

Reaper 30

"Another day another hollow," Tanya muttered as she rested her hand on her sword's handle. Standing across from her was a hollow of some type, a mix of bear and bird by the looks of it. Disgusting beast really; emotionless mask was flat against the face and whatever human features may have once adorned the creature and the back half was definitely that of a bear while the front half was some sort of bird. Some form of new griffin then she decided, not knowing her mythological creatures. She should endeavor to try to, considering how many of the hollows tended to mimic such animals.

"Reaper, fight me!" the creature roared charging with its semi-clawed and feathered arm trying to slice through where Tanya stood. Unfortunately for it she was able to flash step behind it, slashing its back as she did.

Some may say that was a little bit underhanded and others would say good job. Tanya would say it was a valid though ineffective tactic. Being that hollows were spiritual creatures often on a level above soul reapers in some ways with their healing abilities simply slicing their back open tended to not actually put an end to them. It might slow them down but it would not kill them so as the creature turned to strike her down she chopped off its hands.

The creature screamed in pain looking at its empty limbs as if unbelieving that its arms ended without hands. Tanya though did not leave it in such a state for long as she simply sliced through its neck. Not having hands to prevent her from doing that did the monster a favor in that way, as it collapsed to the ground quickly dissipating into black muck before dissolving into mist. There was a brief instant where she noted with some consternation a human figure in the muck indicating one of the more interesting things about hollows she'd observed over the years; this one was recent, having only recently turned into a creature of hunger.

Now there was the possibility that the substitute reaper was terrible at his job and wasn't sending as many spirits to the spirit world as possible or maybe she had missed one but something didn't feel right about that. It was very well possible that some more powerful hollow was in the region grabbing up spirits and instead of eating them as was to be expected of their kind it was converting them. Why were they converting hollows, creating weaker monsters in other words. There were many reasons but Tanya was starting to get a feeling she had a good idea already why these things were happening.

Tanya had been in the city for 3 days now and while now training that substitute reaper 2 days in a row annoyingly he was proving to be a fine example of stubbornly successful. No matter how many explosives or tricks she used on him he seemed to be able to take what was being sent at him and figure out how to deal with it. Heck she was half certain she'd accidentally taught

mageblade as his sword had glowed a bit when he attacked one of her mage shields once, breaking it a little bit faster than normal.

Thankfully mageblade was under the category of an empire spell and not a kido spell so technically speaking she had not broken the law technically. But that was besides the point. Over the last two days she had observed quite a bit of information and started working up her report but this information was starting to gather in the back of her mind painting a ugly picture and now that the latest hollow in her city was handled it was time to see if this picture translated well on to the reality of the world she was in.

Sliding her sword into her scabbard she brought up her hand and began working a little bit of kido magic bringing up a map of Karakura Town and Naruki City for good measure.

"Starting to catch on to something now?" Tasha joked from over Tanya's shoulder.

"Are you implying that you caught on to what I've caught onto first?" Tanya asked, raising an eyebrow and looking annoyed at the spectral spirit that was not really there.

"Part of your soul. I see what you see and I come to similar conclusions as you just a bit faster," Tasha said with almost too much self-satisfaction.

Shaking her head Tanya quickly got to work putting parts of the spell to bring up the information she wanted and before long she had a bad feeling about what she was looking at.

What she was looking at was a map of spiritual energy across the region. For the most part it was what she expected, a flat map with some areas of white indicating souls of the living and the dead wandering about and a half a dozen black souls indicating hollows that were popping in and out throughout the city. The fact that there were more attacks probably indicated that they weren't very powerful or were hunting their prey at a reasonable rate. This particular spell could try and be used to hunt those hollows down but the problem remained unless they had already committed to an attack it was kind of hard to track a beast being that they are jumping over into Hueco Mundo which rendered tracking them nearly impossible.

What was annoying and terrifying was the not so infrequent spikes of energy. Inside Naruki City where she was now was a single red spike. Not too tall, not too wild to be expected considering she was using her power sparingly. This is how a typical map should look like when created the way she had done it.

Karakura Town did not look like that. Karakura Town should have maybe two spikes of red one being Rukia the other the substitute.

Well those spikes were there. Rukia's was barely a spike as she could pass for one of the white dots with how flat it was. And hey to be fair the redness of that particular dot was looking a bit pink to her. Something was definitely up with Rukia's powers that need to be investigated a bit more than just it'll come back with time perhaps you'd been exposed to something. She'd have to have a talk with the girl when she got a chance. Ichigo's of course was wildly tall and that might be the problem because it wasn't just Ichigo's red spike on the map there were red dots too.

Tanya estimated maybe a dozen small red dots across the entire map. They weren't moving. They were not living, and they weren't souls. They were remnants of energy released by a massive soul based attack unleashed by a reaper... Ichigo was unleashing so much energy he was basically an uncontrolled Chernobyl event spewing reaper energy across the battlefield and leaving the radiation to blow in the wind across the town.

