



LIVE comment

VTUBER LEGEND: HOW I WENT VIRAL

AFTER FORGETTING TO TURN OFF MY STREAM 7

AUTHOR: NANA NANATO ILLUSTRATOR: SIOKAZUNOKO

- MANAGEMENT YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN YOU SON OF A BITCH!
- SO THIS IS LIVE-ON GEN 5...
- VISUAL KEI BAKA
- THE STREAM TAG IS TOO AVANT GARDE FOR ME
- AND THE OTHER TWO ARE JUST LIKE HER... WHAT IS HAPPENING...
- MANAGEMENT REALLY SAID "NEWBIE = NEW BREED (OF HUMANS)"
- AWA-CHAN STRUGGLING OUT HERE
- SHE'S A GOOD SENPAI (THAT DARN ALCOHOLIC BEV NOTWITHSTANDING)
- CRAZY TO THINK SHE'S NOW A SEASONED VETERAN
- THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA

Tadasu
Miyazuchi

VS
Awayuki
Kokorone

#AntiLiveON

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FORGETTING TO TURN OFF MY STREAM 7



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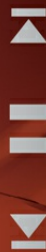
CRAZY TO THINK SHE'S NOW A
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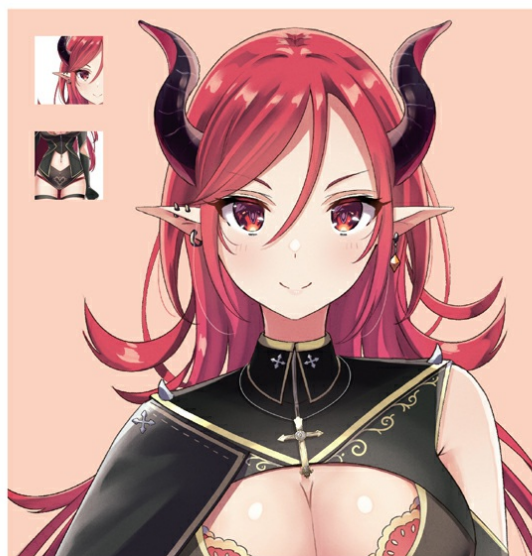
GEN 1

GEN 2

HARERU ASAGIRI

"Heya! It's me—the sunlight in everyone's hearts, Hareru Asagiri!"

An energetic high school girl who loves putting smiles on everyone's faces. Extremely curious and—carried by her momentum—frequently does or says things that nobody would have ever expected.



SEI UTSUKI

"Hey, ladies and gents! It's your girl, Sei-sama!"

In her past life, she was a succubus who lived off the vigor of men, but died of starvation since she only ever showed interest in other women. She reincarnated, bringing us to today. Her horns are a holdover from that past life.



SHION KAMINARI

"Kon-miko, everyone! It's everyone's mama, Shion Kaminari!"

A shrine maiden whose body is inhabited by a nine-tailed fox and who safeguards the people as a servant of the kami. Because of how fiercely her nine fluffy tails swing around based on her emotions, caution is needed when standing behind her.



NEKOMA HIRUNE

"Nya-nyan! I caught a whiff of something great and came running!"

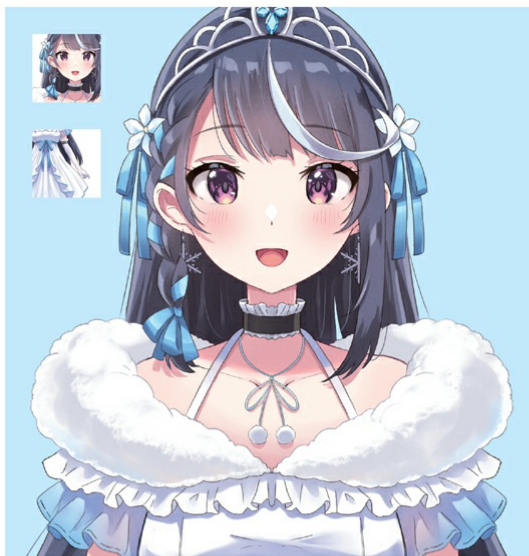
A beast girl with heterochromia who loves naps—but whenever she sees someone close by eating food, she immediately gets up and goes over to them with sparkling eyes. She'll be happy if you give her something. She'll also be happy if you pet her, even if you don't give her anything.



MASHIRO IRODORI

"Kon-mashiro, everyone! It's me, Mashiro Irodori, also called Mashiron."

An illustrator who lives to draw. While she can be a little scathing with her remarks, she's actually a kind, friendly girl.



AWAYUKI KOKORONE

"Good evening, everyone. Another nice, light snow is falling tonight? I'm Awayuki Kokorone."

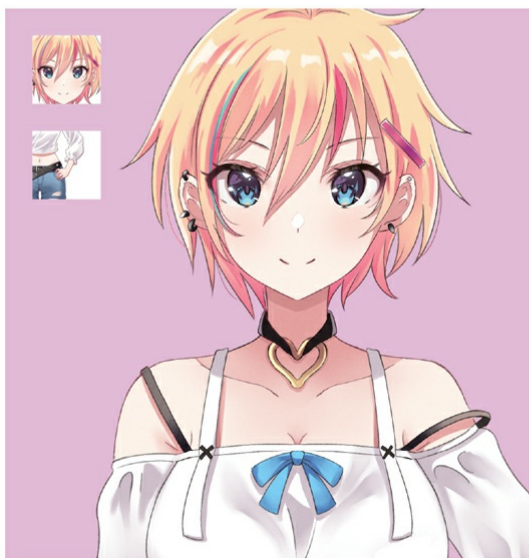
A mysterious beauty who only appears on days when a light snow is falling. Her purple eyes draw you in with the promise of something hidden deep inside them...



HIKARI MATSURIYA

"Kon-pika, everyone! The light of the festival is here for all to enjoy! It's me, Hikari Matsuriya!"

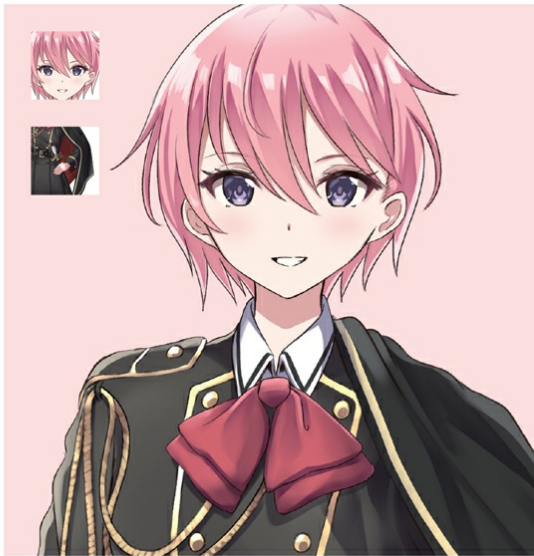
A festival girl who appears at festivals throughout Japan. Some say she's even appeared at the same time in two different festivals held in separate places.



CHAMI YANAGASE

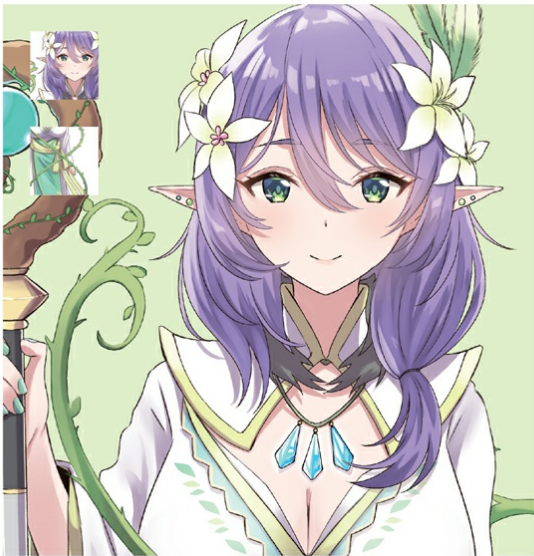
"Hello! It's Chami Yanagase-oneesan, the one who always guides everyone to the pinnacle of healing."

Originally a gloomy character, but rallied her courage and debuted as a sunny one—to thunderous applause. Inside, though, she hasn't changed, making her a gloomy character wearing the skin of a sunny one.



ALICE SOMA

“Ma’am! Alice Soma, at your service!”
A member of the Resistance, an idol group focused on self-liberation. Her cool looks make her popular with men and women alike, but inside she’s somewhat incompetent, so she works hard to protect her image.



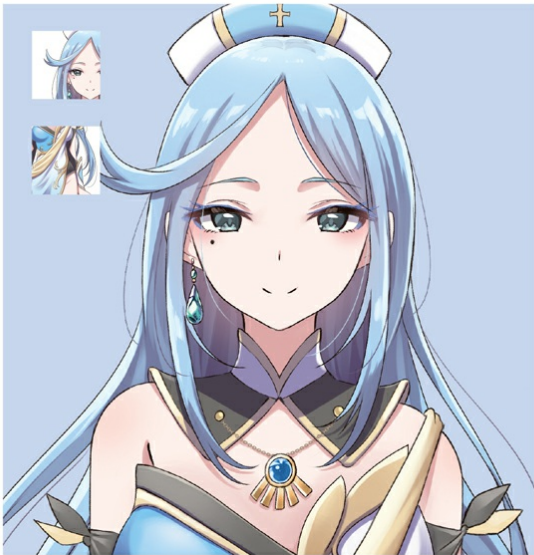
EHRAI SONOKAZE

“Heya, everyone! Are you all doing well? I am! I’m Ehrai Sonokaze, zookeeper at Ehrai Zoo!”
An elven zookeeper at Ehrai Zoo, a major theme park featuring every animal under the sun. Respected to the point of complete obedience by all the animals there, for some reason.

Live-ON
Live-On

The Chosen Shining Girls

News | Goods
Guidelines | Talents | About The Company



KAERU YAMATANI

“You can cross the mountains and dales, but you can always return here. Welcome to Kaeru Yamatani’s stream.”
A mysterious, mystical woman who is said to appear before kind, loving hearts that have been grievously wounded, grant them her healing, and then return upon the wind.



TADASU MIYAUCHI

"How do you all do, everyone? It is I, the sole daughter of the venerable Miyauchi lineage, the Anti-Live-On icon herself, Tadasu Miyauchi."

The student council president of the prestigious all girls' school Saika Girls Academy, she takes great pride in her family name. A lover of all things clean and virtuous, she has thus come to view Live-On as the enemy.



DAGGER

"I am a wanderer of memories, a renegade in this realm. Forsaken by my past, I am a whisper without a name. I...am Dagger."

A young girl with amnesia. She wandered the realm without purpose or end before Live-On took her in and promptly debuted her as a streamer. What few memories she retains paint a grim picture.



CHURIRI

"Good morning, class! It's your teacher in all things love, Churiri-sensei!"

A teacher with hair of indescribable hue who works at Live-On. An alien from outer space, her real name is much longer, comprised of sounds not replicable in any human language. She teaches love.

Contents

Chapter 1

Idle Talk: Tadasu Miyauchi's Great Dog Poop Spiral

Chapter 2

Idle Talk: Dagger-Chan Is...

Chapter 3

Idle Talk: A Day in the Life of Churiri-Sensei

Epilogue 1: The Gang's All Here

Epilogue 2: Hareru Asagiri's Castella Q and A

Afterword

Chapter 1

Fifth Gen, Part 1

“It’s almost time, Awa-chan.”

“I know, right, Mashiron? Omigosh, be still my beating heart.”

“Has the day finally come at last where I, Alice Soma, become a senpai?”

“Heh heh,” Mashiron chuckled. “Do you feel like you’ve grown, Alice-chan?”

“To be perfectly honest, not at all, ma’am.”

“That tracks. I didn’t either,” Mashiron reassured her.

