The Price of Love and Redemption

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The Price of Love and Redemption

by Bee_Free

Summary

When he says something he should not have, Akiya finds out the hard way that redemption takes a lot of work. Both for him and for others.

Notes

I changed the cause of Isshi's death since we have no idea. I mean no disrespect, however, I liked him just as much as all of you, this was a hard fic to write as a first fan work here. I don't own any of the characters.

The Fight and First Step

18.07.2011

"Akiya, *please*, try to understand! I just want the best for us!" Isshi begged, trying hard not to cry. But the guitarist was glaring at him under the shocked looks of the other bandmembers.

"No, you do not! You only want to be the center of the attention as always, Shinohara!"

"What!? Akiya, I never--"

"Stop lying to yourself, you stupid diva! I *hate* you!!" Akiya growled and that, made Isshi's tears fall. He couldn't bear to stay any longer than this, he had to *breathe*. The vocalist just went out of the door, sobbing as he ran to his car.

"Akiya, that was too harsh..." Nao gently chided the younger guitarist.

"Oh come on, Nao, you know that is the truth. He always wants the spotlight on--" Just as the brunette was about to finish his sentence, a loud tire screech and a bang stopped all of them and made them all run to the window.

What awaited them however, horrified all of them. There was Isshi's car, gotten squashed by a truck.

"NO!!!" Shin screamed as Akiya staggered away from the scene only to run to the door with the others. When they arrived, they saw with horror that Isshi was not alive anymore.

19.07.2011

After they had put Isshi to his grave, the remaining members of Kagrra, turned to Akiya who looked not only grief-stricken but also full of guilt.

"You *do* realize that this is all *your* fault, right, Akiya?!" Shin said softly, making the younger man flinch and nod miserably.

"Yeah! If you didn't break his heart like *that*, Isshi would have been *alive* now!! I hope you're fucking *happy*, you bastard!!" Izumi added, turning his back to the brunette man.

Then, both Izumi and Shin left, leaving Akiya to his guilt.

"Akiya, it was *not* your fault, you couldn't have known, my friend..." Nao whispered but Akiya shook his head, too distressed to be able to say anything.

What they both didn't know, however, was a young woman watching them closely as Nao helped the other man to his house. The bassist tried hard to keep Akiya sane. However, the guitarist was hurting so much that it seemed nearly impossible to make him smile again.

"N-Nao... Please, *leave*... I'm a murderer..." Akiya whispered, silently crying. Nao gasped at that, horrified at how much Akiya believed that.

"Akiya, don't say that! Isshi would've *never* wanted you to feel that way!" The bassist said, trying to make the guitarist understand that he was in no fault.

But Akiya, unable to face his guilt, suddenly fainted, making Nao panic. The bassist frantically tried to wake the brunette up but Akiya was not gonna wake up easily.

"What do I do?!" Nao whispered, putting his head in his hands in despair. After trying more, the bassist gave up and opted to put the young man into his bed.

Then, he left, wanting to talk to the other two so that they stopped making Akiya even more miserable. But he did not know that by leaving Akiya alone, he had doomed the guitarist.

Second Step

When the older man left, a young woman came into the guitarist's room through the balcony and put her hand on his sweaty forehead, looking slightly disgusted.Then, Akiya woke up with a gasp, sitting up.

"W-who are you?! Where's Nao!?"

"I am Luka. Don't worry about your friend, he is fine." The pink haired woman said, calm. Then, she said something that made Akiya gasp in shock.

"I am a mage. I can help you bring *back* what you've lost."

"Y-you mean... I can b-bring Isshi *back*?! How can I do it!?"

"You will have to sacrifice a lot of things and the road to forgiveness will be rough. Do you *still* want to?"

Akiya immediately nodded, wanting more than anything to see Isshi back. Luka smiled, teleporting them away. After they were gone, Nao came back with the keys the bandmembers had trusted eachother with long ago. But when he saw Akiya was gone and his phone was still on the desk, the bassist panicked.

"Oh no... AKIYA!!"

Nao immediately ran out of the apartment, horrified at the thought of Akiya succumbing to his guilt and taking his own life. Then, he called Izumi, hoping that the bandleader would at least try to help.

"What is it, Nao-kun?" The drummer said upon answering the call.

"Izumi, Akiya's *gone*!!"

"What do you *mean* he's gone?! He didn't... Didn't *die* or something, *right*?!"

"I-I don't know!! He wasn't home and his phone was sitting on the desk with no trace of where he might have gone to!! Izumi, I don't know what to *do*!!"

"Wait right there! I'm coming!" The drummer said and cut the connection. Nao scaredly sat on the road, trying to calm down. Thankfully, Izumi came quickly, looking panicked as well.

"Naoki, what happened?!"

"I-I don't know!! I only left him for a moment but t-then, he was just *gone*!! W-what if he..." Nao said, trying his hardest not to cry at the thought of losing Akiya as well.

"We'll find him. We'll find him, Naoki. Akiya *wouldn't* do something like that."

Just as they were about to search for the guitarist, they saw that the man they were about to search for was coming with some paper bags in his hands.

"Akiya!! Where the *hell* were you?! You scared the *crap* out of us!" Izumi said, running towards the young brunette but then, he saw that the guitarist pulled back, a sad look in his eyes.

"Akiya?" Izumi said softly, only then seeing how much of an impact his and Shin's words had on their friend. The guitarist didn't say anything, looking at him timidly.

"Akiya, say something! Please... I know I hurt you but I was just angry at Isshi's death!" The drummer begged, his eyes filling with tears.

"It's... It's alright, Izumi. I deserved it anyways... Because of me, h-he's *gone*..." Akiya whispered, looking down. That made Izumi run to the other man, enveloping him in a warm hug as he tried to keep his tears in.

"Akiya, don't say that. You could not have possibly known this would happen to Isshi!"

Akiya just shook his head, not believing the others' words for a minute. But then, he brightened up inwardly, remembering what the mage named Luka had told him. He could bring the older man back with the rituals Luka had mentioned.

Revival

One week later

26.07.2011

Akiya walked towards the place where Luka awaited him, heavily sighing. It was time. Time to bring Isshi back.

"So you came. After bearing all the burden the rituals made you face. Are you ready to bring your beloved friend back?" Luka said, calm.

"Yes. I *won't* let him down again." The guitarist said softly, tears filling his eyes at the memory of his own last words towards the vocalist. The words that had killed the older man.

Then, Luka told him to brace himself as the last ritual was about to mark him permanently. Akiya did so but the searing pain still made him lose his footing and fall to the floor, crying out in pain. Then, a small part of his skin began to rot.

"W-where is Isshi n-now, Luka-san?" He asked, panting and trying to bear his pain and focus on Isshi alone.

"He is in the room to your left. He's asleep for now as his wounds were too deep for even the rituals' healing abilities. Don't worry, he'll wake up soon."

Akiya smiled, getting up and wincing as the movement made his mark ache. Then, he opened the door to find his beloved best friend, deeply asleep on the comfy looking bed.

"Thank God... Luka-san, I don't know how to thank you for this. Is there a way for me to show my gratitude?" The guitarist asked the pink haired mage to which, she smirked.

"You will have the chance to thank me later. Don't worry about that."

That was then, Isshi slowly woke up, yawning and looking around in confusion as he sat up.

"Isshi-kun! Oh, thank God!" Akiya said, running towards the bed. Isshi looked up and his expression turned guarded, obviously remembering what the younger man had said to him before.

"Akiya... Why did you do this?" The vocalist whispered, making Akiya shocked as he was not expecting Isshi to remember his own death.

"W-what do you mean?"

"I mean *why* did you bring me back even after you said you *hated* me!! Why?!"

At Isshi's angry words, Akiya could not keep his tears in any longer. He sobbed against the older man's shoulder, apologizing constantly. At that, Isshi softened, not knowing what the brunette man had done to bring him back but having a bad feeling about it anyways.

"Let's go, I-Isshi, *please*. I don't want to stay here for longer than I should, t-to be honest..."

Shocking Surprise

Isshi nodded wordlessly, his brain working at a record speed to try and figure out what had happened. Then, when the two had arrived to Akiya's house, the first thing he did was to get Isshi comfortable, obviously still very shaken.

"Akiya, I'm okay. Stop fussing over me, please." Isshi said, looking actually concerned about the other man. Akiya stopped getting Isshi a good book that he knew the singer loved, hesitant.

"Akiya, please, just talk to me. What *happened* after I died? *How* did you even bring me back?"

"I... I don't want to talk about *that*, Isshi... *Please*, I don't think I can talk about that..."

Isshi nodded, not wanting to make the guitarist even more upset by asking more even though he was starting to get really worried. Then, Akiya took his phone in his hand, deciding to call the others to get them to his house and show them what he had done.

As the guitarist talked about the "surprise" he had in a very enthusiastic voice, Isshi silently thought of how much Akiya must have been hurting from his death and felt bad about being guarded once he had seen the younger man.

And when the others finally arrived after two hours, Akiya asked Isshi to get the door himself.

"You sure?"

"Yeah, I'm *very* sure. They'll be *elated*, Isshi-kun." Akiya said with a gentle smile. Isshi reluctantly nodded and opened the door to find the other three standing. When they saw who had answered the door, they all gasped, shocked.

"I-Isshi?! How?!" Shin said, shock in his eyes. It didn't escape Isshi's attention that all of them had tears in their eyes.

"Akiya brought me back." The vocalist decided to say at last. At that, all of their eyes widened. But before Nao could ask if Akiya was alright, the guitarist came up from behind Isshi, smiling truthfully for the first time in a week.

"Hey guys. Like my surprise?" He said before both him and Isshi were bowled over by Shin's bear hug.

Slow Burn

"We missed you *so much*, Isshi-kun..." The older guitarist sobbed as Isshi enveloped him in his warm embrace.

While they took care of the upset Shin, Izumi and Nao shared a look between eachother. They both knew this could not have come at a small price.

"It's okay, Shin. I'm just fine now." Isshi said gently as Akiya tried his hardest to not show how much pain he was in. The Mark of Destruction was spreading with searing hot pain.

But in all of them, only Nao saw that he was in pain but at the shake of the guitarist's head, he decided not to tell the others. But silently, he resolved to get what he'd done out of the younger man's mouth.

Then, they sat on the sofa with Isshi being the center of attention. Especially Akiya was doting on the young vocalist, making him slightly uncomfortable.

"How did you bring Isshi-kun back, Akki-kun?" Izumi asked, very curious. "Well... All I'll say is that I had some help. You don't need to know the details, trust me." The guitarist said with a calm voice, inwardly wincing at the thought of the things he had had to do.

That made all of them look at eachother, worried for Akiya. All of them, especially Isshi, were aware that no matter what, whatever Akiya had done could not have come without a huge price.

Thankfully for Akiya, none of them made any comments about it even though they all were worried for the lead guitarist. But when it was night and the others left, Isshi found that he couldn't sleep.

He tossed and turned but sleep didn't find him. And just as he was about to finally drift off, he heard Akiya's scream. Scared, Isshi ran to his friend's room only to find that Akiya was having a nightmare.

"No! L-leave me!! I'm... *No*!!!" He was tossing and turning as he screamed while Isshi shockedly watched him.

Then, the vocalist finally got the strength to wake the other man up.

"Akiya! Akiya, wake up!!" Isshi said, shaking the younger man in worry. But even when he woke up, he wasn't responsive.

"I'm... I'm a *murderer*..." He was whispering over and over again, shaking all over.

Isshi froze at that, horrified. Then, he shook Akiya once more, trying to get him to respond.

"Akiya, *look* at me!! It was not your fault! Come on, come to yourself, *please*!" He exclaimed, tearful at the state of his younger friend. Thankfully, hearing Isshi, Akiya finally

looked up, revealing that he was crying silently.

"Akiya, *please*, stop blaming yourself. You couldn't have possibly known what was going to happen to me." Akiya still did not answer the vocalist but his eyes looked clearer. But then, the guitarist suddenly doubled over, the mark spreading again and making him hurt.

"Akiya-kun, what's wrong?! Come on, *say something*!!"

Realization

"I-I'm fine, Isshi-kun..." Akiya said, his voice strained with obvious pain. But the youngest still smiled at the older man anyways, trying not to let his pain be known to him, no matter how in vain that was.

"It's obvious that you are *not*, Akiya! Tell me what is wrong. Please."

But despite Isshi's beggings for what was wrong with the younger man, Akiya shook his head, knowing Isshi would freak if he really knew what was wrong.

"Go to sleep, Isshi, it's... It's really late." Akiya said softly, swallowing his pain. But Isshi was not going to leave his youngest friend to suffer alone.

"I can sleep with you, if you want."

"W-what?! Isshi, you don't *need to*!" Akiya said with wide eyes. At that, Isshi smiled.

"I *want to*, Akiya. You're *very* precious to me, I can't even *bear* the thought of you losing your mind because of that one *little* mistake."

Akiya froze at that, shocked. Not minding his shock, Isshi gently laid the young guitarist down, snuggling as he laid down as well. But then, his hand accidentally came on top of Akiya's rotting skin through his clothes, making the other man hiss quietly in pain.

"What's wrong, Akiya?" Isshi asked, concerned at what he'd felt through the guitarist's clothes. It almost felt like there was a deep wound there.

"N-nothing. Let's just... Just go to sleep, Isshi."

Isshi sighed and nodded even though he was worried. Then, he gently hugged Akiya as both of them slowly drifted off to sleep.

27.07.2011

When Isshi awoke, he was alone. Akiya seemed to have woken up faster than him. He slowly got up, his mind whirling with questions. What had he felt through Akiya's clothes last night? And what had the younger man been talking about when he'd woken up from his nightmare? He did not know but he was determined to find out.

Then, he decided to give the others a call, getting help for this would be ideal, after all. He did it while Akiya was preparing breakfast for the two of them, humming cheerfully to himself.

Thankfully, Akiya didn't suspect the vocalist going for help when he told him that he was going to meet with Izumi. And after the older man was out of the door, Akiya took a deep breathe of relief, going to his room and taking a pen and paper and started writing a letter for

Isshi to read later, much later. While the guitarist was doing that, Isshi met with Izumi who looked very happy to see him, despite how heavily burdened the vocalist was.

"Hey, Isshi! How's it going?"

"Izumi, I need to talk to you about something." He said, looking honestly worried. Seeing that, Izumi got worried as well.

"What is it, Isshi? Is there something wrong?"

"I think so. It's... It's Akiya-kun. There's something seriously wrong with him."

Izumi's eyes widened at that and he demanded to know more immediately.

"He was having a pretty bad nightmare last night and even when I woke him up, he kept saying that he was a *murderer* and wouldn't look up or respond for at least 10 minutes. I thought of sleeping beside him so that he wouldn't have more nightmares but when I laid down with him, I happened to touch his right side and I swear to God, I felt a wound there. A *deep* one at that. But he denies it so *vehemently*. I don't know what to do, Izumi..."

Izumi was silent for a moment, thinking what to say to the upset and concerned vocalist. Then he looked up, deciding to tell the others about this as well.

