

Robot Eyes

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/31730044) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/31730044>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Ensemble Stars! (Video Game)
Relationship:	Itsuki Shuu/Kiryuu Kurou
Characters:	Kiryuu Kurou , Hasumi Keito , Mademoiselle (Ensemble Stars!) , Itsuki Shuu , Kagehira Mika
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Robots & Androids , Robots , Robot/Human Relationships , Robotics , Alternate Universe - Post-Apocalypse , Science Fiction , Alternate Universe - Science Fiction , Oddballs were Androids , a little bit of ooc , Out of Character
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2021-06-04 Updated: 2021-12-25 Words: 7,903 Chapters: 3/9

Robot Eyes

by [Rota](#)

Summary

A sudden red light almost makes him jump in his seat: he must have passed a roadblock, a patrol of the omnipresent police. He did not realize that he had felt asleep tiredly, after that umpteenth and long day of exhausting work, and the slight pain in his sore cheek suggests that he spent too many minutes of total abandonment against the window of his car.

It must have been a moment when he let his guard down, and he felt the full weight of his dark circles between eyelids and headaches.

He yawns and goes back to lean his cold shoulder against the soft seatback of the car, retrieving his jacket and looking for a little warmth for the trembling bones. Look forward, towards the traffic of evening reentry.

Not even having completely automated all kinds of transport, from public to exclusively private ones, has freed humanity from the scourge of traffic jam: that's the bitter irony that colors the humor of those who consider themselves shrewd.

Him, certainly not.

Notes

I wrote this fic 4 years ago in italian, my first language. Now I want to try to translate it in english, because it's one of my favourite KuroShu fic written by me.

The title, "Robot Eyes", is a reference to Asimov's collection of short stories "Robot Dreams"; I really LOVE Asimov and I really LOVE his books. In my fic, I included many references to the world developed by Asimov about robotics and its laws.

I think some characters are a bit OOC, especially because of some events and gacha that were written after my original publication. I apologize for this, but I didn't want to change what I originally wrote. Now my views of some character relationships have definitely changed, also my writing style has DEFINITELY changed LOL

I still hope you enjoy my fic, and I ask you for suggestions to improve the translation!

Enjoy the reading everyone!

[Here is my twitter account, with updates of every of my fics <3 I mostly write in Italian, but sometimes I write also in English!

Twitter: https://twitter.com/Rota_WFTL]

- A translation of [Occhi di robot](#) by [Rota](#)

Prologue

Slightly raising both his glasses and his gaze from the monitor with a thousand buttons and lights, he sees him passing by chance in the distance: he recognizes him because very few people, in that place, have hair of that particular color. He understands the direction where the other man is going and he imagines, at that point, what he is looking for; for this reason, he calmly moves away from his own workstation and with a nod he reassures the members of his crew that nothing was wrong in the stringent control system that manages the whole building and what it commands. Holding the folder of notes and codes tightly in his hands, he exits the control room with transparent walls, made of plastic as hard as resistant, and walks towards the intersection of white corridors with a resolute pace.

He stops the other man returning in that direction, snorting rather angry.

-Kiryuu.

Kuro seems rather surprised to find him right there - he didn't expect to meet him, perhaps, nor he did foresee having to deal with him so quickly. It seems that that eventuality is the last thing he wanted to happen.

The red haired man chews slowly the only word he speaks to him: nothing but his name, in a flat tone.

-Hasumi.

Keito doesn't get too close to him, he keeps that right distance so that he doesn't feel threatened or accused of something in advance. But they look into each other's eyes without hesitation.

-I heard you were looking for Kanzaki.

-Yes, I had to ask him a favor.

Keito eyes up the corridor behind the mighty man. Several meters away, there is the laboratory where Souma Kanzaki, their esteemed colleague, was supposed to carry out his work of control that day.

It's boring, monotonous, unrewarding like almost all the jobs that everyone is forced to do in those times of peace.

Hasumi adjusts his glasses on his nose, before telling him what he knows.

-Today Kanzaki is not there, this morning he asked for a few days of sick leave. It seems that he has not felt well, that he has a stomach ache.

There are several seconds of hesitation in the gaze of his interlocutor, and this only deepens the man's suspicions, moreover it confirms part of his doubts. Then, the concern sharpens the frown of those perennially frowning eyebrows, while the tone of his voice becomes a little more deep.

-It must be very serious to block someone like Kanzaki.

-I thought the same thing.

Kuro looks down at the ground, considering something in silence. And his foot is already ready for a quick step, to slide back the corners of the long white coat over smooth tiles to his department, isolating himself again until his work is completed, when Keito precedes and blocks him there.

-So tell me, what did you need?

Surprised, Kuro tries to respond but every attempts of escape are cut short immediately.