This was a big problem, how big of a problem was yet to be seen, but she did take note of several spikes of energy from the white dots not as powerful as Ichigo, maybe on the level of Rukia pre whatever the hell happened to her. She assumed that a few of those were the Quincy of the town but there were a couple more than there should be and one of those white dots seemed darker than the others. It could be a fullbringer which is not impossible... Either way though the map was telling a terrible story, one that might explain why the hollows in this region were so active and verdant and Tanya might have contributed to this in a way.

There was a limit on how many powerful soul reapers could enter the World of the Living at one time in a particular region. This limit had been established exactly for the reason she was seeing right now; a Cascade event.

In essence anyone who got in close to these battle zones were exposed to large amounts of reaper energy igniting their spiritual powers, the presence of the Quincy having their own spiritual energy was also inflicting damage on the local population as well. She wouldn't say the entire town would be seeing spirits by the end of the year but she wouldn't put it past that being a possibility either. The Quincy's levels were normal comparatively to be expected by humans living in the world of spiritual energy. It was simply the fact that Ichigo was so powerful with spiritual energy and himself that might be speeding up the process... Might have to have a talk with that [Urahara](#) gentleman about getting a gigai after all, because at this current rate Tanya would need radiation shielding to prevent some local student from developing psychic powers.

"Heck it might already be too late," Tasha chimed in, not improving Tanya's mood with the comment.

Muttering to herself Tanya said, "I should have done more research into what long-term reaper energy does to a local human population."

"Why would you have done that?" Tasha asked. "You haven't had a chance to go to the human world for years."

"Point," she muttered before going on. "Still this is not good. I dare say this is pretty bad. This is the kind of situation that would need government oversight."

"Oh I don't know about that," Tasha said pointing towards the center of the map. "Pretty sure the government doesn't know enough or care about a few people getting spirit powers in this region if that's to be believed."

Following her point Tanya quickly saw what she was talking about. Near the center of the town was what could be best described as a bump of spiritual pressure. This was not living spiritual pressure, it was not souls en masse, it was just generated spiritual pressure. The kind of stuff that would make this region harder to detect things into if they weren't using this particular spell Tanya created.

Tanya didn't even get to say what that meant as Tasha said it for her. "This region's already predisposed for people getting spiritual powers due to the natural wellspring of spiritual energy, so this Cascade event probably happens whenever someone with a large amount of spiritual energy fights in the region."

"Yes, but there's generally not two of them," Tanya pointed out.

"True but as long as you do as you've been doing, fighting on the outskirts of town away from most of the public, you could continue to 'not train' the boy without major issue."

"That may be true but this is not a situation where we can just bury our heads in the sand. The kid has created a Cascade event. Maybe we can talk to Urahara about creating some sort of cleanup crew."

Tasha said with amusement, "In town maybe though I wonder where he is on the map."

"Well he's right over-" Tanya began to point to the general direction of the candy shop when she noticed the dead zone it was in. Oh there were a few spirits walking in and around it, some even walking right up to the shop but the shop itself was completely empty according to her map.

“Why does the shop have a barrier around it to protect people from determining what kind of spiritual pressure is going on there?” she muttered with concern.

She looked at the map and thought intently while rubbing her chin.

“I don't know. Maybe he's hiding something?”

Tanya looked in the general direction of the voice before saying, “I'm paranoid but I'm not that paranoid. No doubt he's on a higher level than we originally suspected. Maybe he's a former Vice Captain or something and getting his spiritual pressure mixed in with all this would screw the place up and start a Cascade event. Maybe he has equipment there that can be used to help Ichigo keep his reaper footprint down.”

Tasha laughed before thinking, “Oh, I'm sure he does. Question is will you be willing to help? We don't have that much money on us I believe after the last three kills?”

Tanya nodded her head, “And I don't feel like paying him hush money but if that's what we need though, Rukia probably already has quite a bit of stockpile from all the kills Ichigo has gotten. Perhaps Ichigo and Rukia would be willing to fit the bill on anything we come up with.”

She could hear the smile on Tasha's lips. “As he said, proper investment strategy, that's something else you can teach the pair.”

Shaking her head Tanya said, “Something an adult should know so if they happen to need a little bit of training on that that's fine by me.” Waving her hands she closed the map and said, “All right, well that's enough guesstimation for now. Let's get to work on dealing with what we were already doing and see if we can't figure out how much damage has really been done by this Cascade event.”

Staring out the window Ichigo wondered if he would actually make it through a day of lessons. For the past month or two he'd had non-stop interruptions it felt like every couple days and it kept getting worse but for the last few days since ‘totally-not-a-teacher’ Tanya had shown up things were quieter.

That kind of spooked him a bit. Oh sure he still had to make a few late night runs to kill some hollows attacking various spirits and sending them to whatever afterlife awaited them. But in the grand scheme of things he was not having to deal with as many hollows during the school day.