The Horrifying Moment

"I think we should tell the others as well, they'd want to know, Isshi. And our work would be easier to find out just what is happening to Akiya-kun."

Isshi nodded, still very worried. Then, Izumi called Shin and told him to come by his house. After that, he also called Nao so that the bassist wouldn't be in the dark as to what was happening. When the other two arrived and learned what was going on, they looked at eachother with shock and horror. Neither knew what to think.

"I have an idea, what if you searched his house to find out just what he has done to bring you back? Maybe there's a clue there." Said Shin softly, starting to really get scared for their youngest friend and feeling terrible for treating him like he had.

Isshi nodded, hoping to be able to stop whatever was happening to Akiya somehow. Then, his phone rang and Isshi immediately answered it, seeing that it was from Akiya.

"Akiya-kun. What is it?" The vocalist said, alerting the others immediately.

" ... I'm with the others, I wanted some fresh air, don't worry about me. ... Okay, I'll return soon then." He said but he was frowning slightly, from the tone of his voice, he'd understood that Akiya was not feeling very well.

"What's it, Isshi? Is he... Alright?" Nao asked with concern. Isshi was thoughtful, however.

"I don't know... His voice was kind of strained and as if he was hurting but he keeps saying that he is okay. I have no idea how to make him admit that he *isn't*..."

"Let's just go one step at a time, Isshi-kun. We'll find a way, I promise." Shin said, putting a hand on the vocalist's shoulder.

"Thanks guys..." The vocalist said, smiling at how much he could depend on his best friends. Yet, the worry was eating at his insides, he needed to know what was happening to Akiya soon before the guitarist was hurt somehow.

When he arrived at Akiya's home, he was not expecting the guitarist to immediately tell him to sit on the sofa, obviously trying not to show how uneasy he really was.

"What's it, Akki?" Isshi asked, looking really concerned at how silent the lead guitarist was. Akiya sighed, mentally getting ready to tell the older vocalist about the letter he had written for him.

"Look, it's... It's just something I should give you. I kinda did some pretty *hard* stuff when I was reviving you and well, I... I might not have much time to tell you about it."

"What are you talking about?! Akiya, you're starting to *really* scare me!" Isshi said at those words, trying not to panic.

"Please don't interrupt me, Isshi, I don't think I can say this again, my friend..." Akiya whispered, tears in his eyes at the horrible things he had been through. Isshi nodded but he was starting to really panic.

"I hid a letter in my studio. If... No, *when* something happens to me, I want you to read that. You'll know how to get it when it's *time*."

Isshi turned pale at that, not knowing what the younger guitarist was talking about. The bad feeling he'd been having had multiplied tenfold after the words of his friend.

"Why not give it *now*?! Akiya, *please* just tell me what's wrong, I don't want to lose you like that!"

Akiya shook his head with a smile, however, not wanting Isshi to fear what was coming to his younger friend. After all, Akiya had deserved everything that was happening to him. Then, the guitarist told Isshi that he was going to take a shower as the older man tried his best to not cry from worry.

"Okay..." Isshi said with a trembling voice and Akiya left to prepare for his shower. Then Isshi thought of texting Izumi, wanting to let what Akiya had said to him known by the drummer so that they could at least try to reverse the situation. Then, it occured to the vocalist by Izumi's return message to secretly go to peep on Akiya, to see if the guitarist was truly wounded or not. Feeling really bad, he got up after getting the message from Izumi and headed to the bathroom where the water was running. But nothing could have prepared Isshi for what he was about to see.

What he saw was Akiya's skin, rotting alive starting from his right side.

Pain of Love

Isshi couldn't even gasp, shocked and horrified. He turned around and fled but his resounding footsteps made Akiya look up and go after him after donning a bathrobe.

"Isshi!!" He called out but the older man was so distressed he was barely able to take his phone into his hand to call Izumi.

"Isshi, why did you--" Just as he was about to ask why the vocalist had peeped on him, he saw that Isshi was talking to someone on his phone, so distressed.

"Y-you were right... He's... He's *hurt*, I-Izumi... H-he's hurt *bad*..." The vocalist was saying through his sobs, tears starting to spill. Akiya felt horrible to see the older man so distressed but he was not regretting his decision. Not even for a moment.

"Y-yeah, I-I'll try... ... I-I don't think I c-can... ... Okay, s-see you soon t-then." Isshi closed the phone right as Akiya came to stand beside him. He looked up with tears streaming down his face as Akiya knelt down beside him.

"Isshi, why the *hell* did you just *spy* on me? That is downright perverted, you know." The lead guitarist chided gently, trying to come up with a good lie to tell the vocalist but Isshi just continued crying.

"B-because I *knew* something bad was h-happening to y-you!! But I-I *never* would've t-thought... Tell me, *why* is this happening to you?!"

"Isshi... It was my *own* choice to bear the pain for you. I'll be fine, stop worrying for me."

"I *will* worry for you, you're one of my *brothers*, Akiya!! Tell me there's a way to reverse this!" Isshi begged, his tears wrenching at Akiya's heart but the guitarist was not going to tell him the only possible solution that he knew of.

"I don't think there's one, Isshi. But I deserved this, didn't I? Causing you to die like that..." He said at last, very calm. Which made Isshi break down even more.

"You *n-never* deserved such a thing!! No one would! Akiya, *please*, don't give up like this! T-there has to be a-a *way*!!" Isshi sobbed, making Akiya hug him tightly, as if he was never going to be able to hug the older man again if he didn't. He didn't even care about the pain his mark was causing him.

"It's gonna be *okay*, Isshi. Please don't cry, I never wanted to let you know what was going on because of this..." Akiya whispered, his own eyes filling with tears as he tried to comfort his older friend.

Revelation

"I-it's *not* g-gonna be o-okay!! N-not if I'm g-gonna *lose* you!!" Isshi cried, hands clutching at Akiya's robe in sorrow. Akiya, however, smiled softly, happy that Isshi never bore a grudge on him for letting him get killed.

"Look at me, Isshi-kun." He said, soft and completely calm. Isshi looked up, barely able to his friend's smiling face through his tears.

"I did this because I just *couldn't* bear the thought of losing you like that. And besides, I *deserve* this, even Shin said so, two days after you were *gone*. And I agree with that *fully*."

Isshi froze at that, shocked and in disbelief. He couldn't believe Shin being so mean towards anyone, let alone to Akiya.

"I... I deserved this pain, Isshi, even if he didn't say that, I would've still deserved it, no matter what." The guitarist said gently, making Isshi feel even worse.

"No you *didn't*, Akiya! Stop saying that!! I'll talk to Shin about that, he *has to* apologize, that is downright *wrong*! And I *promise* I'll find a way for you to survive, just *don't* give up!"

Akiya looked totally shocked about that as all of a sudden Isshi's phone went off. They looked at it only to see Shin was calling. Isshi's eyes turned hard at the thought of the older guitarist and what he had said to their youngest. He immediately answered the phone and put it to speaker mode.

"Isshi? Izumi-kun just told me that you needed us?" The rhythm guitarist said, concern obvious in his voice. Isshi shuddered at what he had seen in that bathroom.

"Y-you could say that. Can you guys all come to Akiya's house? It's... It's important."

Akiya's eyes widened and he shook his head frantically only to see the vocalist's eyes harden in anger. Seeing that, the lead guitarist had to sigh and nod miserably, going to wear something suitable.

When the other three arrived, they saw the pale Isshi and the very reluctant-looking Akiya, all of them confused about what was going on.

"Isshi? What's wrong?" Nao asked as they went in, obviously not ready for what they were about to see.

"It's him, he's *hurt*, guys." Isshi whispered, pointing at Akiya with his head while trying not to cry again at the thought of Akiya's scary wound.

"*What*?! Where?!" Shin asked, horrified at the thought of his youngest bandmate being hurt.

"Akiya, show them." Isshi said, voice trembling. The others looked at eachother with really worried expressions before Akiya sighed and unwillingly opened his t-shirt enough to show

his rotting skin, making them all gasp in horror.

Shock and Horror

 Then, Shin bolted straight to the bathroom, throwing up. Akiya sighed softly as he closed the mark, going to try and help his friend. As he was going, he heard Izumi say;

"W-what the *hell* was *that*?! Did he tell you *anything*, Isshi?!"

But without listening more, he went to Shin's side, rubbing his back as he teared up at how horrified the others were at his wound.

"Hey, come on Shin, breathe. Do I look that hideous?" Akiya joked but when he saw how the black haired man was crying, he was concerned, very much so.

"W-why?! Why's this *happening*, Akiya?!" Shin asked through his tears.

"Well, let's go back to the living room. I'll explain, okay?" The younger guitarist said with a gentle voice. Shin nodded, shaking as Akiya helped him up and gently washed his face.

When they rejoined their friends in the living room, Nao and Izumi immediately demanded an answer for the wound Akiya sported as Shin shakily managed to sit down beside Isshi.

"It was only something I had to take on when I decided to revive Isshi-kun. Nothing too big--"

"Don't you *dare* say that is no big deal!!" Isshi's shaking and angry voice said, shocking the younger guitarist.

"I-Isshi, I--"

"Don't you *dare*, Akiya!! You're fucking *dying* right in front of us, that is a *huge* fucking deal to us!!" Isshi said, tears filling his eyes once more at the thought of Akiya dying.

"There has to be a way, Akiya. We can't, no, *won't* lose you!! Not like *this*." Izumi said with a note of finality in his voice, making Akiya even more stunned at the anger of his best friends.

"I-I... I don't think there's one, the woman I got help for Isshi from openly said there was no way for *this* to go away, actually."

But even that did not deter the other four, all of them were determined to bring Akiya out of his impending doom.

Trial and Error

"Then get us to that woman, whoever this bitch is!!" Isshi said, angry still. Akiya was thoughtful after that, not knowing whether to really let Isshi and the others into what could be a dangerous situation with Luka.

"Akiya, it's *not* gonna end like that, we're *not* gonna let you die, not if we can help it. So, *please*, tell us how we can get to this woman, okay?" Izumi said, putting a hand on the youngest's shoulder and making him feel even more shocked.

"I'll... I'll try. But I don't actually know if I can, to be honest. She was the one to contact me, not the other way around."

"We'll find her though! And undo whatever she's done to you, I *promise*. You're *not* going to die like that, Akiya-kun!!" Shin said, determined to help his friend this time. The next thing Isshi said, however, made Shin grimace in guilt.

"By the way, Shin, I heard of just *what* you said to Akiya-kun when I was gone."

The other two looked at eachother with Izumi feeling also awful but Akiya intervened before Shin or Isshi could say anything more.

"I *deserved* that, Isshi. My words practically *killed* you." The lead guitarist said, shocking all of them before Isshi smacked the younger man upside the head.

"No you did *not*, you dumbass! There was no possible *way* you could've known that would happen!!"

While Isshi was saying that, Shin shakily hugged the younger man, feeling very bad about the things he had said, knowing that those words and his subsequent actions had at least a part on Akiya's current state if not more. Akiya hugged back, trying to get the older man to stop crying.

"Shin, it's okay. Please don't cry, you were just angry and I understand that fully."

But that made Shin sob even more, apologizing to the younger guitarist through them.

"Shin, come on. Please calm down. I don't blame you at *all* for the things you've--" The lead guitarist started to say only to double over, more of his skin rotting right in front of the others' horror filled eyes.

"Oh my *God*..." Nao whispered as Akiya tried hard to not fall down and keep holding onto Shin who was so distressed that he was unable to talk.

"That's it, I'm going to search for this woman *myself*!! This *cannot* be allowed to go on any

longer!" Isshi said with anger and horror.

"I-Isshi, *no*!! T-that could be... *D-dangerous*!" Akiya who had managed to recollect himself enough to talk said in a trembling voice, paling at the thought of Isshi getting hurt again because of him.

Found Out

"I. *Don't*. Fucking. *Care*!! I'm *not* losing you like this, Akiya, you are *far* too important to me for such a thing!"

The others also nodded, determined to bring the youngest out of his doom, making Akiya's eyes fill with tears of happiness. Seeing that, all four of them hugged him tightly.

"You're gonna be okay, Akiya. We'll make sure of it."

A week later

2.08.2011

As the others searched for Luka, Akiya fell really badly ill, his body now unable to function as it should due to the mark's fast spreading rate. Shin immediately volunteered to stay with him while the others searched.

"S-Shin-kun... you don't... have to stay... with me... I'll... be just *fine*..." Akiya said weakly when the others left but Shin shook his head.

"After what I let happen, this is the *least* I can do for you, Akiya. I will *never* leave your side, not if I can fucking help it!"

Akiya looked shockedly at the rhythm guitarist's tearful, tormented eyes.

"Shin... It's... it's gonna be... okay... I... know you're... hurting but... it was what I... d-deserved..."

"Will you fucking *stop* saying *that*?! You did *not* deserve such cruelty!!"

Akiya only managed to smile at Shin, too tired to speak anymore. He felt sleep creeping on him, maybe never to even awaken anymore and he felt he should say what he felt for them all before he would die. He gathered all of his remaining strength and then looked up at Shin who looked pale as a sheet, understanding that something bad was happening to his younger friend.

"Shin... I... I want to... Say something..." He said, coughing weakly.

"Tell me. I'm listening, my friend."

"I'm... I'm really... *glad* that I met... you guys in my l-life... all of... you..." Akiya said with the last of his strength and smiled weakly before he let go and fell into a deep, coma-like sleep.

"NO!! Akiya, *NO*!!!" Shin cried out, trying to wake the younger guitarist up but it was

impossible.

Just as he was about to call for help, Nao came into the room, excited.

"We found her!! Guys--" The bassist had started to say only to see that Akiya was not awake and Shin in fright.

"W-what's going on?! Shin, what *happened*?!" Nao said, running towards them.

"I-I don't *know*!! He... He won't wake up, Naoki!!" Shin's fearful, distressed voice said as Nao tried to wake Akiya up as well. Then, Isshi and Izumi came in and saw what had happened.

"Shin, what the *fuck* happened!?" Izumi said, looking horrified.

"I d-don't know!! He just *let go* after saying that h-he was g-glad he m-met us! I couldn't w-wake him up, guys!!" Shin sobbed, scared for his youngest friend.

Another Reveal

Isshi gently hugged Shin, trying to calm the panicking black haired man down as he himself tried not to cry.

"We'll find a way, Shin. We found Luka-san already. She'll *have to* give us the way to bring Akiya-kun back. It's gonna be alright."

Shin didn't answer, just sobbing in the vocalist's arms. Isshi stroked the black haired man's back, knowing if they lost Akiya this way, Shin would never be able to recover from that.

"I think we should go to where we've tracked that bitch down and demand an answer *now*. Preferably *before* we lose him." Izumi said gently, also knowing the same thing as Isshi.

"I think we should take Akiya with us. Maybe this so-called mage *is* a good person as he thought." Isshi said, looking at the barely-breathing man with tears in his eyes.

Then, Shin did the honors to carry Akiya in his arms, his tears falling onto the younger guitarist's face. The others looked at eachother once the black haired man was out of the room.

