to write down all the colors and record possibilities for later testing.

A feather light sigh escaped from Kiptcha's lips and Isredel turned again to watch. Her mouth opened and closed, as if trying to form words.

"Bastard shinigami. Aizen-sama will be glad to learn of this. Must return .. ."

Isredel stiffened, having a feeling that the shinigami mentioned was himself. He walked closer carefully, eyeing Kiptcha's limp body. Her Espada uniform now gently floated in the liquid, and her hair as well.

Her expression was of sadness, and her eyes had flashed to a different color.

"Mayuri, can you identify this color?" Isredel was hopeful, seeing as he thought he might have seen it before.

"As far as I can figure, this would appear to be affection, or love. I have to clue what has prompted this. Perhaps . . ." He did not end up finishing the statement, however.

Isredel nodded and walked even closer to touch the glass. Kiptcha's body spasmodically twitched, and she seemed to try and reach out.

"Isredel? You've got to release the taboo on the information before I can tell you anything. Got to — " Kiptcha seemed to be panting at the effort it took to do this, and Isredel vaguely wondered at how she could do it at all.

"Kiptcha? Can you hear me at all?" No response came. Isredel took this as a negative answer. He felt the amount of reiatsu she was giving off, and a sudden realization hit him. That was how she had calculated his movements without seeing them in her fight.

"Isredel. . . has to be a certain shinigami," she whispered, the soft parts incomprehensible, " . . . you're a candidate . . . you must — "

She was cut off sharply with a scream of pain and rage, and she started coughing. Blood quickly tainted the liquid red, and Isredel drew back. This was unprecedented.

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Kiptcha had been taken out of the chamber, but she had lost consciousness. However, she had also been strapped to a metal table tightly, and a reiatsu limiting collar strapped around her thin neck. She was not going to be allowed to try to burst through the bindings.

The chemical was hard to get off, and they had tried, but the shinigami had replaced her clothing, as her uniform had absorbed it quite well. She was dressed in a shinigami uniform, and Isredel had wanted to laugh when he saw it. It was like a puzzle piece that was totally wrong.

Kiptcha moaned lowly, trying to curl. The bindings stopped her easily. Her eyes opened slowly, and she blinked rapidly in the light. She ended up just shutting her eyes again. Needles still poked into her skin and liquids flowed through them into her.

"You're evil."

Isredel turned to look at her. "But I'm the only one in Seireitei that holds even the slightest bit of compassion for you."

"How nice," Kiptcha attempted to snarl, but it came out choked and raspy. She cursed. A whimper followed that, and she lapsed into silence.

"What's wrong with you? You started coughing up blood earlier."

"Funny you don't mention that I was in a damn cylindrical fish tank," she breathed.

Isredel made no reply concerning hers, and instead, he followed up with a nonsequitur. "I'll return when you can talk better. I can't do an interrogation when you can barely talk at all."

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Nao followed the grim procession to Grantz' laboratory. The human was asleep, but soon enough that would change. She would be screaming. Nao took out her fan and absentmindedly fiddled with it, earning herself a deep cut from one of the embedded blades. She stuck her finger in her mouth and sowed the fan away. The blood tasted distinctly coppery, and she found it quite to her liking, like always. The procession reached its destination, and Nao followed them in. She didn't want to watch it, but she knew that no human would be allowed to keep their powers and life, not after last time, when Orihime was the center of the problem. Aizen wasn't going to make the same mistake twice. She would be molded into a fine, obedient arrancar afterwards.

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Nao had been forced out during the process, and with her two large felines. She had been confused until

she had been told that they were Kiptcha's and she was to take them to the proper quarters.

A small kitten leapt up suddenly, surprising her. All three had remnants of masks, but they were all different. And as to why they were feline in form, Nao had no clue.

"Where is our mistress?" The black one asked, calmly interrupting Nao's thoughts. She hadn't known that they could speak at all.

"She's. . . currently in a bit of trouble."

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Isredel had returned. Kiptcha's brain had registered that much, but no more. She dimly realized that being out of Hueco Mundo for extended periods of time could do this to her. Isredel was getting closer. Kiptcha wanted to snarl, but she decided against it. Instead she opened her eyes to glare at the approaching shinigami.

Isredel stopped and returned the glare. "I'm not here to be a comfort or friend you know. But it could help. And it would make it a bit less painful perhaps."

"If you accomplish what you came here for, I will hurt. If I manage to save you off, you will hurt. There is no middle path that would save us both," Kiptcha said lowly, closing her eyes again. The room was tilting. And she felt horrible.