A month had passed since the announcement of Live-On’s fifth generation, and the day of their debut had finally come. In attendance were Mashiron, Alice-chan, and me, Awayuki Kokorone.

Why were the three of us huddled together, eyes glued to the screen for their debut? To shake things up, that’s why! When the fourth gen debuted, I’d watched it all alone, so this time I’d invited Mashiron to join me. Then Alice-chan extended her invitation to me, and before we knew it, we were watching the debut as a trio. Just like last time, all active streamers had pressed pause on their activities, stepping back to ensure the newbies had the spotlight they needed to shine. In that moment, we were no different from any other viewer.

Here we go! The countdown was ticking, just a few minutes left until the planned time!

“It’s going to be a stormy three months with three newcomers, methinks,” Alice-chan said.

“That’s right, they’re switching things up this time, aren’t they?” I said.

“Great decision. Setting all four of you loose at the same time was a mistake,” quipped Mashiron.

Indeed, the debuts for the fifth gen were taking a fresh turn. Three total members were making their grand entrance, but today was reserved for only one special debut. Then, a month from now, the next member would step into the limelight, and a month after that, the final one.

The staggered debut was a thoughtful experiment, born from a desire to ease the viewers into the new era. Management had feared that thrusting three robust personalities into the fray all at once would be too much, too overwhelming. To that end, each individual newcomer was being given a longer debut stream, much longer than any of us had ever had. According to the higher-ups, this would help the viewers gradually warm up to each talent, a strategy that surely had the newbies breathing a sigh of collective relief. Even I had to admit it was a great idea.

However.

That phrase “robust personalities?” Those weren’t my words; those were straight from management. As for what they meant by that, I had no idea. I was equal parts nervous and excited, and utterly unsure of what to expect.

: waku waku

: LFGGG

: bro my heart

: Live-On's getting bigger... we truly live in a society...

: inb4 sad trombone

The chat was electric. The endless stream of comments flying past on-screen elevated the excitement in the room to a fever pitch.

Alice-chan squealed. “That is an insane number of people on standby! This is way more compared to when I debuted!”

“Wow, you’re right,” replied Mashiron. “I’m getting nervous just thinking about debuting in front of this many people.”

“Yeah, I would’ve had both feet out the door by now,” I agreed.

“Hey, no. Bad ace of Live-On,” Mashiron scolded.

“Yeah! No running, ace!” added Alice.

“I’m just a runaway from a bygone era!”

“Hm,” Mashiron grunted. “True, you are where you are now because you ran to alcohol.”

“Mashiron, please. It’s too early for you to be this mean...”

“She’s right, ma’am! We’ve been trying to reach you concerning your StroZero’s extended warranty! Mind if I come inside?”

“Alice-chan, what are you even saying...?” I muttered.

As we had fun at each other’s expense, the stream image began to change, and a hushed silence fell over us. Live-On loved its surprises, and today was no different. The only clue we were given was the newcomer’s silhouette on the stream thumbnail, a shadowed enigma soon to be unveiled.

And then, it happened!

“How do you all do, everyone?” came the silken voice of the debutante. *“I am Tadasu Miyauchi, sole daughter to the most venerable Miyauchi lineage, and a third-year student as well as the esteemed student council president at Saika Girls Academy. It is both a privilege and an honor to make your acquaintance.”*

Our collective gasps of astonishment filled the room, a testament to an introduction so graceful and elegant, you’d never think it was her inaugural stream. Her voice, so pristine, so poised, resonated with the grandeur of royalty. In her presence, it felt like we were mere subjects, blessed by the attention of a lord. And that wasn’t even taking into account the model that had just graced the world with its presence. Her sharp, angled eyes were a mysterious black, hinting at an indomitable strength of will hidden within. A voluminous orange mane exploded across her back, the color so vivid it seemed ablaze, and nestled within her parted bangs, a lovely little lotus flower stood as a delicate garnish.

All in all, she was—

“Cool as heck!” Alice-chan said.

There you have it, straight from the horse's mouth.

“Very elegant,” I murmured. “The lotus-flower hair accessory gives it a soft touch, balancing out the overall sharpness of the design.”

“It’s her clothes for me,” Mashiron chimed in. “We’ve only seen the upper half, so I can’t say for sure, but that’s the uniform of her academy, no? It’s gorgeous.”

We instantly took to her design—especially Mashiron, with her illustrator’s expertise—and our excitement soared to new heights.

: THERE SHE IS

: how do YOU do, MILADY?

: SHE'S SO FREAKING COOL AAAAAAAAH

: elegant...*and* cool?

: fiery witch of the west, anyone?

The chat was a whirlwind, scrolling by far too swiftly for any of us to read, a torrent of support and warm welcomes for the elegant newcomer. To be honest, I would’ve liked to be right there with them, screaming (figuratively) my approval at the top of my lungs, but management had requested we hold back, not wanting to needlessly unnerve the talent. I’d have to be content lurking for now.

But wow, if this was the type of flair we could expect from the rest of them, I didn’t even know what else to say.

“To have all of you here for me, gracing me with your presence, is an honor unparalleled in the annals of the Miyauchi family. I, Miyauchi, shall cherish this moment for the rest of my days. Now! With that rather onerous introduction out of the way, how are you all doing tonight? Oh, are you surprised? Well, what did you expect? I had to present myself appropriately, without tarnishing my family name. But I do apologize if I made anyone a bit nervous.”

: oooh she's chill now
: wait that's crazy. how she do that?
: are we sure this girl's new?
: so she refers to herself as "I, Miyauchi?"
: have we seen this type of character before?
: show us the rest of you!

Right on the heels of her dignified introduction, she switched gears. While retaining that regal air, she managed to exude a more approachable vibe. And on top of that, she was concerned not with her own nerves, but with those of the audience? During my debut, I'd been a chattering wreck, my stage fright turning my speech into an incomprehensible jumble. Yet here she was, poised and considerate. But considering the microscopic acceptance rate of Live-On nowadays, perhaps being past that initial hurdle meant they were hardly newcomers anymore?

"I, Miyauchi, hold the legacy of the Miyauchi family in the highest regard. That much should be self-evident in the manner that I, Miyauchi, address myself. You all wish to see my attire in full? But of course! I am adorned in the uniform of the venerable Saika Girls Academy, a place that I also hold dear in my heart. I trust you will all remember that, my dear viewers. Now, observe here, near my hip. Do you all recognize this embroidery? Indeed, it is the lotus flower, mirroring the one in my hair. In the language of flowers, the lotus symbolizes purity of heart. It is also the symbol of my beloved school. Alas, I must confess, the flower in my hair is but an imitation."

She seemed eager to show off her ensemble to the world, pulling the camera back to reveal her full figure. Her height was...average, actually?

"Oh my god she's so seiso! Seiso—but hot!"

"Calm down, Mashiron, I can't even tell it's you speaking without a dialogue tag anymore," I said. "You really like her, huh?"

“I think I understand the appeal!” Alice-chan butted in. “Her uniform is yet a whole ‘nother vibe compared to mine and Hareru-dono’s!”

Tadasu-chan’s uniform took the word *modesty* to an extreme. Her sleeves were tailored to extend from shoulder to wrist, and her long skirt fell gracefully all the way past her ankles, covering up any hint of what lay underneath. If I had to sum it up, I’d say it was somewhere between a sailor fuku and a nun’s habit. Which is basically just the kind of uniform you’d find at a well-to-do girls’ school, I guess?

But that brief description failed to encompass the true charm of her garb. Far from being merely old-fashioned or austere, it was punctuated with artful details that added a hint of modern chic and tasteful sex appeal. The dominant color was an eye-catching reddish orange, contrasted by alluring sections of white near the chest and other areas of femininity. The whole thing was then pulled tightly over her figure to bring out a curvaceous silhouette. Her design was an exercise in balance, exuding just enough flair to resonate with the VTuber world, yet not overshadowing or diminishing her innate aura of grace. Daring to not show skin—now that was something I could get down with!

“Well, what are your thoughts on the uniform? Gorgeous, isn’t it? Lovely and full of character, but above all else—it is clean and pure!”

: it's definitely going for pretty over cute

: I mean yeah when you have a bombshell of a woman wearing it...

: inject the visuals straight into my veins

: so that's a fancy all girls' school right?

: if the name is anything to go by, yea

“Indeed. Saika Girls Academy stands firmly upon the twin pillars of good public morals and dignity. Though some may associate the term ‘academy’ with a religious institution, know that that aspect of it has waned in recent years. Regardless of nomenclature, one immutable truth remains: it is a house of

learning that nurtures students of the highest moral caliber.”

Oh! So it was a fancy all girls’ school! The kind I’d always dreamed of attending... But also not really, because I knew I wouldn’t last a day in such a strict and exacting environment.

: I am a gentleman, and I must say that I most respectfully *would*.

: they absolutely knew what they were doing making her chest area white like that

: why even cover them up at that point

Even the chat was a storm of praise for her outfit. It seemed first impressions were good; her appearance had seized the attention of all, and everything was going swimmingly.

“You there! What did you just say?!”

...Or had I spoken too soon? Tadasu-chan’s voice was suddenly cold and commanding, a razor-edged arrow slicing through the air. The joy from showing off her uniform had vanished, replaced by a steely resolve that froze every viewer, including us, on the spot.

“‘Why even cover them up?’ How dare you! In public no less! Should you persist in your indecency, know that I, Miyauchi, will be angered!”

It was as if all the oxygen had been sucked out of the room. In all my days of streaming, never had I once—ever—witnessed the chat come screeching to such a collective halt. Was this not really bad?

“This might be bad,” Mashiron said.

“Bad,” echoed Alice-chan.

Both of them seemed to share in my sense of impending doom, their voices reduced to squeaks. What had the newcomer done to rattle us so? Well, to put it simply, she might have crossed the line.

Crossing the line, of course, refers to delving into topics that should not be

brought up before a vast and diverse audience. Be it ethics, politics, or matters of public opinion, there were certain topics that even an organization as chaotic and notorious as Live-On would not touch. Well, in this case, the particular line that had been crossed might not have anything to do with the above, but more with the mythos and expectations surrounding Live-On that had been so painstakingly cultivated.

Was this girl trying to step over that line right here, right now? My intuition was telling me yes—yes, she was.

“This is what is wrong with you Live-On people! You act without a shred of decency, speaking thoughtlessly on matters that should invoke shame! You gleefully abandon your inhibitions and revel in such crude, foolish conduct. This behavior demands immediate rectification!”

Ah, I was wrong. She wasn’t trying to step over the line, she was getting a running start—so she could hop, skip, and jump right over that bitch.

This was bad—like, really bad.

“Now is as good a time as ever, so let me be clear. Why have I, Miyauchi, chosen to join Live-On and direct my indignation toward this very platform? The answer is simple: I am here to cleanse Live-On, to right what has been wronged! I am anti-Live-On, and I will be your downfall!”

“Should we call someone?” Mashiron asked.

“I think we should,” I responded.

“From the tone of her voice, I think it’s clear she’s not joking around!” Alice-chan added.

It wasn’t her criticism of us that was alarming—that didn’t matter. What mattered was the manner in which she spoke, the righteous fury in her voice that threatened to alienate the very viewers who appreciated the wild, unrestrained spirit of Live-On. What also mattered was Tadasu-chan’s future and the potential repercussions this could have on her. We needed to hit pause, regroup, and figure out a way to do some course correction, and quickly!

“I, Miyauchi...”

On the other hand—what the heck, Live-On? I thought you were supposed to be *the* experts at discovering wack jobs who happened to have the potential to hack it in the virtual world, so what the heck was this?! Oh no, panic was setting in. She was going to cross the line in a big way. I felt it in my bones.

“I, Miyauchi...!”

Crap, we’re not gonna make it! She was blowing past all of us, sprinting full speed ahead, calculating the distance, eyeing the prize, preparing for a great leap into the unknown!