"We need to do something before Shin does something that he will regret later." Nao said softly, seeing clearly how much Shin was hurting.

When they arrived the building where Luka was dwelling, Izumi gently took Akiya's body from Shin, seeing how tired the younger man was from carrying the brunette. Shin tried to oppose but the other man shook his head with a sad smile. Then, when they entered the building, they saw the pink haired woman smirking at them, obviously knowing why they had come.

"So, you came back." She said to Isshi and that, pissed the vocalist off big time.

"What did you *do* to Akiya?!" He growled, glaring at the mage. But what he didn't expect was that Luka sending a bolt of lightning towards him. Thankfully, he managed to dodge it and not get hurt.

"He chose his own way. I *warned* the idiot. But now..." She said, grinning crazily now and looking at Akiya's unresponsive body. Then, something both shocking and scary happened; Akiya opened his completely black, pupilless eyes.

"A-Akki?! Akiya, w-what--" Izumi stuttered before getting punched by the controlled guitarist and dropping him accidentally as he fell himself.

A Frightening Moment

"Akiya, *stop*!!" Isshi yelled as Shin froze in shock and horror, scared for the youngest's sake. Had the Akiya they knew and loved been *gone* because of *his* mistakes? Izumi got up from the floor alongside the younger man, touching the black eye the guitarist had given him softly, wincing.

"This isn't good, guys... We need to--" The drummer started to say only to stop when Luka smirked once more and led Akiya deeper into the building after she immobilized the other four.

"*Crap*!!! What the *hell* do we do, guys?!" Nao asked, starting to panic.

"I don't know! But we have to get out before she makes Akiya worse!" Isshi replied, trying his hardest to break the spell on himself.

"T-this is all *my* fault..." Shin whispered, trying his hardest not to cry and stay strong for Akiya's sake.

"Blaming ourselves won't do *anything* for Akiya right now, Shin. We have to stay strong for him!" Isshi said, knowing how bad the short guitarist was feeling about his words towards the taller one.

"That is true, young man." A young woman's voice suddenly sounded, making them all look up to see that a pair of twins were approaching them.

"Who are you?! Leave Akiya alone!!" Nao said, angry at the thought of more people trying to harm their youngest friend. The girls only smiled sadly at them, making all of them pause and look at eachother with confusion.

"We aren't here to harm your friend. We're here to *save* him before his true self is *destroyed* by that witch Luka." The taller one said, making them gasp. Then, the smaller one murmured something in a different, archaic language and suddenly, they all were able to move.

"T-thank you! Who are you though??" Izumi asked with confusion.

"I'm Mayu and this is my sister, Mio. We met Akiya-san before while he was trying to revive his friend and warned him but he... He didn't listen to *anything* we said." The taller girl said, looking down as Isshi clenched his fists, very distressed.

"We should talk later. Every moment we spend talking is precious right now. We need to find your friend or he'll be gone *forever*." Mio said seriously and the members of Kagrra, nodded with conviction, ready to move and save Akiya from himself.

Before they started though, Mayu said something in that language once more and they all

became transparent, much to the members of Kagrra,'s shock.

"This way, Luka cannot detect us. Let's move!" Mayu said, her eyes very determined. Everyone started moving with Mio's directions and then, they found Luka and Akiya with the guitarist standing still in front of the witch.

"You know what to do now, do you not?" The vile woman was saying and Akiya still didn't talk, he merely nodded like a robot. Then, Isshi wished so much that he could bash the dangerous woman's head in, his fists trembling with terrifying anger.

"We can move in, *now*, before *it* starts!" Mio said to Mayu and the other twin nodded, whispering another strange word and then, the group became visible, making Luka startle while Akiya just stood there, completely devoid of action.

Moment of Truth

"*You*!!" She growled at the sight of Mio and Mayu.

"Yeah, *us*. Leave that young man *alone*, Luka!! He *won't* become what you want him to become!!"

"You should have been *dead*!! How?!" Luka growled and then, obviously realizing something, she whirled on Akiya and sent a fireball at the guitarist but right as it was going to hit him, Shin ran and took the hit himself, much to the others' horror.

"Because at least *one* of the rituals was actually done *right*! We're not letting you have him like the others!" Mayu yelled and then, she whispered in that language again, trying to understand if Akiya truly was lost.

As they took Shin away from more injury, Isshi frowned, what had the twins meant by a ritual? Surely, it was not what Akiya had done to bring him back, right? Those never ended well in his knowledge, after all. Then, after Mayu's spell was over, Akiya managed to say only one name, making the man in question swallow and answer immediately;

"Is...shi?"

"I'm *right* here, Akiya-kun. I-it's gonna... Be okay. Y-you just hang on, alright?" The vocalist whispered, trying hard not to cry.

"I... I can't... See..." The younger man managed to utter. Then, Isshi couldn't help himself and went straight towards Akiya despite the twin mages trying to stop him.

"It's gonna be alright! J-just focus on my voice! I *won't* let you die like that, *please*, Akiya, follow my *voice*!!" The vocalist said, tears starting to fall at the state his friend was in. Akiya didn't show any indication that he'd understood what the red-black haired man had said but he started to shake.

"I think your words are having an effect, Isshi! Keep at it!!" Izumi said as Nao gently took Shin away from the main fight.

"No, you do *not*!!" Luka screamed and sent a fireball at Isshi but it did not reach the vocalist as Mio created a shield around the young man.

"If he manages to follow you, Isshi-san, he *will* be free! Keep talking to him!" The young mage said, maintaining the shield around him. Isshi immediately nodded and started talking to Akiya, his voice shaking.

"Akiya, I know you're probably *terrified*, but please don't give up. Me and the others are *right* here, we'll save you from this curse, just like we *promised*!"

As the vocalist kept talking to the confused guitarist, Izumi frowned and said;

"Why can't he hear all of us?! Isshi won't be able to handle all of this by himself!"

Survival

"It will only work with the person who conducted the forbidden Revival Rituals and the one who was revived. I'm sorry but right now, it's between those two." Mayu said sadly.

"Izumi, leave this to Isshi. He'll bring Akiya out of this, just believe in him right now." Nao said quietly as he tried to tend to Shin's burn wound.

Izumi reluctantly nodded as Isshi kept talking to Akiya and looked down, knowing that he also had hurt the younger man and seeing what his and Shin's words and actions led to, he felt like he could never forgive himself. But just as Isshi was about to succeed, Luka suddenly sent a deadly dark spell towards Mio who was shielding the vocalist, disabling the shield and the girl in one swift movement.

"MIO! You *witch*!!" Mayu yelled as Isshi still kept talking to Akiya even though his shield was gone.

"Come on, Akiya, you can do this. *Please* don't be scared, we're all here with you. Just follow my voice, my friend." The vocalist was whispering as Akiya kept shaking and trying to ascertain where the red-black haired man's voice was coming from.

And just when Akiya gasped, his eyes becoming what they normally were, Luka's dangerous spell hit Isshi in the back, making the vocalist gasp but he wouldn't fall down through the sheer force of will, stumbling towards his younger guitarist friend.

"Impossible!!" Luka screamed but none of her cries mattered to Isshi nor to the others, all of them were concerned at the state of the youngest one out of them.

"Akiya... Please, *say something*!" Isshi said, trying to stand the pain in his back but then, the guitarist smiled at him faintly and said;

"Isshi... Thank... You..." And fainted once more.

"Akiya!! Akiya, *wake up*!!"

Mayu came to stand beside Isshi reassuring them with her gentle words.

"He's going to be fine. You brought him out of the danger. He only needs a lot of rest."

"Thank God..." Isshi whispered, trying hard to control his tears as he took the younger man's peacefully and steadily breathing body into his arms even though he was injured.

"Are you *sure* you can carry him, Isshi? You're kinda--"

"I'm *fine*! If he could go to *so much* trouble just for *me,* I *have to* tough it up and carry him

when he needs me to." Isshi said, looking down at the unconscious younger man and thinking of everything he'd gone through for the older man.

Start of Healing

"Then I'll carry Shin. Izumi, can you carry Mio-san?" Nao said and the drummer nodded, taking the young girl's body in his arms and following Isshi along with Nao.

After they arrived Akiya's house, Isshi, Nao and Izumi put the three unconscious people onto the futons Akiya had out. Then, Mayu told them to open Shin's chest to heal him. They opened the older guitarist's shirt and were promptly horrified at the state of Shin's wound. Most of his chest was blackened by the fireball.

"Oh my God... Shin..." Nao whispered, tears coming to his eyes at the state of the black haired man's body.

"It's okay, Mayu is a healer mage, she can easily heal him, right, Mayu-chan?" Mio who had awakened said with a smile and her twin smiled back and nodded, softly touching the burnt skin and whispering in the archaic spell language.

Her hands suddenly started shining a green color as she kept at it and soon enough, Shin's wound was gone except for a slightly darker scar on the impact place on his chest.

"Thank you for all your help..." Izumi said, still distressed as he looked at Akiya's still body and Isshi who never left his side. Then, Shin groaned as he woke up, gingerly sitting up and looking around.

"What happened?! Is... Is Akiya alright?!"

"He's fine, Shin. Isshi managed to save him. Are you alright??" Nao said with a soft, sad voice as he looked towards the vocalist and their unresponsive friend.

"I think so. What *happened*, Naoki?"

"That bitch tried to hurt Isshi but she couldn't do anything. Akiya... He somehow managed to hear Isshi's voice and come back to us but he hasn't awakened yet." Izumi said gently, looking towards the two of them as well. Then, Isshi looked towards them and his eyes widened at seeing Shin awake.

"Shin! Thank goodness you're awake!"

"I'm fine, Isshi... How's he though?"

Isshi looked down at Akiya's peacefully sleeping face at that, still concerned about the youngest.

"I... I don't know, Shin... God, he's such an idiot, he would've died if we didn't find out about his wound!!" The vocalist said in a choked voice trying his hardest to not cry as the youngest

man was going to be okay in the end. That was then, Akiya gave a small groan, his head turning towards the others slightly. They all turned to the lead guitarist with worry and saw that his eyes were opening slowly.

"Akiya!! Are you alright?!"

"Isshi-kun...? What... is going on...?"

"You're okay, Akiya. Everything is alright now, you're *safe*." The vocalist said, holding onto Akiya's warm hand to reassure himself of that fact.

"What happened? Why... am I so... exhausted?"

"Luka had you in her control. Are you okay?" Mio said gently much to the other members of Kagrra,'s anger. At that, Akiya's tired eyes widened in horror and worry.

"It wasn't... A dream?!"

Moment of Guilt

"You... You saw what was going on?!" Izumi asked back, just as horrified at the thought as Shin fell silent, thinking of the horrible moments he had seen once more and shuddering.

"I only remember... Complete darkness and... Isshi's... Voice..." Akiya whispered, his eyes falling closed once more, still very exhausted. The others looked at eachother with worry for the lead guitarist, not knowing what to do.

"He will be okay. He's just exhausted after everything." Mayu said with a gentle look on her face. Shin and the others nodded even though they all were worried for the younger guitarist but then, Mio said something that made Isshi curious while the others were *very* reluctant.

"Isshi-san, if you want, I can help you watch what happened when you were gone."

"Of course. I'd like that." The vocalist said as Izumi and Shin looked at eachother and swallowed, knowing they both had been so harsh on Akiya. Nao in the meantime, winced, knowing that Isshi was *not* going to be happy.

Mio murmured a soft spell and a light window opened in front of the vocalist. He watched as they all stumbled away from his dead body, slightly worried. Then, when his funeral was over, the vocalist saw just what Shin had said along with Izumi.

"You <u>do</u> realize that this is all <u>your</u> fault, right, Akiya?!"

"Yeah! If you didn't break his heart like <u>that</u>, Isshi would have been <u>alive</u> now!! I hope you're fucking <u>happy</u>, you bastard!!"

Isshi gasped and glared at Shin and Izumi, horrified at how much they had hurt the youngest. Nao shook his head wordlessly, knowing it wasn't the only thing that had happened and Isshi was going to be very pissed off by the end of this. Then, the very next day began playing.

"Come on, Izumi, let's prank that <u>murderer</u>. It'll be <u>fun</u>." Shin said, an evilly mischievous light going off in his eyes. Nao tried to stop the two but they shut the bassist up and Shin explained his plan much to Nao's horror.

"Why don't we dig a hole and lure that bastard into it and leave him in there for a day or two?"

"That's a good idea, at least he'd know how Isshi probably felt in that car."

They nodded at eachother while Nao looked horrified."

"You didn't...? You *wouldn't* do such a h-horrible thing to *Akiya, RIGHT*?!" Isshi said, completely horrified. Neither of the two could meet his gaze, knowing what they had done was horrible and Akiya had every good reason to hate them.

"I'll call the dumbass now." Shin said after they had dug a large enough hole to barely fit their lead guitarist.

"Alright. Don't let him know though, you're an <u>awful</u> liar." Izumi replied.

"Guys, please, this is <u>not</u> a good idea, what if something happens to him in there?!" Nao said, trying to stop them as Shin called Akiya but neither was listening to the bassist.

"Akiya, can you <u>please</u> come to the Yoyogi park, to our secret place?"

'Mmh... I'm so tired... Can't it wait, Shin-kun?' The exhausted voice of Akiya answered, making Nao and Izumi both get slightly concerned and look at eachother with frowns but Shin insisted it was important and Akiya finally agreed, telling that he'd come as soon as possible. After the guitarist came and fell into the hole, both Shin and Izumi laughed at him as the lead guitarist didn't even try to get out, slumped against the dirt in obvious exhaustion.

"*HOW* COULD YOU?!" Isshi roared, punching both Izumi and Shin. Neither knew what to say to say to defend themselves.

Forgiveness

"We managed to get him out but I think he had already started to do those rituals to revive you by then, Isshi-kun... He... He wasn't even *awake* when me and Izumi got him out of there..." Nao said as the vocalist seethed.

"I think we should stop for now, Isshi-san." Mio said softly, closing the window of light. Isshi was about to protest but suddenly, Akiya put a hand on his arm, making him look down and see that the younger man was awake.

"Akiya! God, are you okay?!" The vocalist asked, worried for the younger man, especially after seeing everything he had gone through by his own friends.

"I'm fine. Better than I was anyways." Akiya said, smiling softly. Then, he got up even though it hurt his now withdrawing Mark of Destruction.

But after what he had seen, Isshi's trust in both Shin and Izumi had become almost completely gone. As Akiya got up fully, sitting beside Shin, the vocalist didn't know how the youngest could still call the two of them friends.

"What? What's going on, guys?" Akiya asked in confusion after seeing both Izumi and Shin distressed and Isshi obviously pissed off.

"We just let him watch a part of the week when he was gone--" Mayu started to say much to Shin and Izumi's chagrin.

"You did *what*?! That's a *very* bad idea!!" Akiya said, his eyes wide in horror.

"No, it was *not*! At least now I *know* how they've treated you and know who to *trust*!" Isshi said, glaring at Shin and Izumi who couldn't even meet the vocalist's angry gaze.

