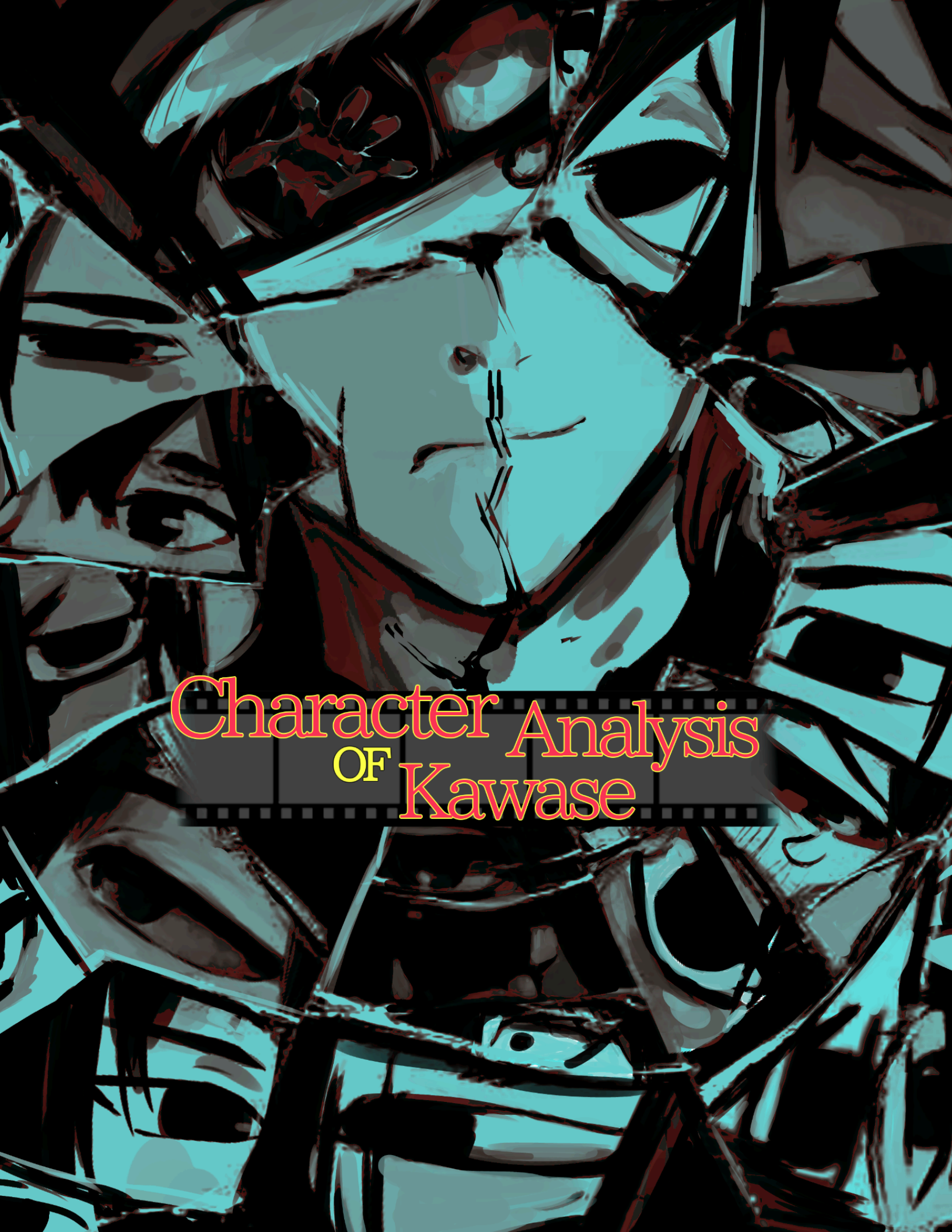

Character Analysis
OF
Kawase

Introduction

Hello everyone. The point of this document is to offer my collection of thoughts and theories of Kawase's childhood and his family situation. I should start by saying that I, NarWool, also had an interesting childhood. As a result, I have a strong interest and care about characters like Kawase. I'm sure a lot of you guys can relate.

In this document I will explore three sections. The first section will be about Kawase's youth. This will be about his family situation, and what I believe his everyday life would have been like. Then I would like to discuss emotional contamination and the contagion heuristic. For my third and final section, I would like to discuss the 'two versions' of Kawase, and how some fans prefer one version of him over the other and what this means.

Emotional contamination is an affliction that I personally have also suffered from. It is a poorly understood disorder that is often attributed to OCD, even when the patient does not exhibit other OCD signs. Because we are still in the early era of psychology, conflicting information exists about it online. I'll do my best to explain how I think it affects Kawase.

With that being said, as a disclaimer, not everything I say below will resonate with everyone. There's a lot of diverse experiences out there, and no two situations are exactly alike. Even though two people can both say, *'I relate to Kawase!',* they remain two totally different people. Two people can relate to someone and still have a chasm of differences between them. Everyone experiences pain and love differently- by describing how I see Kawase, I don't want to dictate how you see him.

When I first heard the saying, *'comfort the disturbed, and disturb the comforted'* I was deeply moved. I think Adelta, and Kurosawa-sensei as an author, greatly exemplify that saying. I don't consider myself a deep or meaningful person- I'm just someone that likes talking and writing- but I still want to explore dark themes.

I love giving my own opinion, but I also love hearing other people's opinions. I made it so anyone can leave comments on this document. Please feel free to leave your own opinion or ideas, even disagreements! Or if you would rather, you can reach out to me. My email is 8d.xd.83@gmail.com, and my discord is WhaleWatcherAnon.

I hope this document offers a different perspective for you.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Table of Contents 2
Content Warning 3
About Kawase's Youth 4
- Home life & School Life 4
- Grandfather 9
- Mother & Puppy 14
- Father 18
- Doctor Umezawa 29

Timeline 34
Emotional Contamination & The Contagion Heuristic 36
The Two Versions of Kawase 42
Closing Thoughts 49
Reading Recommendations 51
Credits 52

Content Warning

Please regard the following list with care. I put them in order of most relevant to least relevant. This document contains the following subjects.

- Descriptions of childhood sexual abuse
- Descriptions of incest (physical and covert)
- Sexual assault
- Physical assault
- Domestic abuse / domestic violence
- Familial abuse & violence
- Artist's depiction of bruising (Kawase & mother)
- Abandonment
- Murder
- Alcoholism
- Mentions of victim blaming
- Mentions of suicide
- Mentions of self harm

About Kawase's Youth

Home life & School Life

A small overview of life in Aizu in early 1900.

After writing extensively for the fandom, I became curious about what the school system in Japan was like during the Meiji and Taishou era. I have a textbook on modern Japanese history from university, and there's sections that mention school curriculum at the time, but I wanted to apply what I could learn to *Hashihime.* I've also seen a few films about that era, like Yumeno Kyuusaku's *Shoujo Jigoku,* and the school scenes from the film are greatly helpful for picturing the setting in my mind. But despite my research, I had never done much to map out a timeline. My mind is rather stunted when compared to the average person, but this is what I've come up with.

Most children would start attending school around six years old, and elementary school lasted six years. Then they would attend middle school, and some eventually attended high school. It was common for elementary school to be mixed gender, but for middle and high school to be split gender (with many girls not attending higher education).

Despite being somewhat more rural, Aizuwakamatsu seemed to have a fairly competent schooling system, which I suppose would be necessary if Kawase were to ever hope to get into Tokyo Imperial University. No matter how smart he was, without access to the proper curriculum, he couldn't have learned anything. It was necessary for medical students to learn German language at the time, because the medical classes were frequently in German (the alliance between Germany and Japan growing in the early 1900s). High school-aged Kawase would be very interested in learning German for this reason, and so he would probably have to excel in school so he could have access to these opportunities.

But first comes elementary school. In more rural areas, schools often had only one teacher for multiple grades. I imagine our characters would have lived closer to Aizuwakamatsu proper, which would mean it was likely they had one teacher per grade, and school would have been co-ed with girls. Many schools at this time did not have uniforms, but bigger schools did. I've seen many fan depictions of school-aged Kawase and his friends in gakuran, but he might not have actually had a uniform until university. If he didn't have a uniform, he would have just worn a kimono with geta or

straw boots. One of the recent doujinshi comics I've seen depicts Kawase in these straw boots, and I was so excited to see it.

Schools at this time also had clubs and activities even back then, albeit not with as much variety as these days. Baseball was just getting popular in Japan, but kendou was already a staple. While girls in school practiced sewing and homemaking activities, boys would be made to partake in physical education. It seems to me like it was somewhere between gym class, and young military training. Many of the exercises performed by boys at the time were based off of military drills.

Students would read, memorize, and recite moral texts aloud. Moral texts were on concepts like filial piety, the importance of revering and respecting the emperor, and the necessity of loyalty to their country. Japan was becoming more and more nationalized at the time, and so it's not any wonder how children like Hanazawa could grow up believing wholeheartedly in their mission, although that's a conversation for another document.

As a fun aside, I would like to mention that I found out that sports day/undoukai already existed at the time. There's supplementary material that mentions one day when Tamamori is staying after school for supplementary classes, he spots Kawase running on the track outside. It seems that Kawase lost a race to another student, couldn't stand this fact, and wanted to try and get faster. He has a competitive streak in him, and perhaps he finds losing to anyone to be embarrassing.

So that's what school would have been like for Kawase (and all of his friends as well). But what about his home life? And, I don't mean to talk about his exact predicament just yet, but what was home life like for a boy his age in that region? I did a little more research just so I could better understand life at the time.

The nuclear family, consisting only of parents and children, is a modern concept, and it was not widespread at the current time. Instead, most households would contain the paternal grandparents, and would be multi-generational. Respect flowed upward; the eldest males were the heads of the household, with younger and female counterparts being beneath them. Grandfathers, (or perhaps any great-grandfathers) would be the head of the household, with their eldest son beneath them.

Having a male heir was very important to families to preserve the family name. Without a son to continue the family name, any property or finances could not be inherited and kept within the family, and any family trades or business could not be passed down. This could be seen in the game in Hanazawa's family- he had seven older sisters and his parents stopped having children when they had him, the first male.

However, this can also be seen later in the game when Ikeda Terutora. I have seen some western comments online say things that make me think they find Ikeda

adopting Kawase very strange- but at the time, adoption into a household (engumi) was very common. Adopting adult males (even ones the family didn't know well) was a strategy used to preserve the family line. It was a mutualistic symbiotic relationship where the adopting family's name and assets were secured, and the young man being adopted would have more wealth and better access to education than the family he left behind. Kawase's situation was a little unique precisely because he didn't have a family to leave behind, and he certainly had no reason to reject Ikeda's offer... but I'll touch more on this later.

The importance of the eldest male in the family home meant that women did not have much in the way of rights. Any women who would end up in neglectful or abusive homes could try to appeal to any of their old household members (on their side of the family) to try and help them, but they didn't have many legal protections. We find out that Kawase's mother ran away with another man, but it is likely that she didn't have many other options. I'll discuss her and grandfather in more detail below.