-I had to ask Kanzak-

-Kanzaki is missing, I just said that. But there's nothing he does that I can't do for him.

The Yumenosaki Company is a particularly quiet place, especially since Machines have been brought back under human control. All that white color, all that silence, the human spirit and its powerful feelings seem to stand out as if there is a perennial echo.

On the other hand, this is what Eichi Tenshouin, undisputed leader of the powerful structure, has always wanted to be.

Keito therefore does not believe in Kuro's words, not even this time.

-You don't have to worry, Hasumi. It is nothing important.

-I've told you more than once, Kiryuu. I see you very worn out, it's not like you.

Kuro thins his gaze, examining the face and expression of his interlocutor.

Keito then looks at his shoulders, his whole body to his legs, raising his eyebrows as if the words he is about to pronounce are so obvious that only someone with severe cognitive impairment could not understand.

-Your connections have passed the latest backups, right? Have the technical and bionic tests give any interesting results?

-Everything is normal.

-What about biological tests?

Pause, Kuro tries to smile but he does it very badly - not that Keito judges him for his inability to express himself, but he is always dazed by the grimace his lips take in those

moments.

-Done them too.

Keito sighs and uses the folder in his hands as an improper weapon: he taps it on Kuro's forehead, trying to be at least a little persuasive.

-So do me the favor of not ending up like Kanzaki. Have some good sense, take care of yourself.

Kuro's tone softens a little, although there is a little annoyance of being warned in the back of his tone.

-You don't have to worry, Hasumi.

And without more words, he leaves him, finally relaxing his shoulders only once he no longer has to look the other man in the face.

Keito's eyes snap, rolling around behind his glasses: focusing on the back of Kuro's neck, perhaps they are looking for something that doesn't exist and never has. The fact that Kuro and Kanzaki himself are hiding something from him is certain, the level of danger of this something is up to his judgment.

Soon everything will be clearer, it's just a matter of time.

A boy with a clear voice, but also a little hesitant, calls for the attention of Keito Hasumi, chief responsible for the permanent control of Yumenosaki, because the suspended work can no longer be postponed and none of the crew can read codes as complex as those on the monitor. His eyes snap again, the metallic mechanism takes refuge behind the white bulb and the green iris so perhaps it never frightens those of them totally human, who have never seen the perfect coexistence of bionic and biological in one body like his.

He goes back to the ward without delay, to finish his own job as quickly as possible.

1. Two worlds - Descent

Chapter Notes

HERE WE GO with the first chap (L)
Enjoy the reading everyone!

1. Two worlds - Descent

A sudden red light makes him jump in his seat: he must have passed a roadblock, a patrol of the omnipresent police.

He felt asleep tiredly, after that umpteenth and long day of exhausting work, and the slight pain in his sore cheek suggests that he spent too many minutes of total abandonment against the window of his car. It must have been a moment when he let his guard down, and he felt the full weight of his dark circles between eyelids and headaches.

He yawns and goes back to lean his cold shoulder against the soft seatback of the car, retrieving his jacket and looking for a little warmth for the trembling bones. Look forward, towards the traffic of evening reentry.

Not even having completely automated all kinds of transport, from public to exclusively private ones, has freed humanity from the scourge of traffic jam: that's the bitter irony that colors the humor of those who consider themselves shrewd.

Him, certainly not. He finds it boring and somewhat annoying that he cannot eat at the same time every day. But mankind reveals itself right there, where the machine has always been imperfect and does not admit mistakes, in that approximate chaos that makes clear the real idea of life.

Rather than these thoughts, however, data and acronyms are still swirling in his head, infinite codes that he had to check and double-check an infinite number of times in just five hours. That afternoon he had to rush to help one of the Department Executives - it was about sewer, or something similar, he hardly remembers what the initial problem was, because he had to run a series of scans and backups himself and simultaneous checks on all of the city's water supply - and it wasn't much funny for his already very tired nerves.

Below several meters of void under his car, the city. He does not remember which of the Big Machines had the idea, but to raise the traffic routes thus leaving the city environment free both from smog, sucked in by the ventilation systems near the clouds, and from polluting sight of vehicles and things like that was a brilliant idea, he has to admit. Very few unwary pedestrians, then, can die with such a system.

The idea of emptiness of void no longer scares him, but there was a time when he didn't feel comfortable floating uncontrollably in the air. Not that he trusts machines more now, but he never leaves or will ever let an artificial intelligence control every single aspect of his life.

Because, at that point, the only human thing he could possess was only a profound estrangement.

He would also like to drive manually some evenings. Not this one, because he is really too tired and a part of him, which does not even have a voice or emits a sound, is grateful to the insistence and subtle manipulation that Eichi has performed on him by imposing on him as a work obligation to have a machine always ready for his needs.