“I, Miyauchi, am incredibly aroused by all things hidden!”

“Huh?” all three of us exclaimed at the same time.

Wow, she jumped so far she went all the way across the globe and ended up right back where she started.

The silence that followed was palpable. All we could hear was Tadasu-chan’s heavy breathing coming from the other end of the mic. Then, like a burst dam, messages began flooding the chat once again.

: what.

: come again?

: big kusa

: ?!?!

: I was prepared to put out a fire not a goddamn meteor strike

: I thought she needed time to build it up but nope, full send

: this is a sex thing isn't it

: WE'RE SO BACK

: phew that's more like it

: [WR] unleashing my fetish upon the world any% speedrun

: trying to see what cannot be seen. I'm sure she's an amateur astronomer in her spare time /s

: some people prefer seeing less, eh?

: today's haiku: Though shadows may loom. What is the anti live on. But simply live on

“Hey, Manager-chan, what’s up?” Mashiron said into her phone. “Sorry, random question, but um...Live-On oppai mouse pads—whaddya think?”

“Mashiro-dono?! What in the world are you saying?”

“Mm-hmm—oppai mouse pads, you know, the ones with the wrist-support boobies on them. I think we should make them for all Live-On members. Why? Because I want to touch them, don’t you? Uh-huh, uh-huh. Great idea, right? Huh, what’d you say? Mashiro’s would be flat enough for its whole surface to function as a mouse pad? Say goodbye to your kneecaps the next time I see ya, you punk!”

“Hi, Suzuki-san? Do you think we could make oppai mouse pads for all Live-On mems? No? Understandable, have a great day.”

“Both my senpai have lost it.”

“She picked up—what did you want me to do, just hang up?” quipped Mashiron.

I gave a half-hearted chuckle. “All jokes aside, I think the crisis is tentatively over?”

As we fooled around on our end, Tadasu-chan once again got on her soapbox. *“Hear me! When are we humans more stimulated than during the thrill of discovery, during the uncovering of that which has been concealed from our gaze? What else would drive us to relentlessly seek out knowledge, if not for that exquisite brand of guilty pleasure?”*

I couldn’t lie, that brief detour had had us all worried for a hot second, but now it looked like we were right back on track. Everything was making sense again. It seemed this girl really was one of us—she was just the first of her kind,

the “anti-Live-On” girl.

“Allow me to make myself more explicit. What is more appealing than a chest fully exposed? A bosom that is only modestly yet tastefully accentuated! And yes, this concept extends to far more than just sensuality. Take, for instance, horror—yes, fear itself. You’ve seen it—Western splatter flicks that endeavor to shock by simply drenching the screen in blood and gore. Let me be the first to say that such crass displays are bereft of the essence of true terror! What I, Miyauchi, seek is a fear that pervades your very being, a dread that compels you to recoil from taking even one step forward, to flee from the inexorable march of time itself! Tease me with the scent of blood but shield it from my view! Let me feel only the pulse of my own life force as an unknown and unimaginable terror awaits just beyond my sight! That is true terror, is it not?”

“She’s got a point,” Mashiron said.

“Really?” I shot back.

“Especially what she said about horror. The last horror game I played, you basically just loop around a series of hallways the whole game, but oh my gosh that game was freaking terrifying. I literally started crying and threw in the towel halfway.”

“Huh?!” I exclaimed, “Crying?! You?!”

I swore I heard Mashiron mumble, “Oop.”

Alice-chan snickered devilishly. “Who knew you had such an adorable side to you, Mashiro-dono?”

“Sh-Shut it!”

“As for the common thread linking the two tales I’ve just bestowed upon you, I shall leave that as an exercise for you, the viewer. The conclusions you reach independently, derived from your own reflection and thought, will be a manifestation of your unique self, immeasurably more satisfying than any answer imparted from without. Now, are you all finally beginning to grasp what I am trying to convey?”

: I see...

: galaxy brain take

: a bit of a preachy start but yes? maybe?

: I agree. Japanese horror is great

: nah just watch, she's gonna say something questionable in 3...2...

: LOL

“I, Miyauchi, cannot deny that I’ve revealed to you part of my true nature, and the fact that you are all the same is unsettling, to say the least.” Tadasu-chan’s anger roared back with renewed vigor. “But Live-On?! Just what on Earth is going on here?! You all spew dirty jokes as naturally as you breathe, spouting nonsense, exalting deviation! Where have I landed, hell? You have all strayed irredeemably far! What has happened to your Japanese spirit?!”

: my sides

: she's got spirit i'll give you that

: what are hell and Live-On but one and the same?

: I got your J A P A N E S E S P I R I T right here

: damn Live-On you just gonna take that?

“And just what leads you all relishing in this environment to believe yourselves exempt? The situation is nothing short of dire! You must be rectified—all of you! What a distressing reflection of our reality it is that Live-On has succeeded in ensnaring so many fans as loud and proud as they are. At this rate, the entire world shall soon find itself consumed by your corruption! It is against such wickedness that I, Miyauchi, have boldly arisen!”

: ain't no way

: see, what did I say
: I think you failed your insight check dawg
: local woman really feeling it
: absolute megalomaniac
: i am deceased
: Miyauchi!!!

Rattling on and on, Tadasu-chan, with a final *“Pay close heed to what I’m about to say,”* prepared to drop her ultimate declaration—a declaration of war. *“As I mentioned, I am anti-Live-On, and I have taken it upon myself to purify this hell. Steel yourselves, for I, Miyauchi, shall transform Live-On into the cleanest, most immaculate platform this world has ever witnessed!”*

“Mashiro-dono, Awayuki-dono, what should I be doing if my first-ever kouhai turns out to be an anti?”

Mashiron shrugged. “Iunno, live, laugh, love?”

“It could be worse. My first kouhai told me she wanted my throat dick,” I reminded her.

“I see. So this is senpai-hood.”

Not quite, I don’t think. But what I did think was that we had a wild card of a newcomer on our hands—a very wild card indeed.

“Ahem. I got a little carried away there, but that concludes my introduction. Now, I have been instructed by management to entertain questions from you, that is, the viewer. Ask away and I shall answer to the best of my ability,” Tadasu-chan said before taking a swig of water.

Phew! Glad someone finally took that soapbox away from her. Then again, she was going to listen to management here? I’d have thought someone who touted themselves as anti-Live-On would be a little more antiestablishment than that. There were more than a few people watching who shared my sentiment as the questions soon began rolling in.

: by outing her fetish herself she countered shuwa-chan's fetish-unlocking technique. How delightfully anti.

: gentle reminder that she is only the first out of three this gen

: Q&A arigatooo

: so you listen to management? Are you on good terms with them?

"I am not opposed to them, at the very least. I may be an anti, but I still stream under their auspices. Naturally, I heed their counsel. Do not mistake my true endgame. It is not my wish to erase Live-On from this world, but rather save it from itself, and in doing so, save the entire world."

: aw she's a good girl at heart

: Miyauchi!!! (inconsolable)

: good to know her sense of justice isn't that black and white

: imagine waffle house but it's clean. That could be Live-On

: sounds nice actually

: true, then it'd actually just be a gathering of cute girls

: maybe the real anti was Live-On all along

"At least management never brings in people who have purely bad intentions, right?" Alice-chan said.

"Yeah, which just makes dealing with them all that much harder," retorted Mashiron.

"Yeah, Alice-chan."

“Hm? What do you want, Awayuki-dono? My hand in marriage?”

“Huh?”

“Huh?”

: how do you plan on cleansing Live-On specifically?

: i'm also curious

: it has to be something heavy-handed or else it's not gonna work

“Through dialogue, naturally! By engaging them in good-faith discussions of my philosophies during our shared activities, they will most assuredly begin to see the errors in their ways. True change, after all, comes from within.”

: god she's so pure LMAO

: Miyauchi!!! (literally crying)

: that is quite the difference between your ideology and your methods, ma'am

: welp, pack it up boys

: then have you really come to "regulate" anything?

“You can only get so far with coercive methods. But rest assured that I have come to reform this living hell—fair and square.”

: so...still hell?

: "Welcome to Live-On" translated into english is <Go To Hell> so it checks out

: quick question but you're not actually rejecting the horny, is that correct?

“To reject the horny is to reject human history. If you consider how each of us arrived into this world, you will realize that to reject that part of yourself is to reject yourself in its entirety. The horny is something to be celebrated—but not the way Live-On does it.”

: preach

: yup!

: Live-On still no bueno tho

: what do you do as student council president?

: oh true she's a student huh

: can't imagine this girl being president

“Indeed, I, Miyauchi, am currently a third-year student at Saika Girls Academy, as well as serving as its student council president. My duties are not so dissimilar to those in any school you might be familiar with. As for my age, I stand before you a proud eighteen years young. And to you, the viewer with the wisecrack, I'll have you know that I, Miyauchi, take great pride in knowing I hold the esteem of our student body and educators alike. Fu ha ha! What can I say? You need but pursue your vision for this world, and everything else—order, discipline, a beautiful academy—will follow. Oh, what a splendid institution Saika Academy is. I, Miyauchi, only wish to change Live-On into that.”

: that's actually quite the twisted motive lol

: well we knew she was hiding something perverted inside

: par for the course for a fancy girls' school

“You know, I kinda get the feeling we'd be able to hit it off under the right circumstances,” Mashiron mused.

“Right?” I agreed. “I'm definitely interested in seeing how she does.”

“What makes you think she'd give us the choice?” added Alice-chan.

: I wonder where her threshold for dirty jokes lies

: Penis

“KYAAAAAAAA!!! Idiot! You stupid idiot! Did I not just say such talk is off-limits?! Oh, the vulgarity! This is exactly what’s wrong with Live-On!”



: not that I'm complaining but her scream's a lot cuter than expected.

: we can't even say that???

: I hope you know for those of us not terminally online, saying penis out loud in public is social suicide

: are we the ones out of touch?

: But I get you Miyauchi! The moment something you've been dying to see comes into full view is pure ecstasy!

“Um, I don’t know if that’s... Never mind. The sentiment is similar in nature so I won’t refute it. But what I, Miyauchi, truly enjoy is not the answer waiting for me at the end of the line, but rather the process itself... Of finding out...you know? N-Not that I don’t understand where you’re coming from, but it isn’t quite...the same...for me...”

: ???

: LOL what is this flip-flopping

: You concealment(?) fetish enjoyers sure are a contentious folk

: both. Both is good.

: are you easily embarrassed? jk not if you're so openly talking about kinks

“She’s...definitely got a lot going on,” Mashiron commented.

“But it’s also kinda cute the way she’s reacting!” I added.

“Indeed, she has the chat crushing on her big time! She’s quite the crafty one. If she keeps this up, Awayuki-dono, this could turn out to be quite problematic for you!”

Thank you for your concern, Alice-chan, it was quite unwelcome. Also, it

wouldn't be problematic for just me; it'd be problematic for all of Live-On, thank you very much.

Oblivious to our blathering, Tadasu-chan continued answering viewer questions, the discussion shifting to more substantial topics.

: realistically, what do you think your chances of success are?

: idk how you expect to come out of this without becoming one of them

: challenging Live-On is like challenging a certain kind of trap dungeon iykyk

: we will never lose to the likes of Live-On!

: how do I already know how this is going to end?

Tadasu-chan chuckled coyly. *“Don’t you be counting me out yet, dear viewers. You forget just how much I’ve achieved during my tenure as student council president. It’ll take but a moment for me to cleanse the filth from Live-On. Take, for instance, what I warned our female teacher in health class: ‘Sensei? I will not tolerate indecency during this class, is that clear? You may not use your own body as “teaching material,” nor will you volunteer students for a “live demonstration.” Know that if you try, I, Miyauchi, shall stop you as student council president!’ You can imagine my embarrassment, but it had to be done. To preserve the moral integrity of the Academy, lecherous behavior must be nipped in the bud!”*

: bruhhhh i'm done

: i've read this doujin before

: she's got the mind of a twelve-year-old boy

: where did you learn such things, young lady?