Which had meant that for the last few days he'd gotten relatively good marks. That was good because he was kind of worried that he might get in trouble and be sent to summer school of some sort.

He didn't know how well Kon tested and thankfully most of his work was homework so he was able to get it done at a relatively reasonable time but the complications in his life had been strangling his time.

That being said he had to note his last two lessons with her had been probably some of the most scary fights he'd been in so far. He was used to fighting hollows at this point. They were creatures like any other and you could make some predictions of what their goals would be even if they claimed to have other goals than them saying they wanted to fight you and kill you and eat you. Maybe they wanted to fight you just cuz you were in the way. Maybe they wanted to eat you cuz they were hungry. Maybe they wanted to kill you just because they were bastards in their first life. But it all was the same.

Fighting Tanya on the other hand was something else entirely. Sometimes she went for the disarm and sometimes she attempted to drive him up from a particular area with what could be best described as artillery. One time the blade had almost cut his arm off and Tanya only stopped when she noticed she'd cut into his clothing.

Fighting a hollow was fighting uncontrolled fury. Fighting Tanya was like fighting a cold and calculated fury, and with her as a standard he could make some assumptions about the people he'd be fighting. If she was such a monster in battle as to literally plant mines in the ground he could fairly be certain that the other captains he might have to challenge to make it clear that he would support the Soul Society would be just as brutal.

He would need to come up with some new tricks and find some way to deal with any brutal attacks... Perhaps, perhaps there was something he was overlooking though. When he'd first met Tanya she'd stabbed him right after the fight with Grand Fisher energizing him with energy he assumed was a healing kido. Was there a way to use healing kidos to keep you going in a fight?

He had been on his last legs with Grand Fisher. Had he been able to heal himself he might have been able to have ended that bastard before it even got the chance to try to escape. And so far from what he had heard in their discussions Tanya didn't want to teach him any combat spells because that was arming a possible enemy and could get her in trouble with the Soul Society. Did they have similar rules about healing spells? Maybe he was starting to think a little bit too much like Tanya. She seemed to have a knack for rules lawyering her way out of problems and she might be a bad example to follow but maybe he was simply hitting on something that her way of thinking pointed to.

He was scheduled to fight again this evening so he probably would have to ask her if he got the chance and then if she didn't say no or simply said she didn't have the time he could take that as a possible yes. Maybe Rukia could give him a hand? She always said she was good at healing kids so maybe she could teach him one good trick then.

His thoughts were interrupted as someone knocked on his desk causing him to look away from the window and see that he just missed the last 30 minutes of the lesson.

Rukia was standing there looking a bit worried, saying, "Are you alright Ichigo?" Smiling he said, "Yeah yeah I'm fine," before getting up from his desk and stretching out his muscles taking a look around the room before asking, "What's up? We get a call?"

Rukia held up the phone shaking her head. "No no call, though Tanya asked to meet us on the roof during lunch."

"Well that's fine. I wonder what she wants to talk about?"

Rukia shrugged over exaggeratedly unsure herself by the looks of it. All she said was, "What the third seat wants probably has something to do with fighting. That's what she's always wanted since I first met her."

Ichigo raised an eyebrow at that. "How long have you known the third seat anyways?" he asked as he started to move towards the door. In retrospect he'd never really asked Rukia a lot about herself or the people she knew; perhaps he should actually do that more. Considering that if Tanya hadn't basically spilled the beans on the reality of the situation he'd be walking around completely unaware that he and Rukia were in a bit of trouble for their soul reaper activities.

Rukia walked next to him rubbing her shoulder while her thoughts seemed to be trying to figure out the best way to tell the story before she finally said, "20 plus years I guess at this point. I met her not long after her arrival in the Soul Society. She was just a kid then I think, though..." She stopped, seeming to be unsure how to continue as we arrived at the stairs that lead up to the roof.

Ichigo simply nodded, glad to get this information out of her considering it might be useful in the future.

"Even as a kid she was a battle maniac. My first meeting of her included her rising out of a pile of rubble bloody and wounded only to murder the hollow that had put her in the pile. I believe that was also her first hollow kill since she had no idea how to kill it."

“Not bad,” he said before going on, “if you manage to kill a hollow you have to be doing something right after all.”

“Ichigo, I don't think you get it, that wasn't a clean kill and that wasn't a fight. That girl was laughing as she murdered the creature and the hollow was definitely afraid of her.”

“Laughing?” he asked as we almost reached the roof. Looking down towards her he slowed to take it in a bit of a slower speed.

“Giggling might actually be the better word, almost psychotically.” Trying to envision that sent a shiver down his spine. Imagining a girl no older than his sister covered in wounds and blood laughing as she pulled herself from rubble to kill a hollow. Sounded like distilled madness which yes if he'd been there he'd probably have a similar situation of thinking that she was some sort of battle maniac...wait a moment.