Keito would never admit it, not even to himself, not even in the darkest hours of his solitary existence: he would not be able to drive in the evening, with all those hours of work on his shoulders.

He takes a look at the outside of the car, once he has lowered the window blind with which he usually isolates himself from the rest of the world. But the sky is really too dark for him to see anything of the monotonous landscape and to understand how much time is still missing until he reaches his home; he has also registered a decline in his eyesight, in the last period, due to the stress and the frenetic pace of his new job.

At that moment, therefore, he stretches towards the front dashboard, where with a couple of expert clicks he opens a screen that shows him the way forward, the way still to go, an estimate more or less precise of the remaining journey and also the outside temperature, in the further reassurance that he is equipped with an umbrella: even in the Upper Town one of those acid storms begins and it is not good to take the rain directly on the bare skin. The man finally sighs, trying to release part of the stress, but returning to a perfectly seated position, back against the backrest cushions, he lightly bumps his bag with his elbow: this barely opens, in the coupling that should keep it sealed, making him snort with irritation.

He keeps it only as a gift from his brother, not for real personal affection.

However, this detail allows him to hear the slight insistent alarm that a device has been desperately sending for several minutes already. He opens the bag, rummages for a while through the documents he has brought along to keep himself busy that night too, and finds a small rigid screen that shakes and flashes a red light intermittently. Quickly, as that thing had completely wiped out any exhaustion from his limbs, he grabs it and with a simple touch on the screen he turns on the main light.

A very stylized map of the city appears to his eyes - because the dot reveals a position too far from him to do otherwise - which, widening more and more, ends up outside the border walls. And that little dot keeps going undaunted until it disappears beyond its range of action.

Far beyond the eastern suburbs, in the city dumps.

Keito makes a grimace that completely contracts his face. He has been waiting for that development for days and certainly that is not the time to miss such an opportunity, however he is bewildered by what he saw.

Without more hesitation, he leans forward again and types in a new order to his car, a new destination for his return journey.

This time, Kuro Kiryuu will have to explain several things to him.

He is not proud of what he did: programming, in the system of his colleague's personal car, a navigator that would send him the exact coordinates through which the vehicle was moving without the consent of the owner himself, wasn't easy in any way. His luck is that Kuro doesn't have a suspicious heart and doesn't question the integrity of others.

And this, of course, benefits Keito.

For days, the man has been waiting for this opportunity, peering at that signal in isolated silence. Nothing for almost two weeks.

However, if the suspicion in Kuro's pure heart is not allowed to enter, he has made a permanent home in Keito's heart and has suggested to him over and over again, with a malice and perfidy that have corroded him on many levels, which the entire situation was not normal.

Certain behaviors, certain actions, certain interests, certain mysteries, certain questions that man asked, certain times and certain entire days when he suddenly disappeared and reappeared. Too suspicious for him.

He was almost forced to do it. It is no longer the time when Machines act as a receptacle for all suspicions and guilt and inside the ranks of humans there are too clear separations between who follow the moral ethics of the technological process and who not. Not to mention, how Kuro Kiryuu has always shared with him a very precise opinion about it.

But all this did not stop Keito Hasumi from following his own suspicious personality. Personality that has increasingly distanced him not only from his own warm dinner ready in the electronic oven at home, but also from the center of the city and even from the suburbs of it.

Fewer and fewer houses, fewer and fewer factories, fewer and fewer roads to follow, fewer and fewer cars to hide behind. The signal appeared from time to time and then disappeared quickly - Keito knows that is the right destination, but it seems that Kuro has left the car in a place where every electrical signal is interfered by something and maybe it's still there, maybe not. Keito only wants answers, nothing else.

Then, there's only one road. A lane that goes on, a lane that returns, for several whole kilometers of nothing. Below the car, in the lower part, where the electromagnetic trails that allow the latest technology vehicles to proceed without the use of wheels, there is a shadow so deep that it embraces everything.

Maybe it's water, maybe it's something solid, Keito doesn't know.

Right now, he recognizes only the sound of acid rain beating over the roof and against the car doors, and he looks ahead. A large, frightening bolt of lightning slashes the entire sky, and shows the outline of the mountains of metal and cementer trash that assembles the Capital's landfills.

The parking for private vehicles is outside the landfill, since cars would be of no use inside.

A large amount of metal, all gathered together, could frighten those who still have vivid memories of what was the War, or Purification of ferrous souls, but anybody calms down when that whole mass of metal is bounded in a space within nothing bionic can materially live: the whole area is crossed by bands of electromagnetic force, enclosed and channeled in metallic tubes with a sparkling color, if someone has the unfortunate idea of stumbling over it inattentively. These large pipes also flow along the walls of the outside, making them threatening to those who retain more than a passing feeling of the first impression.