But as for the common Japanese house itself, what was it like? Japanese house walls were thin, with many of the inner walls being made out of rice paper screens. This was extremely poor for soundproofing, and that meant that there was very little privacy. Many families slept together on the floor, and separate bedrooms were not common. With that being said, Kawase was an only child. After grandfather passed away, it would have been just him and Father in the home. Depending on the time in Kawase's life, he may have slept separately from his father- especially if his father found him as an eyesore or irritant.

Aizu is cold compared to the rest of Honshuu, and there is a good bit of snow comparatively. In winter it would be preferable to have been inside the center of the home where the hearth would be. In a normal family situation, it's almost certain that this is where most young children's time would be spent, with any mother and grandmother to help watch the children.

Families would eat a lot of rice, barley and millet, and they of course had miso soup and pickled vegetables. Meat was a rarity at the time, something that can be hard to imagine from our modern perspective. There were things like fish, noodles, wagashi, and a plethora of other Japanese foods, but the most common and cheapest was rice, barley and millet. Rice wine was a common drink for adults, and it seems like many men would go to izakaya to eat or drink.

The expectations for children back then and these days are also quite different. If your family were farmers, you would have to partake in farm chores, and if your family were tradesmen, you would have to partake in the trades to learn them. There were many expectations and less protections for children back then, but they perhaps

had more freedom when they went outside to play. Children were not as supervised, and they were often left to their own devices.

And that should just about wrap up the logistics of his childhood. Maybe this information is obvious to native fans of *Hashihime,* but I didn't have much exposure to the specific culture of Aizu at the time. I hope that by gathering this information here, it could help anyone else who has limited background information.

It's important to understand what life in general was like. It's hard to get the story straight in your head if you don't have any context. But now that we know this much, we can contemplate the family situation with the background information we need.

As for family dynamics, I've done a lot of research since I became an adult myself so I could understand my own situation better, although most of my research is limited to the English-speaking sphere. Everyone's situation is different, but with the information that is given to us in the game, we can actually make quite a few conjectures. In some ways, human emotion is surprisingly similar across cultures and eras, so there are many similarities between Kawase's story, and those that I know have occurred in real life.

So with that, let's consider his family.



Grandfather

The progenitor of his troubles.

When we think about who it was that was first in Kawase's life, the answer would of course be his biological family. Not a lot is stated in concrete terms about his family situation, but that is natural- *Hashihime of the Old Book Town* is a story centered around Tamamori and his friends, it wouldn't make sense to expand upon a single character's home life. I also think any expansion upon Kawase's home life in particular might not have fit the game's overall tone.

As mentioned in the section of the home life, the most powerful figure of a home should have been the eldest male, while all the other members of the household should have been subjected to his will. In the Segawa's case, this man should have been grandfather.

The man described as Kawase's grandfather is very likely Kawase's father's father (father on the paternal side). Since the grandfather was a carpenter and the family trade was passed down paternally, it is unlikely he was from the maternal side. So, this man was father's father. What kind of man was grandfather? Although we don't know a lot about him, this is stated:

> **Kawase: "I come from a long line of carpenters... They built your house and Hanazawa's clinic. ...My family even built Minakami's storehouse."**
>
> **Tamamori: "...I see."**
>
> **When I was younger, I'd seen a strange man standing in front of my house.**
> **He'd looked up at the ceiling, run his hand against the wall,**
> **and opened and closed the windows over and over again, then left without a word.**
>
> **He always had a hammer in his hand.**
> **When I rushed over to my grandmother, yelling, "He's a youkai!" she scolded me and told me he was the old carpenter.**
>
> **He ended up a senile old man who couldn't even remember what he had done the day before,**
> **but he'd go around inspecting the buildings he had built himself.**

It was always on rainy days,
probably because those were the days carpenters took off.

His carpenter spirit would be awakened.
Anyway, I'd thought he was a ghastly old man.

Kawase: "My grandpa told me a long time ago
that he saw two of Minakami's father before."

Tamamori: "...!"

Kawase: "One of them could guess when the rain would end. He could predict storms.
...He told me the brewery was connected to another world somewhere.
And that one of them had come from the very near future."

Tamamori: "..."

Kawase: "It's a creepy story, isn't it? My father told me they were the ravings of a senile old man...
I didn't believe him either at first, of course.
...But now, the truth is all inside my head."

Tamamori: "K-Kawase..."

Kawase: "Let's stop calling each other by our nicknames."

The text is somewhat ambiguous to me, as it suggests that *'his carpenter spirit would be awakened on rainy days',* which implies that he's still working as a carpenter (because he needs it to rain so he can have a day off to go around and inspect the homes), but it also implies that he was *not working,* because if his spirit is *awakened* when it rains, it sounds more like he was retired because of his senility.

Grandfather probably wasn't working full time like Kawase's father was, but he was still capable of doing something he had done his whole life- carpentry. Tamamori calls the grandfather creepy, but I think that might just be how he, as a child, sees someone suffering from dementia. Tamamori's grandmother seems unoffended by his presence, and she would presumably be from the same generation as him.

Something I think that is interesting about the above interaction is that it seems like Kawase's father was not on good terms with his own father. *'My father told me they were the ravings of a senile old man…'* comes across as a derogatory statement about his father. Even if the grandfather was senile, calling his words 'ravings', it implies that father didn't hold any respect for him.

So it appears that father doesn't like his own father, nor does he respect him. Does this mean anything? Maybe… In my mind, there's a few possibilities:

- Grandfather was abusive to father in his childhood. It's been proven that abuse is generational, and several people who are abusive were abused by their own family when they were younger. Perhaps grandfather mistreated father in some way that made him hate his father.
- Grandfather was *not* abusive to father, and father's abusive nature stemmed from his own nature, or perhaps a traumatic incident altered father's mind. Given that he's messed up for his own reasons, father doesn't like grandfather.
- Being that grandfather was no longer mentally capable, father bather likely begrudged him for becoming a burden on the family. Grandfather couldn't remember what he had done the day before, and is senile. He probably required a lot of care, and it is evident that Kawase's father is not a great caregiver.

Father and grandfather didn't seem close, but were they ever close? We cannot know for certain, but my interpretation is that they were perhaps never close. My reasoning for this lies within Kawase's indifference for his grandfather. I believe that if grandfather had been close with father, Kawase would have had a much stronger negative reaction to him.

It doesn't seem like Kawase was too close with his grandfather, but he doesn't necessarily seem to resent him like he does his mother or father. I believe that *if* grandfather had been some manner of abuser to his son, that he would have *also* been abusive to his grandson. My reasoning for this is that I don't believe that if grandfather were abusive, he would have spared Kawase. If grandfather was violent, or if he was a pervert, why would he only inflict that violence on his son when he was a boy? Arguably, if grandfather's mental faculties had deteriorated, his impulse control would also be lower, he would be quicker to anger, and he would be more violent. Therefore, in his senile years, he should be more likely to abuse children if he had a propensity to do so, because his self-control would have waned.

But we don't hear anything about grandfather abusing Kawase, physical or otherwise. I think Kawase would speak a lot more negatively about his grandfather, and he would be a lot less trusting of his words on time travel as an adult.

I also question how long grandfather must have lived in Kawase's life. We don't know for sure, but grandfather mentioned seeing two of *Minakami's father.* This wording suggests that Kawase already knew Minakami and knows his father. And it's not that I think Kawase's grandfather called Minakami's father *'Minakami's father',* but I think that Kawase must have been aware that Mr. Suizenji is Minakami's father by that point- meaning that he must have already met everyone at the hospital.

It is likely that Kawase's grandfather at least lived until he was a five year old boy. Grandfather lived past mother leaving the family home, but he definitely died before father did. So he would have had to die sometime between early 1905 and June 1912. With that being said, he probably passed away sooner rather than later, because Tamamori states that Kawase was 'left to live alone with his father for a long time'.

My mother also suddenly vanished from our village when I was younger.

"Thanks to" losing my parents, all the adults were nice to me, and no one ever teased me or let me realize how unfortunate I was.

It was that sort of pitiful upbringing that gave me this wretched personality.

All I could think was how lucky I was.

Kawase and I were similar in that way. His mom also ran away when he was younger, and he was left to live alone with his father for a long time. So, like me, he was also raised with the charity of other adults.

Regardless of his lifespan, grandfather wasn't any help to Kawase. In fact, it's better if he was senile to the point of being completely incompetent, because at least then the argument could be made that he wasn't blatantly *ignoring* the abuse Kawase was suffering at the hands of father. Perhaps grandfather was so unwell that he couldn't report what father was doing to outside authorities. Perhaps he too was a victim of some sort of abuse, (and it was likely he was neglected by his son and daughter-in-law).

It's open to interpretation how much of an aggressor or how much of a victim grandfather was. Was he completely dementia ridden, a victim alongside a young Kawase? Or was he just yet another bystander, potentially even sharing a few of his

son's sadistic qualities? He might have even enjoyed the abuse father inflicted upon son...

Either way, to a young Kawase, grandfather standing by while father abused him (verbally, physically or otherwise), is a grave betrayal of trust. His inaction would feel like tacit approval of father's actions. A child would not be able to understand why one adult was turning a blind eye while another adult was harming a child. He would only be left to wonder what it all meant.

Did others' silence mean that treating children like how father treated them was okay? Did everyone treat children like that? Or were father's actions bad, and yet no one cared enough to save Kawase? But why did no one care enough to save him?

As adults, it's easier to see that the world's far more complex than we give it credit for. As adults, and as bystanders, we can look at this situation and say *'Well, grandfather, mother, the neighbors, all of them were likely too scared to confront father. I don't think I would have confronted someone who was known for being physically violent. What if I was seriously hurt?'*

But how can a child that barely knows how to write their own name or make their own breakfast possibly understand an intricacy like this? They likely couldn't understand it. They would only know that they had been abandoned, knowing of a pain that not even some adults ever experience.

Mother & Puppy

A tragedy waiting to happen.

Mother was in a similar situation to grandfather. She can be viewed as a victim of her fate or as a complicit participant alongside of father, but in reality, she was likely somewhere in between. Perhaps the marriage was arranged between her family and father, or perhaps he initially presented himself favorably, winning her over before revealing his nasty qualities (a common tactic described in Lundy Bancroft's book *Why Does He Do That?).*

Either way, it seems like mother's family was no longer involved by the time Kawase was born. As mentioned earlier, abused women had few protections to help them, and it is highly likely that father abused her as well. Because of father's physical and sexually violent nature, it's hard to imagine that he would let a woman- whom he would view as inferior- live without experiencing his violence.

Mother appeared to have little attachment to Kawase, and more than that, she likely resented him. To her, Kawase was the living symbol of her relationship with a physically violent man. Kawase never had a chance to be loved by his mother in these circumstances, and he would never be able to know parental love.

It has been suggested that mother was around the same age as Tamamori's mother, Yuzu. It's very likely that Yuzu knew Kawase's mother, and they would have both been pregnant with their sons around the same time, with their houses being not even a five minute walk from each other. Yuzu's relationship with Tamamori's father appeared to be stable and healthy. On the other hand, mother would have been battered by her husband.

It would have been difficult for Yuzu to overlook a woman close to her own age, pregnant at the same time, and yet suffering while Yuzu herself was surrounded by a loving family. If the circumstances were different, maybe the two women could have been close friends, but Yuzu likely kept her distance for her own safety.