"Isshi, look, that was just a *harmless* prank. They both were just angry and besides, if I remember right, Izumi *helped* Naoki to get me out of that hole."

At that, the other four looked at eachother with confusion, not knowing why the youngest didn't remember it clearly.

"It was kinda too late even by then though, I'd already started those rituals to revive Isshi-kun by then so I was kinda exhausted..." The lead guitarist explained calmly, smiling.
Isshi shook his head, he simply couldn't believe just how forgiving Akiya really was. Seeing how calm and content the younger man was, the vocalist couldn't do more to the two who had hurt his friend so much.

Painful Truth

"Who are you girls anyways?" Akiya asked, looking curiously at the twin girls.

"I'm Mayu and this is my twin sister Mio. We're mages unlike that witch Luka." Mayu said kindly.

"Really? I'm guessing you helped the guys to save me somehow. Thank you for that." The brunette guitarist said with a calm smile.

"Yes. But we mostly only got them in to where you were. Isshi-san did most of the work."

"Wait, you don't remember us? We're the mages Luka sent you after, remember?" Mio said, blinking in confusion as the recognition finally dawned on the younger guitarist's face and he blushed in humility, looking down. The others looked at eachother in confusion but refrained from commenting.

"Then... It *really* wasn't a dream, huh? I remember hearing Isshi and after I managed to follow him, *nothing*. Is anyone hurt?"

Shin shook his head, looking down and avoiding the brunette's gaze. That tipped him off that someone might have gotten hurt in his place.

"Don't lie, Shin! Please, tell me who got hurt!" Akiya said, trying not to panic. But then, Isshi told about the fireball that had hit Shin much to the two guitarists' horror.

"*WHAT*?! Shin, are you alright?!" Akiya asked frantically, scared that the black haired man was badly hurt.

"I'm... I'm fine, Akiya-kun..." Shin said, trying not to cry at the forgiveness his friend was showing him. But Akiya was not satisfied with that answer, seeing how distressed the older man was. But when the older man was made to open his chest to calm his friend down, the only thing Akiya saw was a slight scarring on Shin's body.

"Akiya, everything's okay. I'm fine, I promise." Shin said but his voice still shook, thinking that he had lost Isshi's friendship. But he was proven wrong once Isshi started talking even though he was still angry at both him and Izumi.

"Are you *sure*? That fireball almost killed you there, you know..."

"Fucking *WHAT*?!"

"I'm fine, guys. Stop worrying."

After that, Shin did everything in his power to keep Akiya content but when night fell a

horrible truth became apparent. Akiya and the others were just about to fall asleep when Shin screamed, making them run to the room he had been sleeping in.

"No!! Please, f-forgive me!! *NO*!!" The rhythm guitarist was thrashing on the futon, obviously haunted by what he had done. Akiya ran towards the black haired older man and shook him awake but as with what had happened with himself, Shin's eyes were blank, unseeing as tears ran down his face.

"Please... D-don't go... *Please*..." He was whispering, his tears unstoppable.

"Shin!! Shin, look at me!! *Shin*!!" Akiya shook him once more, trying to get him to respond but nothing worked until Mio came to stand by them.

"I think he's still stuck in that nightmare... Stand back, I'll pull him out." She said gently, pushing Akiya away softly and the lead guitarist gave way to the young mage while the others were watching horrifiedly.

Keeping Control

"Oh God, Shin-kun..." Izumi whispered, feeling the same guilt that haunted his friend for hurting Akiya as they had. Then, Shin gasped and his eyes looked clearer as he finally looked up at them.

"Shin, are you alright!? Talk to me!!" Akiya said, scared for the older man's sanity.

"H-how can y-you forgive me even after..." Shin's weak, trembling voice whispered, shaking in the younger guitarist's embrace.

"I forgive you because you are my friend, my *brother*, I'd *never* bear a grudge on you just because you were mad at me and did some stupid stuff."

At that, Shin hugged Akiya tighter, sobbing hard. Akiya gently rubbed the older man's back, hoping to calm him down. While they watched the scene, Isshi felt really bad about punching the two of them earlier, knowing that he would have forgiven them as well in Akiya's place. But after Shin was comfortably asleep once more, Mayu said something that horrified them.

"I hope this incident is *not* Luka trying to take control of your friend..."

"*WHAT*?!" All of them yelled, making Shin flinch and blink.

"What's wrong??"

"You go to s-sleep, Shin-kun... Everything is... Okay..." Akiya said, scared but trying to hide it. After Shin was asleep again, Isshi immediately asked if there was a way to know if the dangerous witch was trying to take Shin.

"Yes, but it might hurt Shin-san as it's going to be a reminder of the hit he took from Luka."

The others looked at eachother, at a loss as to what to do. But then, knowing that something really bad would happen if they didn't know, that Luka might control Shin. When Mio murmured a soft spell, Shin screamed in agony, waking up and shaking.

"Shin! Shin, it's alright! Just... Just try to endure this, *please*!" Isshi said, holding the younger man's hand which was spasming under the vocalist's hand.

"What does this mean?! Is he...?" Izumi asked with worry. Mayu sadly nodded, much to their horror.

"That witch is *trying*... But we will not let such a horrible thing to happen." She added as Mio continued to enchant the older guitarist so that he was not going to become controlled by Luka.

After the spell was over, Shin still shook in pain, much to the others' concern. Then, Izumi came closer and knelt beside the older guitarist alongside Akiya, honestly worried.

"Shin? Are you... Okay??"

"I-it *burns*! W-what's even g-going *on*!?" Shin whimpered, in so much pain.

Deadly Truth

"I'm sorry, Luka was trying to get you under her control so we had to step in. Are you okay?" Mio asked softly.

"Everything h-hurts! P-please, make it *stop*!"

Mayu came closer to the agonized guitarist as the others started to panic and whispered something in the spell language, gently helping him to lay back down as the pain slowly started to fade away.

"Will he... Will he be alright?!" Isshi asked, trying not to cry as Shin drifted back into a deep sleep.

"With a little help, he will be. But he definitely will need his friends around him."

"We'll stay by him, no matter what." Akiya said softly, determined to keep his shorter friend fine. And then, Isshi asked something that had been on his mind ever since they had saved Akiya.

"What would have happened if... If Akiya couldn't God forbid hear me?"

Mio and Mayu looked at eachother, obviously uncomfortable by the thought as well. Akiya looked curious about it even though it scared the others even though it was over already. And the lead guitarist was glad that Shin was not awake, the last thing he would want was for Shin to hear the grim alternative for his choices and feel even worse.

"If that happened, Akiya-san, you *wouldn't* have just died which would be a *much* better choice than what would have happened. Luka... She would have *absorbed* your soul and you would have *literally* ceased to exist any longer with your body decaying like it was."

Isshi, Nao and Izumi gasped in horror, eyes wide. But Akiya just looked down, still not regretting what he had done for his friend.

"Oh, God... Akiya, you would've... *What* were you even *thinking*, bringing me back with such *horrible* consequences?!" Isshi whispered, his voice breaking. Akiya immediately hugged the slightly shorter man, wanting to reassure him of his well-being.

"Isshi, I did it because I couldn't *stand* the thought of *that* day. I just didn't *care* about the consequences even though I knew it would be some huge stuff, I just... I just wanted you *back*, you know... And besides, it's *over* now. I'm just fine."

Isshi's eyes filled with even more tears at that, not knowing how to respond to those words. Akiya gently rubbed his back, seeing how distressed the singer was. But much to his worry, Isshi broke down against his shoulder.

"Isshi, please don't cry. Everything is alright."

Isshi sniffled, still upset at the thought of the things Akiya had had to go through just for him. Akiya though, just smiled at him, making him feel even worse at the memory of the first thing he had said once he'd seen Akiya when he'd first awakened.

Then, the group decided to finally go to bed but all around Shin and Akiya. Isshi and Izumi got the futons to the room where Shin was laying deeply asleep and they went to sleep.

Start of the Rituals pt. 1

In the morning

3.08.2011

Shin woke up slowly, his body still aching. He blearily looked around as he pushed himself up only to see four more futons around him which had his bandmates sleeping on them. The guitarist smiled at seeing Isshi's hand gripping Akiya's tightly, knowing how much the vocalist had been hurting about Akiya's decisions. But then, he looked down, remembering the things that had led to the taller man's deadly decision.

"Mmh... Shin-kun...?"

Shin looked up to see that Isshi was awake, looking at him with a slightly worried look on his face.

"Good morning, Isshi-kun..." The rhythm guitarist said with a reluctant smile and went towards the singer as he got up as well after pulling Akiya's covers tightly on him since the younger man was shivering slightly.

"Good morning. How do you feel?"

"I'm fine... Physically that is... Though I still feel *awful*..."

"What do you mean?! Shin, you know you can *always* talk to me. Tell me what's wrong."

"I... I hurt him... *So much*, Isshi... I don't even *deserve* the forgiveness he's showing me in the slightest..." Shin whispered, swallowing and looking down. Isshi was silent, worried that the thing he could say might make Shin feel even worse about himself.

"I don't know what to do, Isshi... What can I even *do* to deserve his forgiveness?!"

"Look, Akiya forgave you because you're one of his, *our* brothers. Yes, what you did was *horribly* wrong. But that *doesn't* mean you are a horrible person, Shin-kun. You were just angry and upset at my death."

Shin looked shockedly at the gentle vocalist, not realizing that Akiya had also awakened, blinking sleep out of his eyes. Then, seeing his friends' states, the taller guitarist decided to feign sleep and see what was wrong with Shin.

"But still... I don't think I *deserve* it, Shinohara... I mean, that hole we dug could've *seriously* injured him to say the *least*... He still... Still didn't even blame us after *that*, I don't know what to think, Isshi..."

Akiya almost gasped at Shin's weak, trembling voice as Isshi hugged the other guitarist, shocked.

"Shin, stop saying that. I forgive you too, you know. You didn't know what could happen and besides, didn't he say that he had already started those terrible rituals when you two did that? You were just *clueless* as to what was going on. Stop blaming yourself, Shin, *please*."

Shin's eyes were wide in surprise at Isshi's words, having thought that he had lost the other man's friendship. Then, when Shin looked down at Akiya, he saw that the taller man was awake and looking back at him.

"A-Akiya-kun! Good morning!"

"Good morning. Shin, why the *hell* do you still blame yourself? I never did that, you're the *only* one who thinks you don't deserve forgiveness."

"I-I--"

"Akiya is right, Shin. You couldn't have known what could happen. Anger makes you do shit you shouldn't do and it's completely fine now." Isshi said, concerned about his friend.

Then, after the younger guitarist reassured Shin of both his forgiveness and well-being, Akiya started preparing breakfast for them all.

"Shin, we're gonna talk about this later. You need to see that you're *not* in the wrong, not anymore." Isshi whispered to Shin, making the shorter man look down in shame.

After that, Isshi got up and joined Akiya, still wanting to make sure that the youngest was fine and content. Shin watched as Akiya sweetly smiled at the older man, shaking his head.

"I can't believe you're so forgiving..."

When everybody got up and got their stomachs full, Isshi took Shin to a corner, knowing he had to have a talk with the black haired guitarist before he did something seriously bad to himself just like Akiya had done.

"What is it, Isshi-kun?"

"Shin, I want you to forgive yourself already. Can't you *see* how important you are to all of us, not just Akiya-kun?! You blaming yourself hurts all of us, believe me."

"I know that. But I *can't* do it, Isshi, not after what I let happen..."

Just as Isshi was about to say something, Mio and her twin came closer. The two men smiled gratefully at them, glad that the two young girls had helped them so much.

"Me and Mio just had an idea, we think we should see just what rituals Akiya-san's conducted to bring you back, Isshi-san, just in case."

Isshi immediately nodded along with Shin, hoping that those rituals had not made him almost perish while he had been doing them. But when the twins asked about the matter to Akiya, the lead guitarist paled and shook his head, not wanting to both relive that and let any of them know what he had been through.

"No! Let's not even *think* about *that*!"

Start of the Rituals pt. 2

The others looked at eachother before Isshi spoke up, serious. All of the others were looking between Akiya, the twin mages and Isshi who looked worried.

"Akiya, I think we *need to* know. What if that bitch tries to take control of you again?!"

"B-but--"

"No buts! If that's even a *slightly* plausible thing, we *need to* stop it before it happens!" Nao said, frowning at the thought. Akiya bowed his head, knowing there was no way to convince the others to drop the matter.

"What do we need to do so that we'll see what *exactly* happened, Mayu-san, Mio-san?" Isshi asked seriously.

"Akiya-san only needs to give his hand to me. I'll be able to pull out his memories of the rituals then and project them." Mio said, smiling gently to reassure Akiya but the guitarist hesitated anyways, knowing the others, especially Isshi, were going to be very mad at him. Then, thinking for a moment, Akiya said;

"I want a price for that, you'll show me just *what* happened when I fell asleep."

Shin shuddered while the other three looked at eachother, unwilling but knowing that the youngest wouldn't let them know about the rituals if they didn't let him know this. So they nodded and sighing, Akiya softly held his hand out to Mio who took it and focused.

Then, another window of light opened, making them curious and worried. And when Isshi saw how suddenly Akiya fainted, he gasped along with Shin and Izumi which made Akiya smile to reassure them. Then, after seeing the conversation between him and Luka, Shin felt even worse about his actions.

"These rituals will put you in grave peril. Do you <u>still</u> want to?"

"Yes. I don't care what happens to me. I just want him <u>back</u>. The others wouldn't care if I died anyways."

Isshi gasped as Shin bowed his head, trying not to cry. Akiya grimaced, knowing what Luka had made him do first was not something Isshi was going to take well at all.

"What do I do now, Luka-san?" Akiya asked, looking down and missing Luka's cunning smirk completely.

"Come. I will show you." The woman said, bringing him to a red room where a goblet was standing tall in front of them.

Mayu and Mio gasped when they saw the goblet, both paling immediately as Akiya gulped and inched away from Isshi, knowing the slightly shorter man was going to be either horrified or worse, angry at him.

"What?! What *is* it?!" Nao asked, alarmed at the twin mages' reactions to the goblet.

"T-that is--"

"N-No! Don't tell them!!" Akiya said, looking scared now.

"Akiya--"

"You'll see *anyways*! I don't want to talk about *that*!"

The others looked at eachother and sighing, they accepted it. Then, to their horror, Luka explained what it really was;

"This is the Goblet of Conchita. The drink inside it is special."

Akiya looked curiously inside it and asked;

"How so? It seems like a normal drink."

"It has the magic of transferring life years towards another person, even if they are dead <u>and</u> they will be impervious to death for the time you have given them."

Isshi gasped, not wanting to believe that Akiya had done such a thing for him. Akiya just smiled at the vocalist though, not regretting what he had had to do for the singer in the least.

"I'm guessing I have to drink it to bring Isshi back?"

"Not only that. But it will be the beginning of the Seven Revival Rituals. It will take a week, however, and in that week, you will be <u>extremely</u> prone to dangerous accidents and maybe even death due to this first step."