Stopping on the stairs he looked down at Rukia and said, “You said she was a kid, but she said she fought in a war. When she originally said that she was old enough I'd just thought she died young or something but that doesn't add up if she was a kid.”

Rukia nodded, “Said something about a German military mage corp but I'm not very familiar with her first life. I've never really asked about it as it's not something that's very polite to do in the Soul Society. Unless you're in a situation where it makes sense to do it then it's best to leave your life before death behind.”

“Okay that makes sense but that doesn't add up. I know I'm not the best at history classes but I'm pretty sure there was no German mage corp and the age of recruitment tended to be 18. I think I could be wrong but even then that's a bit of a low number.”

Rukia shrugged before saying, “I don't know. I don't know what was going on on Earth 100 years ago. I was technically already on my way to the Afterlife by then.”

It just then dawned on Ichigo that he had no idea when Rukia was from in Earth's history. It had never been something that had even been on his list of thoughts before. He guessed he'd just been too busy but he had come to have a general idea that she was older than she appeared. And he never considered that she might be from a period before World War II.

But back on the subject of the mysterious sensei he knew her age did not line up with what he believed he understood about World War I and perhaps World War II. It might be that in the last days they had gotten pretty low on manpower but, something just seemed off about it.

If he had time he'd stop by the library, maybe check out a few books on the period to see if he couldn't take a peek into this try and figure out why it didn't seem to add up to him. It was probably nothing but then again why had she known about Berserk... for that matter he was pretty sure Berserk came out in the late eighties and according to Rukia he would guess she'd appeared in the mid to early eighties in the afterlife.

The story didn't actually add up at all if that was true. He wanted to poke at this a bit but then again Tanya was helping him learn how to fight and he knew not to punch the gift horse in the mouth after all. He would just take note of these things, add them up and maybe when the situation was not as dire as Tanya was indicating he'd ask a few more questions and see if he couldn't find out what the hell was going on.

Shaking his head he said, "Never mind then. I'll worry about this later," before walking up the rest of the way to the roof, opening the door and stepping out into the sunshine of a summer's day. Looking around he saw that no one was out there yet so he moved to his favorite corner, one that had a bit of privacy and leaned against the fencing. Rukia stopped at a machine by the door to the roof to get a drink pack before joining him outside.

As he watched, several other people came up the stairs finding their own places around the rooftop to mingle and enjoy their food. Chad and Keigo were off in one corner, Orihime and Tatsuki off in another, several other groups just all having pleasant high school lives not worrying about the possibility of an angry afterlife kingdom coming to hunt them down...

He needed to lay off being so worried about this stuff. It was affecting his mood a little too much.

Before he could get any more circumspection going Ichigo heard something land on the fence above him before the blonde girl landed next to him.

"Is there any better place to have conversations like this? It seems rather open," Tanya asked, looking around at the gathering people.

"Not on school property. Kind of need to be here to learn after all. Besides, you're the one who wanted to meet up here."

"Well at least you have a good work ethic," the blonde muttered before turning to him. "Ichigo we need to work on your control of your abilities."

"Control? What do you mean?" he asked, wondering why he didn't get a drink before taking his position.

“I mean you are pumping out spiritual pressure in this world at a rate that could be unhealthy for the people around you.”

Rukia raised an eyebrow and whispered, “What are you talking about third seat? He seems completely under control in combat.”

“Yes yes he is but that's not the problem,” Tanya responded shaking her head. “How best to describe this so as to not alarm you.” She looked up in the air and thought before saying, “Have any of your friends recently developed the ability to see ghosts?”

Ichigo shook his head saying, “I don't think so. Why?”

“Because they soon will unless you start being a little bit more in control of your spiritual pressure flow.”

“Wait what? Explain this,” he said, holding the side of his head trying to not get exactly too concerned over this.

“Well it's quite simple, spiritual energy is a bit like radiation only instead of killing you though the more contact you have with it the more likely you are to develop powers related to spiritual energy. For most people it's as simple as being able to see ghosts all of a sudden or maybe not even see, maybe just hear. There are other symptoms but those usually depend on pre-existing conditions that are under wraps, starved out of the ability to actually work until charged up by spiritual pressure.

“Whenever you go into combat you are basically charging up everyone around you with spiritual pressure and in most people this will not be long lasting but if it keeps up the town will develop a bit of a population spike that can see ghosts which is not good from the Soul Society's point of view. They like to keep the World of the Living away from the dead as well as the dead away from the World of the Living. Which is why we're going to need to work on control today at the bare minimum controlling the battlefield.”

Ichigo nodded, saying, “So basically if I'm near people I should be trying to draw the hollow away from them towards an empty field or something so they don't get charged up with spiritual energy and suddenly develop psychic powers.”

Tanya smiled and said, “To be blunt, exactly. That's the minimum you can do and we'll work on trying to figure out if we can teach you to do the maximum which is, well, self-control over the flow.”

