

Nakim found that this Takeshi Muratori's presence caused him to become an instant master of raising one eyebrow in alarm. He felt a wave of disgust as a thin silvery strand of saliva made its way down the Soul Reaper's grinning cheek. Seconds passed; he didn't do a thing about it. Nakim's eyebrow rose ever higher as he fought the urge to get the bastard a freaking napkin or something.

"Gyeeyahahahahah!" Finally, Takeshi spoke. Or, rather, he cackled wickedly once again—it seemed to be nine of every ten words he knew. Nakim tried to look the unnerving enemy in the eye but his gaze kept getting drawn to his foe's obsessive stroking of his zanpakuto, "Gyaha... Now hold still, fattie, and I'll make this quick an' easy!"

The Arrancar had no intention of holding still. Expecting to hear the faint shuffling of flash step somewhere around him, he prepared to react accordingly. His stronger fist clenched, though he held his weapon higher in his weaker hand to draw attention away from his real plan.

But Takeshi didn't make a move.

At least, not the move that would be expected according to Arrancar battle etiquette.

"Tear him to pieces..." The Soul Reaper's facial slur tattoos distended in a savage grin, "Akai Shatsu!"

An ominous crimson glow welled up around the blade of Takeshi's zanpakuto, then spilled out in long dribbles as if the light were some kind of radioactive blood. It pooled at the seventh seat's feet, then arched back up to surround the entire weapon and the arm that held it. Nakim squinted and his raised eyebrow got more exercise, turning downward in a scowl.

"It's rude to release first thing," he said. "It's like you don't even *want* to fight me."

"Oh, you *can* talk!" Takeshi's voice drifted out of the sanguine fog enveloping the roof. The fog began to clear, glints of numerous dark-colored blades beginning to poke out, "I thought you were dumb or something. Gyaahahaha! Go on, say something else, fattie! It cracks me up!"

"Hnrr..." Nakim wanted very much to say something else, something to shut the annoying man up. But it wouldn't do much good. If there was something he knew about loudmouths, it was that they don't shut up for anything. Especially not more words.

"Awww... Ah, well!" Takeshi took a step forward, displacing even more of the reddish mist, "By the way, fatboy, I ain't here to fight you, I'm here to *kill* you! I don't wanna cross

blades, I wanna put mine in your fat head!"

"Grrrrr...." Nakim's grip turned white on his zanpakuto, "You are one sick fuck."

"Gyehahaha! Yeah, that's more like it!" Takeshi's face was briefly visible beyond the settling redness, just as distorted and disturbing as ever, "Wow, I never pegged ya for guy who could cuss!"

"That's *it*...!" The Arrancar snarled, flipping his zanpakuto backwards in his hand. Takeshi stared, for once dumbfounded, at why his opponent would hold his sword in such a manner, "You... are in need of a lesson in basic human decency... and *manners*..."

"Yeah, so?" Takeshi's grin was slightly nervous this time, "What, you gonna teach me? Gyahaha—"

"Yes..." Nakim's small eyes were hot as volcanos, "I am going to *teach* you...!"

"Gyaaha...ha..." Takeshi was frozen as Nakim thrust his sword into the ground by his left foot, watching with a stunned expression on his scrawled-over face as the blade began to glow dark green.

"Grow..." The blade seemed to begin increasing in size and brightness, the light quickly overwhelming the Soul Reaper's senses, "Enorme!"

Blinking away water that flooded his eyes from the brightness, Takeshi suddenly felt an immense shadow fall over him. Peering up, his jaw went slack. Nakim, now easily twice the height of the old theater, was armored with a muddy brown skin from neck to ankles. His face was concealed behind the complete version of his mask, and only tiny pinpricks of the streetlamps reflecting off the surface of his eyes showed beyond it. His knuckles were equipped with hefty studs, yellowy-brown ivory-like spikes—his ankles were armed in a similar manner. Glaring down from his new skyscraping vantage point, Nakim's mask fragments parted slightly as he growled down at the ant that was Takeshi.

"This..." He lifted one fist slowly, "Is why releasing first is rude!"

Takeshi smirked, watching the fist wind back at snail's pace. He lifted a pair of multi-pronged blades with a chain between them and prepared to hack and slash the approaching fist.

"Bring it, fatt—"

GGGSHH!

Unfortunately for Takeshi, it was not the slow-moving fist that he had to worry about. Nakim lifted his foot from where he had smashed it down and gave a short glance to the bloodied

form. Nakim wrinkled his nose in disgust and was briefly thankful that the shoes remained during his Resurrección.

.

"Graaaaah!"