But Keito Hasumi, at that moment, has another problems to think about: how to enter the landfill while remaining sheltered from acid rain, how to enter without giving an explanation that could exclude him from the crime scene, how to look for Kuro Kiryuu in a place where no technology in his possession works.

It seems clear to him, after some thinking, that his colleague has entered not from the main entrance, but from a secondary entrance or one made by himself precisely to avoid this type of problem. To the Great Furnace, which always is with a full belly thanks to the hard work of the Metal Smelters tirelessly melting all the unused iron, steel and copper present on city soil, he must have put a lot of distance - or at least, he thinks so, because certainly even the bionic part of Kuro can not fear such a chasm of fire and flames.

With these thoughts in mind, he decides to take his electronic umbrella and his rigid bag, and finally goes outside. The umbrella opens above his head, dangling in the void, and creates a force impenetrable field around his person.

Everything remains in the darkness of the night, except that limited cone within which he is. Just a glance at the main entrance and its control tower - headlights on and a little too much noise coming from that direction - and then he starts walking fast in the opposite direction, trying to look both ahead and the road on which he walks, not to trip over something.

He hears the sound of the stormy sea, far away, and sometimes he sees what surrounds him thanks to those green lightning bolts that open the sky.

Capital is really far away from that cursed island, and the profiles of the skyscrapers and all those immense structures, tending to the sun and the moon, do not seem at all reassuring from that distance. It really seems that there are two very separate worlds.

After several insistence, and after too many meters of walls that look always the same, he finally finds a small warehouse built in concrete and dark tiles, under which a very long row of shuttles with large and thick round wheels are parked.

He hadn't seen such deals since he was just six years old, but their vision doesn't give him any kind of nostalgia. Once he gets close enough to the small, badly lit structure, and he's able to take a better look at those strange cars, he not only realizes that they are absolutely devoid of any electronic control that he could use, but also the evident lack of one of them from the line. The last one, just the one placed in the corner of the border.

For him, this is another proof that Kuro has been in that place and has illegally moved inside the landfill.

Keito turns off his umbrella and climbs, after a couple of high steps, to the level of the door of one of those shuttles. The entire driver's cabin, located on the axis that connects the four-wheel drive, is made of synthetic plastic, suitable for isolating both from any radiation and from any acid rain. The mechanical arm in front, used to pick up the unused metal and transport it to the Furnace, falls like a dead hand against the floor, with its mouth wide open and the teeth in evidence.

Keito sighs, looking a little dejectedly at all the manual controls on the monitor in front of him. He has no idea how to make that thing work, and he really doubts there is some sort of instruction manual somewhere. He also fears that, once their electronic devices are switched on, they may feel the influence of the waves coming from the nearby landfill and therefore be damaged.

He cannot afford to waste days and days of work for that reason.

He sighs again, puts his glasses on his nose and finally takes off his gloves, cracking his fingers loudly.

It takes him some time to figure out how to get that strange thing moving. It also ends up smashing the other cars, both with the side and with the mechanical arm that weighs it down on the front. Green and red lights continue to flash in front of his eyes, and a thousand knobs stubbornly not let him bend them in any way even when, finally, he manages to start the engine and proceed a few meters forward. He crosses the boundary of the shed of the small warehouse and not even knowing how to stop, he almost ends up hitting the rocks and then plunging into the sea - fortunately, his survival instincts and his cool head are still able to make him fully manage such urgent danger situations.

So, he gets some control over that little shuttle.

It proceeds forward, in the direction it has followed firstly, without hesitation. The surrounding wall still slide by his side, tirelessly identical, until it slowly disappear into the ground: in that extreme area of the small island, it was used to dock ships full of waste from

other oases and other cities, and even if at that moment that practice is in disuse there is no danger: the rocks that make up the sharp cliffs, proud opponents of that stormy sea, refract very well every type of electromagnetic wave, providing a natural barrier to any bionic being who has the unfortunate opportunity to come upon.

There, Keito illegally sneaks into the landfill territory.

As a welcome, yet another green lightning illuminates the profiles of the large masses of metal, which form more or less ordered pyramids and imposing waves in a sea that is as motionless and distressing and cold and boundless. The man can't understand where his colleague has gone, precisely, and the only thing left to do is to proceed in a random direction.

He begins to climb on the first level of solid waste - the large and high rubber wheels allow it without problems - and continues to go on without too many doubts.

He has almost touched the sky and, for a moment, stops on the ridge of one of those man-made mountains to look down. But in addition to an incalculable surface of metal sheets, and far away the always open and always hot mouth of the Furnace that is just waiting to swallow all of that, he really can't see anything.

He sees, small and efficient, the vehicles that carried the material to dissolve and to build new forms, within a process of death and rebirth worthy of much of human philosophy. Humans, most of them, but also several machines without Intellect.

There doesn't seem to be any kind of further control.