"I don't care."

"And you can only send 10 years <u>maximum</u>. No more than that. You can do that if you drink all of it. But beware, it will be <u>painful</u>."

Akiya only nodded and drank all of the potion inside the goblet in one go, grimacing at the taste and then, he collapsed, writhing in pain.

"Y-you... You did *what*?!" Shin managed to utter, horrified along with the others. And then, Isshi bolted to the bathroom, throwing up violently.

Calm Before the Storm

"Isshi!! Isshi, it's okay! Come on, *breathe*!! Guys, get some water, *now*!" Akiya said running to help the horrified vocalist. Izumi ran to get some water while Akiya rubbed Isshi's back.

"It's alright, Isshi. I'm *right* here."

Meanwhile, the twin mages were also horrified at the conviction of Akiya, not knowing what to say about that. Then, a loud slap was heard, making them shocked as Akiya backed away, holding his reddened cheek and looked shockedly at the crying and fuming vocalist.

"*How* could you, Akiya?! How could you think *that* was a *good* fucking idea?!"

"I-Isshi, I--"

"*NO*! I *DON'T* want to hear it, Akiya! How could you be such a *DUMBASS*?!" Isshi screamed, both angry and hurting emotionally.

Akiya only shook his head, not wanting to talk anymore with tears in his eyes at his perceived rejection of the vocalist. Then, the lead guitarist went out of the house, trying his hardest not to cry and right before he could try to cross the road, Isshi managed to pull him back right as a huge truck was about to run him over, crying his name out.

"Akiya, are you *okay*?!"

"I-I'm fine, I guess..."

"Oh, thank God... Come on, let's go back home. I'm sorry for lashing out at you like that but you *shocked* me..."

"It's alright. But... Are you *sure* you want to watch more? Because if you'll just hit me every time, I don't think I want to continue, to be honest."

Isshi smiled tearfully, knowing that the guitarist had gone through horrible things alone and shook his head as they headed back to the house. But Akiya knew that Isshi was going to be even more horrified at the things he had gone through in order to revive him.

Then, Isshi requested to know more, much to the lead guitarist's reluctance. The others also nodded furiously, knowing that they had to know what had happened to prevent Luka from ever controlling Akiya again. Akiya sighed and gave his hand back to Mio, letting them watch the very next day, the day where Shin and Izumi had pranked him.

Akiya woke up with the shrill sound of his phone, groping blindly for it as his body ached from the day before.

"Hello?"

'Akiya, can you <u>please</u> come to the Yoyogi park, to our secret place?' It was Shin, making him pause for a moment but then, he decided to sleep more to regain his strength for the remaining rituals.

"Mmh... I'm so tired... Can't it wait, Shin-kun?" He managed to say, already half-asleep.

'It's important. Me, Izumi and Nao are waiting for you. Come quickly though.'

Akiya agreed and after he arrived and fell into the ground, he was surprised but with no energy, he didn't try to get out, preferring to sleep even in the uncomfortably small hole. He only felt one thing, however, a sharp bite to his arm and then, he was completely asleep.

Painful Revelations

"Oh, Akiya-kun..." Izumi whispered, looking down in shame as the night began to play when they had managed to bring the lead guitarist out.

"Akiya! Akiya, <u>wake up</u>!" Someone was shaking him violently, making him want to throw up.

"Go away... Let me sleep..."

"Akiya, you <u>need to</u> wake up!" The guitarist managed to open his eyes a fraction to see Izumi with him, looking worriedly at him.

"I'm so tired, Izumi... Please, let me just <u>sleep</u>..."

"Oh <u>crap</u>! Naoki!! We need to get him to hospital! <u>NOW</u>!!" He heard Izumi say in panic as he drifted back to sleep.

"What *happened*?! *Please* tell me it was just because of the rituals!!" Isshi said, horrified by the thought while Shin turned pale as a sheet. Nao only sent an annoyed look at the rhythm guitarist while Izumi shuddered slightly.

When Akiya opened his eyes next, he heard Nao talk to someone on his phone, completely enraged.

"If you fucking know what's good for you, you <u>bastard</u>, you <u>will</u> come to the Tokyo Central hospital!! ... You're a fucking <u>traitor</u> then, much more than Akiya-kun has <u>ever</u> been!!"

"Don't bother anymore, Naoki, he made his choice." Said Izumi coldly from nearby, also angry. And then, he looked towards the bed Akiya was laying on and his eyes widened.

"Akiya-kun! How do you feel?! God, I'm <u>so</u> sorry for going with Shin's plan!"

"Mmhh, I'm so tired... What happened to me??"

"A s-snake bit you in that hole... If Naoki hadn't convinced me to come... God, I'm <u>so</u> sorry, Akiya! If I knew..."

"It's okay. I'm... I'm just tired, Izumi-kun. You couldn't have known and neither could Shin-kun." He said with a tired smile.

Shin softly started to sob after watching that, making Akiya come closer to him and let go of Mio's hand, wanting to reassure Shin that he was okay.

"Shin, please don't cry. You couldn't have *known*. I don't blame you, I never did." The taller guitarist said gently, hugging his older friend.

"God, I'm such a *b-bastard*, I should've at least *come* to the fucking *hospital*!!"

"Shin, you were only angry, *rightfully* so after what happened. Please stop blaming yourself. It's okay now anyways."

"Akiya... God, I'm *so* sorry! I--"

"Forgive yourself already, Shin. You don't deserve a lifetime of guilt, not at all."

"B-but--" Shin started to say only for Akiya to stop him, smiling gently as he wiped his tears away.

"I forgive you, Shin-kun. You didn't know what was happening at all."

And after that, Akiya sighed and gave his hand back to Mio to let them know about the second ritual. But when the vocalist saw what had happened, he was horrified once more; Akiya had run away from the hospital.

Second Ritual

Akiya ran to Luka's building, having escaped from the hospital despite knowing the others were not going to be happy with him. Luka was waiting for him impatiently.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't come yesterday, a prank kinda went wrong and I was in the hospital!" The guitarist panted and Luka nodded.

"It is okay. However, you will have to go through two Rituals at once today for that so that your friend can be revived."

Akiya only nodded and followed the woman to another room where the walls were teal green this time with a slightly old-looking doll was sitting on the pedestal.

"What do I do now, Luka-san?" He asked right before his phone rang. The tall man looked at it and grimaced, seeing that the call was from Izumi.

"You can answer it. However, be quick about it."

Akiya nodded and answered the call.

"Hello?"

'Akiya, where <u>are</u> you?! Why the <u>fuck</u> did you run away from the hospital, you're still injured with a <u>snake bite</u>!!'

Akiya smiled softly, knowing that Izumi would freak out if he really knew what was going on.

"I'm fine, Izumi. Listen, I'm preparing a surprise for all of you so I gotta go. I'll call you later, I promise."

'Akiya, what--'

The guitarist didn't let Izumi finish, hanging up with a small, loving smile on his face. And then, facing Luka, he asked once more what to do.

"You must concentrate on the doll and your friend, it will reveal if he was <u>truly</u> destined to die as he has."

Isshi looked curiously along with the others while Akiya shuddered, knowing the answer very well. When he saw the reaction Akiya had, Shin got even more worried and guilty, hoping nothing too serious had happened.

"Can you show us what he saw?" Isshi asked, worried about his youngest friend. However, Mio shook her head.

"We can't unless he's ready to give some blood for it."

That made all of them shake their heads, Akiya included. They didn't want the brunette man get even more hurt, much to his gratefulness.

When the guitarist focused on the doll, he suddenly fell down on his knees, sobbing, his eyes blank and panicked as he saw the illusion.

"No!! I c-can't--! Please, NO!!"

Luka only shook her head, knowing from the young man's reaction that his friend was indeed supposed to die as he had.

"No! P-please, Isshi, come back!! Come back!!"

Fear and Guilt

Isshi's face softened as he watched the younger man's breakdown. He had had no idea that his death had hit Akiya this hard. Looking at Akiya, he saw how distressed at the thought of losing the older man again.

"Oh, Akiya-kun..." He whispered, coming closer to his friend. Akiya smiled at him tearfully, not wanting him to worry about him.

And when they saw the third ritual which had bound the lead guitarist's soul painfully to Luka by an enchanted spoon, Isshi, Izumi, Nao and Shin gasped in horror, none of them wanting to believe that. After the third day was over, Isshi told Mio to let Akiya take a break, seeing how worn down the guitarist was. The young girl nodded, saying she was already planning to do that while Isshi gently hugged Akiya and supported the emotionally drained man to the couch.

"Are you alright?" He asked, holding the younger man's hands with concern. Akiya, however, smiled at him.

"I'm okay, it was just *hard* to relive all those things..."

But out of all of them, only Shin couldn't bring himself to come closer and ensure the youngest's sanity's safety. He was simply feeling too guilty about the things he had done. Nao and Izumi looked at him over their shoulders and both got worried instantly. Shin did not look okay at all. And then, Shin suddenly fainted.

"*Shin*!!" They all yelled, running to his side. Akiya lifted his head, checking if he had any injury he did not know about while Nao gently lifted the black haired man's feet so that they could carry the young guitarist to the couch.

"What the hell just happened?!" Izumi asked, scared for Shin now.

"Is it... Is it *her*?!" Akiya asked as well, looking truly scared for his friend.

"I'll check." Mio said and laid her hand on the short man's forehead, slowly focusing on him while the others waited anxiously. In the next minute, Shin gasped and his head turned towards his friends but he didn't open his eyes.

"So?! Is he...?" Nao asked with worry. But to their relief, Mio shook her head.

"No. But his guilt might have been the cause of this." She said softly, also concerned for Shin. Akiya sighed, shaking his head.

"Is there a way to wake him up?"

"I don't know. Maybe we should bring him to the hospital or something..."

Just as Mayu said that, Shin came to, relieving the others. Akiya immediately came close to him, hugging him lovingly.

"Shin, please tell me what's wrong. I *really* don't want to lose you." The younger guitarist said, concern dripping from his voice.

"I... I'm fine, Akiya... I just... I don't even *know* why you still care about me even after all this..."

Akiya froze at those words which were said by a very uncharacteristically weak voice. He wanted Shin to understand that he had no fault.

"Shin, look, it was *definitely* not your fault. What happened to me was my fault *alone*, it was me who didn't think nor care about the consequences. You had no idea this was even *happening*. Stop doing this to yourself."

Third Ritual

"But you could've--"

"What happened is in the past now, Shin-kun. You need to stop blaming yourself about all this. Hell, I'd do this for *all* of you no matter how painful it was for me, not just Isshi-kun."

The others looked at eachother, worried about Akiya's words. But Akiya didn't pay any mind to them, too worried about Shin.

"If you want we can continue watching what happened. But *only* if you stop fucking blaming yourself. Or I *won't* let you guys watch anymore, Shin."

Shin's teary eyes widened in surprise. He had not expected Akiya to be so worried about him.

"He's right, Shin. You just had no idea, you know. None of us did. This guilt is what brought Akiya into that terrible situation, we don't want *you* to be that way as well." Nao said, stroking the slightly younger man's hair lovingly, wishing he could do something to make the rhythm guitarist realize that.

"But still..."

"Shin, please, you're innocent, believe me. I just never told you guys about what I was about to do. Promise me if you want to see the rest of the rituals that you *won't* blame yourself."

And then, ignoring Shin's shocked look and obviously reluctant nod, he went to the kitchen to get something for Isshi to eat since the vocalist had puked so forcefully not too long ago. Then, after he gave the food to the vocalist much to the slightly shorter man's surprise, Akiya decided to show more of the rituals even though he knew what was coming up next would make the others mad at him.

"This ritual will be the hardest for you. Are you sure you are up for it?"

"I am. For Isshi, I'll do <u>anything</u>."

Much to Akiya's confusion, Luka just gave a photo to him.

"Umm, what <u>exactly</u> do you want me to do with this photo?"

"I want you to find these twins and <u>kill them</u>. Their blood will add to the magic so that your friend's body can heal safely."

"FUCKING *WHAT*?!" Isshi screamed as the others froze in shock while Akiya shuddered. The twins however, smiled.

"Don't worry, he didn't do it."

Isshi still looked horrified by the thought of Akiya taking a life for him. Mayu came closer to Isshi, saying;

"If he had, we wouldn't be here talking with you. Luka sent him after *us*. But in the end, he *truly* couldn't do it."

Isshi still didn't relax, wanting to see what happened. The other three were also holding their breaths, not knowing what to expect.

"W-what?! Why?! You're a mage too, can't you give some of your own blood!?"

"I can't. There would be no one to guide you to your friend's revival otherwise."

"B-but... Why don't you k-kill them?! I... I don't think I can do this!!"

Luka smirked at his distress. She knew that many had failed to do what she had wanted.

"They will immediately notice another mage coming close to them. Only a non-mage can kill them. What happened to doing anything for your friend, hm?"

Akiya swallowed hard, thinking of Isshi and the day they had lost him. Then, hardening his resolve, he miserably nodded, taking the ceremonial knife from Luka carefully and sticking it into his belt.

"Akiya, you... You accepted it..." Nao whispered with horror. But he had no idea how it was going to end. Isshi in the meanwhile silently clenched his trembling hands into fists, barely able to keep himself from hitting Akiya once more for his stupidity.

After finding one of his targets, Akiya's hands shook, knowing he had to do this, for Isshi and the others of his friends. But his conscience wasn't allowing him to go any further than a few steps at a time.

"I need to... I have to do this... I'm sorry..." He whispered as he took the sharp blade from his belt. But just as he was about to strike the tall girl, a shield stopped him.

"Mayu, are you okay?!" Her twin came running, angry and worried. The girl nodded and the shielding girl turned to Akiya, angry.

"Why did you just try to kill my sister?!"

"I-I..."

"Wait, you're not a mage! Did... Did Luka send you here by any chance?!" The taller girl, Mayu, asked with shock.

"H-how did you--"

"Don't do what she asks of you. She is lying to you." The smaller girl said, touching Akiya's arm. The guitarist took his arm away immediately like he'd been given a shock.

"No! I won't believe that! I can't!!" He said with his voice shaking in despair but didn't make a move to harm either girl. His hands shook harder. The girls looked at eachother with sadness at his intense reaction.

"There are much less painful ways to--"

"NO!!" He screamed but then, the smaller girl gently took the knife from Akiya's trembling hand, making him freeze as she and her sister cut their palms and gave some of their blood to the young man, smiling sadly at him.

"This much will be more than enough. But beware, the way you're going is a one-way road, it is going to harm you."

"I don't care. But thank you. I'm sure he will be grateful too."

Gentle Talk

"Akiya, we need to talk. *Right now*." Isshi said, looking seriously unhappy. Akiya gulped and nodded, waiting for the vocalist to continue.

"How could you even *think* you could kill for me?! While I appreciate how much you care, this is *not* the way to show it. You could've had blood of innocents on your hands just because of *me*."

"B-but Isshi--"

"No. Buts. Promise me, Akiya. Promise that you will *never* conduct those horrifying rituals for me again. For *none* of us."