Ichigo crossed his arms across his chest and nodded, having an understanding of her concern, and was about to ask how they would train to deal with the spiritual pressure when a voice gasped nearby.

Tanya heard a slightly familiar voice causing all three of the conspirators in that corner to look towards the owner of the voice who had just rounded the corner after coming up onto the roof. Standing there was Akita looking a bit startled to see Tanya though not as startled as Ichigo was as he realized that one of his friends had apparently just developed the ability to see ghosts proving Tanya's point about spiritual pressure.

"Oh hello Miss Ishida." Tanya said, giving a bow to the girl. "I forgot you said you go to this school as well."

Akita stepped forward out of sight of the people on the rest of the roof before saying, "It's good to see you too Tanya. I see that you found Ichigo after yesterday. Did everything work out?"

"Work out is a word for what happened, yes," Tanya said, seemingly evasive for some reason.

Ichigo looked between the two, still trying to figure things out before saying, "How do you two know each other?"

Akita spoke up first saying, "Tanya saved my life when I was a little kid."

That undid his original thought that maybe he'd already screwed someone over. Seems that there was a bit of a story going on here. Looking to Tanya he asked, "You saved her life?"

She waved the question off before saying, "It was years ago. I was on a protection detail for the Quincys and happened to save her grandfather, her, and her brother."

"Brother?" he asked confusedly before saying, "Wait you mean her cousin?"

She looked over at me before waving her hand. "Yes cousin, I really didn't know the family relations. I was simply doing my job. Which reminds me, young woman your cousin ran into me yesterday and told me that you've been moonlighting and protecting the town against monsters in some way. May I remind you that that can get you in trouble with forces beyond your control? Please stay out of Soul Reaper business unless the threat is to you directly." She said that last part while giving Akita a death glare that seemed to indicate not to say anything about the matter but 'yes ma'am'.

“That's not going to work,” Ichigo muttered, looking away only to hear a response from Akita.

“I just want to help people like you helped me.”

“Yes I get that it's a good thing to help other people most of the time,” Tanya said, “but putting your own life at risk has consequences especially when you are a Quincy.”

Rukia spoke up then asking a question Ichigo had been wondering, “What's a Quincy?” Which got her a look from Tanya that would kill her he thought.

“What's a Quincy? What's a Quincy!? Did you pay no attention to your history lessons during your time at the soul college?” she asked incredulously.

Rukia simply shrugged before saying, “I paid as much attention as necessary. I just never heard the word Quincy I guess.”

“The Soul Society exists because we fought a war against the Quincy,” Tanya said harshly, looking so infuriated that she might pull the hat off her head and throw it at the ground as if she was some stereotypical cowboy.

"Oh, oh right," Rukia said, seeming to have remembered something that she wasn't sharing right away. Finally Ichigo just started to get annoyed with not having all the information so he spoke up. "All right, let's take this from the top, hi Akita good to see you," he said, giving her a wave. "How long have you been able to see ghosts?"

“Um, all my life. Sorry for never mentioning this. Dad just said it's best to not talk about it,” she said in response.

He nodded as he met her father once or twice and knew that he tended to be a bit protective of her then said, “That explains that. Now, war against Quincy, why was there a war against the Quincy?”

Tanya spoke up first on that one, “Different ideologies on how to deal with hollows. Soul Society believes we should be the ones who handle sending the dead to the afterlife. We have rituals and all this so it works perfectly fine.

“Quincy believe that they should be able to defend themselves for the most part though some of them believe that it should be their job. At least they did a thousand years ago and their particular method doesn't send souls to the afterlife. It just destroys the ghost so a hollow killed by a Quincy ceases to exist completely. This supposedly creates an imbalance between the worlds and

that supposedly would result in a collapse of the universe or something. The details around the exact nature of what the Soul Society believed at the time are a bit muddled considering the human population has expanded quite a bit since 1,000 years ago. Anyways there was a war, reapers won, and we basically dictated a treaty where the Quincy couldn't use their abilities for hollow hunting with I think some exemption for self protection."

Ichigo nodded along as Tanya spoke before saying, "That's a very detailed answer and I thank you for it," before looking at Rukia and saying, "Could have used that a couple times."

Rukia shrugged before saying, "I told you what you needed to know. The more information you know the worse it is."

Tanya nodded, "She makes a good point though in this situation it doesn't matter. Quincy's are not technically part of the Soul Society so talking about them is not a breach of any laws. Now that I've shared a bit of info, how do you and Akita know each other?"

"Oh we went to the same karate class when we were kids," Akita said. "Me, Tatsuki, and Ichigo have been friends to one degree or another since then."

Tanya shrugged, saying, "Don't know any Tatsuki, don't care, all that matters is you didn't know Ichigo before getting your powers right?"

Akita shook her head saying, "No, why?"