: how did sensei react? I can't imagine she was too happy

about that

“She froze for a few seconds before flashing me an apologetic smile and patting me on the head. She conceded, clearly!”

: oh you sweet summer child

: hey you live and you learn

: i bet your fellow students treat you the same way

“I’m not always like this at school, if you must know. I usually keep to myself, living in accordance with my own moral compass, only intervening when necessary—but not here! This is Live-On. How can I hope to control such chaos if I don’t fervently challenge it at every turn?”

“I don’t know about you guys, but I think Live-On will be just fine,” Alice-chan said.

“Same,” I said.

“Maybe I’ll draw a beet red Tadasu-chan beseeching her sensei next,” Mashiron mused.

: sorry, I still don't really understand what you're getting at. can you give an example?

“Very well, let’s see... You know all about Puccho, yes? The candy? Not the Hi-Chew-looking ones, but the ones that come in the long, plastic container? Imagine a seiso-looking girl casually snacking from one. Doesn’t that arouse you more than, say, an easy-looking girl holding a sex toy?”

: ?!?!

: what

: she's given this far too much thought...

: her imagination's more overactive than a teenage boy's
i tell you hwat

: she seems fun

: sorry, could you explain why that's arousing?

"Why? Well, that's...heh heh heh..." snort "You know... Don't you?"

: WWWWWWWWWWWW

: ewww LMAO

: god it just keeps getting worse

: your inner otaku is leaking out, ma'am

: your head ok?

"Awa-chan, explain."

"Awayuki-dono, I would also like to know."

"Why did you both just assume I knew what she was talking about?"

"Hmm, was that too difficult to understand? Very well, let's simplify this with another candy metaphor. Imagine you have two pieces of Hi-Chew in front of you. One is strawberry, while the other is a mystery. Faced with the choice, I would wager that most of you, unless deeply fond of strawberry, would be tempted by the mystery flavor. And even for our strawberry stalwarts, wouldn't you still find yourself wondering just what that mystery flavor was? Yet I propose that the true thrill isn't in the actual tasting, but in the moments of anticipation leading up to it. The emotions you experience when faced with the known versus the unknown are worlds apart. What sensations await as the candy dances on your tongue? Might it evoke fruity notes, mimic a familiar beverage, or surprise with a disgusting twist? The mere act of speculation sends the mind into a whirlwind of excitement, setting the heart aflutter. Now isn't that a far more tantalizing experience than merely settling for the taste of strawberry? This, in essence, is the concept I wish to convey."

: naruhodon't

: i did not need a whole-ass speech on that lmaoo

: let's keep in mind that no matter how serious she sounds she's still talking about kinks here

: sorry, I still don't understand

“Fine! Fine. You know how you get more turned on by the word ‘amateur’ rather than ‘professional’? It’s that, okay? It’s that.”

: I finally understand thank you

: i...i don't think it is...

: why say lot word when few word do trick

: okay so I don't think that's exactly the same thing...

“Awa-chan. I have zero experience, so I might not have any technique or anything, but would you still?”

“Wh-Wh-Wh-What are you saying?! I mean, yes—I would! But Mashiron, y-y-y-you can’t just say these things, you really can’t, but, yes—yes!”

“Heh heh, just kidding.”

“Awayuki-dono! I’ll have you know I’m an absolute dead fish in bed!”

“Mmm... Call me a skeptic but I don’t believe you.”

“Hey, I know how you could fix that—just move.”

“Uuugh. Seduction failed. Flop flop,” Alice-chan sighed.

: okay so where do we draw the line???

: I would also like to know

“The line? Well, I believe if you take a commonsense approach, there shouldn’t be any issue.”

: okay then how about cup?

: cup...?

“‘Cup?’ The word ‘cup?’ There’s nothing wrong with ‘cup.’ Wait. Think, Miyauchi, think. Cup... Indirect kiss...saliva...bodily fluids...they go in the cup... Oh my GOD. Cups are sex toys, are they not?”

“Huh?”

Oh wow, that was our second triple-synchronized “huh” of the night. How about that?

“Oh dear, oh dear, this must be corrected. But how do I stay hydrated without a cup? No, no, the cup is fine. What is not fine is that you continue to use that lewd part of yourself to drink. Yes, yes! From now on we shall drink only through our noses!”

“Huh?”

Humanity was becoming one.

“Excellent. Now, I, Miyauchi, must lead by example and try it for myself. Here I go.” SIP PFFF CHOKE COUGH COUGH HACK HACK BLEHHH

:

: no shot LMFAOO

: what the hell did she think was going to happen?

: great job finding this girl Live-On

: Im so sorry i said cup just to be funny i did not think it would end up like this

: how did it end up like this it was only a kiss it was only a kiss

: LOL the genuine apology

: this girl's not just a newbie, she's a new breed.

“Uuuuugh. You know what? A cup is fine. Oh, heavens, would you look at the time! It appears that our time together has come to an end. I, Miyauchi, shall remain staunchly anti-Live-On in all my activities going forward. I welcome all comrades, those of you who share in my vision, to join my flock. Join me, so that we may defeat the enemy. As for all you Live-On streamers, your end is coming, so just sit pretty and wait for the axe to fall. Mua ha ha ha ha—” COUGH COUGH

With a watery-eyed and mucus-filled departure, complete with a coughing fit, the curtains closed on Tadasu-chan’s debut stream. In the poststream debrief, we found ourselves in an engaging discussion over whether or not Live-On had genuinely made a mistake and discovered themselves a new breed of human rather than a newbie, as the chat had so cleverly pointed out.

May Live-On live in interesting times.

Tadasu Miyauchi vs. Hareru Asagiri & Shuwa-chan

During her first week of streaming, Tadasu-chan focused on developing her solo streams. Her foremost priority, as she so aptly put it, was to gather comrades and bolster her influence.

#AntiLiveOn trended after her debut, which meant she had the world’s attention. Seizing every moment, she passionately shared her beliefs with the throngs of viewers who flocked to her streams.

The growing legion of fans seemed to boost her self-confidence somewhat, as at the start of her most recent stream, Tadasu-chan proclaimed, “The time is upon us!” and declared her next mission: to win the hearts and minds of Live-On streamers. (Of course, not all her fans were true believers in her cause. Some were there just for the ride, but she didn’t seem to mind. According to her, they would turn in due time, or something along those lines.) All that meant was that she was ready to collab. That brought us to now, a week later.

After we'd ironed out all the specifics, aligning schedules and such, the day of her debut showdown arrived.

"How do you all do, everyone? It is I, the sole daughter of the venerable Miyauchi lineage, the anti-Live-On icon herself, Tadasu Miyauchi. The day of our long-awaited battle is finally upon us. To ensure that Live-On can be cleansed, I beseech the backing of you, my dear comrades—my viewers-in-arms. And now, let's summon forth the enemy."

"Yahoo yahoo! The sunlight in everyone's hearts and the dawn of Live-On, Hareru Asagiri, is high in the sky!"

"Pshhh! Gulp, gulp, gulp! Pwaahhh! I was told it had to be Shuwa-chan or there would be no point, so here I am! Hopped up on that StroZero, it's your girl, Shuwa-chan!"

: ggggggggg

: ah yes the scripted loss event

: Bombazar, Dragon of Destiny

: how do you fuck up choosing your opponents this badly

: not this girl challenging the final boss and hidden boss at the same time

: sasuga miyauchi! you've surpassed our wildest expectations!

: this is like trying to clear the danmachi dungeon from the bottom up

: maybe she thought this was undertale

: rydia vibes

: dark elf

: kzinssie

: black knight

: beatrix

: I bet shuwa-chan's glad to be drinking

I knew I wasn't one to talk, but chat was onto something—something about this girl wasn't right.

“Heh. I applaud you both for not fleeing on sight. Hareru-senpai, Shuwa-chan-senpai! Your carefree gallivanting ends today! I hope you've prepared yourselves.”

“Oh, I wasn't expecting 'senpai' from you.”

“But of course? Live-On requires that I address you as such, Hareru-senpai. What are rules if not meant to be followed?”

“What, is this a Sakana-kun situation where the 'chan' is baked into my name? Also, that's Shuwa-chan-sama to you.”

“Fine, Shuwa-chan-sama. Will that be all?”

“Sorry, senpai's fine. I forgot how good of a girl you were, Tadasu-chan.”

“Of course I am! Unlike all of you!”

“You know what? I kinda feel like our interaction just now has shown me just how far I've fallen,” I admitted.

“I won... Papa, Mama, I did it...” Tadasu-chan said in wonderment.

“Shuwacchi?! It's far too early to be throwing in the towel! The future of Live-On is at stake here!”

“Ope, sorry, I'm here, I'm here. My people need me.”

: aw she's so sweet

: hey no switching sides, true final boss. who are you, nokturnus?

: i mean she got OTK'd, that's the deal

: papa and mama is so cute though

: ok but seriously why did she pick these two out of all

people

“Hah hah hah. Why these two, you ask? Just think about it! Even if I manage to rectify the behavior of every other streamer here, as long as these two, the root of all evil, remain, they’ll all just relapse straightaway! The evil must be cleansed at the source!”

“Sorry, quick question. I get why Hareru-senpai is the root of all evil, but why me? I’m third gen.”

“Have you no recollection of your own deeds, you wench? Ever since you came out of your shell, you’ve poisoned even the more moderate Livers with your evil, turning Live-On into its current chaotic incarnation, have you not?!”

“Aw shucks, I mean, I can’t take all the credit.”

“That wasn’t a compliment!!!”

My, the pipes on this girl. She could make a career out of her quips.

: yea you tell em Miyauchi!!!

: I think she took the saying "the first step is always the hardest" a little too literally

: it's always that darn alcoholic beverage ruining everything around here

: and now it's tadasu-chan's turn...

“Like that’ll ever happen! I, Miyauchi, have made my opposition clear! Don’t lump me in with all those other streamers.”

“Hey, Hareru-senpai, I know it’s a bit late to ask, but why’d we pick up this girl?”

“Hm? I’ve been focusing on my streams, so I’m not as heavily involved in the recruitment process as I used to be. I gave her a final thumbs-up and that was it.”

“But that still means you were involved in her selection, no? I know it doesn’t feel like it, but she *is* calling herself an anti, you know?”

“The quads in my arms whispered yes and I obeyed.”

“Your arms don’t have quads unless you’re a Machamp!”

“Mua ha ha ha ha! You’ll regret giving me a chance, Hareru-senpai! We shall talk long and hard about rectifying your wretched behavior today!”

“Wah, love her,” Hareru-senpai and I said at the same time, lifting the curtain on our showdown with Tadasu-chan.

“Now, first things first. I’d be remiss not to ask—do either of you intend to abide by my views readily?”

“Nuh-uh. Live-On lives and dies by its freedom!” I fired back.

“Very well, I thought as much. Looks like I’ll have no choice but to cross blades with Shuwa-chan-senpai. What about you, Hareru-senpai?”

“Mm...”

“Hareru-senpai?” said both Tadasu-chan and I.

For reasons unknown, Hareru-senpai continued to murmur softly as if she were seriously considering Tadasu-chan’s proposal.

Wait, she isn’t about to betray us here, is she?! She can’t! If she flips, Live-On might actually turn over a new leaf!

“Hm? Ah! Sorry, sorry! I was just thinking about Tadasu-chan’s nickname!”

“Oh, thank goodness,” I breathed.

“Yeah, I don’t know. Do you have ideas, Shuwacchi?”

“Oh jeez, way to put me on the spot. Tadasu-chan... Tada... Tada...su...”

“Stop, stop, stop! Shuwa-chan-senpai, stop!”