Akiya's eyes widened but the others nodded as well, looking at him very seriously. But what struck the lead guitarist the most was Shin's stricken expression.

"Guys, I..."

"*Promise*, Akiya! That's *all* we want from you." Nao said softly, saddened by the things he had witnessed. The others also nodded. Akiya sighed and then said;

"Okay. I promise. But on *one* condition. *You guys* won't do it for me either. I would *never* want any of you to go through what I did."

The others nodded, relieved that they could make the sweet guitarist promise them. Mayu and Mio smiled behind them. After that, they went back to watching what had happened next.

Akiya shook as he went back to the building, thinking back to how close he had come to killing two young people. He didn't know what Isshi would think of him now, if he would forgive him at all, period.

"So you did do it. Very well. Pour the blood onto this needle. It will help him heal."

Akiya mutely nodded, closing his eyes as he poured it, trying hard not to cry.

"You are very close to getting what you want. Don't despair so much."

"I'm fine... I just... I don't know if he'll... He'll forgive me or not..." Akiya whispered, a lump in his throat at the thought of Isshi never forgiving him for the things he had said.

"I cannot know that. It is only up to your friend."

"Oh, Akiya... Of course I forgive you. You couldn't have known!" Isshi said gently, putting a gentle finger on the younger but taller man's chin and making him face him. Akiya only hugged him, trembling slightly.

"Don't blame yourself so much, Akiya, it wasn't your fault that I died *at all*."

The Breakdown

Then, in the next ritual when Luka wanted him to steal something from Isshi's house, Shin's eyes widened and he gasped, remembering what had happened. Isshi and the others blinked at his reaction, not knowing what had happened as Akiya smiled.

As Akiya sneaked into his best friend's room, feeling like trash, his eyes fell upon a package with his name on it.

"Huh?? W-what could this be??" He said, going towards it and picking it up. Then, he opened it and when he found the shirt he had wanted for a while along with a heartfelt note from Isshi, Akiya couldn't hold his tears any longer; he sobbed so much that it attracted someone into the house.

"Akiya?! Come on, get up, you dumbass!" It was Shin's voice. But Akiya couldn't breathe properly to answer the shocked rhythm guitarist. Then, Shin forcefully took Akiya outside, trying to calm him down.

"Akiya, breathe! You <u>have to</u> breathe!"

The lead guitarist only managed to do that after Shin rubbed his back, rocking him back and forth softly and softly calling out to him repeatedly. Then, he looked up through his tears.

"Why <u>him</u>, Shin?! <u>Why</u>?!" He managed, clutching the shirt and the note in his hands so tightly they both almost tore.

"I don't know..." Was Shin's only answer. Then, Akiya fainted, unable to cope with everything around him.

"Shin... You actually comforted him..." Izumi said, surprised yet still sad at the thought of how much pain Akiya must have felt.

"Yeah. It was me who brought him back home as well but as soon as I left, so did he."

"Thanks, Shin-kun. I actually was semi-awake then, to be honest. I just didn't know it was really you or not. After I came to myself, I just ran for Luka-san..." Akiya said, smiling as he sat next to Shin and hugged him with one arm.

"You are one lucky person, Isshi-san. There were other people who were caught in Luka's traps but I don't think any of them went *this* far."

"Yeah, I know..." Isshi said softly, tearful at the moments he had just watched. He didn't even want to imagine how desperate Akiya must have been for him and it both hurt and gave him a sense of happiness. He now knew for sure that he could always rely on his friends that they would indeed support eachother and him as well.

"*We* are lucky to have *him*, if you ask me." Akiya said, smiling so sweetly that the vocalist's heart ached.

And after that, seeing that it was already night time, they decided to go to sleep. But Akiya found that he couldn't sleep after remembering everything he went through. It was a good thing too since soon enough, he heard Isshi whimpering in his sleep.

"Isshi?"

"No! P-please stop it! You'll... You'll lose yourself, *please*, stop it, Akiya-kun!"

"Oh, Isshi... I wish I could make you understand that it's okay. It *always* will be for me." He said before shaking the older man awake.

"H-huh?!"

"Are you okay, Isshi?"

"J-just a bad dream... God, Akiya, I--"

"It's okay, Isshi. Want me to sleep with you? Like you did for me?"

Shin's Reveal

Isshi's eyes widened in shock, not having expected Akiya to do that.

"Y-you *really* don't have to!"

Akiya smiled, repeating the words the singer had said to him almost three weeks ago in his own words.

"I *want to*, Isshi. You're gonna lose your fucking mind otherwise."

"Akiya... God, *Akiya*!!" Isshi whispered in a choked voice, hugging his taller friend with tears. Akiya was taken aback by how the singer had thrown himself onto him but then, he smiled again softly.

"Come on, Isshi-kun, let's go to sleep."

Isshi nodded and closed his eyes, leaning on Akiya as if he needed the confirmation that the sweet guitarist was truly alive. They drifted off, embracing eachother.

4.08.2011

When Akiya awoke, all of the others were up already, including Isshi. The guitarist yawned and got up as well. Just as he was about to say "good morning" to everyone, he heard Shin talking quietly.

"I... I want to show something, once he awakens." He was saying, making him curious as the mage twins nodded. Then, he decided to come up.

"Good morning guys."

Everyone smiled at him, saying the words back at him. Then, Shin said something that made him wince slightly;

"Akiya, I want to show something to everyone here. The time when I tried to follow you."

Akiya swallowed slightly and nodded, sighing as he knew he was about to get a few smacks on the head at least. Then, after they'd eaten, Shin unhesitatingly gave his hand to Mio, letting them watch what the youngest had done.

After putting the nearly-catatonic Akiya into his bed, Shin sighed, not knowing anymore as to what to think. He had thought for days that Akiya had felt no remorse about his actions. But seeing him break down so completely like that was a rude awakening for the rhythm guitarist.

"What would <u>you</u> have done, Isshi...?" He whispered, putting his hands into his pockets as he

started walking away from the apartment. But only 15 minutes later, Akiya passed by him, shocking him.

"Akiya?!" He called out but the other guitarist didn't even pause, going fast as if on a mission. Calling out some more, Shin decided to follow the younger man, having a really bad feeling about all this.

But after a while, Akiya noticed that he was being followed. Looking nervous, he looked over his shoulder to see Shin who didn't make any moves to hide himself. Shin saw Akiya's eyes widen in obvious fear and the lead guitarist took his phone into his hand immediately. Shin walked faster but still couldn't hear Akiya's conversation.

Then, when the lead guitarist was crossing a street, he suddenly disappeared, shocking Shin.

"A-Akiya?! What the fuck?!" He said, looking around everywhere but could not find his friend.

"Shit! I have to get help, this isn't good..."

Isshi immediately asked what had happened to Akiya, shocked. And when Akiya sheepishly told about how he had requested Luka to make him invisible only to Shin, Izumi facepalmed and smacked the lead guitarist on the head.

"Ow!! *Izumi*!" Akiya said, rubbing his head.

"You idiot!! No wonder Shin called me in such a panic!"

At Izumi's angry words, Akiya blinked, having had no clue that Izumi knew about this. Shin still shuddered at the reminder, however, having been really worried about Akiya. Akiya smiled at his worry, touched.

"I didn't know you worried, Shin-kun. I'm sorry for that." He said, smiling lovingly at the older guitarist. Shin shook his head, thinking that had he known about the rituals, he would've stopped Akiya at all costs.

Sixth Ritual

Then, Akiya smiled and decided to show the last two remaining rituals that had resulted in Isshi's return even though he knew Isshi would not be happy about them.

When Akiya arrived, feeling both bad and relieved that he had managed to make Shin lose him even after the shorter man had tried to comfort him. He didn't want to know how much more Shin would have hated him if he knew this was happening.

"Did you lose him?" Luka asked once he was inside. Akiya nodded softly, still thinking of the possible reaction his friend would have had if he knew the pain he was going through.

"Good. Then let us start with the 6th ritual. This one and the last one will mark you <u>permanently</u>. Are you sure you can handle the pain that will come with them?"

Akiya only sent the mage a look that clearly conveyed his annoyance and conviction at the question. Luka smiled at that.

"Alright. Let me show you the ritual you are about to go through then."

Luka took him to a room that was completely purple and had a sword in the middle of it. Akiya looked at the sword and understood instantly what he was supposed to do.

"Oh God... Not *this*..." Mayu gasped, her eyes wide and horrified along with Mio. Meanwhile, Nao silently hoped with all his heart that it was not what he was thinking. But even as the bassist wished that, Isshi turned pale, also starting to figure out what his friend had done.

"No... Please tell me it wasn't..."

Akiya just bowed his head, knowing that Isshi was not going to be happy with him.

"You must stab yourself with this poisonous sword. It will lift the chains of death from your friend and also will <u>bind</u> you to him for a week. It will also leave a scar on you."

Akiya nodded, going towards the sword with no hesitation. Then he whispered with a sad smile as he took it from its pedestal;

"I'm sorry, Isshi-kun. But know that I will <u>always</u> be with you..."

And then, he stabbed himself right through the stomach. The sword went right through his back, making him gasp in pain and then, black out.

"No... NO!!!" Isshi screamed, his eyes wide and panicked. Shin, Izumi and Nao had no idea what to do as Akiya fastly ran to his friend's side, trying to comfort him.

"Isshi, please calm down. It's alright. I'm *fine*." He said, trying not to cry at the vocalist's state. Isshi, however, hit him in his panic.

"God, please, *no*!!" He whimpered, tears falling unbidden.

"Isshi! Isshi, calm down, you *need to* calm down!!" Akiya said, not even minding he was going to have one hell of a bruise on his arm later. The lead guitarist rubbed Isshi's back, rocking him back and forth like a child.

"Come on, Isshi, *breathe*." Akiya whispered softly as the singer sobbed into his shirt.

"Akiya... P-please, never... Never leave... *Please*..." Isshi managed through his sobs, his hands clenching in the younger man's shirt and Akiya nodded.

"Of course not. I'll always be by your side, Shinohara, I promise."

The Last Ritual and Summoning

And that, made Isshi hug the guitarist tightly, still very upset. The younger man hugged back as the others came close and hugged him as well, making it a group hug.

"You *dumbass*!! W-what if it *killed* you?! H-how could you *do* this to me?!"

"Isshi, I did it *for* you, not to you. I care about you guys too much to lose any of you, especially *that* way."

Isshi still shuddered at the image of Akiya impaled in his mind, shaken to the core by how much pain his friend had endured for him. Then, Mio asked to show the last Revival Ritual and sighing, Akiya nodded, giving his hand to the young girl.

When Akiya woke up the next day, his wound having healed somehow except for a small, purple scar on his stomach, he looked at the time and when he saw that he was a little late to the last ritual.

"Oh crap!" He said, running out of the house. When he arrived the building, his heart was beating fast from a mixture of anticipation, anxiety and running.

And then, he went into it, sighing heavily as he looked for Luka.

"Luka-san? I'm here, please tell me--"

"So you came. After bearing all the burden the rituals made you face. Are you ready to bring your beloved friend back?" She said, completely calm and Akiya nodded, saying he would not let the vocalist down again.

And then, Luka gave him a black key and told him to open the box in front of him to bring Isshi back. Akiya braced himself and opened it but the resulting pain from the box's dark energy made him fall to the floor with the rotting beginning.

Just as Izumi was going to say something, Mio's phone rang. The girl immediately opened it, seeing that it was from the Council of the mages.

"Yeah, what is it, Kei-san? ... Yes, she did it. But the result is-- ... No, that's... That's *really* not a good idea. ... Okay then, we'll... We'll try, see you soon."

"What is it, Mio?"

When Mio told that they all were being summoned to the Mage Court, the only thing the others did was to look at eachother and nod.

"We'll come. If they can help Akiya to never get hurt by that bitch again, we'll come." Nao

said calmly and the others nodded, making the twins nod back and teleport them to what looked like a Shinto shrine. And when they both put their hands on the door without pushing, the doors opened by themselves, surprising them.

Archimage's Reveal

"Let's go in." Mayu said quietly, worried but trying not to show it to any of them besides her twin sister. Inside, they were greeted by a young man who looked stern. The twins bowed respectfully and Kagrra, members did the same thing, not wanting to be disrespectful to any of these people.

"Hello. I am Kei, the uncle to these twins. You must be the ones they helped."

"Yes. I'm Isshi. We're *forever* grateful for your nieces' help." Isshi said, bowing again and the others also introduced themselves, following suit.

"You must be wondering why we have summoned you here, don't you?"

"Yes, actually. We'd be happy if you told us." Akiya said calmly, simply curious about what was happening.

"Well, the whole Council has heard that one of you has been fooled by the dangerous witch Luka. And that would make something *very* bad. We will have the young one who was fooled by her and make her... Shall I say *atone* for herself."

Isshi gasped in shock along with the others, suddenly gripping Akiya's hand tightly in fear. But Akiya only blinked in surprise.

"*Her*?? None of us are girls, actually. And... And it was *me* who was fooled. But I feel just fine, to be honest, nothing is wrong with me anymore, thanks to my friends. And I *don't* regret my actions, not even in the *slightest*." The guitarist said, making Isshi grip his hand even tighter as they walked towards a closed door. The vocalist was afraid that it would be the last time they would walk like this together.

"Very well. You must talk to the Archimage about it though. I can't do anything for you on that. You must go alone in there."

Akiya nodded and was about to go in when Isshi pulled him back much to his shock.

"You are *not* going in there alone!! Not in a lifetime!!" The vocalist said, pushing him behind himself protectively as the others crowded around them, all of them determined to protect Akiya at all costs.

"Guys, I can take care of myself. Seriously, you are being overprotective here." Akiya said, pushing against Isshi and coming out from behind the singer.

"At least let *me* come with you! I *can't* let you go alone *this* time, Akiya! *Please*!" Shin begged and looking at Kei, he saw that the man nodded at him. Sighing, Akiya nodded and took Shin's hand as they passed into the room under the worried looks of Isshi, Izumi and Nao.

The first thing the other mages did, however, once they were in, was to separate Akiya and Shin and get Akiya to stand on a platform as Shin was taken to sit on the comfy looking chair in the corner of the room.

"Akiya!! Akiya, *no*!!" The rhythm guitarist said, panicking. But to reassure him, Akiya smiled.

"I'm gonna be *fine*, Shin. Stop worrying so much."

Then, he turned to the young looking Archimage, awaiting the questions.

"You must be Akiya-san. You were fooled by Luka to revive someone and succeeded in doing so. Is this true?" The young woman asked. Akiya nodded.

"Yes. I did it and I feel absolutely *no* regrets about what I did for my best friend. I'd do it for him, for *all* of my friends." He said, making Shin look down as he clenched his fists.

"And do you know what would have happened if Luka managed to *completely* succeed in her terrible plan?"

"No, I really don't. But I'm okay now, thanks to my best friends. I doubt she can touch me anymore."

But much to Akiya's horror, the woman revealed what would have happened to him along with the rest of the world right in front of Shin.