Keito turns to what he has identified to be the steering and tries to go back, following another path that takes him to a different place and shows him new sides - even if on that eternal night it almost seems that everything is the same and nothing has really a recognizable look.

They are just so many robot faces, arms and legs and bionic torsos of what fortunately is no longer able to do anything to humans.

But something unexpected happens, just as something falls under the left wheel: the vehicle grumbles, gasps, under the pouring rain emits a single sigh of protest and then shuts off, for lack of fuel.

Keito stares into space, now even the lights of the plastic cockpit that encompass him illuminate anything beyond the tip of his nose, and in a hysterical moment he randomly moves more levers than he really should. But nothing, nothing happens.

Keito doesn't even have time to panic too much because, with a shrill cry, the vehicle begins to lean to the right, where the ridge of that strange cold mountain swoops down.

A few seconds and everything starts to spin. His head, his shoulder, his knees are randomly slammed against all that hard plastic - his hand desperately clings to the seat belt he managed to buckle, the only vaguely instinctive response he can give.

He rolls, and with that vehicle rolls other metal and other sheets, expanding a noise so deafening and so deep.

Its mad rush stops, but after the duration of a breath something falls on him and crushes the vehicle and almost crumples it. The cockpit protects the man, who does not suffer any damage from that crash: he screams, thus discharging fear, he screams behind broken glasses and his head throbs and bleeds from his temples.

His hand is able to move, after several seconds of absolute immobility, where the priority was to be able to breathe normally. The belt, however, does not unfasten and therefore the man is forced, as he can and as the pain in his whole body allows it, to slip out of that cage crawling, slipping between sheets that have left him alive.

He can't even think too much about the acid rain falling on him as he escapes from the crushed vehicle. He touches with a trembling hand what is around him, without being able to really see it, and only after having freed even the completely crooked foot he thinks about seeking a shelter - he remains crouched on the ground, holding his legs, and under a sheet of metal he remains motionless trying to think about what to do.

Of course, don't stay there, where no technology can reach him, available to interpreters and without any kind of provision. He feels the skin of his hands burning and the will waver like in front of the need for a deep sleep, but this does not stop him.

He faces the rain, covering himself with his own jacket to protect at least the head; he runs as he can, avoiding slabs or other edges protruding from uneven bundles. Sometimes he manages to take shelter for a few seconds under an improvised roof, but he doesn't stop too long.

And in his wandering, incomprehensibly, he sees a light in the middle of that dark sea. He runs, runs in that direction, trips several times and his legs are filled with bruises, scrapes and cuts.

A few meters away he recognizes what should be, approximately, the shape of a small house, the entrance, the walls and the roof. He stumbles again, and that door opens - someone seems to scream as he passes out, while he simply gives up for physical exhaustion.

-Hasumi!

2. The Metal Room - Clash

2. The Metal Room - Clash

He opens his eyes abruptly, finding himself awake almost by chance, and what he finds himself observing, thanks to the light of a crooked lamp placed on the floor, is a room acquired from waste and metal sheets. A simple open space where the walls and ceiling are made up of the remains of the landfill. Cold is gripping his bones, but he could not say if this is an indication of some depth in the ground or if he is simply still on the surface and outside it continues raining uninterruptedly.

At least, what he's been lying on is not made of metal, as well as the blanket of some strange, rough material he was wrapped in.

He tries to sit up on his bed, making the whole structure of that weird bed creak. He hardly recognizes the presence of a table, an elevated horizontal surface, and above that a series of tools that he recognizes with some difficulty, because he hasn't seen such relics for too long.

A hammer, perhaps, a soldering iron and a screwdriver, several odd shapes of wrenches. Unmentionable things submerged in screws and nails, half-open boxes smelling of burnt plastic.

Under that table, metal plates with vaguely recognizable shapes have been placed, more or less in order, whether they are cones or tubes or simple flat rectangular plates.

Keito gets up slowly, because his head is still hurting. He is cold but does not hold the blanket on, considering it too foreign to receive any warm comfort. He approaches the first available wall, looking for the entrance or exit door since he is not really willing to stay in that place any longer.

He instinctively looks for something resembling a doorknob, but he finds nothing but sheet metal with a more or less composed position and rusty pipes.

In one corner, however, something like a large display case opens, inside which is hooked a large anthropomorphic-shaped bust - with head and sketches of arms outstretched - which makes Keito pause for a moment, just to get closer. It stands out not only because it has a more precise shape, but also for the colors of particular materials that fit into elaborate mechanisms.

While Keito is looking with some apprehension at the large clock in his chest one of those arms moves and almost touches him. The man leaps back and shouts with how much air he

has in his body.

-Wah!

In his motion, he bumps into the side wall, and this clash causes not only a loud noise but also the free fall of a piece of metal parting from the wall which makes everything tremble for a few seconds, giving the illusion that that same room can curl up on itself at any moment.