“Huh?” I was just trying to come up with a good nickname, so why was she yelling at me?

“You were thinking about pinning me down on the bed, having me say something like, ‘Ta-da... Tadasu-chan’s body is all yours, baby girl,’ weren’t you?”

I know it! That's lewd! Obscene! This behavior must be rectified!"

"Excuuuse me?! Also, 'baby girl'?! Who even says that? Not you, that's for sure! You're screwing with me, aren't you?"

: WOOO YEAH BABY THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

: I know we're *supposed* to hear one word and understand ten, but now she's nine off

: if an actual girl said that to me nothing would make me more flaccid

Yep, there it was. One of the main reasons Tadasu-chan was able to rack up as many followers as she had: the sheer power of her imagination. She'd shown a sliver of it near the end of her debut stream, but seriously, this kid must've been homeschooled for eighteen years on nothing but hentai and the Hub, because she had absolutely nothing but porn on the brain. (Okay, maybe not *absolutely* nothing, but all of it was just as wild.) Her appetite for this kind of stuff meant you could probably place her firmly at the top of Live-On, even surpassing me. Why was it always those who shouted the loudest who had the most to hide?

In any case, her concealment fetish, kink for the hidden, or whatever it was, coupled with her imagination, made her a force of entertainment to be reckoned with—her legion of new fans could attest to that. Maybe it was to her benefit that she'd introduced her serious persona first, yelling lewd this, lewd that, before coming out with a more relatable and comical side. Still didn't really know what she was saying half the time, though.

"Hmm... I dunno. Tadasu-chan, do you have a preference?" asked Hareru-senpai.

"Hmph. Call me whatever you wish. I couldn't care less about how I'm referred to by the enemy."

"That's it! You can be 'the Enemy'!"

"Oueuu?"

What part of you just made that noise, Tadasu-chan?

“The Enemy? My nickname is the Enemy? No, no, no, that’s not really a nickname, now is it?”

“Really? Think about it. If we are your enemy, then that makes you our enemy as well.”

“Y-Yeah, I mean, sure...”

“Then what’s the problem?”

“N-No, it’s not that there’s a problem...”

“So we’ll go with that, then.”

“...”

“Speak now or forever hold your peace?”

“Sure, let’s go with that...”

Your words, Tadasu-chan, use your words! “Okay, okay, Hareru-senpai, stop bullying your kouhai.”

“Oh gosh, I’m so sorry. She was just so adorable I couldn’t help myself.”

“Shuwa-chan-senpai... Thank you for stepping in.”

“Instead of thanking me, how about doing something about that dogshit mentality of yours? You caved without saying a word! How do you expect to win against me like that, let alone Hareru-senpai?!”

“Y-You’re dog poop! I was just caught off guard, that’s all! When it comes to conviction, I’m unmatched! Defeat is impossible for a member of the great Miyauchi clan!”

“Mmm, I don’t know ’bout that one.”

“Nickname, nickname, what do I do... Something no one’s called her yet would be nice...”

: Miyauchi! You're dog poop!

: If Harerun came down on you, you wouldn't find refuge

anywhere on god's green earth

: small dog yaps at dragon

: it's lookin like a Live-On sweep I gotta say

“Wait!” Hareru-senpai suddenly exclaimed. “You’re a student council president, aren’t you, Tadasu-chan? Then how about ‘Prez’! What’s the student council president if not the Prez?”

“Mmm... I suppose that is acceptable. Heh heh, well, don’t you have a keen eye for greatness! Finally, a nickname with gravitas, fitting for one of the Miyauchi clan!”

“I’m surprised you’d go with something so orthodox. But is that really okay? Prez is a nickname for someone in a position of power, no? Won’t that prove detrimental to our debate?” I pointed out.

“Oh, it’s fine. Being first gen already makes me unapproachable enough to the newbies. Gotta break down those walls between us where we can. Look, I’m wearing a uniform too, so we match! Well, different school, but yeah!”

“Wait, is that why you call Ehrai-chan Bosslady?” I asked.

“No, she’s just really cut out to be the bosslady.”

“Okay...”

“You all took Boss from me, so I’ll be taking Prez in return!”

“It’s not like we wanted to take it from you...” I protested. *Ah, good ole Hareru-senpai, free-spirited as always.*

“Ahh, this isn’t going anywhere! I may be eighteen, but I, Miyauchi, am still a student! I have class tomorrow. I can’t afford to be wasting time like this!”

“Hmm?”

“What’s wrong, Shuwa-chan-senpai?”

“Oh, no, nothing...”

It was kind of a fourth-wall thing, so I kept it to myself, but was Tadasu-chan actually a student—like, in real life—or was that just something she said to stay

in character? If she were, that would make her the youngest member of Live-On. Uh-oh, if someone like Hareru-senpai counted as a “legal student,” then Tadasu-chan would be a “barely legal student,” no? Ew, what was I even saying?

“Let’s see... Yes, I shall start with Shuwa-chan-senpai first. With her, there’s at least precedent to work with, which should make things much easier.”

“If you think I’m easy pickings, you’ve got another thing coming! While my brain might not work as fast as Hareru-senpai’s, I’ve got StroZero on my side!”

“Doesn’t that just slow your brain down even more?”

“Heh. It seems you aren’t quite there yet, Hareru-senpai, but that’s okay. We all start somewhere.”

“Huh? What’s with the condescension? Wait, you are being condescending, right? Where is ‘there’? What are we talking about? Like making your brain work backward or something?”

“What are we talking about, indeed...?”

Uh-oh, Tadasu-chan was getting antsy. *Ah, right! I had a question for her.*
“Tadasu-chan, what did you mean by ‘there’s precedent’? I had something like that?”

“Don’t you? Not in Shuwa-chan-senpai, of course, but you need look no further than Awayuki-senpai! And not the recent Awayuki-senpai, but her original incarnation, for she is my ideal realized.”

“Oh man, that takes me back.” Enough time had passed since that stream incident that I’d started to regard it fondly. But wow, yeah, I did use to be like that. “But what do you mean by ‘your ideal realized’?”

She giggled coyly. “It means I thought the original Awayuki-senpai to be breathtaking, if you must know.”

“Huhhh?!”

“Underneath that innocent and seiso exterior, there lurked an allure, something tantalizing just beyond reach. It’d been my ideal, the perfect fuel for my imagination—until that something turned out to be the devil itself, that is!”

“It’s not the devil, it’s StroZero!”

“Quiet, Hareru-senpai!” Tadasu-chan snapped.

“Oops, I made her angry. Are you ‘*shooketh* like a can of StroZero,’ as the high school girls say?”

“That’s not an age-appropriate reference for high school girls to make, is it?! Also, you’re so close with the slang, yet so far. And are you not a high school girl yourself? You’re wearing a school uniform.”

“I look like a high school girl to you? Staaawp, I’m blushing! Eh heh heh heh...”

“I don’t get it. Why are you glad to be recognized for what you are?”

“That... Well, you see, I’ve been doing this for more than three years now. In fact, let me ask you—how *do* I keep up this high-school-girl look? My ‘I was held back a year’ excuse is becoming untenable.”

“Um, you know what? My bad, I’m sorry.”

As the two of them conversed, I was stunned into silence by what Tadasu-chan had just said. I’d never imagined I’d be told the old me was better—ideal, even. But then again, it takes all kinds. In the great wide world, you could find an audience for even the most niche of niches, so I supposed I shouldn’t be so surprised. In fact, even I had OG viewers who’d supported me from the very beginning. “You sure sound like you know a lot about the old me, Tadasu-chan,” I said.

“Of course I do. How could I possibly critique something without understanding it inside and out? Not only would that be disrespectful, it might render one’s criticisms baseless. Ever since the day I, Miyauchi, swore to become anti-Live-On, I have studied you all religiously. While my acquaintance with you all may be brief, I’m confident my knowledge more than makes up for it. And naturally, my research into you is yet ongoing.”

“Oh, she’s so sweet! You make li’l ole Shuwa-chan so happy!”

“That’s a wonderful sentiment, Prez, but don’t you think your whole *motivation* for criticizing us is a little *too* personal?”

Both Tadasu-chan and I remained silent.

“Oh, did I say something I shouldn’t have?” added Hareru-senpai.

: Good girl Miyauchi!

: o...

: LOL she is silent

: go easy on her harerun

: she's true to herself to a fault and that's what makes her live-on

: oof that was a punch to the gut

: Miyauchi! Don't give up!

“Y-You’re right, I can’t give up! Personal? Hah! I, Miyauchi, am not doing this for myself, but for everyone’s sake, to combat the rampant decay Live-On is inflicting upon the world at large!”

“You hear that, Hareru-senpai? She even said as much on her debut stream!” I added.

“Yep, you’re right! There, there. I’m sorry, Prez!”

Phew, that was freaking close. If she hadn’t had her backstory locked and loaded, that might’ve been how her story ended, the unfortunate punch line to a two-panel comic of the “instant loss” variety. You know, forget about taking on Hareru-senpai two-on-one, I was starting to think that even all of Live-On combined would struggle to take her on.

: phewww

: why am *I* sweating

: i like live-on so I hope tadasu-chan doesn't win but i'm glad that worked out lol

: *whispers* tadasu-chan so weak

: Thanks for having her back Shuwa-chan, you da bes!

Wait. Huh? Had I just defended Tadasu-chan? I mean, she seemed like a nice girl at heart, plus she gave off that dorky vibe that really made you feel for her. Ugh, twist my arm, why don't you.

"All that is to say that I, Miyauchi, wish for you to revert to the Awayuki-senpai of old! I yearn to see you in all your seiso glory once more!"

"The me of old, eh? To be honest, that version of me wasn't very popular. I doubt anyone's too excited to see me go back to it."

"That's only because the viewers haven't yet realized Awayuki-senpai's true charm! Fret not, I shall take it upon myself to extol the virtues of the original Awayuki-senpai!"

With that, Tadasu-chan, as if she'd been waiting for this moment, began to expound her thoughts vis-à-vis original Awayuki. "First of all, initial Awayuki-senpai had sex appeal!"

I'd...had...*what?!*

That might have been the first time anyone had ever said that about me. Even though she was kind of only obliquely talking about me, she still had me a little embarrassed.

: she did?!

: more like sex repeal amirite???

: lmao easy there chief let's not get carried away

: initial awa-chan you say? I can see it

: that's what seiso is right? pure feminine allure?
whether that has a place in live-on is an entirely
different question

Holy crap, they exist! Not a lot of them, but they exist! Viewers who agree!

"There was something so wonderfully carnal and stimulating about her

particular brand of seiso. Imagine the Awayuki-senpai of old inadvertently uttering something risqué. Her ensuing fluster, the reddening of her face. But wait, how did she know? Was she not the very essence of seiso? To think that she might actually have an interest in such topics—wouldn't you all agree there is something uniquely titillating in that line of thought?"

"Preach, Tadasu-chan, preach! You all hear that?! I had sex appeal!"

"Shuwacchi?!"

"Compare that to what Shuwa-chan-senpai has become! Utterly vulgar, she drinks, spouts revolting dirty jokes one after the other, pesters other women in broad daylight—just what is there left to the imagination?"

"Who's vulgar, you sexually repressed student council president?!"

"Shuwacchi?"

"Where, I ask, has that Awayuki-senpai gone? It's true—she was never the very picture of innocence, but that was never her role! She teetered precariously, swayed and ensnared by her desires and sensibilities, the epitome of a blossoming maiden, delicate and enchanting! A true masterpiece, if I, Miyauchi, dare say so!"

"Exactly! I'm a blossoming maiden, delicate and enchanting! Thank you, Tadasu-chan, thank you! My hero, you see me for who I truly am!"

"Shuwacchi."

"But Shuwa-chan-senpai now is...while still beautiful, she lacks even a hint of female presence, let alone sex appeal. She's basically Popuko from Pop Team Epic."