Even so, outside pity does not absolve mother of her mistreatment and abandonment of Kawase. Even if she was a victim herself, she still chose to abandon Kawase with a man she knew was violent. If she cared at all about her son, she should have taken him with her out of the home when she left, but she did not.

Kawase-specific:

- Kawase resembles his mother, part of the reason why his father abused him.

It has been theorized that Kawase bears a strong resemblance to his mother. (Or perhaps confirmed, though I have been unable to locate the original source. The image above was in my folder of notes, but I do not recall where I originally found it. I have searched for original Japanese text supporting this, but could only find this at the time. If someone has anything, please let me know.)



When I tried drawing mother, I kept Kawase's resemblance to her in mind. This is somewhat difficult, because I've seen several nyota versions of Kawase, and I imagine that mother would look quite similar to nyota Kawase. But I also imagine that her style would be a good bit different- nyota Kawase is often portrayed in Western fashion, while mother would probably have only grown up around traditional Japanese dress. I envisioned mother looking down at Kawase with an expression of resentment and disgust in her eyes, and I hope to have captured that.

Mother left Kawase when he was very young. This conclusion is based on what Tamamori says about their dog who disappeared at the same time as mother. Tamamori mentions that he 'remembers a dog howling across the rice paddies'. This line, in addition to the fact that Tamamori assumes that Kawase hates animals, supports the idea that Tamamori never met Kawase's puppy. Knowing that mother and puppy disappeared simultaneously suggests that mother must have already been gone by the time Kawase was about to turn five.

Kawase finished smoking his cigarette and snubbed it in a portable ashtray.
He stuffed it into his pocket as he picked up the lamp by his feet.

Kawase: "I used to have a dog back in the day."

Tamamori: "..."

Kawase: "He was a stupid dog that wouldn't really eat unless you put his food right in front of him.
...He was a handful, but pretty cute."

...I suddenly remembered.
Before Kawase and I knew each other,
I used to hear a puppy howling from across the rice paddies.

Kawase: "But my mom took the dog with her, along with her lover.
...I was more upset about never seeing my dog again
than being left behind by my mom."

Tamamori: "I-I was sure... I thought you killed him."

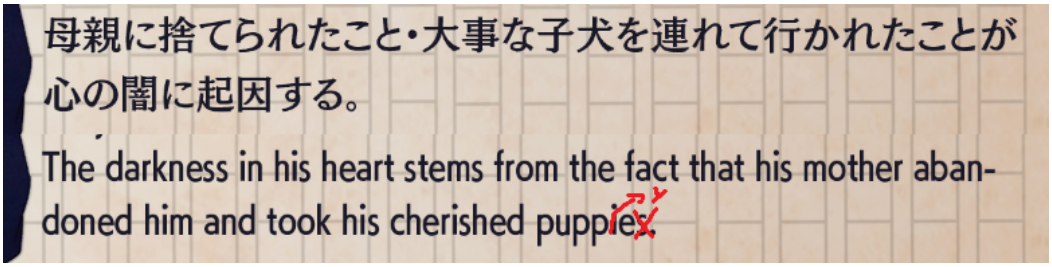
Kawase: "...?"

Tamamori: "You... I mean, you hate animals."

Kawase's expression went blank. "Dirty animals," he muttered.

Regarding the family dog, Kawase assumes that mother takes puppy with her when she leaves home with her other man. As we learn from Minakami's after story, *'kimi ga tame',* in reality, the dog was killed and thrown into the well (or perhaps killed *by* being thrown into the well). Kurosawa-sensei does make a contradictory statement in one of her Q&As however. Someone asked why mother would take the dog and not Kawase, and Kurosawa-sensei answered that perhaps mother thought the dog was cute and Kawase was not cute- which contradicts *'kimi ga tame'.* There are actually several contradictions when you compare all the bonus materials and the original works, but rather than criticizing these contradictions, I'll just say that I believe that these contradictions give an opportunity to fans so that they may choose either version of these realities that they like.

Reality Version A



Reality Version B

The cries of the cicadas brought back the summer heat over my whole body.
I pulled up the bucket, and emptied its contents onto the lush grass.
They were tiny white bones.
"Actually, just now, I wanted to push you into the well."
"..."
"But I changed my mind."
He picked up a bone using a gray handkerchief.

"This is the puppy I used to raise. I always thought it was taken away by my mother. ...So it turns out you were in a place like this."
"Kawase, you..."
At that moment, his smile was so relieved.
It was completely different from the smile he showed me just now.
Even he himself had forgotten that he had once lost such a thing, thinking that it had long since disappeared. His second most precious thing.

Either way, this leads us to believe that the dog was originally taken in by mother and not father. She either liked the dog enough to want to take it with her when she left home, or father killed the dog in retaliation for her leaving him (and father must have associated the dog with her). Although, I suppose it's possible that mother could have thrown the dog in the well before she left, but I wouldn't know what her motive would be. Out of all the possibilities, I find it most likely that it was father, who is well known to be violent, who killed the family dog.

The short story is potentially more official than the Q&As, so let's assume that father does kill the dog and throw it in the well. For Kawase to be *unaware* that father killed the dog, he would either have to not be home, or he would have to be asleep. Killing a dog would likely be noisy, and even throwing it in the well would probably cause a ruckus. Kawase struggles to sleep anyway, even as a boy, I don't think he could sleep through a dog yelping, so he was probably outside somewhere.

And when he came back, his mother and dog would be gone, and father would already be angry...

Although I'm sure that Kawase would already be used to taking the brunt of his father's rage by that point, father would likely be inconsolably angry the day mother left him. It is difficult to say what occurred, but I'm sure that Kawase suffered in some manner. Some interpretations suggest that the day mother left might have been the first night father sexually abused Kawase, which is not an implausible conclusion. But with that note, I suppose it's time we talk about him...

Father

A man unworthy of his namesake.

To begin, I think I would like to try to answer why father is a violent person. It's probably impossible to come up with one exact answer, but I think there are many factors that can bring out someone's violent side. I mentioned earlier that it's possible that grandfather abused father when he was just a boy, and that abuse could have been verbal, physical, or sexual in nature. Abuse is often generational, and while not everyone who gets abused will become an abuser, plenty of abusers have had their own tough lives. The Segawas also seem to have a genetic tendency towards violence, and Kurosawa-sensei mentions this is why Kawase tries to maintain a particularly gentle demeanor.

> Q：回想で、川瀬は子どもの頃「ガキ大将の鼻を折って失神させた」等の暴力的な一面があったようですが、喧嘩は強い方だったのでしょうか。
> また、今でもその暴力性はあるのでしょうか。
>
> A：カオルを覗けば、喧嘩は誰よりも強い川瀬です。
> 父親の暴力性が、川瀬にも継がれているのでした…。
> 自分の性質(残虐性)に気がついているので、なるべく柔らかい態度を心かげています。

Kawase possesses a violent nature himself, though he displayed these traits more prominently as a boy. He picked a fight with a boy from the neighboring town, and he beat the boy quite severely, knocking him out and proceeding to kick the boy's side. He only stops when an adult arrives to intervene in the situation.

> **...Next, a man like Kawase had no trouble insulting people.**
>
> **This incident also happened when I was younger. There was a festival I really wanted to go to in the neighboring town, so I invited Kawase to go with me.**
>
> **Everyone was dancing like crazy in the center of the stage, while Kawase was standing completely still in the middle of them. I thought he looked cool, but of course, the leader of the neighborhood kids had noticed him.**

Well, more than noticed him, Kawase had done something to get himself noticed.

"There's a bunch of ugly kids in this town."

His muttered words had rubbed the leader the wrong way. ...Which leads me to Kawase's third tyrannical quality.

This was probably his worst trait.
Kawase was the kind of guy who had no trouble resorting to violence.

He broke that bratty leader's nose and knocked him out, then dug sharp kicks into his side.

He pushed away an adult who stepped in to stop him,
grabbed my hand, and ran down the dark path, laughing.

"Did you see? Did you see his face?"

Kawase stopped at a river and laughed the entire time, until he finished washing his hands.

This behavior is none too surprising when you consider Kawase's home life. Those who grow up in violent environments often learn to display those traits. Children will mimic the behavior they see at home. While not an excuse for his behavior, Kawase probably didn't think what he was doing was very strange. Being that an adult was beating him with just as much ferocity, Kawase wouldn't stop to think that beating a boy his own size was anything terrible.

Kawase seems to stop displaying these violent outbursts when he becomes an adult and moves to Tokyo. I would assume this is in part because as an adult he would be arrested and incarcerated for assaulting someone, but also because he recognizes that if he wants to become a doctor, he will have to integrate into polite society.

Unlike Kawase, his father never bothered to hide his violence. He had less need to, living in a rural area where law enforcement is often more lax. That's not to say that I think father attacked random villagers- I don't believe he would, or could, do something like this. Regardless, father seemed to presume himself as above the law, a bully that often chose to attack those who were beneath him.

Of course, I cannot exclude the possibility that alcohol exacerbated father's behavior, especially when I am aware of Japanese drinking culture. A working man

would hardly be able to refuse drinking during this era, as his fellow tradesmen would likely have encouraged him to drink after work. I mentioned izakaya earlier, and I imagine father likely frequented izakaya. Mother left father when Kawase was young, and that meant that there was no longer anyone around to cook for him. Men at that time typically did not cook for the family, and I seriously doubt grandfather or father cooked. Father seems to have forced Kawase to cook for them, but he was so young when mother left that I don't envision him being capable of preparing dinner for two adult men and himself the moment mother left.

So father probably ate out a good deal, and that would likely have involved inexpensive bars and restaurants. Men are more likely to develop a dependence on alcohol than women, and father's dependence on alcohol probably extended into addiction. Alcohol isn't bad on its own, but if he had issues with anger, low self-control, and a tendency towards violence, drinking in excess wouldn't help in the slightest.

However, it is also a possibility that father was violent simply because he was someone that enjoyed violence. Not every abuser in the home, or bully at school or in the workplace is abusive because they have difficult or extenuating circumstances. Sometimes people have good home lives, great parents, a wonderful spouse, and they still take pride in hurting others. Not every unfortunate circumstance has an explanation.

It's the same for real-life situations as well- why do violent people turn violent? Why do people who get angry and throw things sometimes do so without anything seeming to trigger their anger? Is it untreated mental illness? Is it just in their nature to have physical expressions of rage? Why do people hit people? Is it out of fear? Is it out of anger? Is it out of pleasure?

Some people's personalities cannot be explained by their situation, and their behavior certainly cannot be excused by it. I think a lot of us spend time looking for reasons why someone acts a certain way, when there is no answer we could hear that would make us happy. We don't know why Kawase's father abused him, we just know that he did abuse him, and he didn't deserve it.

Now, let us examine this abuse. I'll start by mentioning that we don't have a lot of information on the emotional or verbal abuse that Kawase suffered at the hands of his father, simply because we don't have specific examples of things he said. I imagine that there was verbal abuse, but it seems like father was less someone who planted seeds of doubt or insidious words, and more someone who relied on physical violence. Father likely perceived Kawase as either a burden to be endured or a tool to be utilized.