Nothing happens, however, except the rather agitated arrival of a person, emerging from a corner that has mysteriously opened in the wall.

-Hey!

The concern on the face of the red-haired man does not arouse many positive feelings in Keito, who instead gestures with both arms and somehow tries to point at that strange thing, that robot prototype anchored to his skeleton.

-Kiryuu-

-Hasumi.

-Q-that thing's moved!

Kuro is astonished at what he has just heard, and inexplicably for Keito his expression opens and becomes almost amazed - as if he could hardly believe his words but really wanted to. But someone else gives voice to his emotions, behind him.

-For real? Has he moved?

A thin and not particularly tall creature, with strange torn but elegant clothes has come forward, behind Kuro. He has the same emotion in his eyes as the red-haired man, amplified by different degrees.

Keito, however, seems to be looking only at that piece of his skinless face, which exposes a metal skull and a hard plastic eyeball, the color of gold.

Every fear leaves room for wrath in his voice.

-What is that? A robot?

The creature pointed to also immediately modifies his feelings: anger breaks out in his gaze, an unparalleled homicidal fury breaks out. Keito, heedless of the ominous noises coming from the creature's back, presses on.

-Living?

There is so much poison in that single word, so much contempt.

The man is about to take a step forward, in an instinctive gesture denoting his nature always willing to command and impose, when that robot responds to provocation and literally splits into two.

His torso decomposes in the metal arms of a double machine gun and his forelimbs are barrels ready to pour their entire arsenal of lead bullets onto the opponent.

Kuro acts as a human shield to his colleague, and this is the only reason why the other does not open fire - what he lets out is a firm scream, no matter how desperate his gesture and how delicate his position.

-Kagehira, stop!

Keito does not spare him any reprimands, because his soul is overwhelmed by wrath.

-Kagehira? Do you also call him by name?

Neither does Mika, who is speaking on and moving his mouth from his head stuck in his own metal sheets, engulfed and secured inside his open shoulders.

And if for a moment he mediates between them, soon they go for each other.

-He is that Hasumi, right? The Yumenosaki man!

-Where are we exactly, Kiryuu? I demand an explanation!

-His remaining here, together with the Master, is insulting!

-Lucky you, ugly dwarf, I don't have any of my tools with me otherwise-

- I'll tear you apart!

- I'll destroy you!

Kuro screams again, with more determination.

-Enough!

This does not calm their anger, but it restrains their heated quarrel.

Both contenders are well aware of how Kuro is able to terminate both of them and put an end to the dispute in one way or another, even though, perhaps, their rationality is too biased by something more visceral.

In fact, Mika doesn't lower his guns - Kuro turns to him again, trying to hold back his passion.

-Kagehira, please.

He does not move him, and then he tries another solution to which the other responds promptly.

-Kagehira, Itsuki doesn't want bloodshed. You know.

-But he wouldn't even want his house muddled by the presence of such a person!

Keito tries to speak again, but is almost immediately interrupted.

-How dare you-

-He will go away as soon as the storm is over.

He says it with so much confidence that everyone immediately takes it for reassurance and certainty.

A little reticent, Mika returns to his anthropomorphic form: arms, torso and head in their place, and real emotions in the gaze. In a gesture of annoyance, he arranges his dirty clothes better, pulling the hems of that dark jacket covering half of him - in the gesture, he also stretches the tear at the side and the one near the burgundy-colored collar, thus revealing more gray metal .

Keito, safe from the deadly threat, goes for Kuro and points, annoyed, with a hand full of blisters and sores at the creature placed in the corner.

-Kiryuu! I'm certainly not going to wait for more than a second under this roof-

The colleague silences him immediately, cutting off every slightest hope of salvation right there. Thus communicating to him, without even looking him in the eye, the destiny to which he is inextricably doomed, at least for that short period to come.

-I'm sorry to keep you stuck here, Hasumi. But I can't do otherwise.

-Give me the vehicle you came here with! Or come with me!

-There is fuel only for a return trip, in the tank. I cannot go back now, nor can I let you go.

The dismayed tone with which he pronounces those words does not move his colleague but convinces him to change the subject of attack, because on that front he seems so defeated that he cannot make other claims on the contender.

-The mere existence of a cybernetic creature of such complexity is a crime! I have no idea of how it is alive, how it can walk and move, but all of this is totally unacceptable!

He makes the gesture to adjust his glasses on his nose, but finds nothing: he is even more angry.

-Like, indeed, your presence in this place!

Kuro finally turns to him and gives him a look that he has often seen but never had to bear, because it has never been towards him. Perhaps he is still ready for the fight, that brief exchange of words with the robot must have upset him greatly.

However, Keito is not bothered in any of this much, nor in the thoughtfulness in his words.