The one who called himself Atsushi Wamumoto darted to the side as Edorad's reiatsu-cloaked fist slammed the brick wall he had been standing against. Pieces of masonry and mortar flew about, stinging the Soul Reaper's face and bouncing harmlessly off the Arrancar's. Flitting upwards, Atsushi tried putting some distance between himself and his dangerously strong enemy. Settling on a light pole, he murmured under his breath the words to the spell in the few seconds he had to spare.

Edorad tracked the seventh seat's flight, eying the light pole with an unnerving gusto. He'd never had the opportunity to do battle in an urban setting before, and there was so much new infrastructure to destr—er..."prepare for replacement". Barreling towards the base of the tall metal pole, Edorad's ear caught snatches of mildly familiar verse... Kido. He couldn't remember the exact spell, but he'd know once it was fired. He didn't doubt it would be an easy one.

"Hado Forty Two..!" Atsushi was nearly through his casting before his perch became unstable. Edorad grinned up at him as he wrapped his huge mitt around the base of the pole and squeezed, popping the top half of the structure off and letting it crash to the ground, "Unh! Shimoku!"

Now what is that one again..? Edorad wondered. He was answered with a thick shower of acid-smelling sludge careening towards his head, *Oh! The poison goo one!*

Atsushi was not quite arrogant enough to assume that mid-level Kido fired with ample warning would be enough to win the battle. Leaping from the toppled light pole, he settled again on the roof of the water tower and kept his senses tuned on his immediate surroundings. This Arrancar was quite an aggressive fighter, doing whatever it took to stay in the attacking position. No doubt he would pop up somewhere nearby, and unleash another assault to keep his head down in the process. The black fluid from the Shimoku was flooding away--flat, not a trace of any figures caught underneath the highly poisonous sludge.

A creak and a static noise sounded over his head, and the Soul Reaper lifted his sword in time to divert Edorad's palm. The Soldado was grinning like a demon as he thudded down in the spot where his enemy had recently vacated. For a brief few seconds they appeared to catch their breath, staring each other down from across the rusted steel width of the water tank.

"What's the matter!" Edorad barked, cracking his knuckles. "You been running the whole fight. Are you tired yet?"

"Running?" Atsushi almost smiled, but the attempt died off into a sneer before it fully decided on what expression it was going to be, "On the contrary, I have just been feeling your abilities out. Quite impressive. Not quite the ungodly power I was expecting from the mightiest class of Hollows, but..." Atsushi shifted his stance, sliding one foot further back as he leveled his sword out flat, "Challenging all the same."

Edorad smiled rather than snarling (as he would have loved to do), failing to hide the tic nagging his eyebrow and betraying his true feelings. He'd called him a Hollow *again*. It was hard to restrain himself enough to continue with proper fighting manners. It was tempting to launch right into Volcanica, melt some concrete and Soul Reaper face, teach the moron just how offensive his Arrancar-equals-Hollow assumption really was from the horse's mouth, but... That would be rude. They'd only been exchanging blows for four or five minutes at most. Truth be told, Edorad was far from simply charging around after Atsushi.

Atsushi prepared to leap. He knew the Arrancar was doing just as he was; he was feeling out his opponent, otherwise his lousy half-hearted flash step would have resulted in a large seventh seat smear on the sidewalk by now. Now that they were both sufficiently warmed up and sure that either side was soft-stepping it, he could go ahead and move full speed.

And strike at full strength.

CHANNG! SHHNGG!

Atsushi's downward chop and the swing that followed it were both deflected, but this time by Edorad's blade and not his hands. Atsushi blinked in shock as he tugged to bring his weapon away but found that the Arrancar had grabbed a hold of it in his other hand. Their eyes met, so Atsushi spotted the look of fiendish delight crossing Edorad's face before he yanked him in closer. The Soul Reaper had no choice but to give up his zanpakuto before he was slammed through the metal roof of the water tower.

"Heheheh..." Edorad held up the purloined weapon, grinning teasingly, "Oh, Atsushi or whatever... You dropped something!"

"So I did..." Atsushi eyed his sword dangling from the two fingers the Arrancar was holding it with, "Would you be so kind as to give it back?"

"Sure..." Edorad chuckled heartily and wound his pitching arm back. Atsushi barely had time to duck before he winged it back, spinning, right back at him. Behind him there was a ping of metal on metal as the zanpakuto-turned-chakram bounced off another of the decrepit light poles, "Oh, you didn't catch it, sorry. Better go and get it!"