I also believe that along with incestuous sexual abuse, Kawase seemed to have suffered from covert incest as well. This has been said before in the Q&A:

Q：川瀬は雨になると家にこもり学校は休んでいたということですが、何か理由はあるのでしょうか？

A：雨だと父親の仕事が休みになるので、家事全般をさせられていたようです。父親が亡くなった後も、雨の日は気分や体調が優れないため、ふて寝してサボることが多かったようです。

When I first read this part, I was a little confused about what it meant by *'made to stay home and take care of all the household chores'.* Kawase hates rainy days because his father was a carpenter, and he stays home on rainy days, but what does it matter if he was home or not? Didn't Kawase have to go to school regardless of whether father was home? While I'm sure that Kawase did do household chores, I couldn't see why father staying home would necessitate that Kawase also be home and care for the house. Why would father keep Kawase home on those days?

It doesn't seem like the quote above is referring to care in a sexual manner (at least not exclusively sexual). If father being at home meant that Kawase also had to be home, it was likely that father was using Kawase as a surrogate wife. As difficult as it is to consider a boy as young as four years old becoming his father's surrogate wife, it does seem like Kawase was meant to fill the absence that his mother left behind. Women were kept in the home to cook and clean, and without a woman at the Segawa household to fulfill those duties, Kawase had to take that role.

Q：畜生の飯と言われた川瀬の料理の腕は上達しますか？

A：全く上達しません！たまに作りたくなって玉森に食べさせますが、玉森は嫌々です。

Although it is stated that Kawase can only make food 'fit for beasts', I think the statement above supports the above theory. Because Kawase had no one to teach him how to cook, he simply wouldn't have any way to learn how to do so properly. The thing is, Kawase is a very smart and capable young man- how is it that he is not capable of preparing even a rice ball? But I think Kawase might have *refused* to learn to cook properly out of spite from having been forced to take care of his father. It's the same reason why Kawase hates rainy days even as an adult- he cannot overcome the mental hurdle that is cooking a nice meal, because to do so would be becoming like how his father had wanted him to be (someone who was good at taking care of father's basic needs).

Father's wife leaving him would already be an embarrassment to him, because in his mind he lost his rightful property to another man. This grave insult, along with losing the woman who was cooking, cleaning, and caring for him, raised father's animosity exponentially towards Kawase, who bore his mother's resemblance. Father was likely already inflicting his violence upon his son as a form of catharsis, after he lost his wife, there was nothing left to stop him from going further.

And so we can only imagine what father did to Kawase. There is a theory that father started sexually abusing Kawase when mother left, earlier than his first trip to the hospital, and it has merit when we consider the information we are given. That would make Kawase about three years old when his abuse started, and although that age is earlier than the time stated in the Q&A, the possibility cannot be dismissed. Because there are a few contradictions across all of the official sources, there is a lot of leeway for reader interpretation.

Given that Kawase strangled Tamamori during his route when he slept with him, it seems like he had become very used to strangulation. Kawase's father had strangled him before, although if it was out of an act of violence for a more depraved reason, it is not certain. Strangulation is one of the biggest predictors of lethal violence in domestic abuse cases. Those who strangle their partners or children are significantly more likely to use lethal violence against victims than those who do not strangle others. For reference, in the short term strangulation can cause a throbbing headache, and long term serious issues like brain damage can occur if the asphyxiation is prolonged.

Kawase was subjected to so much physical violence that Tamamori mistakes his face for being dirty when they meet in the hospital. It is also mentioned that Hanazawa is surprised by Kawase's appearance when they meet again at Tokyo Imperial University, because it's the first time he has seen his unbruised face. Although, it is worth noting that there are a few years between father's death (June 1912) and Hanazawa's departure (April 1914), and if Kawase's face was bruised, he should have healed in that time. Unless his face was scarred in some manner, and the scars took several years to fade, which is a possibility.

Tamamori: “But the look in Kawase’s eyes as he watched you leave was just like an abandoned cat’s... He hasn’t changed since back then.”

Hanazawa: “...”

Tamamori: “Kawase shouldn’t have gone looking for you when he came to the capi—”

Hanazawa: “Seeing Kawase again was a total coincidence.”

Tamamori: “...That’s surprising.”

Hanazawa: “I heard the pond at the Imperial University was a sight to behold, so I went, then happened to run into Kawase on top of the stone bridge.”

Tamamori: “He was overjoyed, I’m sure.”

Hanazawa: “He covered his face and collapsed.”

Tamamori: “D-Don’t tell me he started sobbing...!!”

Hanazawa: “Until I heard his voice, though, I didn’t realize it was Kawase.”

Tamamori: “...”

Hanazawa: “Because it was the first time I had seen him without a single bruise on his face,”

Hanazawa said matter-of-factly, but that felt sad to me.

With the physical evidence of Kawase being so battered as to appear dirty, father must not have had a light hand. We, as readers, have the advantage of knowing that father is such a physically violent man that he will even go on to murder Umezawa, an adult who would have been much more capable of defending himself than a child. But the people in Aizu seemed to fear him even before he murdered Umezawa.

The villagers wouldn't report father to the police even knowing that he is physically abusing his child. I do not believe the villagers' unwillingness to report was solely due to apathy- Minakami states that the people in Aizu are nice (when telling Tamamori that he thinks the villagers will accept their relationship). So rather than apathy, I believe it is that they must have feared father. Especially after Kawase is brought to the hospital for the first time, and after he starts attending school. Several adults- Kawase's neighbors, his teachers, his friends' adult family members, any hospital staff- would have been able to see his bruises. And yet, no one bothered to report father to the police.

> Q：川瀬が父親を殺したあと、誰が彼の面倒をみてくれたのか。村の大人たちでしょうか？
>
> A：村の大人たちが交代で川瀬の家に通い、世話をしていました！夕食を作ってもらったりなどしていた川瀬ですが、彼らに感謝の気持ちはありませんでした。中学生にもなると誰の手も借りず、貯金を切り崩しながら一人暮らしをしていました。

But I do not believe the villagers were entirely remorseless. It is written that after Kawase killed his father, the adults in the village took turns visiting Kawase's home to care for him. Understandably so, Kawase does not feel grateful for them appearing to help him only after father is dead. From middle school onwards, which he would have started just as he was about to turn twelve, he lived off his family's savings. So the villagers were only coming to see him for about a year. Perhaps feeling that their help was 'too little, too late', he wanted to stand on his own as soon as he could.

Regardless of the villagers' reasoning for not making any effort to defend Kawase, it would be a message that stayed with him for life. Kawase would learn from an early age that people prioritize their own safety over helping others. It didn't matter how defenseless a child Kawase was, no one was willing to help him.

I have seen a few fan depictions of father, and I wanted to try making my own. We know that father is imposing- most likely physically so, but perhaps he also had money or an imposing societal status. Father was capable enough to be a carpenter, which was a physically demanding job at the time, so I think he must have been in fairly good shape.

I gave him a cauliflower ear (a permanent deformity caused by blunt trauma to the ear) on his left ear because I imagine he's probably gotten into a lot of fights in his life. I also gave him a few scars, because if he likes to fight he probably has some scars. I searched for traditional carpenter clothing and found some good reference images to help me draw. However, I am still uneducated as to any specific terms used to describe this specific style of clothing. Perhaps I leaned too far into horror with this depiction, but I wanted to capture something inhuman in his eyes, because he is someone that could not be reasoned with.



We first hear about Kawase's abuse through Tamamori's perspective. He mentions the abuse briefly before continuing on with his narration, but he occasionally circles back to it. Narrated like this, it gives you the sense that something important has happened that Tamamori is not saying. At one point Tamamori is discussing that abuse with Hanazawa.

Tamamori: "This isn't the first time... I've let Kawase die."

Hanazawa: "..."

Tamamori: "This is...
atonement."

It was a rainy day long ago.
Kawase was taking the day off from school as usual.
I was his neighbor, so I was bringing him some handouts.

No one answered the door, so I snuck around back
and realized the storm shutter was opened slightly.

From that gap, I saw someone trying to kill Kawase.
The murderer wasn't just trying to choke the life out of him.

That was the moment I knew that my denying his nature,
his personality,
his freedom, was enough of a sin.

Right as I was about to cry out,
Kawase noticed me and gave me a smile.

Even though he had been crying out in pain,
even though he was severely wounded...

...he smiled at me.
And yet, I couldn't help Kawase back then.
I was scared and didn't tell anyone about it.

Tamamori: "...Kawase was a pitiful man."

The text is vague, but it is enough to let us know what father is doing to Kawase. Tamamori feels guilty for witnessing Kawase being abused in this manner, but he is too scared to tell anyone about his sexual abuse. The other adults should know about the beatings, but it had not been enough to get others to take Kawase out of the home. Sexual assault would have been enough for other adults to get involved, but no one knew about that particular abuse at the time.

Sexual abuse greatly affects the psyche of adults, for such a young child to go through such abuse is harrowing. It also seems that Kawase must have been attacked at night on several occasions, because he grows afraid of the dark. His fear of the dark remains even as an adult. When it's dark he leaves his curtains open at night, and if the moon isn't out, he lights a lamp so he can sleep. Even then, he has to take barbital nearly every night so he can get to sleep.

It is already evident how much the events of Kawase's childhood haunt him through his words and actions in the game. Although Kawase's personality is not exclusively based in trauma, a good portion of his most characterizing traits came from his circumstances. In modern terms, we would probably think it likely that Kawase has some form of complex post-traumatic stress disorder, a kind of PTSD that occurs from prolonged traumatic events.

And if that wasn't enough evidence to show the hold his past has on his mind, another Q&A response is. When asked about the floating bridge device that appears in Hanazawa's route, a device that will show the user's strongest subconscious impulses, it has been stated that Kawase will dream of his childhood.

Q・花澤ルートでウキハシによって花澤と玉森がお互いの意識に入り込んでいましたが、
仮に他の攻略キャラ達に装置を使用した場合どんな夢を見たりするのでしょうか？

A・ウキハシは一番強い潜在意識を引き出すので…。
水上→魚の夢を見ると思います！
川瀬→幼少期の夢を見ると思います。
博士→玉森の書いた小説に夢中なので、花澤同様、玉森が書いた物語を夢見ると思います。

Even though some of the dreams above are positive (Hakase and Hanazawa dreaming of Tamamori's manuscript stories), Kawase's mind locks on to his childhood, likely some of the worst experiences in his young life. For those who have done reading on human psychology and the effects of trauma, it's none too surprising how greatly someone can be affected by traumatic events that happened in their formative years. Even if Kawase wishes to not dwell on his pain, that pain has become deeply embedded into his memory (like those flashbulb memories that occur in those with PTSD).

It's safe to say that even a decade later, Kawase still despises his father and what he did. When Kawase has obtained the power of the hashihime, he wants to return sixteen years in the past and kill him (in addition to Minakami, Hanazawa and himself). The game does not treat murder as a light matter, and for Kawase to have the resolve to go back to the past and kill his father shows us the extent of his need for catharsis.