"Had she succeeded, she would have absorbed your soul *completely*, erasing your existance and would have also had *absolute* control over life and death."

The Poison

"What...?!" Shin whispered with horror. He did not want to believe what his actions had almost led to.

"Oh, God... I had *no* idea what she would've *had*!!" Akiya whispered and spared a glance towards Shin only to frown in worry. The rhythm guitarist was trying his hardest not to cry with horror plain in his wide eyes and he was shaking uncontrollably.

"It's okay, Shin-kun. She couldn't manage it and as long as I have you guys around me, I doubt she *ever* can." Akiya said, wanting to calm the older man down. But the very next thing the Archimage said made Shin turn even paler.

"If you say so, but you must *still* be cleansed as the Venom Sword's poison is probably *still* inside you."

"No..." Shin uttered and it was all he could do to not faint from horror. Seeing this, Akiya immediately ran to him, holding him close.

"It's okay, Shin. I'm not gonna die, I promise."

"B-but the others..."

Akiya frowned, not knowing how to tell the others about this probability.

"I don't think we should tell them, Shin, it would be too much for Isshi especially. You know how he feels about this whole thing in the first place."

"No. We *have to* tell them, Akiya. None of us would want to be left out of this."

"B-but... Isshi will be so upset..."

"Do you think I am not?! Of course I am! But I know you never go down from your promises so I believe in you!"

Akiya smiled and then, they went out of the room as Archimage sent them out to prepare for the cleansing of the taller guitarist.

"What happened?! Are you alright, Akiya-kun?!" Isshi asked, really worried.

"I'm fine. Don't worry about me." Akiya smiled but then, got serious while Shin shuddered at the thought of his friend being poisoned.

"Guys, Archimage said something... Pretty disturbing, actually..."

"What?! What *is* it?!" Izumi asked with worry. Akiya gulped and then, before he could chicken out, Shin told them about the poison.

"Fucking WHAT?!" All of them yelled in horror looking at Akiya with fear.

"Guys, calm down, please. I feel just *fine*. Besides, the Archimage said they can get rid of it." Akiya said, trying to calm his best friends with a small smile. However, Isshi's eyes still filled with tears.

"God, Akiya-kun..." The singer whispered, making Akiya hug him tightly to reassure him.

"It's okay, Isshi. I'm fine, I'm *right* here." He said, rubbing the older man's back.

"It is *NOT* okay!! *Why* didn't you tell us this?!"

"I didn't tell because I didn't know *myself*, I swear. Would I lie about something like *that*?"

They all shook their heads, hugging Akiya with worry apparent in all of their body languages. The brunette smiled, hugging back. Then, one of the mages came close to them as they broke up but still stayed crowded around Akiya.

"The preparations are complete."

Purification

They all nodded and this time, they were all accepted into the room along with Akiya. They were too nervous to look around as Akiya was doing, however. All of them hoped with all their hearts that the brunette guitarist would be alright.

"Who was revived from you?" The Archimage asked and much to Akiya's discomfort, Isshi immediately said;

"It was me. But know that I would've never wanted Akiya-kun to do this to himself."

The mages in the room looked relieved at that, confusing Kagrra, members. And then, the Archimage asked Akiya to come to the center of the room where five mages waited with different colored candles in hand.

"So, what am I supposed to do now?" Akiya asked after they had settled down.

"Just stay there. This spell will reveal how much the venom has affected you." One of the women said. Akiya nodded as she murmured a spell and then, he screamed in pain and collapsed.

"*AKIYA*!!" The other four yelled, getting up immediately but Kei put a barrier between them and the lead guitarist, angering all of them.

"Let him go, you bastards!! Let him *GO*!!" Shin roared, trying to break the barrier.

"G-guys, don't... Worry, I'll... I'll be f-fine." He tried to reassure them but then, Archimage talked and told how close exactly he had come to dying.

"Had you waited for two more days, the poison would have *consumed* you."

At that, Isshi couldn't take it any longer and fainted, scaring Akiya as Nao caught his falling body.

"Isshi!! Isshi, what's wrong?!" He yelled, running towards his friend in panic. But no matter what he tried, the singer wouldn't wake up, everything being simply too much for him.

"We've prepared rooms for you. Don't worry, you all can rest there." One of the mage women said, looking calmly at scared Akiya and the worried trio of his friends as they took Isshi's limp body into Nao's arms. Akiya had wanted to carry him himself but the bassist wouldn't let the already hurt and exhausted guitarist to do so.

"You're already hurt, Akiya. I can carry him, don't worry." He said softly as Izumi came to support the brunette as he was limping.

Then, they followed Kei and Mayu into a big suite and Nao gently put Isshi onto the bed. Akiya sat on the bedside of the oblivious vocalist, very worried.

Attempt

"Are you okay now, Akki?" Nao asked worriedly. Akiya smiled at him, touched by how much his friends really cared about him.

"I actually feel *much* less lethargic now that that purple thing is out. I didn't even *know* it was there though." He said but then, he looked down on Isshi's body, worried about the vocalist.

"He's gonna be okay, right?" He whispered, his eyes tearing up as he watched the vocalist sleep.

"Yeah, you need to believe in him, Akiya. He's... He's probably too shaken about what happened to you, you know." Izumi said, putting his hand on top of the sad guitarist.

"Yeah, I guess so..."

"He's not the *only* one who's shaken, all of us are, Akiya. Did you even think of the *rest* of us when you conducted those horrid rituals at all?" Nao asked softly, looking so sad and worried that Akiya froze.

"N-Nao, I--"

"Akiya...?" Isshi's voice cut off whatever the youngest was about to say and made him snap towards him.

"Isshi! Are you okay?!" The lead guitarist asked immediately, worried. Isshi pushed himself up on the bed and then, smacked Akiya's head hard.

"Ow! What the *fuck*, Shinohara?!"

"You are a *dumbass*! H-how could you not tell us you were being *poisoned*?!" Isshi asked, his voice shaking in a mixture of anger and pain.

"Isshi, I had *no idea* that was happening, I *swear* to you! If I knew, I would've told you guys." Akiya said softly, coming to hold Isshi's shaking body. Then, he suddenly fell asleep leaning on the red-black haired man's shoulder, completely peaceful.

"Akiya??"

"I think he's asleep. Let's just let him sleep, he needs his strength." Nao said as Isshi gently put him into the bed, covering him tightly to not let the guitarist get cold.

"I can't believe how much he got hurt, guys... He doesn't even care that he almost *died* at least three times..." The vocalist said, his eyes full of tears.

"It's because he *cares*, Isshi. He cares for all of us, I don't think he'd be able to take it if he sees you or any of us feeling bad again, to be honest..." Izumi said, softly stroking the youngest's hair as he slept like the dead.

"I think we should go find something to eat or we'll all collapse and *that* would freak Akiya the fuck out." Nao suggested but Shin, wanting to be close to Akiya, shook his head and took a seat beside the younger guitarist's bed. The others promised that they would return soon and left, not knowing what was about to happen.

4.08.2011

10 minutes later

Shin was dozing off when the sound of the door opening made him wake up. But thinking that it was Isshi and the others, the rhythm guitarist was about to drift back when a venomous female voice whispered;

"*Die*, you servant of Luka!!"

Killing with Kindness

Shin immediately got up and looked at the young woman who was about to stab Akiya in the heart. His eyes widened in total rage and he immediately overpowered and slammed her against the wall, taking her dagger from her.

"How about *you* fucking *die*!?" He growled at the shocked girl as he pressed the dagger close to her throat. But before he could do anything more, Akiya woke up, blinking and gasping once he saw what was happening.

"Shin!! Shin, calm down!!"

"You think you can just come in and try to hurt him?! *Fuck* no!!"

"Shin, I want you to calm down and give that dagger to me, *now*." Akiya said, coming closer to the two of them and holding out his hand.

"Akiya--"

"No, Hashidani, you're *not* killing someone. *Especially* not on *my* behalf." Akiya said right before the other three came in and froze in shock.

"What the hell is going on here?!" Nao asked, looking between the two on the wall and Akiya who was trying to calm Shin down.

"This bitch tried to kill Akiya!"

"*WHAT*?!" All of them yelled in anger as well but Akiya stopped them, frowning seriously.

"I'm *fine*, Shin. You stopped her and that's *enough*. Now, give me the damn knife, will you?!"

Shin growled but complied with Akiya's request, releasing the girl. The other three came close to the still furious rhythm guitarist and then, Akiya softly asked;

"Why did you try to kill me?"

"Because you're a *slave* of that witch Luka!!" She spat but then, Isshi punched her, shocking Akiya.

"You have *NO* idea who you're talking to!! Akiya is *NOT* a slave, not in a lifetime!!" The vocalist said, angry as hell at the accusation. But Akiya softly put his hand on the red-black haired man's shoulder and said;

"Let me talk to her. It's fine."

Surprised, Isshi let him come closer to the girl and calmly talk to her.

"Look, can I ask you one thing?"

"O-of course?"

"What would *you* do if you were to witness one of your best friends', or more like family's, death *because* of your *own* words and all of the others downright *hated* you for it? Wouldn't you have been *desperate* as well, just like me?" He said, making Isshi's eyes widen in complete shock at the realization that Akiya was still blaming himself for what had happened that day.

"I-I..." The girl whispered, trying to find words but Akiya smiled, not letting her finish.

"Besides, it *wasn't* me who tried to look for Luka-san, she was the one to find *me*. I don't know what grudge you have against her but I completely agree with you, I wasn't really thinking straight anymore after what happened. But in *no* way I regret reviving Isshi-kun, not *ever*."

"I'm sorry... I... I didn't know..."

Akiya just smiled kindly, telling her that it was okay. After the disaster was averted and the girl had left, Isshi sat Akiya onto the bed, tears in his eyes at the thought of the younger man still feeling guilt even after almost a month.

"Akiya, why didn't you tell me you were *still* feeling guilty? *How* many times do I have to tell you that there was no way for you to have known about that truck?"

"Still... If I hadn't said those words, you wouldn't have..."

"Died?! You can't *know* that, Akiya! Stop doing this to yourself, you've already gone through *more* than enough!" Isshi said, shuddering at the reminder of how much the guitarist had gone through alone. Then, Akiya's stomach growled, making him grin sheepishly. Isshi smiled back and Nao came close to them with a pack of unopened food.

"We didn't eat out. We brought food for all of us." The bassist said, smiling as well to hide his uneasiness. Akiya nodded and eagerly opened the food, starting to eat immediately.

Hopes and Anguish

As Akiya ate, the others went much slower, preferring to watch him eat, all of them worried about the lead guitarist. It took Akiya poking them with his chopsticks to eat as well. Just as they were about to finish however, a knock came on the door.

"Come in?"

In came the girl that had tried to kill Akiya, making Shin's eyes harden and then, she told them that they were being summoned to the ritual dome. The members of Kagrra, looked at eachother and nodded, getting up. When they arrived, the first thing Isshi asked was for Akiya's well-being. The Mage Council all smiled at the vocalist's concern for his friend.

"Don't worry, the real danger has passed. Only one problem remains, to completely erase Luka's influence on him." The Archimage said in her soothing voice, making them all sag with relief.

"It can only be done with music, however, and we do not have the musician mages with us anymore, thanks to Luka slaughtering them three months ago." The girl who had attacked Akiya said softly, looking down. But the members of Kagrra, smiled and surprised the Council.

"Actually, you don't need any musician mages. Can it be done by music that *he* plays?" Izumi asked with a smile. Archimage nodded curiously, much to their relief.

"We are a Visual Kei band, actually. Our band's name is "Kagrra,", maybe you've even heard of it, I don't know. We've been together for over 10 years and we can indeed play music enough to get Akiya *completely* safe from that witch." Izumi added and the Archimage said;

"Very well. Irina, go and get the instruments for their performance. Tell her what she should get and it'll be done."

The group looked at eachother and quickly told them that they needed a setlist so that they could give the list to Irina and quickly, they decided on 6 songs to play;

Amafurase Tanmaina
Uzu
Sou
Oumaga Toki
Irodori no Sanka
Majinai.

Then, Isshi quickly scribbled down which instruments to get and Irina nodded after taking a look at it. While she was gone, Isshi warmed up his vocal chords as the other four got increasingly nervous as they had never before played to a mage audience.

Then, after the instruments arrived, Isshi got in front of the microphone as Izumi started the drumline for Amafurase Tanmaina. The crowd watched avidly as Isshi began singing, almost enchanted by the vocalist's voice. After the song ended, Isshi asked Akiya quietly about how he felt and getting a very relieving answer from him, he went to the second song.

"Here is Uzu, I hope you all will like it."

After the show was over, Akiya suddenly started to shine and gasped after it was over, the chains on his soul having been lifted.

"Akiya, are you alright?!" Shin asked, really worried. Akiya smiled and nodded, feeling much more free than he had felt in a month.

But when the night fell and they all fell asleep, too tired to stay up, Shin found that he couldn't sleep, simply too upset to be able to do so despite his tiredness. He cried silently as he watched Akiya and Isshi sleep close to eachother.

"Mmh... Isshi-kun..." The younger guitarist whispered sleepily, snuggling the red-black haired man in his sleep.

"Oh Akki... *Why*? Why *you* of all people?!" Shin whispered, trying not to sob as he closed his eyes and missed the fact that Akiya suddenly woke up with a slight jump.

"Shin? What's wrong?" The younger guitarist asked softly, making Shin jump and furiously wipe his face, not wanting the younger man to worry.

Letting Go of the Guilt

But Akiya just got up and hugged the older man, asking again about what was wrong even though he could guess.

"I-I'm fine. Please, Akki, I don't think I can *talk* about it..."

"It's okay. Come on, go to sleep, my friend." Akiya said softly, getting Shin to lie down and snuggled him. Shin started falling asleep, his body was very exhausted after both the day's events and the crying.

"Oh, Shin-kun... How many times do I have to tell you it wasn't *you* who made me do all this?" Akiya whispered, not wanting to wake him up as he drifted off to sleep himself.

5.08.2011

When Shin woke up, he saw that the others were already awake and waiting for him to wake up himself.

"Good morning, Shin-kun." Akiya said, smiling. Shin smiled back reluctantly, still blaming himself about how much pain his friend had gone through.

"Shin, Akiya told us about what happened last night. Do you wanna talk about it?" Nao asked gently, concerned about him. However, Shin shook his head furiously, making them look at eachother with exasperation.

"Okay. But if you want to talk about it or about *anything*, we're here for you." Isshi said, serious. Shin smiled and nodded but he had no idea that this talk was *far* from over.

The group of five went out of the room, wanting to find some breakfast and then, they saw Irina who was looking shyly at them. Shin's eyes still hardened as he had not forgotten what the girl had tried to do to Akiya before. But he had no idea what Akiya was about to do next even though the others knew.

"Can I talk to you in private, Irina-san? It's... Kinda important."

Shin's eyes widened but Izumi held him back as the girl nodded curiously.

"You're gonna let him go?! She could hurt him, Izumi!!" Shin growled but Isshi stopped him.