-If you do this, you make things difficult for me, Hasumi ...

- Should I act differently?

His colleague doesn't say much, for several seconds. He is holding back something, perhaps a piece of truth that is as uncomfortable as it is intolerable for him.

After several snorts, he expresses himself in a simple sentence.

-Kagehira is not completely bionic.

And this, according to the recently confirmed current law, guarantees his survival, because only bionic beings in all their parts have been banished from the capital and only robots with Intellect have been condemned to total repression, whatever their form. But it is enough to have even a minimal percentage of biological cells alive in your body to escape this death sentence.

This is the reason why many of them were saved and managed to escape.

Keito, of course, explodes in all his indignation.

-He was the minion of one of the great Machines.

Kuro says something that hurts his colleague, not because he discovers a weakness that is not even considered as such by the man, but because, voluntarily, he is opposing him with all his conviction.

-You were one like that too, some time ago.

-Before the Purification!

But all that feeling and all that anger are not good for his exhausted body.

The man without glasses ends up bending forward, almost to the ground, and coughing frantically. His head is still throbbing and his body is trembling all over.

Kuro immediately retrieves the blanket he had left on the bed and covers his shoulders, in an attempt to warm him up a little.

-You are not well, are you? I'll get you something hot to drink.

He lifts him without the slightest effort and puts him back on the bed not far from there, watching him relax after a few seconds of strenuous resistance and tension.

Keito closes his eyes, any further vision annoys him - he hears the two go out slowly and close the sliding metal door behind their backs.

He hears several confused noises, some loud some soft, but it could simply be one of the consequences of his headache. More than once his neck bends and he finds himself almost with his chin dangling low, in a position of abandonment in which he still has no intention of indulging. He tries to keep himself busy with a thousand thoughts, but most of them escape him as he tries to catch one, or they turn into daring adventurous images typical of half-sleep.

At least the blanket he's wearing has begun to warm him a little, and his legs have stopped shivering with cold.

Above the words of the two men in the other room, who have not stopped exchanging strong opinions even for half a second, he hears the impetuous roar of lightning. The storm is still fierce outside, reaffirming the need for him to remain under a solid and compact shelter for some time, protecting his entire body from the acidic water falling from the sky. It would be enough to get out of that fortuitous house, from that shelter of metal sheets and go towards the Furnace: surely, he would meet someone human, a guard or a worker in the area, and could then return to his world.

If only he had the strength to feel some other feeling besides anger, a truly remarkable indignation would certainly mount in his soul.

He decides to look up when his head gets too heavy and he feels the real risk of falling asleep without even realizing it. With some effort, he focuses on the case embedded in the wall in front of him, the interior of which is well protected from anything that can touch or even scratch it.

He would like to note more details, because he senses it is very important. That particular position suggests it to him, as does the very detailed form.

Probably, that's the reason why Kuro is in that particular place.

Keito feels a strange homicidal instinct towards that inanimate object, with its face turned downwards - as if in a bow to the spectators, silent and eternal. But a new detail finally comes to his eyes, when he follows the imaginary direction of the mannequin's hypothetical gaze, downwards. A top hat, of dark red felt.

Then the sliding metal door opens and his red-haired colleague appears, waiting for a glimpse of him before entering with a jar and a mug from which hot steam comes out. Keito catches sight of him and says nothing, so that he can move forward and reach the bed where he is lying.

He immediately hands him the soup in the cup.

-Kagehira apologizes for what he did earlier. He didn't really want to react that way.

Keito gives no hint that he was impressed by that: he doesn't really care about the feelings of a machine, even if they are repentant. He grabs the cup slowly, trying not to burn his fingers even more, and begins to sip slowly.

He tastes something indefinite, but at least he manages to warm his stomach.

-How did you get here?

-I followed you, Kiryuu. Lately you acted as if you were hiding the organization of a coup.

He makes a strange grimace and looks up at him, stern. Icy as always - he doesn't need to roll his eyes to be as cold as steel or as hard as iron.

-Instead, I find you here doing things I don't know. Inside a landfill, in the company of a robot with Intellect.

His tone of voice has not softened from the slightest contempt he showed earlier, not the least because he has no interest in hiding his feelings. He has every reason to be irked by their existence, or at least that's what he assumes is right.

Kuro's gaze darkens and who knows what he's considering, in the depth of his eyes. His shoulders just creak when he tenses his muscles - that kind of temperature and especially that kind of humidity are not good for bionic conjunctions of his type, they both know this.

He looks very dejected when he talks to him again.

-You really don't like them, do you?

-In no way. We have already had ample evidence of how dangerous they can be.

-We both know that many of what you call evidence were not true facts.

- They were true facts.

Kuro frowns even more, almost growling.

- Not completely.