> Q：川瀬に橋姫に移ったあと、川瀬は「16年前にもどって、過去の自分以外にも殺したいやつが他にもいる」といったことを言いますが、殺したいのは水上と花澤のことですか？
>
> また、この橋姫が宿った川瀬も、父親を殺すのでしょうか？
>
> A：こちらは父親のことです！彼は過去に戻って、店主の代わりに水上・花澤・自分を殺害することを決めました。ここでの他にも殺したい相手とは、まさに実父のことです。

Sixteen years should be just before the time father started sexually abusing him, and then if he killed the child version of himself, he could die untainted in that timeline. Of course, I mentioned earlier that it is possible that father abused Kawase earlier than that (perhaps earlier than he is capable of remembering). I believe Kawase chose the number sixteen because if he went back that far, he could kill Hanazawa and Minakami without Tamamori ever having met them (and if they were killed before they met him, Tamamori would never have to miss them).

But right before Kawase is intending to go back in time, it seems he is quite anxious. It's stated that he intends to bring as many cigarettes as he has with him to soothe himself. Although this may be in part due to the fact that he is going to be killing his childhood friends, I also believe it is because he is nervous about seeing his father again, and he is anticipating meeting with him.

Q：川瀬は煙草を美味しくなさそうに嗜んではいますが、過去へ跳躍する時にありったけ持っていこうとしていましたので彼にとってはお気に入りの嗜好品なんでしょうか…？
それとも手放せない理由がありますか？

A：煙草に対する依存度はそれほどなく、イライラしたり不安な時に吸うと落ち着くため、喫煙するようです。
ですので「安定剤」を鞄にたくさん詰めたということは、当時の彼、実はかなり不安を抱いていたのでしょう…。

It is stated above that Kawase is not very dependent on cigarettes, and he smokes primarily when he feels anxious or irritated. I believe that part of the reason why he is smoking so much in game is because it is raining for the duration of *Hashihime,* and rain seems to be a trigger for Kawase. Meeting father again in another timeline would be a nerve-wracking event that ate at Kawase. As it is stated, the fact that Kawase is taking so many of those ‘stabilizers’ with him means that he has a considerable amount of anxiety.

To conclude father’s section, I would like to say that I would not wish someone like him on my worst enemy. Part of what makes father so terrible is his choice to bully those who are ‘beneath’ him, those who are not capable of putting up a fair fight to defend themselves. Whether it's for reasons of status in mother’s case, reasons of health in grandfather's case, or reasons of age in Kawase’s case, father should have seen himself above all of his family. In seeing himself above them, he could treat them however he wished. When they should have been his family that he loved and cherished, he saw them as mere objects to meet his needs, not even as human.

Kawase is just a character, and his father is an off-screen character, but there are people just like these characters in real life, walking the Earth at this very moment. I’ve talked to many people over the years, in therapy groups in real life and communities in online forums, that have similar situations to Kawase. No two situations are exactly alike, but Kawase’s particular situation holds a lot of traits that I see in those real people. I think it’s fascinating how well *Hashihime* captures certain traits of someone who is from an abusive home.

What can be said about people like father? It probably seems silly to those who have little experience with violent humans, but their minds don't seem to work in the same way others do. Sometimes father and Kawase's actions can seem 'comically cruel', because they act so brutal that the audience might have a hard time believing that people capable of that cruelty exist.

However, people of violent natures do exist. I believe human nature and emotion transcend eras and cultures. What I mean by that is even though we are talking about characters, these characters exist because someone somewhere knew humans with those traits exist, and they created characters to mimic these traits. Even if fantasy isn't a one-to-one replica of the real, I believe fiction captures aspects of reality in ways that nonfiction struggles to do so.

Taking all of the above into account, it will be worth taking into consideration one of the only people in Kawase's life who tried to protect him.

Doctor Umezawa

The hospital and physical consequences of abuse.

Although we don't know a lot about this character, I did want to bring him up because he seems like a very influential man in Kawase's life. He is a huge part of why Kawase wants to be a doctor, even becoming a pediatrician in some routes of the game to follow in his footsteps. While I'm sure that Kawase wanting to become a doctor was also largely in part because of his desire to please Hanazawa, that was not the only reason. It's been stated that in worlds where Hanazawa and Tamamori disappear, Kawase eventually moves on to become a pediatrician, just like Dr. Umezawa was.

小児科医を目指すと思います！花澤の父親のような小児科医になるという夢にシフト…！

I tend to call this character 'Dr. Umezawa', but in the game and in official materials, he is only known as Hanazawa's father. Dr. Umezawa is a little more natural for me, so I will continue calling him by this name. Dr. Umezawa is a pediatrician who presumably works at the hospital in Aizu. He puts a lot of unfair pressure on his own son, but I believe his heart to be in the right place, and he seems to want the best for Hanazawa.

Dr. Umezawa is a significant character because he's the only one that stands up for Kawase, when all the other adults in the village have failed to do so. Dr. Umezawa ends up being murdered for trying to protect Kawase, proving that there was indeed a risk involved with helping the boy- a danger that the other villagers seem to sense. Dr. Umezawa was a very valiant and honorable man, and he serves as a foil to Kawase's father.

Notably, Kawase ended up at the hospital before he even started elementary school. I don't picture father taking Kawase to the hospital under any circumstances, so we are left to wonder who it was that took him there. Perhaps it was some adult neighbors who saw Kawase and reported the boy's injuries to authorities, or perhaps the neighbors took Kawase to the hospital themselves while father was away from the home, but I don't imagine that it was an easy thing for him to have gone to the hospital.

Later, after Kawase started school, it would become a lot easier for him to be sent to the hospital, or to have been seen by nurses, because then there is an official reason for there to have been an intervention. He would have to be severely injured for anyone to have intervened. Kawase also likely feared father's impending wrath for having dared to end up in the hospital- which would result in a hospital bill being sent to the Segawa family. Children who grow up in unforgiving families learn to fear incurring

monetary costs from a young age, and Kawase should have been one of those children.

Regardless, it's still a good thing that Kawase was sent to the hospital to be treated for his injuries. We know that Kawase must have been seen by Dr. Umezawa *at least twice* (once when the boys all met, and once when Umezawa discovers signs of sexual abuse). However, based on how roughly Kawase was treated, I do believe that he must have been sent to the hospital on a handful of occasions. It is unfortunate that despite evidence of physical abuse, Kawase was not removed from the home sooner, but during that era, children were seen as the parent's property. Even if his parents beat him, it was fully within their legal right to do so...

How Dr. Umezawa first noticed signs of sexual abuse is something worth examining. Kawase does not give the impression that he would admit to having suffered any kind of abuse, even if his life were in danger. It's even stated that while Kawase is being assaulted, he smiles at Tamamori so that he would not cry out for help, because that would have wounded his pride.

> **Q：玉森が父親に性的暴力を与えられていた川瀬を見つけた時に、川瀬が笑かけた、とありましたがどうしてまだ玉森を好きでなかった川瀬は笑ったのですか？**
>
> **A：玉森を安心させるためです。苦しんでいるところを見せて玉森に大声を上げて人を呼ばれたら、自分のプライドが傷つくため……。**

Knowing that Kawase is the kind of child that can bear unspeakable mental and physical wounds without crying, I don't envision that he would have admitted that he was being abused voluntarily. There must have been some physical sign that would cause Dr. Umezawa to check for sexual battery- perhaps some strange markings or bleeding. However, there are signs for CSA that don't involve obvious injuries, and I wanted to mention them here because I think they're interesting headcanons that could be applied to Kawase.

For example, things like bedwetting, frequent childhood masturbation, and inappropriate level of sexual knowledge for the child's age are also things that can be signs of abuse. (Although, these alone are not certain indicators of abuse, and are not necessarily causes of alarm. Abuse is also not the only reason children end up touching themselves- biologically, children have the same nerve endings that adults do and they may touch themselves even in infancy- as reported in books like *Come As You Are,* by Emily Nagoski.)

However, we do have some information about the character's masturbation habits. It was reported that all of the characters in the game started masturbating around the age of twelve years old or so, but children who experience sexual violence often start masturbating at very, very young- often much younger than twelve. Given that Kawase's primary sexual experiences were introduced through violence, he also seems to have picked up noticeable masturbation habits.

> Q：川瀬との濡れ場シーンで、彼が受身側に慣れているような描写がありましたが、父親から受けていた性的暴行の他にも経験があったのでしょうか？
>
> A：父親からの虐待のみです！自分で慰める時に、ついいじることはあったかもしれません…！

To put it bluntly, it's not always that fingering oneself is a sign of sexual abuse, but sensei seems to imply that Kawase's *is* a result of his abuse. This aligns with other victims in real life who frequently learn things that are 'inappropriate for their age level'. It could be that Kawase displayed (verbally or otherwise) a certain amount of sexual knowledge that would lead to Dr. Umezawa being concerned. Therefore, it is not necessarily that there were physical signs of sexual assault.

In any case, Dr. Umezawa discovered that Kawase was being sexually abused by his father, when he was ten years old, and this gives him sufficient cause to involve the police. However, the police do not make any effort to take Kawase out of the home, nor do they arrest father, and father finds out about the police's involvement. It's then that father attacks and kills Umezawa. While this document does not focus on police misconduct, for what it's worth, inaction from law enforcement is a commonly reported experience among survivors, so this portion of the story is very accurate to real life experience.

Father murdered Dr. Umezawa, and at that point, it's not clear what the legal ramifications of this murder would have been. I'm not sure if the police in the village of Aizu were supposed to have sided with father, because Dr. Umezawa was 'holding Kawase captive' when it was rightfully father's child- perhaps the excuse used in a legal situation would have been similar to self defense at the time (father would argue that he was recovering his kidnapped child by getting him back from the doctor). Or, perhaps the villagers were about to get involved and send the police after father. After all, a man has just murdered a small town doctor- how could they allow someone capable of murder to wander the streets.

In either case, the villagers do not act before Kawase does. A few days pass before Doctor Umezawa goes missing and they find his body in the forest. Kawase says

that the villagers didn't say anything, and I think this truly speaks to the power of fear that father must have held over other people.

> Kawase: "...My father hit me all the time. Hanazawa's father tried reporting him to the police.
>
> He got into a fight over it with my father."
>
> Tamamori: "..."
>
> Kawase: "And then Hanazawa's father went missing, and his corpse was found in the forest a few days later."
>
> Kawase 'Everyone knew who did it, but they didn't say anything
>
> Tamamori: "..."
>
> Kawase: "I killed my father... because I thought that would make Hanazawa and I even."
>
> Kawase must have dreamed of becoming a military physician because he wanted to be closer to Hanazawa.
>
> But that wasn't just a dream. Kawase had already started walking down that path in the real world.
>
> Kawase: "I was jealous of you guys... for being able to be normal friends with Hanazawa."

After Kawase kills his father, the villagers seem to let father's mysterious disappearance go. I don't imagine that the man had many fans, and it was probably a relief that someone who was violent disappeared from their sight. If anyone ever suspected Kawase did it, they never tried to accuse him for it. For the most part, everyone appears more at ease once his father is gone.