"Just confirming that a recent problem is not a long-standing one. Anyways, much as it's nice to see you again Akita, this is soul reaper business. You should not be getting involved in it. Go hang out with your friend Tetsuki or whatever."

"But I want to help."

"You can help by preventing the normal people from getting involved in these conversations. I'm sure Ichigo does not want to look like a crazy person talking to the wind right?"

He nodded agreement to that though that was not why he wanted Akita out of this.

"Fine," she said with a pout before walking off.

Shaking his head, Ichigo just said, "Thanks for getting her out of this whole situation. It's for the best. She was terrible at fighting for what I remember from that class."

Tanya scoffed and said, “No problem. Now back to the main problem that we do have to deal with. Getting you in a situation to prevent unleashing utter chaos in this town by allowing people to see ghosts. Today we'll meet at the empty field and have a spar and then I will offer a few tricks for trying to control your spiritual pressure and see if that doesn't take. That's it as it seems to me that's all it takes with you to set you on the right path.”

She didn't look at Rukia, but pointed at her and said, “You are going to go to Urahara and see if he's got anything that's going to help lower the pressure Ichigo's putting out to make sure this situation doesn't become worse than it is. Who knows how long until people start seeing or hearing ghosts? If we don't do anything it might already be too late for all I know.”

Rukia gave us a salute and said, “Yes third seat, I will do that.”

“Good good,” she said as she started walking towards the ledge before stopping. “By the way I will be putting together an unofficial report at the end of the day to be sent back via hell butterfly. If you have anything you wish me to send to your captain let me know before it gets sent out tonight, understand?”

“Yes third seat,” she said, still holding that salute. She then dropped it as Tanya nodded in her direction and jumped over the 6 ft chain link fence to the ground below the school.

Rukia let out a sigh of relief and she said, “Well hopefully everything goes well.”

“I can only hope,” he said, still pondering the complex chain of events that apparently had led to all of them knowing each other. Very small world that seemed right? Perhaps Tanya's paranoia was rubbing off on him.

Building a gigai was not a very hard process. At least not very hard when you've prepared most of the materials and even constructed a few base models in waiting.

Granted, if the local police ever broke into the candy shop and found their way into one of the basements that looked particularly like a morgue he'd imagine he'd have a lot of questions to answer about all the bodies that have no features in there but Kisuke doubted that would ever happen.

For one he had done a pretty good job making sure the police were not interested in the shop. For another, finding some of the secret doors in the shop would be an amazing test for someone who doesn't have spiritual energy or the sight to see it. But that's besides the point, frankly. Building a

gigai was damn easy when you had everything prepared ahead of time. All you needed to do was shape the body to fit the spirit and maybe add a little bit of glamor to the whole thing to make it be able to pass off as the age required.

As a result creating a body for the blonde third seat who's been poking around was easy enough, getting the clothing had been a bit of a task on such short notice but not impossible and he managed to pull that off quite easily in fact. Really the hardest part of the job was falsifying records for the body as the living had such nice examples of this like keeping birth certificates and driver's license and student IDs; things you needed in order to operate in the World in the Living. And making documents that would pass muster was pretty hard but not impossible, not when you've had a hundred years to work on it and built a little bit of a stockpile of documents, records and other examples to use in the creation of these false identities.

Really that was the only thing that put his candy business at risk but if one of them were ever stupid enough to ever get arrested it was always a possibility that the paper trail would lead back to him. So far that hadn't happened though and he did his best to make sure that it would never happen by cleaning up a lot of mistakes.

Now either way as a result he had a body ready for Tanya. Well 90% ready. He was still trying to decide if he should put in the one little mechanism that would trap her in there and slowly drain her. He had very little detail on how this might be a bad idea as the third seat going missing could be brushed off as lost to a hollow unless there were a lot of people connected to them. He did not need them poking around here. He needed to know exactly what he was dealing with before he made a mistake as things were a little too close to the end game to screw up now.

Sighing Kisuke leaned back stretching his back out before walking away from the body and climbing up a ladder to the main candy shop. Everything that could be done with it had been done and any small details would be filled out when and if Tanya decided to claim it.

Till then he simply walked up behind Ururu here who had been using a broom to clean out some dirt from the building and tapped her on the shoulder. "Hey Ururu, mind going downstairs and dressing the body in a Karakura High School uniform for me?"

"Yes sir," she said in her gloomy way before walking past him, happy to go help him out with work around this store.

He smiled as he watched her go then shook his head before moving further into the candy shop, heading for a spot behind the register where he could watch TV for a bit. He'd been working on and off for the last 2 days on this project and still hadn't heard anything from the cat and he wasn't liking it. Hopefully she turns up soon and maybe she'll be able to give some details on

this Tanya character. They had been gone for over a hundred years but the fact of the matter was people didn't rise through the ranks that quickly usually in the Soul Society. There's always rumors of a person well before they take the position they have.