"We should believe in him right now. He'll be fine, Shin."

Shin looked reluctant to let the two talk but in the end, he gave up, watching them closely anyways. Meanwhile Akiya and Irina sat down on a bench and Irina curiously asked what he wanted to talk about.

"I have a request for you, if you're willing."

"Tell me. I can do it." She said, smiling slightly.

"I want you to talk to Shin for me. He was *really* upset last night and won't tell me why. The others can't get it out of him either so I thought maybe a stranger could make him talk..."

Irina's eyes widened, slightly scared of the rhythm guitarist after the failed attempt. Akiya though, looked so worried that she couldn't resist the look on his face.

"I'll try... But I doubt he'd talk to me, to be honest after yesterday." She said and asked for Shin, making the rhythm guitarist's eyes widen and then, harden once more.

"I have *nothing* to talk with you!!"

"Go with her, Shin. Please, maybe it's important." Izumi said, putting a hand on the angry guitarist's shoulder. Shin reluctantly went with the young girl, not realizing Akiya was secretly trailing behind them.

"What did you want to talk to me about?"

"You look troubled, would you like to talk about it? You're worrying your friends, you know."

Shin shook his head, not thinking about it. But after a little more prodding, he started talking, not knowing that Akiya was listening to his every word.

"I... I just don't know how Akiya-kun *still* cares about me after all the shit I've done to him... I pushed him so far away when he *needed* me, never even thinking that he may be hurting more than any of us. I even made him fall into a hole and left him for dead there, not even showing up to the hospital when he got... He got bitten by a snake. And yet, he *still* loves me as a brother." The short man said tears starting to spill again at the thought of the things Akiya went through on his own.

"But it's obvious you *never* hated him, you protect him like a brother and he realizes that as well. I think you should forgive yourself. You couldn't have known Luka would choose *him* to enslave like that, you know."

Akiya smiled at the girl's words, agreeing with them silently. But Shin was still feeling bad and it showed, much to his worry.

"Still... I only realized how bad he was *feeling* after everything was already done... Hell, I didn't even realize it *then*, I was too happy to see Isshi back but then, w-we saw his wound... God, that *horrible* wound will never leave my mind!"

"But he's managed to heal fully. You shouldn't feel like that, you're only gonna hurt yourself and your friends, you know."

"He's just lucky... Lucky that he has Isshi and the others... I still think of what would've happened if we didn't find out... He would've--" Shin said before stiffening in Akiya's tight hug.

"Shin, *look* at me. You *promised* you wouldn't feel guilty anymore about this shit. Did you *lie* to me even though you *know* how much I hate liars?"

The Illusion

"A-Akiya, I... I'm sorry!!" Shin managed, hugging the younger man tight as he tried to control his tears. But right as Akiya was about to say something that would hopefully soothe the older guitarist, a huge bang diverted their attention with Irina going pale.

"Oh no..." She whispered as the dust cleared to reveal Luka in her glory.

"YOU!!" Shin yelled with rage, taking Akiya behind him to protect him. The other three came close as well, protective for the guitarist.

"Why did you come here?! You have no place here anymore, you witch! Leave now before Archimage-sama takes care of you!" Kei said with a glare towards the pink haired woman.

"I have come to collect my due." Was all she said before sending a black blob towards Akiya who had gotten out of Shin's protective stance. The young man immediately dodged it but the blob somehow followed the guitarist until Shin took the hit and fell into Akiya's arms.

"Shin!! Shin, what did you *do*!?"

Shin didn't answer, having fallen into unconsciousness immediately. But just as Isshi was about to run to the two guitarists, Luka stopped him and said;

"I may not be able to kill *you* for a long time but I *can* kill *them*. Stay back if you want them to *live*."

Isshi shook in outrage and fear, not knowing what to do. But then, Luka smirked and did a flick with her wrist, sending Akiya flying away from Shin's body.

"Akiya!!!" Isshi yelled, wanting to go to him but the fear of losing him stopped him. Akiya staggered back to his feet and was just about to go to Shin again when Luka focused on the shorter guitarist and then, Shin woke up with completely black eyes.

"S-Shin?!" Isshi whispered, horrified. The short man didn't answer him, scaring all of them.

"Shin, please, *say something*!!" Nao begged but nothing came out of the guitarist's mouth. Then, much to their horror, Luka gave him a dagger and told him to kill the friend he chose himself.

"Hashidani, *DON'T*!!" Isshi yelled as the younger man came towards Izumi and was right about to stab the shocked drummer in the heart when Isshi threw himself at Izumi and got stabbed through his back. The vocalist gasped in pain but he indeed didn't die despite how grave his injury was.

But right as Izumi was going to say something, Luka took Shin and teleported away.

"Oh God, no..." Nao whispered, horrified. Akiya ran to Isshi's body, picking him up gently.

"G-guys... Go after Shin... He will get *h-hurt*..." Isshi whispered, falling unconscious in Akiya's arms right afterwards.

"Isshi!! Shinohara, wake up!!"

"He's gonna be fine. Luka cannot kill him due to your actions, Akiya-san. But he is right, if we don't find Shin-san... I don't even want to *think* about what will become of him."

The others nodded with Izumi trying not to cry. Shin had chosen to kill *him* for some reason. But pushing those feelings away, he focused on trying to find the slightly younger man before he could be lost forever. Nao put a hand on his shoulder, understanding that the drummer was hurting emotionally.

"We've got to find him. *Right now*, right, Izumi-kun?" He said and Izumi nodded, worried that they might have lost Shin.

"Don't worry, the blob he took will certainly leave a trail behind. We can very easily track him down with those." Mio said softly, concerned as well.

The others nodded but Izumi decided to stay with Isshi as the older man was still injured and unconscious.

"Izumi, are you sure about this? I don't know, I think Shin needs all of us right now, to be honest..." Akiya said but Izumi shook his head, distressed that maybe Shin hated him secretly and didn't need him anymore.

"Izumi, come on. Shin probably doesn't even *know* he's hurting us. Let's go and find him before that bitch kills him or something." Nao said softly, holding Izumi's trembling hand. Seeing that the others weren't going to let him stay with Isshi, Izumi nodded miserably.

Broken Mind

Mio started tracking the young guitarist and they soon found out that Luka had imprisoned the guitarist in a cage which she kept hovering above an abyss. Seeing this, it was all the three of them could do to not break in and break Luka's neck.

"That... That horrible *bitch*!!" Nao managed out, his eyes wide and angry.

"We need to get him out of there. If something happens to him in there, Isshi would never recover from his loss." Akiya whispered and then, they noticed something that upset them even more; Shin was crying silently.

"I think he's seeing something *entirely* different than what is happening." Nao said, really starting to get upset.

"We'll get in once Luka is out of the room, I promise." Mayu said, also very unhappy by the tears of the short guitarist.

"I swear, I'm gonna fucking *kill* her if she's hurt a hair of him!!" Izumi growled, angry and worried for Shin.

Thankfully, only moments later, Luka left the room and Mayu said something that confused the others.

"Irina, this is *your* specialty. Come on, you know what to do."

Irina nodded slightly unwillingly and went into the room ahead of them. And then, she shocked them by transforming into a perfect copy of Luka.

"What the actual *fuck*?!" Izumi said, thoroughly confused.

"Her special talent is shapeshifting. We thought she should go in like she's Luka so that Shin-san doesn't attack her or something."

"But what if Luka-san comes in?! She'll be in danger!" Nao said, starting to get alarmed. At that, the twin mages smiled, confusing them.

"Don't worry. Luka will have her comeuppance. Irina *especially* hates her because she killed her entire family. And our parents as well..." Mayu said softly, making the three of them gasp in horror.

"That bitch... She deserves everything that is thrown at her!!" Izumi said and then, looked at Irina who was busy getting the cage Shin was in to safety. Then, she opened the cage but Shin did nothing to get out of it, still crying and sitting completely still in the small cage.

"We should go in. Maybe your voice can spur him into action." Mio said, not wanting to dwell on the uncomfortable subject anymore. The others nodded and they went into the room,

all of them nervous.

"Shin? Shin, we're *here*. Come on, open your eyes already, *please*." Akiya said, honestly worried and then, Shin started shaking uncontrollably.

"Shin, come on, get out of that thing, everything is gonna be alright." Nao added when the short man did nothing to get out again.

"He might not be able to see, guys, we should get closer, that might help. It helped me with Isshi." Akiya said, slowly getting closer to the cage.

Support

"Shin. We're here for you. Come on, get out of that cage, *please*."

At Akiya's words, Shin started to shake even harder and then, gasped as his eyes became as they normally were. He looked up with tears still streaming from his eyes and his eyes widened at seeing Izumi there.

"I-Izumi-kun?! But I saw--"

"It was only an illusion, Shin-san. Come on, let's go." Irina said even though she was still in Luka's form and that angered the guitarist.

"I have *nothing* to do with you, bitch, not after *everything* you put Akiya through!"

Akiya smiled and just as Irina was about to change back, Luka came in, freezing them and confusing Shin thoroughly. The foul woman only looked at her copy before smirking.

"I didn't think you would come back, Irina."

Irina turned back to her normal form before screaming in fury and attacking Luka despite the obvious difference in their power levels. Shin stared in confusion while Mio and Mayu grimaced.

"Irina-san, get back, she'll kill you!!" Nao yelled but the girl didn't seem to care one bit about the obvious danger. Meanwhile Izumi came close to Shin, asking if he was feeling okay.

"I-I'm fine... God, Izumi, I'm *so* sorry..."

"Don't worry about it. You're *safe* now." The drummer said as he wiped Shin's tears away. The guitarist shook as Izumi hugged him lovingly.

"W-where's Isshi though? I-is he... Okay?!"

"He's fine. Don't worry, Shin." Izumi said softly, not wanting the black haired man to know about the vocalist's injury and the cause of it.

As they talked softly, Irina continued to send Luka lightning attacks, enraged.

"So you want to avenge your family. How *nice* of you. Too bad it will not work." Luka said with an evil chuckle and sent a huge black hole at Irina who barely dodged it.

"I will *never* forgive you, you murderer!!"

But just as Irina was about to best Luka, the older woman sent a lightning bolt straight to the

young girl's chest, making her scream in pain and fall to the floor, unmoving.

"You *monster*!! Irina!!" Mayu yelled, going straight for her friend. She turned the unconscious girl's body in her arms and tried to heal her injury but the lightning had gone straight to the poor girl's heart, making it barely beating.

"We should go back, maybe she can be saved." Izumi said, sad like the others. Then, the drummer shocked Shin and swept him off his feet into his arms.

"I-Izumi! I can walk just *fine*!" Shin said, blushing furiously.

"You need someone to carry you, Shin. It's *obvious* you're kinda weak right now." Izumi said, smiling as they started walking.

"This is embarrassing..." Shin muttered in the drummer's arms, still blushing as he buried his face in Izumi's chest and making Akiya, Nao and Izumi chuckle while the twins smiled themselves.

When they arrived back to the Mage Court, Nao carefully handed Irina's barely breathing body to the medics as Shin managed to convince Izumi to let him down.

"God, Izumi, you *really* didn't have to do that!" The black haired man said, still embarrassed.

"You were through something *horrible*, of course I had to support you when you need it!" Izumi said, clasping his hand onto the slightly younger man's shoulder and smiling.

Memories pt. 1

"Thanks..." Was all Shin could say, remembering what he had seen in the illusion world.

"Shin, do you want to talk about what you saw? You know nothing you saw was real, *right*?" Nao asked at his silent voice.

Shin immediately shook his head, shuddering at the thought. Then, much to the others' discomfort, he asked where Isshi was once more and the medics guided him towards the room where the vocalist was thankfully awake and waiting anxiously.

"Shin! Oh thank God you're alright!!" Isshi got up fastly and winced, tipping the older guitarist off that he was hurt. But the vocalist didn't let him say anything, hugging him very tightly.

"Don't ever scare us like that *ever* again!" Isshi whispered, so relieved. Shin tentatively hugged back and then, asked how much the red-black haired man was hurt as he could see that Isshi was not truly okay.

"I'm fine, nothing too serious, I just hit my back pretty hard." His friend said, making the guitarist very relieved.

"What happened though? You look kinda distressed, Hashidani, what did that bitch do to you?"

Shin hesitated on telling about it, not knowing if he should talk about it. But he couldn't help but talk after much prodding.

"I... I saw that I k-killed Izumi-kun..." The rhythm guitarist whispered in a choked voice which made the others look at eachother before Izumi came to hold him, deciding not to tell Shin that he had attempted to do so.

"You didn't Shin. I'm just fine, I'm here with you and I'm going nowhere."

Shin hugged back, still very upset at the things he had seen in the illusion world. Then, a mage came in to alert them of the Archimage's summoning.

"We'll be there." Izumi said and they went with the drummer supporting Shin. When they arrived to the ritual dome, Archimage told them that Shin needed to let them watch his memories from the week where Akiya had revived Isshi. Shin grimaced but didn't refuse, wanting Akiya to know how much he actually was worried for him.

"You just need to lay down here. You will sleep and we will be able to project the memories of the ritual week." The Archimage said, seeing how uncomfortable Shin actually was.

Shin nodded reluctantly, laying down on the pedestal under the careful looks of his friends. And then, the Archimage came to put her hand onto the guitarist's forehead. As Shin drifted off to sleep, Akiya looked down in worry, not knowing why the mages wanted this. And then, the members of Kagrra, watched as a light window opened, all of them concerned. When they saw the prank in Shin's point of view, Isshi almost growled in anger but he held it back, knowing how much Shin was actually hurting about the matter. But they were about to get a shock in the form of the short guitarist's dream next night.

Shin woke up, blinking, as all of a sudden, Akiya was standing by his bed.

"What the hell are you doing here, you traitor?!"

"I just wanted to talk to you, Shin. I... I don't have much time to do so anymore."

Shin blinked and sat up, starting to get worried despite himself. Akiya sat down on his bedside, smiling so sadly at him and making him feel even more worried

"What are you talking about? Akiya, what is happening?!"

"Nothing you should be concerned about, Shin-kun. But I want something very important from you."

"What is it? You know you can tell me, Akki."

"Well, I'm preparing something for you guys and... I don't think I'll... I'll survive this. So I want you to never cry for me if I'm gone like Isshi-kun. Will you promise me that?"

"W-what?! Akiya, what are you talking about?! You're not gonna die!" Shin said, his eyes wide in shock and horror. Akiya only looked sad as he waited for Shin to promise.

"Please, Hashidani. Promise. I don't want you to be upset when I'm gone."

"I-I can't promise that! You're still important to me!" He said, making Akiya look really sad and somehow disappear and then, he gasped as he woke up, shaken.

"W-was this all just a dream?" Shin whispered and then, reached for his phone to call Akiya, he simply needed to confirm that the younger guitarist was alright. But the younger man's phone was off, making him even more worried.

"I need to go to Akiya's place... Right now!" He whispered, getting up and going out of his house immediately. But when he arrived, he saw that the other guitarist wasn't home.

"What do I do?! Akki, where are you?!"

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