"Well then. I'll have to say that I'm not going to allow the latter." Isredel smiled inwardly. His victim was already feeling on edge, and that might give him just the opening he was looking for. He pulled a chair up to the side of the metal table and sat down, within touching distance.

"Too close," Kiptcha snapped.

Isredel ignored the comment. "How did you get your zampakū to take the form of a scythe?" he questioned amiably, as if he were commenting on the weather.

Kiptcha did her best to shrug, knowing that if she answered any of his questions at all, Aizen's taboo would kick in again. The coppery taste of blood still resided in her mouth, and she didn't want any more of it. Blood wasn't the problem. It was pain. Kiptcha despised pain more than losing. More than shinigami. The hand that delicately brushed her neck snapped Kiptcha back into focus. Her eyes opened, and she was shocked to find that Isredel was actually looking bemusedly down at her. The cold fingertips brushed the hollow of her throat, and she tensed. Her eyes would be changing colors, she knew. And she didn't care. Let Isredel read her emotions if he could.

"You're alarmed." It was a statement that brought no questions, and shocked Kiptcha enough to make her open her mouth in horror. "But I'm not going to do anything, unless you refuse to answer me."

"How—?"

Isredel cut her off with gentle pressure to the side of her neck, activating the nerve there and sending shock waves of pain to her brain. "I'll ask questions, and you'll give answers. Understood?"

Kiptcha nodded mutely. But she wouldn't give any answers. Because that would bring pain.

"Why won't you answer direct questions?"

Kiptcha thought about it for a split second before giving an equally ambiguous reply. "Aizen-sama."

"What does Aizen have to do with this?"

"Pain."

Isredel thought about the response he had just gotten. He had unwittingly placed her in a position where either outcome would be pain. "A taboo on anything you say about how things work." He received a nod. He then changed the positioning of his hand slightly, lightly rubbing the nerve he'd just aggravated. Her response was to relax slightly, and her eye color changed again. A navy blue color this time. Isredel didn't understand however, so he kept quiet.

"Can't speak about anything of relevance. This holds true unless – ah – on home soil or — " Kiptcha was

interrupted by a wave of the excruciating pain she had dreaded. Her head rolled to the side, away from his hand, and blood dripped from the corner of her mouth. Consciousness faded from her eyes quickly.
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When Kiptcha came to again, she was alone, but in a different situation. She now seemed to be in a white room with no windows or doors. On top of that, she was free to move around as she wished, with only the limiting collar at her neck and a pair of handcuffs chaining her arms together behind her. They were regular metal though, and she could feel them bend ever so slightly when she pulled at them. A warm blanket had been thrown over her, and her wounds had been healed. Her throat felt better, and with her head. She sat up, the light blanket that had been thrown over her sliding down a bit. She leaned against the wall that the cot was next to, enjoying the feeling again. She relaxed enough to drift into a fitful sleep, but she was soon disturbed from it when a door opened in the wall, where Kiptcha had previously thought there to be nothing.

Isredel entered calmly, looking over at Kiptcha evenly. Something stirred inside her, and she looked away, as if she could show normal emotions so easily. However, the room was dark, and Isredel would have had a hard time figuring out which color her eyes had shifted to.

“Are you feeling okay, arrancar?” The tone was flat, and devoid of any compassion.

Kiptcha didn't even bother to look up. She tried to get the blanket back around her, but without much affect. She sighed in frustration and gave up on the chains that bound her arms. “We're already back to name calling again, are we, Isredel?”

The shinigami flinched at the use of his name by the enemy, just as she had suspected he might.

“What right do you have to call me by that name, arrancar?”

“Am I not allowed to simply because we're not on even terms right now?”

A silent stare greeted her comment, but no awkwardness seemed to spread though the air. It was more like the weight of guilt that flowed thickly in cold tendrils. “You're going to be in pain no matter what, huh?” Isredel asked calmly, trying to break the ice between them on the topic of his interrogation. “You were talking about a second way to release it — the taboo . . . Could you finish that statement?”

The answer that came was short and direct. “No.”

Isredel was shocked at this response, but he didn't move, and instead he sat on the bed opposite her own and sighed heavily. “There are ways, aren't there?”

“Yes, but you would have to be out of your mind to actually use them. The closest you will get is simply releasing me, as I can be of no use to you in this state,” Kiptcha said, a resigned chord ringing in her voice. She slunk back into the black shadows and leaned against the wall.

“Furthermore, I would rather die than betray Aizen-sama.”