Then again Rukia was a bit of a showing that that wasn't always true. He had never heard of **Rukia Kuchiki** before though he was plenty familiar with their clan, which last time he checked did not have a female daughter, just a male son.

One that probably was well on his way to becoming captain of a division and was one of his deeper worries about the whole operation. If he had any concern for his sister and decided to show up and look around then that could throw a wrench into things a bit. The fact he hadn't shown up yet was a good sign. What it was a sign of was still up in the air. Perhaps Rukia was a problem child, perhaps it was a simple expansion of the clan, or perhaps there was just something that he didn't know... Which was an exciting prospect all in itself and something he could discover if he felt like it.

As Kisuke began to sit down the subject of his thoughts actually walked through the door looking around before spotting him and walking forward. "Good morning Rukia," Kisuke said with a smile, taking a fan out of his pocket to blow some wind in his direction. It was a hot day after all and the shop was an open air place.

"Good morning Urahara," she said with a smile stepping forward and she looked around at the shop.

"What can I do for you this fine day?" he asked, wondering why she'd shown up. "Got quite a bit of kills I need to know about?"

"No no, just on here on the orders of the third seat."

"Oh," he said simply and with a raised eyebrow. So the third seat was giving orders now. He wondered what that was about, "Well that's interesting," he said out loud. "What order has she put you up to?"

Clearing her throat she began by saying, "Apparently, she's taking note of a fact that Ichigo puts out a large amount of spiritual pressure during fights and that the town itself puts out a lot of spiritual pressure and is worried that this could lead to what she's calling a Cascade effect where people just start sprouting the ability to see spirits randomly."

"Well now that's an interesting theory," he said out loud. Internally though he said, 'Smart girl. This was something I had been worried about and taking efforts to try and mitigate unbeknownst

to both Rukia and Ichigo.' He had already placed a few barriers around Ichigo's home to try and dampen the spiritual pressure coming from him as well as engaged in a few clean up operations though he'd done this less out of the goodness of his heart and more of the hope to keep the Soul Society from poking around. He had been doing this quite often and it seemed to be crazy. He was even considering sending Tessai over to their school to put a few barriers around that in hopes to mitigate it as well.

Either way though this presented an interesting opportunity. Turning towards a hallway he yelled, "Hey Jinta go into storage area three and search for a bracelet in rack 7!"

"God it's her again," the voice of Jinta echoed, sounding only a bit annoyed that he was being given a job.

Turning back to Rukia he explained. "I have a bracelet that theoretically could dampen the output of powers while inside a human body. I've got no idea if it will work but I'll give it to you for a fair price so at least give it a try." Honestly it probably wouldn't work but he was hoping for maybe a placebo effect. An 'if you believe it works it would help you make it work' sort of thing. If it did work then that was good. If it didn't work and he still was able to control his spiritual pressure to keep it from leaking all over then he did it all on his own and yet he could still take credit. A win-win for Kisuke Urahara.

She smiled and said, "Thanks. I'll get that to him while he's training later to make sure he has something to work with."

Nodding absentmindedly, he stopped and looked up, "Training? Why is he training? Ichigo had not been training that I've been assured of. You've been fighting monsters, yes but why would you all of a sudden be interested in training?"

Rukia rubbed the back of her neck before saying, "Tanya kind of told him about how serious a situation we're in technically with the whole substitute reaper thing and explained that the only way to not get us in trouble would be to prove his worth to the Soul Society."

The smile on his face melted away as he took this information in. That was not what he had expected to hear. On one hand the fact that Tanya was having him train to prove his worth to the Soul Society meant that she well and truly intended for this information to make it to the Soul Society and if that happened, well people would start digging and they would dig up the fact that Rukia was currently unable to use her abilities because she was trapped in a gigai with her soul mingled with the Hogyoku.

The game was thoroughly up if that happened. Which meant he might have to make her disappear after all though to do that he would need more information if that was even possible. He couldn't make someone disappear if everyone would go looking for them.

‘Well ain't that interesting,’ he said in thought before continuing by asking, “It's been a while since I've been to the Soul Society. What do you know about this Tanya character? Are they trustworthy?” ‘Are they an agent of Aizen?’ was the real question he wanted to ask, but that could wait for now.

“Is Tanya trustworthy?” Rukia said before she nodded. “Yeah she's trustworthy, she was a member of the 11th before joining the 10th and was held in high regard by their captain.”

“Huh, so she's a fighter type then? All brawn, no brains?” That seemed unlikely as he said it but he wanted to see her reaction.

Rukia shook her head before saying, “No, more like she uses her brains to augment her brawn. She got into the 11th because the captain of the 11th asked for her from what I know. Something about seeing the fighting spirit in her.”

He nodded in understanding, saying, “Brawn and brains, not a bad combination. Surprised she wasn't part of the fifth division.” A simple question trying to fish if there was any connection to Aizen to see if she was a pawn of his or an independent one moving about on the board just causing a little bit of mayhem by being there.