They are both right, for different reasons.

Originally true facts, inflated into extremely speculative news, mostly aimed at exaggerating causes and consequences and imaginary plots and who knows how many other things the human imagination has managed to make up.

And if it had been, at the time, simply a question of right or wrong, humanity would have simply split into two and one side would have prevailed over the other.

Reality isn't that simple at all.

Keito still spits his grudge, returning to sip his strange soup.

- The fact remains that that object pointed its weapons at me.

Kuro snorts, sitting better on that corner of the bed and at the same time trying to defend his partner in the other room.

-He felt threatened, he's an old prototype of a self-defense machine, he's built to fight back-

- I know what it is.

The bed creaks under the heavy weight of the red-haired man, moaning loudly.

Kuro frowns at him but then sighs, lowers his shoulders and it seems that his whole figure becomes smaller: he seems really dismayed, discontented and disheartened by the situation he is experiencing.

-I never wanted you to come right here, to see this place.

A fit of anger, not directed at Keito but at the chance that brought them together, makes him raise his voice.

- Least of all now.

Keito watches him fidget and for a few minutes lets him brood in his own silence. There is a part of his brain that considers the whole thing as a great betrayal of his trust and this sets him on fire inside.

More than anything else, all that aura of mystery within which Kuro hides and takes refuge, and which leaves him far away, unable to fully understand what is happening, annoys him more than ever.

However, Kuro is Kuro. The strength of his soul and the ability to remain attached to a certain type of purity give him the strength not to be totally closed to dialogue - at least, not with him.

He lets go a sigh, before speaking wearily.

-Are you working for one of our opposing companies?

-What? No, of course not. I am here for a personal purpose.

-And right here you had to do it?

- There was no other place.

He seems dejected, again. Keito does not know, however, if he really wants to know why he came to consider that place the only refuge capable of protecting him.

Too tired: his head is still throbbing.

He hands him the now empty cup.

-My hands are hurting.

Kuro takes the cup from his fingers and quickly hands him the bottle he brought earlier.

- Here. This ointment is made for this. It won't leave any scars on your skin.

The man gets up for a few seconds to put the cup on the table, and when he goes back to the bed, he sees him looking doubtfully at the package that he's rolling between his palms.

He barely smiles.

- I have personally tested it, don't worry.

But he does not wait for the other to believe him: he sits down again on the bed and, taking the jar of ointment, opens it and begins to medicate the other man, spreading that beneficial ointment all over the surface of his hands. Keito immediately feels the beneficial effect of that rudimentary medicine, and more sighs leave his lungs.

-How long do you think the storm will last?

-I don't know, it can last even weeks. I have taken a few days off to stay here longer.

The man's eyes are captured by the vision of his hands as they continue to massage him, finger by finger, with a truly noteworthy care.

Not even Kuro, it seems, intends to completely close himself to him, and, as always, he reserves for him all the goodness and care he is capable of.

He responds to his gestures, letting himself turn and turn as he pleases, until the job is fully completed.

- Does Kanzaki have anything to do with all this?

-No, absolutely not. Kanzaki is foreign to what is happening here.

-Why then were you looking for him that afternoon?

Kuro hesitates for a few seconds - Keito understands that he is trying to involve the other colleague, the youngest of their trio, as little as possible, yet he doesn't really want to wait for the resolution of his inner dramas.

Thus, he pursues him with a not too soft decision.

-Kiryuu.

Kuro exhales the first real confession of that day, closing his eyes and holding his hands rigid against his.

-He has some knowledge of primal robotics that I don't possess, that's all.

Keito knows it's the truth, he reads it in his face.

Something still escapes him and weighs down all his words, he just can't grasp it, and between stumps of revelations and half words he understands little and reacts little.

He just gets annoyed at these incomplete statements. Even when Kuro finally seems to notice a not too trivial detail.

-Where are your glasses?

-I lost them when I had an accident with that contraption-

-Accident? Have you been in an accident? And when?

-After breaking into the landfill with a fuel vehicle.

This also upsets Kuro, because he feels he has underestimated something related to his decision to follow him and discover the truth he is hiding from him.

Fortunately, however, Keito is still very pale and does not seem able to resist the sleep that makes his eyelids swollen for much longer. Kuro takes advantage of his own apprehension and tries to invite him to calm down, to pass time in silence.

-Maybe you'd better go back to rest now, Hasumi.

He finally releases his hands and lifts the edge of the blanket until it is almost at the level of his chin. He gets up and seems to go out of the door.

-I'll stay here, in case you need anything.

He points to the room, as he says these words, beyond that small entrance. Keito barely hears the sound of anything moving - perhaps the robot named Kagehira - and gestures to him that yes, he really understands what he is saying.

One last apprehensive glance, and Kuro leaves him alone again, in the company of the Master.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!