However, as difficult as it is to acknowledge, I would imagine that the villagers did not treat Kawase with any kindness even after this event. Although Kawase's murder of his abusive father is justified, many people in Aizu at the time would have viewed the boy as *kegare*. Because father 'defiled' him, they would probably mostly

want to avoid this kegare boy. Even though Kawase was the victim, victims were treated less compassionately a hundred years ago. Kawase would still be seen as a boy from a troublesome family, and many children who were his age would be warned to stay away from him. Especially having the Segawa family name, he wouldn't be able to escape the shame and stigma of what happened while living in Aizu.

Even though his father's actions should not have had any bearing on him- especially as the victim- it seems like culturally they would have. It's not any wonder why Kawase believes himself to be dirty. Something we take for granted today is how prevalent social ostracization was, and in a conformist society like Japan, someone like Kawase would have stuck out like a sore thumb.

Someone like Tamamori does not realize this, however, and it is of great benefit to Kawase. Because someone like Tamamori is ignorant of social norms, Kawase can be his friend without judgement. When Tamamori chooses to become his accomplice, he falls down to Kawase's level, and he feels like they can see eye to eye for the first time.

Timeline

From Segawa Eiichi's birth until his graduation.

July 10 1901 Segawa Eiichi is born Age: 0	**~ Early 1905** Eiichi's mother runs away from home with another man. Unbeknownst to Eiichi, Father kills the family puppy, tossing the body into the well. Age: 3	**Early 1905** Father possibly begins sexually abusing Eiichi Age: 3	**July 1905** Eiichi meets and becomes friends with Tamamori, Minakami & Hanazawa. He becomes acquainted with Dr. Umezawa. Age: 3~4
January 1907 Kawase develops 'germaphobia' / contagion heuristic. Father is definitely sexually abusing him at this point. Age: 5	**April 1907** Starts attending elementary school. 小学校尋常科 Age: 5	**End of May 1907** Tamamori is instructed to take papers to Kawase from their teacher. Tamamori witnesses father sexually abusing Kawase. Age: 5	**Mid June 1907** Angered with Tamamori witnessing his abuse, and feeling jealous of Tamamori's loving mother, Kawase invited Tamamori to Juuroku bridge so that he could murder him. Age: 5
June 1907 Tamamori does not go to the bridge and get murdered; Kawase is left alone in the rain that night. Age: 5	**End of June 1912** Dr. Umezawa attempts to report Father to the police for sexually abusing Kawase. Father kills Dr. Umezawa. Age: 10	**End of June 1912** Kawase kills his father. He becomes 'accomplices' with Tamamori and falls in love with him. Age: 10	**March 1913** Graduates elementary school. 小学校尋常科 Age: 11
~April 1913 Starts attending middle school. 中学校（旧制） Age: 11	**April 1914** Hanazawa goes to the capital, leaving Kawase with Tamamori and Minakami. Age: 12	**March 1918** Graduate middle school. 中学校（旧制） Age: 16	**April 1918** Starts attending a regional high school? Age: 16

June 1920 Minakami, Kawase and Tamamori arrive in Tokyo. Age: 18	**June 1920** Kawase is adopted by Ikeda Terutora. His new legal name is 'Ikeda Eiichi' Age: 18	**Post June 1920** Studying for entrance exam. Potentially begins being sexually abused by Ikeda. Age: 18-19	**January 1921** Takes imperial university exam and passes. Age: 19
April 1921 Starts attending Tokyo Imperial University Age: 19	**March 1922** Kawase meets Hanazawa again. Age: 20	**April 1922** Kawase and Hanazawa kill Ikeda to protect Katou. Age: 20	**~April 1922** Kawase begins smoking 'thanks to Hanazawa's influence'. Age: 20
June 1922 (Game start) Age: 20	**March 1925** Graduates from University. (Four years for medicine at the time). Age: 23		

Emotional Contamination & The Contagion Heuristic

Revulsion caused by that which can't be seen.

For this section, I want to talk about emotional contamination and the contagion heuristic. Even if you've never heard of these concepts before, you can probably guess their meaning from the name alone. The contagion heuristic is a psychological process that leads humans to avoid coming into contact with things they believe are contaminated, regardless of the object's actual biological level of contamination. This concept, along with emotional contamination, relies on magical thinking- the superstitious belief that unrelated events are connected in some way.

Kawase may have been born in the Meiji era, but he was still subject to the same psychological conditioning as those of us in the modern era. Psychology is still very much in its foundational years, and a hundred years ago even less was known. With this in mind, it's hardly any wonder that people at the time would find Kawase's 'germaphobic' behavior highly unusual.

It's known from very early on in the game that Kawase does not like touching or being touched by others, even if indirectly. In the opening scene of the game, he dumps a cup of coffee on Meiko's hair after she tries to wipe the coffee from his uniform and ends up touching him. This is a rather shocking first impression of his character, and you won't forget him easily with an introduction like that. This first scene establishes two things about Kawase. First, he doesn't like being contaminated by others, and second, he is not afraid to show his displeasure. He even implies that he will throw his gakuran out, saying that at least he has three more at home- a seemingly huge overreaction for having been touched by Meiko's handkerchief.

There are several more scenes that display Kawase's fear of emotional contamination. His disgust when Tamamori threatens to splash him with rainwater from his umbrella, and his revulsion at touching Minakami's book (particularly after the latter's suicide). When the villagers try giving Kawase food and clothing, he throws these contaminated items into the well. It's even stated that Kawase does not want to pick up the baby's rattle because he didn't want to touch an innocent baby's toy.

Q：川瀬はどんなに汚くても玉森が触りさえすればOKなのですか？

A：赤ちゃんのでんでん太鼓を拾わなかったのは、無垢な赤ちゃんの玩具を汚したくなかったからです(自分を汚いと思い込んでいるため)。
基本的には玉森以外触れられません。

From Tamamori's perspective, who serves as the game's narrator, we know that he views Kawase's nature as impractical and excessive. Tamamori is embarrassed by Kawase's brash nature at the cafe at the start of the game, and he feels helpless to change him. He has known Kawase for a long time, and in wanting to remain friends with him, he has to accept these irrational behaviors. Kawase is someone who does not hold any physical objects as dear, and is even willing to throw out Tamamori's belongings (such as his light-blue crayon), if he deems said object as an inconvenience to him.

This may seem obvious, and perhaps the message is overstated. Kawase is a person that seems to find other humans grotesque, and he can't even stand to touch objects that other humans have touched... but so what? What's significant about this matter?

Those who have never considered emotional contamination may not realize how common minor cases are. Emotional contamination can even pertain to food items that have fallen on the floor but have been sanitized, and hairbrushes that contain the hair of those you do not like. Many people would not eat an apple slice or a bunch of grapes after they have fallen on the ground (even if they are washed after retrieving them), and many people also wouldn't like to hold on to a hairbrush that has been used by someone they dislike.

Now consider this case. Let's say there's a second-hand lounge chair for sale- it's in good condition and it is fairly priced. Now imagine you learn that the lounge chair was once the possession of a prolific human trafficker. With just that additional information, many people would no longer be interested in this theoretical lounge chair. Yet, there is nothing physically wrong with the chair. But this discomfort or aversion felt towards acquiring the chair is magical thinking caused by emotional contamination. We may incorrectly assume that an inanimate object like a chair is connected to a human trafficker because of its previous owner, and we no longer want this chair.

So it seems like almost all of us experience the contagion heuristic to some extent, but of course there will be those of us who are more affected than others. Extreme cases of emotional contamination are often diagnosed as OCD. It seems to be

a subject of debate if emotional contamination is actually part of OCD or not, but the relation is there.

But how does this all relate back to Kawase? Although I am hardly a psychologist and I have no reason to diagnose fictional characters, Kawase's behavior can be interpreted through the lens of emotional contamination. His behavior suits all of the principles of the contagion heuristic, and he often thinks about contamination at large- thinking of himself as dirty, and Tamamori as clean.

Kawase's reaction to emotional contamination is much more severe than that of the general populace.This becomes clearer when we consider that his revulsion is linked to his childhood sexual abuse. Humans are conditioned to feel repulsed by that which might hurt us or make us sick. It's why we feel disgusted when we look at rotten food, smell something decaying, or feel scared by an animal that looks venomous. We learn to avoid things which might hurt us.

If Kawase is repeatedly harmed by humans (those humans who were explicitly supposed to protect him and foster his growth, his family), it makes sense that he would grow an aversion to humans. This aversion, whether a conscious decision or an unconscious one, can function as a survival response created in an attempt to avoid that which harmed him. However, his fear and repulsion has grown too strong and has ended up harming him, by causing nausea and illness when touching others. This is comparable to how the human immune system is intended to protect us from germs, but that immune system sometimes backfires and we become allergic to common, non-harmful materials, like cat hair or pollen.

But Kawase has always seen Tamamori as clean, and was always tempted to touch him. Because Tamamori is innocent from moral filth, he feels like touching him is very alluring. Kawase was already jealous that Tamamori had a loving mother, and he is also jealous of his innocence. Kawase 'pretends' that he thinks Tamamori is filthy so that he does not touch him, but actually the opposite is true (he thinks that he is the filthy one).

> **Q：川瀬が玉森くんだけには触れられると気づいたきっかけは何だったのでしょうか。「触れられるのかも？」と気づいた時に、本当に玉森くんだけには触れられるのか、何度か試したことなどあったのでしょうか。**
> **A：試したことはなく、「綺麗だから触れられる」という確信があったようです。ずっと触れたいと思って居ました。**

Also, a few times after the end of the Kawase route, Tamamori refers to his clean freak behavior as being 'fake' or 'pretend' (偽潔癖症), but '偽' or 'fake' is not quite the

right word for it. Kawase absolutely has a condition about physical touch and cleanliness- as is proven the time he throws up after touching Katou- there's nothing fake about it. It's just that his condition is not triggered by touching Tamamori. I think this is a testament to the fact that Tamamori is Kawase's safe person- he feels on an instinctual level that he can touch him without being harmed, so his repulsion response is not triggered.

I will now offer my interpretation about Kawase's fear of being touched by others, and when he developed this disorder. It says below that Kawase developed his obsession around the age of five or six, when he began to be subject to sexual violence. Because Hanazawa was combing his hair for him at the age of four, it was still a time when he could be touched by others.

> **Q：川瀬の潔癖症はいつから現れたのでしょうか。花澤後日談で、花澤に髪を梳いてもらっていたから、それよりはあとでしょうか。**
>
> **A：潔癖症になってしまったのは、性的暴力を与えられるようになった五~六才頃からです…。髪を梳いて貰っているのは四才頃なので、まだ川瀬が人に触れられる時期でした！**

I feel that sensei's form of thinking on Kawase's disorder is too binary. It's not that those who have this disorder have a complete fear of all people touching them, and those who don't have this disorder never mind if people touch them. In most cases, this disorder is onset gradually, with aversion to human touch growing stronger or weaker depending on several factors.

I cannot say how Kawase feels about Hanazawa touching him, but it is likely that Kawase would not become averse to him all at once, and even if he grew somewhat averse, it would not be as strong as with strangers. Hanazawa was close to Kawase's age, and that makes his demographic very different from that of those who abused him. That, coupled with Kawase's admiration of Hanazawa make me think it unlikely that he would be repulsed by him- although there could be moments where he is repulsed by *anyone* touching him.