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Nao had been invited into the throne room for the finalization of the arrancar, but she was already regretting it. And the screams that had echoed up the silent halls of Las Noches had disturbed her greatly. The image of an arrancar chained to the floor in front of Aizen did not assuage her doubts about the whole thing.

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A new arrancar, who had readily claimed the name of 'Katya' now stood before Nao, ready for training. This was an arrancar that would be extremely useful. As was Kiptcha, with her tactics and battle plans. She was very good at estimating others' reactions, and she often did with frightening ability. She also had a tendency to be overly logical, and that in itself was dangerous. Then you could go into her physical abilities, such as being able to sense the outlines of things simply by how things reflected her reiatsu. But Nao wasn't that bad herself. Like Kiptcha, she was extremely strong-willed, as she had to be to be a

survivor in the Espada. Her weapons were fans, one large and the other small. The both had poisoned blades, but the smaller one was capable of launching these things. They were extremely deadly, because of the poison and her accuracy. Her release was seldom used, which was commendable, but as Kiptcha was feline, Nao was some sort of spiky thing. It was often considered as a general opinion that Nao was indeed more dangerous than Kiptcha, just because of a shorter temperament and less analysis of risk. Kiptcha was a safer bet in some ways, just because you knew that she would leave your head firmly attached unless she had a good reason otherwise.

Nao wasn't known for being so logical and agreeing. She was known for being a dangerously moody one to avoid, unless she liked you a bit.

And right now she was pissed. Because this arrancar, who was clearly below her level was daring enough to be cheeky with her, and say that she couldn't command her. This one would soon learn.

Nao drew out her smaller fan and she snapped it out, starting to fan herself demurely. "Do you know what happens to those who challenge their superiors, Katya?" she asked, not ceasing in making the fan seem completely normal and harmless.

"You wouldn't kill me though, because I'm special to Aizen-sama."

"Do you want to try that theory? I'd be more than willing to oblige," Nao commented dryly, knowing that the genetic mutation that allowed the power was safely stored away in Grantz' laboratory, just in case something happened to this one, and a new one needed to be made.

Katya shivered. "I dare you," she snidely commented, trying her luck.

Nao had already guessed that this was how it was going to go, and she had replaced the poison with a pain inducing neurotoxin, but it wasn't strong enough to kill. She flipped her fan closed, lining up the paper thin blades and arrangement of needles. With a flip of her wrists, she sent one of the small daggers housed inside the fan flying out.

Blood beaded up and rolled down Katya's neck from the wound. Her hand flashed up and she removed it.

"What is this supposed to do?" she spat vehemently. "Is it supposed to kill me? Because it failed at that."

Nao smiled, and she watched silently as light dawned in the young arrancar's eyes. The pain started at a dull ache, gradually crescendoing to a searing burn.

"No. I'm not going to kill you. No, not yet. Because we're already having so much fun, aren't we?" Nao laughed sadistically. Katya fell to her knees, whimpering.

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Kiptcha wasn't surprised at Isredel's anger. And the punch that caught her jaw and set it a bit out of joint didn't surprise her in the least. She set her jaw back in place and curled up into a ball, bringing her legs to her chest.

"You're not getting anywhere with that way, you do know. Please keep that in mind." Kiptcha's voice was soft, and she was obviously tired of having to put up with an interrogation. She was still calculating what she should do in this situation, but nothing came to mind.

Isredel snarled something incomprehensible. "Why did you bother letting me capture you in the first place?!"

Kiptcha looked calmly at him. "Because I wanted to. And you amused me greatly."

"So you're sitting there just because you want to stare at me?" Isredel asked, his yelling subsiding to the quiet whisper that usually hinted at bad things to come.

"I'm analyzing. Because you are Aizen-sama's successor. And you are interesting as an individual."

Isredel stared blankly at Kiptcha as she rose, stretching her legs carefully. She walked a bit closer to him, and she smiled. She was a master of masks, but her eye color tended to get in the way of such things.

"You don't mean it, so you don't have to smile," Isredel remarked.

Kiptcha's face fell quickly, a glare replacing it. "You have no right to simply come in here and interrogate me though," she commented in the same soft, deadly voice. "Because I came to you with every intention to be captured. And now, since you seem to think that you're in control here, I'll teach you something." The chains that were wrapped around her hands shattered and dropped to the ground around her. ???
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End of Chapter three, entitled "Bells, Carousels, and Time"

All credit belongs to Kiptcha, 'cept the whole Bleach thing . . . yeah. Reaad and review please! :D

4 - NI Ver

Grimmjow wasn't happy about any of this, since he knew full well that he wouldn't be sent out except to make a distraction. And Kiptcha could handle herself. So why did he need to do anything? A growl made its way out of his throat and an arrancar that had been waiting behind him with a message flitted away in a rush.