"Who you callin' a golden-voice-wasting, chibi-looking freak, huh? Don't think I'm gonna go easy on you just because you're a kid!"

"Flip-flop any harder, Shuwacchi, and you're gonna turn into a metronome."

Ouch, Hareru-senpai, ouch. But come on! No matter how much time had passed, no matter how much of a wolf in sheep's clothing I'd been, that was still me she was praising! It felt good! And besides, hardly anyone had anything good to say about the old me, so this was fresh and exciting and thrilling and I

wanted to hear more keep going don't stop.

: didn't realize this was a 4 person show

: Harerun's gradient of reactions was so cute lmao

: metronome killed me

: don't let shuwa-chan distract you from the fact that tadasu-chan was sayin some wild shit

: she kinda right tho

: eee...

: tempted to go thru her old vods now and be enlightened

: truuuue

“What’s this, Hareru-senpai? Are you *worried*? Worried that Shuwa-chan-senpai is on the verge of turning? Ha ha ha! Perhaps victory truly is within my grasp!”

“Hey, Prez, are you sure you’re going to let ‘metronome’ slide?”

“Huh? Metronomes? Why would I not?”

“I mean, what does a metronome do but control tempo by emitting a click at a certain interval?”

“Gasp! So what you’re saying is, the metronome is to be used midcoitus by the person on the receiving end so they can control the thrusting tempo of the person on the giving end! If they desire to go faster, they can just adjust the metronome—without shamefully vocalizing their desire! That’s lewd! What is a metronome if not a sex toy?! Metronomes must be stopped! They must! Gasp! There are metronomes at school! They must be removed! Shall I tell our music teacher to only use metronomes for night concerts? Oh, how embarrassing of a conversation that would be!”

“She got all that from the way I half-assedly explained how a metronome works. Fifth gen—wow.”

“Now’s not the time to get weirdly impressed, first gen. You too, Tadasu-chan, stop taking her seriously.” *Like, what’s a “night concert,” even?*

“Uuugh! What’s your problem, Shuwacchi? Just whose side are you on? Does our bond mean nothing to you?”

“Hah. Don’t get mad at me for looking out for our adorable little newbie, the kind senpai that I am.”

“So she can...?”

“Continue to shower me with praise!”

“I knew it! She’s not even praising *you*, you know? She’s praising the Awacchi of old—not the Shuwacchi of now!”

“Cut me some slack! Do you have any idea how much it means to me that someone has finally noticed what everyone else overlooked?”

“Don’t you dare show a feminine side now of all times.”

: DRAMA ALERT

: this is your chance, miyauchi!!!

: the tea is fizzy today yall

: Shuwa-chan! You're beautiful on the outside no matter what they say!

: yep, that was the perfect time to drop the worst confession of all time, for sure

“Shuwa-chan-senpai! Have I gotten through to you?”

“I won’t say you have...but I won’t say that you haven’t either, the kind senpai that I am.”

“I’ll take it! Then, Shuwa-chan-senpai...”

“Speak your mind, my dear!”

“Do you promise to swear off StroZero after today?”

“Of course, of course, Tadasu-chan! I’ll kill my StroZero habit—after I kill you first.”

“Hyoeeeeh?!”

“Kind senpai, we hardly knew ye,” Hareru-senpai remarked.

That’s it, I’m pissed off!

: my sides

: I've literally never seen her this angry before LOL

: oh she's *mad* mad

: a senpai threatening her freshly debuted kouhai with death, oh yeah, totally

: aw tadasu-chan made a cute lil noise

: i mean you'd be upset too if someone told you to quit drinking the equivalent of water

: might as well tell her to stop breathing jeez lady you takin this too FAR

“Y-You’re scaring me, Shuwa-chan-senpai...”

“StroZero and I are one in body and mind. It is the rice to my Japan, the katana to my samurai, the pacifier to my Kaeru-chan.”

“The Gagabriel parallel might be problematic, but go off.”

I felt it—the StroZero coursing through my veins, granting me power. This was love—the power of love! Of course, how could I have been led astray? StroZero was my one and only, my best girl, my main heroine. StroZero-chan, I love you, come hither! Mwah, mwah, mwah, mwah, gulp, gulp, gulp, gulp— “PWA-HAAAAH!!! OH YES, ALCOHOL, FERTILIZE ME WITH YOUR SEED!!!”

“...”

“Oh! She’s all shuwa-shuwa’d now. Prez, are you prepared to fight a fully powered Shuwacchi who's ready to lay down her life for what she holds dear?”

“Um... You know what, I think I have to go...”

“You’re gonna run, Prez? Have you forgotten whose story we’re writing today, whose name you stand on?”

“Ahhh, you’re right! I am Tadasu Miyauchi, whose lineage knows not defeat! I’ll stand my ground! I’ll stand my ground and fight!”

“You got this. Go get ’em, sweet tits.”

“You’re just gonna throw me to the wolves?! Fine. Shuwa-chan-senpai, put down the StroZero and look at me!”

Huh? Wuzzat? Oh, she was still here. Very well, I’ll bury her with my StroZero Super Fist.

“Shuwa-chan-senpai! Alcohol may be delicious, but are you aware of the risks?”

“Yes, but StroZero.”

“I...what? No, Miyauchi, ignore her! First of all, overconsumption of alcohol can lead to a myriad of health issues!”

“That may be true—but StroZero.”

“And as long as you drink StroZero, you will never be seiso!”

“Be that as it may, StroZero.”

“Wh-What on earth...am I dealing with here...”

“StroZero. You’re dealing with StroZero.”

: Live-On, ladies and gentleman

: im losing brain cells

: Harerun's so fkin funny lmaoo

: Miyauchi!!! Feel free to run

: The comrades are giving up the fight???

: all right come on are we fighting, are we laughing,
what are we doing here?

: we're drinking, obviously

: yeah sorry obviously, my bad for asking

“Real talk, though, I don’t drink all that much—plus I have liver-resting days, so I’m golden.”

“Is that so? I, Miyauchi, cannot attest to that as I cannot yet drink. Hareru-senpai, do you see anything wrong with her logic?”

“If she were drinking off stream, then maybe, but seeing as she’s not, she’s probably fine. Plus, Shuwacchi likes to sell herself short, but she can actually hold her liquor pretty well.”

“Exactly! Besides, I risk provoking the wrath of Mashiron if I drink too much. She controls my alcohol intake.”

“She controls your alcohol intake...? Th-That’s—”

“Not lewd, thank you very much.”

“M-My sentence! How did you do that, Shuwa-chan-senpai? Are you a mind reader?”

“Nope, just starting to get a grasp on how your mind works.” I was convinced this girl could come up with a world-shaking invention if only she managed to leverage that imagination of hers correctly.

...If only.

“And you mentioned something about me never being seiso?” I added.

“Indeed. Didn’t you look pleased earlier when I praised your former self? We women yearn to be called seiso, but also cute, beautiful—pretty. I am not suggesting you shouldn’t stay true to who you are—merely that you stand to gain much by keeping certain things to yourself.”

“I see... Well, I do like being complimented...and being the center of attention...and I love anyone who loves me unconditionally...”

“Even Aricchi?” Hareru-senpai interrupted.

“Okay, *almost* anyone.”

“In that case, then—!”

“I’m sorry, Tadasu-chan, but I can’t—StroZero and I are in love. You understand, don’t you?”

“Huh?”

“Awayuki Kokorone loves Str*ng Z*ro.”

“*Touch* is a classic, but I still have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Then I shall sing it instead. YOU ARE...MY FIIIRE. THE ONE...♪”

“FOOOOOOOO!!! Shuwacchi, you’re so hawt!”

“...”

Ah, love truly conquers all.

“Dangerous... She’s too dangerous. I, Miyauchi, have gravely underestimated my opponent. This... This calls for a strategic retreat!”

: yeah i'd run too

: homegirl trippin

: even harerun would struggle to contain shuwa-chan when strozero is on the line

: WWWWWW

: she's the hidden boss that doesn't abide by prior game mechanics

Heh. StroZero Super Fist is unbeatable. Flawless victory.

“My turn, my turn! Now that you’re done with Shuwacchi, it’s finally time for *our* debate, Prez! I was getting tired of waiting!”

“Huh? Oh, right, um. Hareru-senpai. What... What do you think of Live-On?”

“She’s deflated like a balloon! What happened to that fire?!” Hareru-senpai yelped.

“I put it out like I put her in her place,” I answered.

“All you’ve put her in is a state of confusion!”

: her attitude switched up quick lmaooo

: you made it to phase 2 congrats!

: is this that malenia fight i've heard so much about?

: Live-On has been afflicted with Scarlet Rot?!

“A-Ahem! I, Miyauchi, shall not run away without putting up a fight! I’m ready—now it’s your turn to be convinced, Hareru-senpai!”

“Woo! That’s why you’re the Prez!”

“Fro thinks so too!”

“Meowth, that’s right!”

“Ahhh! There you two go again! That won’t work on me this time!”

I got yelled at again. Sad.

“Now, Hareru-senpai!” Tadasu-chan continued, “I wish to hear what you, the originator of it all, have to say about Live-On in its current state!”

“Well, by bringing in the talents that we have, I believe Live-On is all about creating a space where people who shine too brightly for this world can flourish. I’ve been there. I know what it’s like to have your brilliance confined, boxed in by others’ expectations. Yes, humans are social creatures, but that shouldn’t come at the cost of suppressing our true selves. That’s why I see Live-On as a place where every unique gift gets its moment in the sun, where every individual can stand tall and say, ‘I’m here, and I matter!’”

“Y-You hear that, Shuwa-chan-senpai?”

“I do, but she’s talking to you, not me?!”

“S-Sorry... After you, I wasn’t expecting her to answer my question seriously.”

“Implying that our conversation *wasn’t* serious?”

“What we had didn’t even count as a conversation in the first place!”

“Well, maybe if you had some StroZero too, we’d be able to understand each other!”

“I am a minor, ma’am.”

“That’s right... You’re so right... Oh, Tadasu-chan, you poor thing.” *SNIFF* “You poor, poor thing.”

“She’s crying?!”

: what a great answer

: that's harerun for you

: she's seen it all, as founder, streamer, etc

: meanwhile, shuwa-shuwa over here...

: hey cut some shuwa some slack. She lost her temper, got impregnated, sang, and cried all on the same stream

: hey body must think it's the end of the world

“What do you think about what I just said, Prez?”

“Um, well, I can’t say there is absolutely no merit to your argument. I just don’t believe that means you have carte blanche to do whatever.”

“I don’t think we truly do ‘whatever.’ We don’t do anything truly reprehensible, for example.”

“That may be true, but I believe people—all people—benefit from a bit of structure in their lives.”

“Hm... I don’t know if that’s as true as you think it is, Prez.”

“Huh?”

“Humans are fleshy bundles of desire, bound within a paper-thin skin known as rationality. We all have deep desires that tug at our core, but in fear of judgment or rejection, we conceal them. Yet the further we step away from society, the further we venture down the path of the Internet and social media, the more explosively those desires burst forth. Doesn’t that just show who we

truly are at heart?”

“But Live-On does absolutely nothing to hide those desires! There is significance in doing so!”

“And why’s that?”

“If everyone behaved uninhibitedly, society itself would crumble!”

“Would it? Prez, you have this knack for fantasizing about what’s concealed from you, right? To me, this whole ‘falling apart’ rhetoric just seems like a way for you to justify those urges.”

“Th-That’s not true...!”

“Sure, if everyone committed crimes without restraint, society would fall apart, but that’s why we have laws, right? I bet that even the most ardent of antis would agree that letting the current incarnation of Live-On do its thing wouldn’t bring everything down.”

“Well, I...”

“But I’m sure that’s not what we’re here to debate, is it? We want to talk about something much broader—ethics, desire, that kind of thing.”

“Ethics and desire?”