Atsushi guarded his back with one pale eye as he fetched his blade humiliatingly from where it was half-buried in the base of a light pole. He doubted the Arrancar would wait for him to re-arm himself, but to his surprise, Edorad did. As the sword came free of the battered steel the Soul Reaper glanced back up to the top of the tower. Edorad was still there, hulking arms crossed over his barrel-like chest and his shoulders shaking slightly from having forced the Soul Reaper to retrieve his own sword after it nearly killed him.

Edorad's interest was piqued by Atsushi's sudden sigh. Peering down over the rim of the tower's top, the Arrancar watched carefully as the seventh seat held out his sword at a thirty degree angle to his forehead.

I should keep back, he thought. When zanpakuto are released, they get a boost of power at first. Being near that's bad news.

"Cloak them in darkness." The sword lit up bright white, but the light did not radiate outward, only shone within itself. Edorad blinked and uncrossed his arms. The light seemed to be growing smaller, shrinking into the clenched palm of his expressionless enemy. But where the light receded, the shine of the lamplight and starlight on steel did not reappear. Atsushi's sword seemed to have dissolved into nothing, "Ka Garasu."

"Cloak them in darkness"? Must be one of those element-based Shikai... Edorad fixed his stance, now on the defensive as he was unsure of Atsushi's abilities, Either that, or it affects the senses. It's not the most obvious command ever, but, enh... Good enough.

He was shoved out of his thoughts by the sight of the unarmed Soul Reaper speeding towards him, one open palm extended as if he were rushing in to grab hold of his face. Edorad leaned back as he approached, slipping to the side and letting the seventh seat sail past.

"Unh!" The Arrancar jerked in alarm upon feeling a sharp sting in the shoulder. Glancing over to inspect the wound, he was shocked to find Atsushi perched on the effected limb, the hand opposite the one he had been charging Edorad with planted on the muscle just by his neck.

"My peers tell me I'm quite speedy," Atsushi said, twisting his wrist. Edorad grunted as he noted the tearing pain from the lightly bleeding area underneath the unwanted hand. Temporarily stunned, his swat was a bit less coordinated than usual and the Soul Reaper dodged it nimbly with space to spare. "Though honestly, that one step was a bit better than my average."

"Which step are you talkin' about..?" Edorad was staring at Atsushi's open palm, the right one, stained with a bit of bright red blood. More specifically, he was focusing on what looked like a silvery dart protruding from the center of it, sharp and armed with four serrated edges. So he wasn't unarmed after all. This spike had been what was spearing his shoulder.

Atsushi seemed to brighten at the Arrancar's statement, looking pleasantly surprised that Edorad thought to ask such a question.

"The second one, naturally. I'm surprised you noticed me taking more than one."

"You know, it'd pay to stop being so surprised by what I can do."

"By all means, I will now. Now that I'm aware of your... relative skill." The Soul Reaper took a pause to chuckle. A vein throbbed on Edorad's temple, "Unfortunately for you, skill means nothing to Ka Garasu. She is very much an equalizing sort of zanpakuto; she's a handicap, to word it differently."

"I take it you're gonna demonstrate what you mean instead of explaining it, huh?" Edorad snorted. Atsushi nodded and allowed himself a slight smirk, running two fingers over the ragged edge of one side of the bloodied weapon.

"Hunh, I really was underestimating you. How observant. But you're right, I do believe showing is always more effective than telling." Atsushi bent at the knees, preparing for launch, "Now, if you wish to see for yourself, hold still and cooperate for me..."

Edorad crouched, readying himself for another head-on charge and letting one broad hand creep over to the hilt of Volcanica. Seconds later, Atsushi vanished.

"What the hell?!" Edorad straightened for a second, dropping his sword hand unconsciously. His confusion only doubled when the deep blues and purples of the night sky over the desert town turned to sudden carmine red, "Th-the sky is..!"

"Changed? Turned a different color?" A voice above him whispered. Hissing through his teeth for letting himself get caught off guard, Edorad brought himself out of the line of Atsushi's fire in a twitch-like Sonído. A blast of fire from what could only be a Shakkaho spell turned the metal roof of the tower liquid orange and it caved in, the stagnant waters below squealing in agony.

The large man landed on a nearby brick building, its normal dusky brown hue now warped into a violently bright purple. Edorad's eyes flicked this way and that, scanning the roof tops and streets for any sign of his opponent. He knew that Atsushi was the cause of the strangeness, but there was no sign of him. He had been right above him, but invisible to both his eyes and Pesquisa.

"Well..." Edorad let out a heavy breath and forced his face into a stone-like expression. No taking chances; he drew out his sword and held it ready to counter any sneak attacks, "This is a pretty fishy Shikai, eh..." He glared hard at where he had last seen the Soul Reaper, "Let's just see what this is all about first... No need to use what I don't need."