It is also difficult to believe that Hanazawa took care of Kawase in this way when he was four years old, and that was the only time. The period of time sensei is talking about is only about a year long. Tamamori, who seems to struggle to remember things about his childhood, remembers Hanazawa caring for Kawase, as stated below.

Hanazawa: "You just watched as Kawase was killed, too."

You don't get it at all, Hanazawa.
You have no idea how much Kawase adored you like a brother.

You have no idea how much he relied on you.

Tamamori: "You're the only one who can save Kawase!"

If he couldn't understand how Kawase felt,
then there was no way he could understand how I felt.

...

Hanazawa: "That was all in your head."

Kawase grew up with an abusive father.
Hanazawa, who was the son of the village doctor, devoted himself to looking after Kawase.
He combed his hair. He neatly fixed his clothes and pat him on the head.

He supported Kawase like an older brother.

...There was no way someone could do all that for Kawase
and not care for him.

...And yet...

Either 1906 really left an impression on Tamamori, or Hanazawa's caring behavior continued past the point of Father's initial assault of Kawase. Of course, I mentioned earlier that I theorized that father started abusing Kawase even earlier than his first trip to the hospital. Since father assaulted Kawase multiple times over his life, I believe his fear of contamination would have developed over time.

It is possible that Sensei felt pressured to answer the questions she was sent in such a way that she ended up making statements that contradicted each other. I think this might have been out of fear that fans would criticize her for making Kawase show any special preference towards Hanazawa, when other fans would want this treatment to be exclusive to Tamamori.

Many readers recognize that Kawase is a guarded person from the beginning of *Hashihime,* but I wanted to end this document by offering this explanation of his distinguishing trait in the game, his *keppekishou* behavior. But I would like to mention to anyone else who is suffering from symptoms of this disorder that it is treatable. I also believe that Kawase would recover somewhat from his disorder as he grew older. Sensei had said before in a Q&A that Kawase would continue to get sick after treating his patients (because he had to touch them in order to treat them).

Q：川瀬は玉森や花澤のために生きている節があると思うんですが、2人が失踪した世界での川瀬はどう生きていくんでしょうか？；；；；とても心配です；；；；

A：償う相手を失った川瀬は、軍医ではなく小児科医を目指すと思います！花澤の父親のような小児科医になるという夢にシフト…！潔癖症がなかなか改善せず、診察するたびにゲロを吐きながら頑張ります。

I question whether this would remain true. Exposure to children as he is an adult in a controlled environment should ease his symptoms. The more people he is exposed to without negative consequence, the easier it should be for him to deal with people. It has been stated that he has shielded Katou before because he saw part of himself in the boy, and I think that if he could continue to see the children as needing him (like how he so desperately needed an adult to protect him back then), that he could overcome his pain in order to help them, and by doing this, his own pain should be eased.

The world is a harsh, cruel place, and characters like Kawase, while only being characters, are similar to a great deal of us that are alive and walking about. But even when the world is so cruel, I believe that there is a place for those that don't fit in, and even if there isn't a place, new places can be made. Pain can be used to make art, and I am forever grateful for creators like Kurosawa-sensei who put pain in art. Even if others refuse to understand this pain, it matters not to me, who has found solace in this unusual place. I hope that by continuing to make fanworks, I can offer someone even a modicum of that same solace.

The Two Versions of Kawase

And the influence of Ikeda Terutora and the red dog collar...



In this section, I would like to talk about the two versions of Kawase. Although, this section title is a bit misleading- it's not that there's two Kawases, it's that there are two major versions of Kawase that fans prefer. If you've spent any time in this fandom, you probably already know these two versions of Kawase, even if you haven't put a name to them.

For simplicity's sake, I've given these two sides names. I've called these two versions 'pretty boy Kawase' and 'sad boy Kawase'. In reality it's more complicated than this, but I want to take some time to explain a fandom phenomenon, so please forgive me.

It's important to recognize these versions among fans because it explains why some aspects of Kawase are popular with some fans and not others. This divide became especially evident after the character poll in Cool-B magazine, where it was revealed that Kawase was the first and third most favorite BL seme character. When Japanese fans were writing in to list what they liked about Kawase, I noticed there was a divide amongst fans. Some fans really like Kawase's dark past, and there are some fans that exclusively like him as a do-S (ドS) seme.

People who favor 'pretty boy Kawase' tend to prefer him in the sense that he's one of the male leads in a boys love game. What I mean is that their primary interest in Kawase is shipping him with Tamamori, and appreciating his sex appeal. They almost always see Kawase as an exclusive top, they love his cruel and teasing nature. They take pleasure in the fact that Kawase is extremely physically attractive, and they see his 'neat freak' behavior as a special attribute, because Tamamori is the only one Kawase likes to touch.

On the other side are people who favor 'sad boy Kawase'. While these fans can appreciate Kawase's sex appeal, they focus heavily on his dark past. This includes his early childhood and the events that may (or may not) have occurred at Ikeda Manor. Some of these fans relate to Kawase, but others may like him simply for the darker side that he offers. These fans also ship Kawase with Tamamori, but when they do, they seem to view the pair as enmeshed and reliant on each other, rather than Kawase being the bully and Tamamori being his victim.

Now bear with me, I'm not mentioning these two sides because I think one side is better than the other side (although, you can probably tell instantly which side I'm partial to if I've taken the time to write this document on his childhood trauma). Actually, I love both of these sides of Kawase, and I believe that both are necessary to make a Kawase that's truly accurate to the version of him in the game. It's also okay to like one side better. There's no restrictions on the heart, you can- and should- like what you want.

But I wanted to bring up these two sides, because I wanted to mention a major disconnect in the fandom. This major disconnect is, as it were, the matter with Ikeda Terutora. Without mincing words, the game heavily implies that Ikeda sexually abused Kawase. It is mentioned that Ikeda is a pedophile with an interest in boys. Ikeda was a head doctor at Tokyo Imperial University. When Kawase is traveling to Tokyo so he can get ready to take the entrance exam and try to attend university, he meets Ikeda by chance, and the doctor takes a liking to him. Ikeda adopts Kawase into his household through engumi.

Tamamori finds a red dog collar in Ikeda's drawers in his room, after Katou says that Ikeda has told the boy that he has a dog named Ei-chan. Considering what we concretely know about Kawase's biological father, along with the fact that Ikeda is canonically a pedophile, one might be tempted to believe that Kawase's adopted father sexually abused him.

Tamamori: "Ikeda-san never told you about Kawase—I mean, the teidaisei?"

Young Man (Katou): "He didn't. He told me that he lived alone with a dog. A dog named Ei-chan."

...

I didn't know where the journals belonged, but I figured I should put them in the desk drawer or something.

When I peeked into one of the open drawers, I spotted a red collar.

Tamamori: "..."

A collar.
I wondered where the dog went.

What kind of dog was it?

However, the original creator of the game 'reassured' fans that there was no canon evidence that Kawase was sexually abused by Ikeda at all. She says that Ikeda only planned to use Kawase to abuse children on his behalf.

Q：池田氏について。池田邸の引き出しにあった赤い首輪、そしてエイちゃんと言う名の犬を飼っていたとのことですが本当にそんな犬を飼っていたのか、もしくはこれは川瀬のことでしょうか？ 以前有志様のＱ＆Ａで池田氏と川瀬に性的な接触はなかったとあったので、いずれ川瀬にこの首輪を使おうと思いしまってあったということでしょうか？

A：まさに、川瀬のことでした…。しかしあの首輪は川瀬用ではありません！赤い首輪は小児用で、いつか加東くんにプレゼントしようと思って居たようです…。が、川瀬の首輪も別にあったかもしれません……匂わせてすみません;;

For starters, I would like to mention that I think Kurosawa-sensei, after releasing *Hashihime,* felt pressured by certain fans (particularly fans in the domestic side, not the western sphere), to alter specific parts of her story. It is my belief this was done by fans that tended to strongly prefer 'pretty boy Kawase' while disliking 'sad boy Kawase'. They wrote to sensei and left reviews of the game that expressed that they wished for these changes.

Please allow me to explain further. It seems to me that there were some fans that like Kawase as a top, and therefore, they were uncomfortable with him being depicted as experiencing sexual abuse. This includes both abuse from Ikeda Terutora, and from his father. The game heavily hints at sexual abuse occurring from both Ikeda and his father, but later during Q&A sessions, Kurosawa-sensei released statements that would lead you to believe this abuse never occurred, or that it was up to the reader's interpretation. I also think it is silly to imply later that the collar is child sized, when Ikeda says specifically that his dog's name is Ei-chan, which would be a (somewhat derogatory) nickname for Kawase's given name Eiichi. Why would Ikeda say that he had a pet dog, referring to Kawase, only for the collar to not be his? Perhaps he did get that collar in preparation for Katou, but it wouldn't make sense to call Kawase his dog, only to not have a collar for him but for a completely different boy.

I think it's fine to leave things up to reader interpretation, as not everything needs to be explicitly stated. However, it would appear to me that the reason that some fans worry if Kawase had been abused by Ikeda is because they are not capable of accepting that a seme character has experienced previous sexual abuse. I have read many comments from both the Japanese and Western sides that imply this logic. it seems to stem from an inability to accept semes as victims of sexual abuse (or to have ever had a history of 'bottoming'.

Sexual abuse can take many forms, and that abuse is not exclusive to the abuser being the penetrator, and the abused being the penetrated. However, I believe that those fans assume that the form of abuse was penetration (with Kawase being the victim of said penetration), and that because he was in this position, that makes Kawase a bottom as a character. Because that event would make him a bottom, they cannot accept him being abused.

While it's completely fine to have top and bottom preferences for characters in fandom, it's reductive to define a character as a bottom *simply because they were the victim of sexual abuse.* This kind of thinking implies that the only kind of person who can experience abuse is a bottom (or uke), and the moment a character experiences abuse, they *must* be a bottom. Although I can respect other fan's opinions, I find it strange that they wish to define someone's positioning in bed through previous experiences, especially nonconsensual ones.

I know that several fans want to see Kawase as 'only for Tamamori', and to them, having been assaulted by others would mean that Kawase was not for Tamamori. Thinking this, they wanted the original creator to reassure them that 'the only person Kawase has ever been with is Tamamori'. This kind of thinking would be harmful even if these scenarios were normal, consensual sexual experiences, but Kawase's experiences are nothing like that.

I don't blame Kurosawa-sensei or Adelta for how they have responded to any fans in this situation, as I think it's a very hard thing to want to keep a large group of people happy. Fans of Adelta's later games have wanted similar reassurances that certain characters of those games have never had sex before, or they want reassurance that certain characters have never been victimized before, and what have you... But I won't talk about those characters here for the purpose of preventing spoilers in other games.

This debate is not exclusive to Adelta, and in particular it seems to be something that appears in some Japanese fandom spaces. What I think happened is an issue that is prevalent far outside the BL-VN sphere as well. It seems that virginity is important for fans, and you can see similar patterns in Japanese idol culture (which affects real people rather than characters).... But I should save this talk for another time- it doesn't fit this document.