“With the growth of the Internet and social media, the lines have gotten really blurry. It’s a bit of a complicated topic.”

“I’d...like to hear what you have to say.”

“You’re interested? Very well! What’s tricky is that ethics can be born from desire. Take sexuality for example. Some people hate it, but on a biological level, you’re suppressing a basic instinct and that feels wrong. But on the other end of the spectrum, completely uninhibited sexuality can lead to crime, which is, again, ethically problematic. It’s all very paradoxical, right? But that’s exactly what we’re trying to figure out in the midst of this modern age, where anyone and everyone can voice their opinion. The Internet’s convenient, and already an indispensable part of our lives, but that convenience can be harmful in its own way.”

“I think I follow so far.”

“You do? That’s great! To expand, while I said we’re in the middle of figuring it out, it’s perhaps more accurate to say that we are in a period of regulation and control, where morality has taken precedence. We’re streamers, and just like our peers in the creative world, we definitely feel it. Things that were permissible a decade ago, you wouldn’t even think about doing today. While some of those things were truly iffy, others simply fell victim to the pervading climate. But, if this trend were to go on indefinitely, we’d reach a point where nothing is achievable and the community would wither away. That’s why I believe things will only continue this way until we hit a wall and change course—much like how Prohibition turned out in the United States. From there, the pendulum will swing back and forth until we land on the answer we’re looking for.”

“I no longer think I follow.”

“Aha! That’s no surprise. Even a genius like me can’t claim to know the answer. In fact, I’m not very good at solving these types of questions. Heck, the future could turn out entirely different for all I know. But that’s just that—the future. What we must focus on now is deciding Live-On’s role in the present. With a shield named Ethics in one hand and a sword called Desire in the other, we’ll battle it out until we come to a conclusion. And to do that, I think it’s crucial to understand the full context of the question I just raised, if not the answer.”

“...”

“I realize I’ve thrown a lot at you. Why don’t we table this discussion for now and you can mull it over? Really take a step back and think objectively about what it is that drives you. Oh, and no pressure—I’m not trying to rush you. For matters like these, it’s important to take your time. Otherwise, you risk losing sight of what’s truly important—yourself.”

“Very well. You’ve given me a lot to think about.”

“Ha ha, you sure? Maybe I brought all that up to muddy the waters on purpose, you know? Perhaps I’m just using my genius-level intellect to plant thoughts in your mind. Well, even if that were the case, as long as you trust your gut, I’m sure you’ll land on your feet.”

“Understood. As shameful as it is, I must admit I need to come back more prepared.”

“No problem at all! Okay, let’s wrap things up then, shall we? Hey, Shuwacchi! ...Shuwacchi?”

“Zzz... Zzz...”

“She’s asleep?!” they both cried.

: mutually respectful and constructive dialogue? In my Live-On?

: i see why everyone respects harerun now

: she's great

: you too shuwa-chan. thanks for sending us off with a laugh

: she was serious today too, she even got angry :)

: she's drinking StroZero in her dreams now

Mmm... Eh heh heh... StroZero-chan... Eh heh heh heh... Mmmphhh...

Idle Talk: Tadasu Miyauchi's Great Dog Poop Spiral

Tadasu Miyauchi, the vanguard of Live-On's fifth gen, sent shock waves through the industry with her debut. The following is a snippet from her streams, a glimpse into her daily life.

"My next target will be second gen's very own Sei Utsuki-sama."

: pardon?

: how many times do we have to teach you this lesson old man

: have you forgotten your utter annihilation at the hands of the Weather Squad?

: I mean sure, Sei-sama can be a bit of a pushover but with you? idk

: Miyauchi!!! (wtf are you doing)

Then, on the day of their collab...

"Why is 'unisex' okay but 'sex' isn't?! This is sex-based discrimination! I, Sei-sama, won't stand for it! What happened to freedom of speech?! Sex! Unisex! Lesbian sex! Sussex! Oral sex! Sei Utsuki and Tadasu Miyauchi having sex!"

"GYAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!! MONSTER!!! STAY AWAY!!!"

...she suffered a total rout. The next day, she appeared on a solo stream looking mighty haggard.

SNIFF "I, Miyauchi, do not have what it takes to stand against that monster. I'm weak—a failure..."

: hate to break it to you, but we already knew that...

: it wasn't your fault, she was just too powerful

: "that monster" lmao

: i don't care what manner of liberalism you subscribe to, that last sex was a bridge too far

: you might have lost, but you more than make up for it in spirit

: chin up, miyauchi! you haven't lost until you've given up!

: Miyauchi!!! (you got this!)

Then, the day after that, cheered up by viewers concerned for her well-being, Tadasu-chan was, well...

“As a member of the great Miyauchi clan, I, Miyauchi, have learned much from my defeat at the hands of Sei-sama, and am now unstoppable!”

...perfectly fine.

: mmm...

: so was all that depression yesterday just for show or...

: least erratic live-on mem

: i laugh but at the same time am oddly inspired

: anyone else hearing the rocky theme in their head right now?

: Miyauchi!!! (let's go!!!)

“Heh heh heh... Now, for my next target—”

And just like that, the cycle would continue: confront a streamer, face defeat, plunge into despair, then recover, only to instigate another confrontation once more. This would come to be known as “The Dog Poop Spiral,” and it would

become synonymous with the name Tadasu Miyauchi. She understandably bristled at being associated with the term “dog poop,” but it was now a title she’d have to shake off on her own.

Chapter 2

Fifth Gen, Part 2

A month had already flown by since Tadasu Miyauchi-chan's debut stream. Though her self-introduction as an anti-Live-On figure certainly had raised more than a few eyebrows, she'd been making somewhat of an honest go at it.

Part of her anti-Live-On shtick involved attempting to persuade her fellow streamers to her side. When she'd inevitably fail, she'd retreat to her solo streams to lick her wounds with the support of her viewers, then try again. "The Dog Poop Spiral," as it was now known, was a major part of her brand. Nonetheless, it seemed her efforts weren't just for show. Amid her near constant criticisms of Live-On, you could tell that there was also some genuine self-reflection going on under the hood. A change no doubt spurred by her debate with Hareru-senpai. (Or at least that was my takeaway after reviewing the VOD once I woke up from my drunken stupor. Sorry, won't happen again. I'd been complacent since I wasn't on my own stream.) Honestly, her main-character energy was kind of remarkable, what with all the getting knocked down, becoming stronger for it, and standing back up to try again. I still couldn't help but think she was trying to storm the wrong castle, though.

But enough about her. It was now a month after her debut—in other words, it was the day our second newcomer would be joining us!

"How exciting, eh, Nekoma-senpai? Do you have any predictions for who we're going to meet?" Chami-chan asked.

"To survive Live's gen five, Nekoma thinks she'll need to be as unkillable as a cockroach!"

"I can imagine the chat filling up with bug-spray emojis already..."

"Gulp, gulp, pwaaahhh!"

Accompanying me today were Chami-chan and Nekoma-senpai, a pair

brought together by none other than yours truly and her counseling stream.

“You okay there, Shuwa-chan? You’re hitting the StroZero quite early. I thought you didn’t drink off stream,” Chami-chan said.

“I canceled a Shuwa-mode stream today for this! ‘Sall good!!! Besides, I dunno how you expect me to watch this crap sober!”

“Are you sure you’re okay? You seem rather touchy today.”

Touchy?! Of course I’m touchy! “We already know the drill! Some weirdo’s gonna pop up on that screen! Doesn’t matter if they’re crazy at the start or crazy at the end—they’re crazy all the same! I’m never getting a cute kouhai at Live-On, so just let me drink in peace, okay?!”

“Nekoma has long since come to terms with that. Now I’m just excited to see exactly how far off the rails they can go. It tingles my filth-senses.”

“I feel bad for our newcomer, having to debut in front of you two...”

What was the point? The new girl was just going to Cesaro Swing us. How many times would we rehash the same storyline?! Do this sober and get let down—again? Screw that! At least if I was drunk I could have some fun.

You know, I’d thought that maybe, *just maybe*, things would be different with gen five, but nope—Tadasu-chan had killed any hope of that! *Ahhh! Live-On, Live-On, Live-On, Live-On! Why do you have to be so...Live-On! You wanna get nuts, Live-On? Then let's get nuts!*

“The screen! It’s starting!” Chami-chan exclaimed.

“Nya-nyan! Time to see just how much crazy we’re dealing with!”

“Screw it, show me a girl with her face on her crotch, see if I give a shit!” I grumbled.

Ominous fog billowed across the screen, parting to reveal a... *Hm?*

“Is...that her?” Chami-chan said.

“I think...so,” Nekoma-senpai echoed.

“Her face...”

...Was not on her crotch. But it was nowhere to be seen.

She wore a black, cape-like mantle, its hood casting her face in deep shadow. Not that it covered her face directly, but the way it hung concealed everything except for a pair of luminous, menacing eyes that seemed to stalk our every move. And the chat was right there with us in our confusion.

: she's...here?

: ???

: oh?

: I have a bad feeling about this

: as opposed to the last time you had a good feeling about anything Live-On-related?

As we stared at the unfamiliar figure, her body swayed from side to side. Then a sharp intake of breath, quickly followed by the lovely sound of a young girl's voice, reached us through the screen. *"Hello, my 'viewers.' While I'd like nothing more than to introduce myself, the depths of my own being remain shrouded in mystery, even to me. If you must label, know that I am a wanderer of memories, a renegade in this realm, one forsaken by their past. I am a whisper without a name, unknown to all—unknown to even myself."*

"Oh my," Chami-chan said. "I think I might know what this girl is all about."

"AHHHHH!!! MY SCARS, THEY BURN!!!"

"Shuwa-chan?! Are you okay?!"

"Let her be, Chami-chan. I think our little lady in black here just struck a nerve with those who share a particular past."

"???"

: leave me alone!!! arghhh! Ahhhh!!!

: CUTE VOICE

: Hi, is this the funeral home? I'm hoping to bury my

past, is that something you can help with?

: how can such a meek, adorable voice cut so deep, inflict so much pain...

: LMAO a subset of chat just suffered tremendous emotional damage

Hahhh... Hahhh... The searing pain of old wounds reopening finally subsided. To think her attack had gone straight through my StroZero barrier like it wasn't even there. This girl was dangerous—in more ways than one. What was it she'd said? "I am forsaken by my past?" *My sister in Christ, it is not your past that has abandoned you, but your future.* That brand of melodramatic middle school arrogance was something I was all too familiar with. It was a specific kind of trying too hard that, unlike Hikari-chan's endearing efforts, was physically painful to witness.

There was no doubt about it: the chuuni had descended upon us.

But then something unexpected happened—a wall of text appeared on-screen.

"Oh?" all three of us exclaimed in unison.

She arrived at our Tokyo offices with no memory of her identity. After it became clear that she had no known family or contacts in the area, Live-On Management deemed it appropriate to temporarily extend our support and shelter her.

To our astonishment, she expressed a keen desire to apply for Live-On gen five. Demonstrating unparalleled audacity, she filled the name field with the word "Dagger," leaving the rest of her application untouched. Recognizing her unique spirit, we promptly facilitated an interview, and the rest is history.

We kindly ask everyone to approach her with empathy, keeping her memory loss in mind. Our interactions indicate that she embodies the warmth and kindness you'd expect. Most likely.

Warm regards,

Live-On Management

: L000000000L

: hey honey what'd you do for work today? oh you know just kidnapped a girl no big

: i can't

: I thought I had a chance of making it into Live-On but nope you guys are just too different

: who manages the management?

“Well, that was...something...” Chami-chan said.

“That was almost crazy enough to sound like the recap sequence on an episode of *Bobobo-bo Bo-bobo*.”

“Yes!!! This is what Nekoma has been waiting for!”

My eyes glazed over. The creepy appearance, the sketchy backstory, the cringe—it was all too much for me. But in the next moment, a deflated, almost pouty voice pulled me from my stupor.