There was no helping it. He would have to hope that she returned of her own accord. She'd better. Because he wasn't going to have any of this 'rescue' stuff.

An arrancar rounded the corner and burst into Grimmjow's quarters, out of breath. Grimmjow looked up and glared at the new arrival, which sent the fraction running before he could deliver his message. Grimmjow shrugged and laid back again on the couch that had been provided for him. There was no need for him to get excited.

Kiptcha hadn't been able to get the collar of death stone off, nor figure out how to get out of the little room, so she was left alone. Isredel sat calmly on the other bed in the room, watching Kiptcha pace back and forth.

"You're not going to get anywhere like that," he commented dryly.

Kiptcha turned, facing him. She made an attempt at replying, especially after vowing to stay silent. She hadn't touched him, per se, she had just punched the wall directly beside his head and shattered the stone a bit. Just enough to make an impression. And it felt to Kiptcha as though she had done something incredibly stupid.

She shrugged, walking towards him, and breaking the pattern. Isredel shot up and efficiently delivered a strike to her stomach, sending her flying backwards into a wall.

Kiptcha looked shocked at the action, and her tongue detected the coppery taste of blood. She coughed, causing blood to drip slowly from the corners of her mouth. Blood came away on her hand, and her chest felt sore. The blow seemed to have caused a rib to shatter.

"W-why?" she asked softly. "I d-didn't do anything! Was j-just . . ." The rest lapsed into mumbling.

"You simply seemed to be threatening me, so I retaliated."

Kiptcha stared at him in horror. Her expression morphed to one of hate though, and she struggled to her feet and staggered to her bed. Her collar fell to the floor as she went, and stunning amounts of reiatsu spiraled off of her figure. Isredel also sat down, warily.

"W-wasn't," she hissed.

"I had no way of knowing," Isredel commented dryly. "You are the enemy, after all."

Kiptcha sighed, and her reiatsu seemed to fade a bit, but Isredel could still feel the pressure and he couldn't breathe normally. She was high ranking, obviously. And she was above him in terms of sheer amount. But how did that affect anything when it came to using it?

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Kiptcha, despite her curses and murmured threats, had fallen asleep. It was amazing to Isredel, as he looked at her.

Her face was still betraying some pain, but overall, she seemed peaceful. Too peaceful for an arrancar. Way too peaceful.

Hegot up and walked over to look down at her form, still surprised that she didn't try to keep her reiatsu from freely leaking out. Maybe she couldn't.

"Kiptcha. I still have to carry out my interrogation," he said shaking her abit.

Kiptcharolled away from him, wincing as she rolled onto her fractured rib. She reluctantly let sleep leave her, and she woke up. A hand lashed out before she thought about it, and caught Isredel in the stomach, also shattering a rib. She snarled something at him, eyes still turned away, that sounded like a dismissal.

"No. I don't care what Aizen-sama wants. He can wait until I want to come . . ." she murmured.

"Wake up, damn it. I'm not Aizen," Isredel hissed. He finally made sense of the pain he had inflicted on her for no particular reason except the he though she was going to do something. Which she wasn't going to.

Hegot up and cautiously returned to her side. She was fully awake now, and she stared up at him with a tinge of guilt. No apology was uttered. Only the simple phrase, "I want to go home."

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Aizen glared pointedly at the returning arrancar, who was standing alone in the great room. The despicable piece of trash has failed at the simple task of bringing Grimmjow here. And he kept muttering something about being snarled at.

As Aizen thought about it, Grimmjow wasn't the most approachable arrancar when he was mad. The numero had a reason to run away.

"Find Ulquiorra. I do not expect you to fail again." Aizen sat back, watching the arrancar scurry off.

Kiptcha was due to come back now. And he wondered vaguely what had possessed her to do such a reckless thing.

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Isredel had assembled a few different shinigami for his mission to save Katya, and they had all gathered directly outside Kiptcha's cell. This included His lieutenant, Fyrita. And the tenth division, fourth seat, Tsutamatsu Minami.

Isredel opened the door carefully, and Kiptcha glared back at him from her perch atop the topmost bunk bed on her side. Before Isredel could blink, she appeared in front of him, a hand on the door.

"I don't suppose you'll be so kind as to move?"