Bringing it back to Kawase, I would like to say that I think it is unfortunate that some fans who are not able to 'look past' Kawase's sexual abuse. It's completely fine if someone would not want to dwell on his abuse, because abuse can be triggering and upsetting. Media does not always have to be meaningful. If you find Kawase sexually appealing but not likeable in any other way, that's fine!

However, I am someone that likes him for his dark history, and I find his experiences with Ikeda narratively compelling. That's not to say that I wish he suffered because I like when people suffer. It's that I have suffered in my own life, as I know many others have, and I find solace in seeing characters similar to myself in media that I like. This also leads me to like darker stories and art that explore these aspects of his past, although I'm sure it will appear as gauche and unnecessary to those that exclusively like 'pretty boy Kawase'.

To me, I consider Ikeda's abuse and father's abuse of Kawase to be canon events. I also don't believe that his abuse has any bearing whether he is a top or bottom, a seme or uke. I won't force any other fans to accept these events, but I think that these things expand upon his character and explain why Kawase acts the way he does. But just as I want fans to feel okay for not dwelling on his pain, I would like to feel okay for dwelling on his pain- precisely because I like the message of 'comfort the disturbed, and disturb the comforted'.

To wrap up this section, I would like to talk a little more about Ikeda. It didn't quite fit in the childhood section, because it happened right after Kawase had become an adult, so I think I'll mention my thoughts on him here. We know a bit more about Ikeda than we do father, as more characters in the *Hashihime* cast have interacted with him.

> Q：池田氏は玉森も養子にすると申し出たときはどんな思惑だったんでしょうか。玉森の顔が綺麗だからでしょうか…。もし本当に玉森も養子になっていた場合の川瀬の動きが気になります。
>
> A：池田氏は二人の顔を気に入り、どちらか一方を、と、汽車の中で品定めしていたようです。
> 玉森はバレずにやり過ごしていたとしても、池田氏は川瀬を選んでいたと思います。
> というのも玉森よりも川瀬のほうが帝大に対しての熱意があるので、川瀬ならばきっと自分の提案(帝大に入れてあげる代わりに少年を……)を飲み込むだろうと。
> 川瀬は自分に優しくしている相手を基本信用しないので、汽車の段階で池田氏を疑っておりました。
> なのでもしどちらも養子に…という話になったときは、玉森をわざと蹴落として池田氏から遠ざけていたでしょう。

I would like to start by saying that I don't believe Kawase could have known Ikeda's full intentions at the moment he met him. Kawase would have ruined Tamamori's chances of being adopted if Tamamori's luggage had not opened, revealing all of his manuscripts (that Ikeda considered to be foolish). It's stated here that Kawase does not trust anyone who treats him with kindness, and I'm tempted to think he might have gotten the sense that Ikeda is lecherous, but perhaps he didn't know to what extent.

Honestly, I'm not sure if Kawase would have let Ikeda adopt him had he known he was a pedophile. Perhaps he would have, thinking that he had already dealt with this kind of disgusting person before, and he needed the advantage of knowing someone from the medical department of the university. Or perhaps he wouldn't have, not being able to stomach being around him after what father had done.

Regardless, being adopted into an unrelated household was very common in Japan at the time. And when you combine that with Kawase's determination to pay back Hanazawa, I think you can see why he would choose to be taken in by someone he doesn't trust. Kawase, on some level, does not see himself as valuable, and so he will protect Tamamori (who is valuable to him) by making sure he is not adopted by a lecherous man, and he will sacrifice himself to pay Hanazawa back (who is also valuable to him).

And even if it's dichotomous, I do think that Kawase, who sees himself as valueless, also has a sadistic streak in him. He laughs when others are in pain, and he's willing to resort to physical violence. When he becomes an adult, he refines this violent side of himself into an ambitious young man, so many of the other students at his university end up liking him. I believe he did this as a survival tactic so that he could prepare for climbing the ranks in the medical world, but he unintentionally amassed a 'fan club' of other students around him.

Q：帝大内での川瀬の評判はどのようなものなのでしょうか。
A：真面目だけど付き合いが悪く、口数も少ない寡黙な生徒……。です。彼と仲良しになりたい生徒や教授は多く、隠れファンもいるようです。

It's both of these sides that make Kawase who he is. I know there are many fans out there who can accept and love his two sides equally. There's value in being able to recognize that dynamic characters will act differently throughout their lives and in different contexts. When you recognize these two sides in him, I think you can understand all of the different depictions fans offer you, and you can enjoy his character more.



Closing Thoughts

I hope this document offered some new or different insight for you. I did my best to organize my thoughts in a way that was cohesive. However, I did run into some issues and limitations during my research.

For example, in my timeline, Kawase does not complete high school in Aizu before heading to Tokyo University. I find it unlikely that Kawase began school a year earlier (at age four), because that would mean that Kawase would have first met Tamamori and Minakami at school, not at the hospital. So he *must* have started attending school when he was five (about to turn six). Normally, a student had five years of middle school and three years of high school before university, therefore, he wouldn't have finished his last year of school before he moved to Tokyo. It is possible he transferred schools, but it seems a bit odd to me. Since sensei stated when Kawase moved, I trust her judgement. My resources on Japanese school are limited, so maybe this is normal. Perhaps he even skipped a grade, as was possible (but uncommon at the time).

I chose not to discuss Tamamori and Kawase's relationship extensively in this document. My reasoning for this is I wished to keep this document a reasonable length. I believe including Tamamori in this document would have made it unnecessarily wordy. That is the same reason why I avoided talking about Hanazawa and Minakami as well in this document- to remain on topic.

I should also mention that it is difficult for me to evaluate a character like father with the proper detachment it deserves, because I inadvertently compare it to my own situation. I am admitting these limitations to you now not to draw attention to myself, but to let you know of my biases. I already have my own ideas about violent fathers, and even before I played *Hashihime*, I thought a good deal about the subject.

I worry about bringing up the fact that I am able to relate to Kawase in any sense, because I really, really, *really* do not want to implant any of myself onto Kawase. I want him to be as authentic and true to the version of him in game as I can make him, untinged by any of my own colors. I believe that there are times in fan analysis where the writer ends up 'self-inserting' themselves into the character. The risk of self-inserting in fan analysis usually looks like projecting experiences onto a character so heavily that the analysis stops being about the character, and starts being a vehicle for the writer's feelings. I think that many readers notice when this happens, and then the readers become irked that their favorite characters are acting out of character. When this happens, the experience becomes negative for both the writer and the reader.

I wish to avoid that at all costs, so I've been very critical with myself when analyzing this document and asking how much of my judgments are my personal biases. However, I also questioned if hiding the fact that I can relate to Kawase (when trying to offer my judgment on his situation) would be unethical. I say a lot of things that- without having experience- I would have no authority to say. I hope that by offering you this minute information about myself gives you, as the reader, perspective so that you may decide how much weight to give my interpretation. Because at the end of the day, your judgment is the only one that should matter to you.

I actually wrote a book about a boy in a very similar situation to Kawase before I played *Hashihime*, and I was very surprised to see the similarities. When Tamamori introduces that Kawase had been abused by his father, I remember thinking, *'Ah, that's just like ○○ in my book. But he probably wasn't sexually abused by his dad or anything, it was probably just physical violence.'* And then I found out what really happened, and I was shocked!

Of course, physical violence and sexual abuse are all very common in the home. Surveys conducted on adults have given results that state around one in five people have experienced some form of CSA, with family members being the highest perpetrators of said violence. I think the subject is difficult to talk about, but with how common the victims are, I believe it's a subject worthy of talking about.

It's what makes me so excited when I see characters like Kawase in Kurosawa-sensei's works, and her other characters in later works (that I won't mention here in case I would spoil the story of those games for those who haven't played them). I feel like a lot of other stories about situations like these are very sanitized in media- the characters who suffer this abuse often become nothing more than two-dimensional victims. Out of fear of showing victims in a negative light, creators show these people as innocent, perfectly nice, and without their own flaws.

But at the end of the day, anyone *could* be a victim. Good people, bad people... the morality and the personality of someone has no bearing on whether one suffers abuse. The fact that Kawase is someone that's very vicious and guarded makes me like him more than if he wasn't.

I think it's wonderful that different people finish playing *Hashihime and the Old Book Town,* and come away with different conclusions. I've thought a lot about the game so that I could make fanworks, and I feel a bit sheepish to admit how much it has impacted me. I've always been someone that gets attached to stories and characters, and I hope to be able to continue making fanworks for many years to come.

Reading Recommendations

If you are interested in learning more about the psychology of people and difficult families, I have left some recommendations. I have also included other material that I referred to. I don't necessarily agree with everything in these works, but they have good information.

Personal accounts to read:

IICSA: 3.2 The effects of child sexual abuse
Center | Psychology Group: "I feel dirty:" mental contamination in trauma survivors

Scientific Journals to read:

Childhood maltreatment, sexual desire and sexual distress in couples: the role of touch aversion
Touch aversion in patients with interpersonal traumatization
Disgust as a Unique Affective Predictor of Mental Contamination Following Sexual Trauma
Emotional Contamination OCD: Understanding the Hidden Fear Behind "Emotional Dirt"
Reversing the causal arrow: Incidence and properties of negative backward magical contagion in Americans
Non-fatal strangulation | NCBI

Wikipedia

Contagion Heuristic
Japanese Public School in the Taishou Era

Books to read:

Lundy Bancroft's *"Why Does He Do That?"*
Bessel Van Der Kolk's *"The Body Keeps the Score"*
Pete Walker's *"CPTSD: From Surviving to Thriving"*
Emily Nagoski's "Come As You Are"
Haruo Shirane's *"Early Modern Japanese Literature"*
Andrew Gorden's *"A Modern History of Japan (Fourth Edition)"*
Ebrey & Walthall's *"Modern East Asia from 1600 (Third Edition)"*
Haruko Cook & Theodore Cook's *"Japan at War - An Oral History"*

Credits

Thank you to ADELTA and Kurosawa Rinko-sensei for making one of the most influential games and cast of characters of my life. Saying that I love *古書店街の橋姫* is an understatement. When I first finished the entire game, I felt a myriad of emotions I couldn't describe. All of ADELTA's works have been wonderful in so many different ways, and *Hashihime of the Old Book Town* will always hold a special place in my heart.

I would like to thank @\worldendsymphony for the transcript they made of the game, and for the English translation of *'kimi ga tame'* and *'After Death'.* I owe you my life for your help! I would also like to thank @\vocaotome for the pdf timeline of the Hashihime game. In addition, I will thank @\HashihimeAnonymous on pastebin for the information gathering. Thank you everyone so very much! You don't know how much you have helped me.

Also thank you to whoever gathered up the Q&A results. I don't know who compiled them all, but it also seems to have been part of a project to translate those Q&As into Chinese. A lot of work went into making it. Thank you very much.

Finally, I would also like to thank you for reading all of this. I get easily attached to characters and I always want to write a lot about them. I think a lot of you can relate. Looking at things that other people made always made me feel better in times when I didn't feel good, whether it was as a fun distraction, or something that made me realize I wasn't alone. I hope I can offer even a little bit of those feelings to someone out there. Thank you again for reading.

See you later!
-NarWool