Rukia shrugged saying, “I don't know much about her career, really. All I know is she was part of the 11th and now she's part of the 10th. We have a connection through a friend of hers in the 13th and her girlfriend owns a series of coffee shops throughout the Soul Society.”

“Oh?” he said before asking, “is that girlfriend as a girl who is a friend or the other version?”

Rukia's cheeks turned a little bit pink as she responded, “I don't pry into people's personal lives like that.”

“Damn I could use some gossip. That's unfortunate,” he said, leaning back looking down the hallway and wondering where Jinta was with that bracelet before leaning forward again. “Don't get to talk much with the people who drop off loads of equipment and it's always rather straight to business with them. I think they prefer being in the Soul Society more than here.” In reality most of the stuff he had were things he'd stolen before fleeing to this world or had traded here but he'd given her the impression he was an operative of the 12th so he was going to keep that impression going.

“I've heard rumors that the 12th doesn't like her if you're that interested.”

‘That *was* interesting,’ he thought before he leaned forward. “Really now? Why would the 12th have a problem with someone who's intelligent and got a brain? I know there is some competition between divisions but that seems like a non-issue.”

Rukia shrugged before saying, “Apparently she may have complained about paperwork being dumped on the 11th that almost resulted in a Quincy dying. There's no exact information on the matter but supposedly she's been blacklisted from getting any tech help from them ever since.”

Black listed from the 12th. Good to see Kurotsuchi was as assholeish as ever but there was something interesting there. “Really? Quincys? They're still around? I would have thought they'd gone extinct a long time ago I'm sure.” A measured tone would make it impossible to tell he was lying on that matter. He knew exactly two Quincys due to prior experiences in the World of the Living, maybe more. They hadn't checked up on them in a while so they could have had families for all he knew.

“Yeah we actually just ran into one today, only reason I remember this story to begin with since most of the details had faded until this came up. All I knew was she'd found some sort of paperwork snafu that had nearly broken some ancient treaty but apparently she was involved in rescuing Akita Ishida from a hollow I guess, so there's probably more to the story than I know about.”

“Really now,” Urahara said, rubbing his chin as he thought this through. Up to this moment he had been working under the idea that she was either an unintentional pawn moving about the board causing problems, or a member of Aizen's party. But if she was a member of Aizen's party she had very little connection to him as far as most people could see and the fact that she'd gone out of the way to rescue a Quincy of all things, well that didn't sit right. If Aizen had ordered her to rescue a Quincy then that Quincy would have disappeared into whatever his evil plans happened to be.

So the connection between her and Aizen seemed tenuous. Perhaps she wasn't a random pawn moving about causing trouble and perhaps she wasn't a member of the enemy's forces. Perhaps she's a player who doesn't know what she's playing.

If that was true though he would need to play careful himself. If the connections Rukia mentioned were Tanya's own agents then that means that she was the head of an organization in its own right that infiltrated the whole society and that would cause a stink if she just disappeared.

No, he needed to be careful about this and have a conversation with her about possibly not getting Rukia back in the Soul Society. How to do that though?

Shaking his head he saw Jinta coming up with the box containing the bracelet. “Found the item bossman.”

“Well thank you,” he said, taking the box and opening it this time to make sure it was the right item. He's not going to let another mod soul incident happen again. Once he was sure that this was the right item he handed it over to Rukia and said, “I'll just subtract this from your next kill. Oh by the way, are you planning to see Tanya tonight?”

Rukia took the box out of his hand and nodded an affirmative, “You can say that. We've been meeting in the evenings for the past few days discussing the issue at large so yeah I can talk to her. Why?”

‘Careful not to say why they were meeting, eh?’ he noted, suspecting that the training mixed with the meetings were very connected indeed but he kept those thoughts to himself. As he nodded he said, “Tell her to come by my shop. I have a thing here she might want to see as well as some stuff she might want to know that could help her with dealing with this whole enlarged spiritual energy issue.”

Rukia nodded in understanding before saying, “I'll do that. I'm sure she'll be glad to have help with this whole thing.”

“Well I'd be glad to help. Now have a good time out there! And don't cause too much trouble,” he said, waving her off.

She shrugged and put the box under her arm as she walked out of the store.

He smiled as he watched her go before sighing and trying to figure out what his next plan should be probably. He should talk to Tessai to see what he thought about this whole thing. Maybe he had an idea that Kisuke had missed.

Writers note: and here chapter 30 long awaited, but finally getting done, i'm ahead on mando fic by five chapter so currently getting trying to get ahead on this fic already writend chapter 31 last week and working chapter 32 this week. So hopufuclly there wont

be 30 days between updates. That being said... **LOOK WE GOT ART!** Also things are moving along this chapter, tanya getting graphs of the situation, and Ruckia warning ishigo to be careful of Tanya, hat and clogs is moving forward with counter plans. What will come of all this! All time will tell.

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