Isredel moved aside, and Kiptcha blinked, unmoving. "Is this some type of crude trick?" she hissed.

Isredel looked blankly back at her. "Why would you think that?"

Kiptcha made no attempt at response and swept off, through the door. Isredel and the two weaker shinigami followed. She strode at a fast pace, ignoring them.

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Everyone in Las Noches felt it when Kiptcha returned, her reiatsu filling in a blank that had been there for a bit too long. Some smirked at her arrival, and others cursed at it, but all was almost back to normal.

Grimmjow sighed, and laid his head back down, finally reassured that he needn't do anything about it anymore. Aizen had probably suspected this anyway.

Gin's smirk widened, and he stalked off down a white corridor to find Aizen.

Aizen, the overlord of Las Noches simply sipped his tea and looked sidelong at the Hougyoku that rested beside him.

Nao jumped up and started running. Her mentor and friend had returned. And she was going to determine who else followed her.

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Kiptcha risked a glance at Isredel as she swept through the gates of Las Noches, and entered the tunnels and passages. Isredel and the other two followed closely, not wanting to get lost.

She glared at them, hoping they would take the hint. They didn't.

Kiptcha abruptly stopped. "Why are you intent on following me? Because I'll kill you. I really will."

Isredel responded. "Because you know you're way around."

"And I'm your damn enemy!" Kiptcha snarled, facing him. Then she vanished, leaping down the hall in a single flash of sonido and disappearing from sight. Isredel cursed.

Just then, Nao stepped up to the intersection, stopping when she saw them. Her uniform floated around her, like veils and streamers in the wind.

"Are you the ones that captured Kiptcha-sama?" Nao asked, eyeing them. She took out her fan and flipped it open, pretending to fan herself. "Because I can't forgive you for that."

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Kiptcha had thrown away the shinigami clothing and replaced it with her own, and she made the final adjustments, adding her zampaku-to in its sealed state on her back. Aizen knew of her presence here, but she did not need show her face yet. Aizen would send for her in due time.

She stalked back down the halls, heading towards Grimmjow's flaring reiatsu. He already knew she was back. An interesting occurrence indeed.

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Nao wasted no time in starting a fight, still happy about her earlier victory over Katya. The girl had suffered before passing out. And she had enjoyed it. She softly fanned herself, stepping ever closer to the intruders.

Isredel stepped ahead of the other two, meeting Nao halfway. "You two split up and look by yourselves. I'll take care of her and catch up." The lieutenant grabbed the other and they sprinted past the two, heading farther down the corridor.

After they had passed Nao started to laugh. "You're going to 'take care of me'? How interesting.

Kiptcha-sama will applaud my effort once I'm through."

Isredel scoffed, drawing his zampaku-to. "Kiptcha will look upon your broken, bleeding corpse with regret."

Nao flicked her fan mindlessly, causing the needles to make small bumps in the fabric of the fan. She counted them, gaging how many more neurotoxin needles she had left. Twenty-seven . . . thirty-eight . . . forty-nine. She stepped into a fighting stance, and prepared for his attack.

Isredel used shun-po, reappearing behind her. A single sword swing, countered with Nao's bare hand. Needles shot out of her fan with a flick of her wrist, four in total, and they buried themselves in Isredel's left shoulder.

"You shouldn't take me so lightly. The neurotoxin will last for quite awhile, and it will render that arm useless until the toxin is removed from the system. It should also be quite painful."

Isredel drew away sharply. His left shoulder felt like it was on fire, and something felt as though he were stabbing it as well. He gritted his teeth. A vile weapon indeed.

"The only ones who can ignore that kind of pain are Aizen-sama, and the first two Espada. Kiptcha-sama has a terrible habit of pulling them out and throwing them back."

Isredel glared at her. "Who the hell are you?"

"Did I not introduce myself?" Nao gasped. "Terribly rude of me. I am Nao Kilikka, the Quinta Espada. Pleasure to meet you."

Isredel shook his head and tried again, lunging. Nao used her fan, now closed, to block the attacks.

"You're not going to get anywhere that way," Nao commented. She paused right before she flicked her wrist again, sending two needles into Isredel's side. The other three were deflected.

"Blind and deafen, Raikouno Kami." Light shrouded Isredel's blade, lengthening it and making it gleam like gold in the sunshine.

Nao smirked. "I'm glad you've finally started taking me seriously."

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End of Chapter four, entitled "Ni Ver" All credit belongs to Kiptcha, 'cept the whole Bleach thing . . .
yeah. Reaad and review please! G