“Wh-What the heck is that? M-Manager, something weird popped up on the screen—that wasn’t supposed to happen, was it? Oh no, what do we do?! Oh, that was a mistake? You’re gonna make it go away? Ah! It’s gone! Yay, thank you!”

“Wait, was that...*her* voice?” I said.

“I think so...” Chami-chan confirmed. “She said ‘manager,’ and the way her model swung to the side seemed like she turned around to look behind her, no?”

“Was that...supposed to happen?” Nekoma-senpai chimed in.

The hooded being spoke again. *“Every attempt to delve into my own history is thwarted by my own being.”*

She’s just going to hop right back in like nothing happened?!

“When I reach back into the recesses of memory, I’m met with visions of charred flesh, all-consuming flames, the viscous hue of crimson, and...the glint of a dagger slicing through the air. To push beyond these glimpses is to invite agony. Yet I yearn to understand my essence, regardless of the revelations that path might bring.”

: my poor brain cell working overtime

: uhh, split personality?

: we already have someone with a split personality. she's in gen 3

: no we don't

: yes we do

: no we don't

: we do

: we don't

“I joined Live-On to embark on a quest of self-discovery. Damaged as I am, a quiet existence among the masses is a dream too distant. My crossing paths with Live-On, mayhaps, was preordained. Here, I intend to confront whatever kismet has set before me. I seek your collective guidance on this journey.”

“I’m lost,” I muttered. “I thought she was going to be some cringe chuunibyou character, but now I’m just lost.”

“I’m suffering from information overload...” echoed Chami-chan.

“All this talk about fate, kismet, and preordainment scores high in my book! The corniness is top-notch—mwah!” Nekoma-senpai said.

If I had to put my feelings into words, it was as if this girl had taken my playbook—the one where I’d written all my rules on how to survive at Live-On—and tossed it right out the window. Just what kind of character was she?

“Okay! That’s it for my introduction. Whew, that was a lot to read. What’s

next? Ah, Q and A time! If you have any questions for me, ask away!"

WHAT. Her tone suddenly reverted to the childish way she'd spoken to management moments earlier. *Okay, seriously, am I getting punked? What's going on?!*

: ? ?? ??

: did she just say read?

: show some respect for the 4th wall, lady!

: aight imma head out

: sooo what should we be doing?

"A question! Ask me a question!"

There was a distinct, fleshy sound accompanying her words. What was she doing? Slapping her knees? It definitely wasn't just memories she was lacking, it was...everything. *Yeah, I... I give up trying to understand.*

: ...anybody have any questions?

: what are we supposed to even ask here

: I have too many questions and don't know where to start

: guys come on she asked for questions not excuses

: um, what should we be calling you?

Great question, random viewer! I'd been wondering the same thing.

"My name is forgotten, sealed beyond the edge of oblivion."

That's it! I'm done! I'm out! Goodbye! AHHHHH!!!

: bruh

: and here I thought we were finally making some headway

: Hi Forgotten, Sealed Beyond the Edge of Oblivion, I'm Dad

: kusa

: eat your heart out, X Æ A-Xii

*“No! Were you even listening? I have amnesia! I don’t know my own name!”
And now she’s lashing out at the viewers?!*

: we made her angry...

: her character's all over the place

: not sure how I feel seeing that model throw a tantrum

: hey but at least she's talking to us! that's progress

: didn't I see the name Dagger floating around somewhere?

“Indeed, you did! I have no memories, so I have no name to speak of. Yet amid the glimpse of the hellscape I shared, only the gleam of the dagger shone with a hint of promise—how mysterious. Thus, I have chosen to be called Dagger! Ha-hum!”

: much like a certain FF princess...

: if you don't remember shit go to the police not Live-On

: escape from hell into hell yup

: we will go with Dagger-chan then.

: can't decide if that's cool or overdone

“Huh?! It’s cool, duh! It’s Dagger! Dag-ger! How is that overdone? It’s cool as heck!”

“Hey, Shuwa-chan,” Chami-chan said. “Is that a cool name? I don’t really

understand this kind of stuff.”

“Oh yeah, it’s the coolest. Super dope.”

“Are you...being sarcastic?”

“Not sure why, but Nekoma’s starting to think she’s kind of cute!”

The rest of her remained a mystery, but at least we now had a name to work with. A very warm welcome to the second member of gen five: Dagger-chan!

“That’s one question down, but we still have so much more time! Ask me more!”

: pls give me some time to think...

: we need to know much more than just your name

: she's weird... i mean they're all weird, but she's...a different kind of weird

: change of plans! if she won't tell us who she is, we'll just have to see for ourselves instead! Take the hood off!

: glad to know i'm not the only one curious! show face!

“Nice going, random viewer!” Nekoma-senpai exclaimed.

“Indeed,” I concurred.

“Huh?” Chami-chan wondered. “Why, what’s going on?”

“The fact that she’s kept her face hidden this whole time without even mentioning it probably means she wanted someone to bring it up!” I explained.

“Ah, I see! That makes sense.”

“D-Do I have to?”

Bruh.

The three of us collectively toppled over in our seats. Okay, apparently I was wrong! *Well played, Dagger-chan, well played.*

: um, only if you're okay with it, of course...

: lol at the chat growing timid

: i do in fact want to see though!

: show show show!

: us humans want to uncover what has been hidden from us!

"F-Fine... I'll show you, but no laughing, okay? There, the hood's off. Are you happy now?"

We were stunned into utter silence.

What. Is. That.

Plump and pinchable cheeks, expressive gray eyes that seemed too big for her delicate, cherubic face, and a large, adorkable mouth, all framed by dark purple hair, small tufts of it neatly tied up on either side. Emerging reluctantly from her hood was an irresistibly adorable young girl, small and dainty, the kind you just want to pick up and run away with.

No, no, no, this can't be right. She's cute. Far too cute. Huh?! What is that??? Omigod is she pouting that's so cute AHHHH!!!

: holy fk

: LOLI

: KAWAIIIIIIIIIIII

: apologies if this comes off as rude but you were so much cuter than expected I got jump-scared

: ok. wow. really can't say i had "cuteness incarnate" on my bingo card

: gen 5 really getting the visual upgrades

"Sh-She's so cute I honestly thought I was going to get a nosebleed," Chami-chan gushed.

“Well, this is wholly unexpected! Nekoma thought she’d have much more of a helpless vibe! How sly of you, Dagger-chan—I’m onto your games!”

“What are you talking about?!” I shouted. “The slyer the better! Cuteness makes the world go round! Let me pinch those cheeks goddammit!!!”

Yup, a cute face is justice after all. The now overjoyed viewers who’d been in a state of confusion until just a second ago could attest to that. But for some reason, the livelier the chat became, the grumpier Dagger-chan seemed to get. *“Nooo! Stop calling me cute! Jeez, this is why I told management I should have an eye patch or bandages—I’d be cooler that way! Listen! I’m supposed to be cool, okay? So you can’t call me cute! Say I’m cool!”*

Oh my, it seemed cute wasn’t what she was aiming for. *I almost hate to say it, but well done, management, well done.*

Oh, there goes her face again...

: no can do with that face of yours

: you are just too ill(well?)-equipped for that

: don't listen to them sweetie, youre cool!

: you're the coolest streamer in the world! my streamer speaks and i obey

: we suddenly have some very devoted viewers in here

: ur cool! now show ur face again!

“Really? Do you mean it? Yay, you guys are awesome. Okay, okay, I’ll take my hood off. Here! Heh heh heh.” She grinned widely in her best impression of the “:D” emoji.

“Ahhh! Look at how big her smile is! You can see her li’l fang, awww!” I cooed.

“If she smiles any bigger she could make a good slit-mouthed woman,” Nekoma-senpai said.

“You two have been giving off vastly different energies for a while now...”

“Now you see me... Now you don’t! Now you see me... Now you don’t! Ha ha ha! This is fun!” She cracked another smile as she played peekaboo with her hood.

“ÅÅÅÅÅÅÅÅÅÅ!!!”

“Wh-What was that sound?” Chami-chan yelped. “Is someone’s kettle boiling over?!”

“Nope, just Shuwa-chan ascending.”



: must... not... call... her... cute...!
: her smile is brighter than my future
: protecc this smile
: best smile world
: almost forgot which org I was watching for a sec
: cooldorable
: it all makes sense now

The only thing that'd changed about her mystery girl status was that she was now a *cute* mystery girl, and that was already enough to steal the hearts of the viewers. *Witchcraft. Cuteness is witchcraft, I say.*

: thank you lord for this new oshi that i am about to receive
: never thought i'd ever find a chuuni endearing
: beeg smiles

"Okay! We have time for one more question! Ask, ask!"

: last question eh?
: we must tread carefully lads and not squander this opportunity
: leave it to me, i'll lay everything bare
: oh? let's see what you've got then shall we?
: are we doing it?! Now?! Right here?!
: we settle this... right here, right now! What's your blood type?
: say sike right now

: not the most basic question of all time
: here deepthroat this shotgun why don't you
: love it when the homies start deepthroating
: half-assed piece of shit alert
: the mental-armored titan

Reiner Braun, what are you doing in the chat...?

"My blood type? Ha-hum! What do you think it is? Guess, guess!"

: Dagger-chan seems to be enjoying herself so i'll allow it

: type B if you ask me, but not that I put any faith in blood type personality theory

: Kaeru-chan would be type BABA

: screams in baby hag

: Hm? Amnesia yet you still remember your own blood type? (thunk)

All three of us let out a dull "uh" at the insightful viewer's comment.

"Th-That does seem like something she shouldn't remember, huh?" I said.

"No way she'd mess up like that on her first stream. Only Chami-chan would do something like that," Nekoma-senpai added.

"I want to defend myself, but I can't..."

"Right? Everything's fine! But then again, she did break character earlier, didn't she?" I said, gingerly taking another look at Dagger-chan.

"Ah, um... Ahh?! N-No, I... Um... Uh-oh..."

And what I saw was a most troubling sight. *Seriously? You have got to be kidding me. Wait, no! As her senpai, I need to be more supportive! You've got*

this, Dagger-chan! You can fix this!

"...What do I do?" she said quietly.

Okay, you can't fix this!

: kusa

: wait, Dagger-chan, is your memory back?!

: not sure if the world's ready for an amnesia character to get their memory back right after they get introduced

: the bag has been fumbled

: all right, well congrats, I guess? Dagger-chan?

"N-No! My memory's not back! I said that just now because that would've been a normal thing to say if I was normal—but I'm not! Ah! Nope, I have no idea! Just who am I? My head—it hurts when I think about it! What even is a blood type?"

: oh, okay...

: my girl is hard sweating rn lol

: now now, "wanderer of memories," let's not forget who you are

: she's the type of girl to even forget she was a chuuni

: so you just don't even know what a blood type is anymore?

: no no you see, she just lost her memory of not actually having lost her memory

: a genius walks among us

"You all have to forget everything just now! Okay? Say you forgot!"

: now she's coming for our memories too...

: L0000L

: i forgot! c'mon guys, all together now

: Wow, I totally don't remember anything!

: Where am I? Am I Sephiroth?

: go look in a mirror

: all my lost saves on Kirby Super Star prepared me for this very moment

: core childhood trauma unlocked

: i think i'm finally starting to understand her character

: the reiner guy actually made good on his promise to bring the mystery to light lmao

: i can't tell what the right thing to do is anymore

“So...what happens now? Not that Nekoma’s exactly complaining, but...”

“What else really can happen?” I replied. “The amnesia bit is probably here to stay, based on what she’s said. Or based on her character, rather...”

“Now, now, let’s not be too harsh on our newcomer,” Chami-chan chimed in. “You know what they say, there’s a certain charm that can arise from imperfection. Not that I’m covering for myself or anything.”

“You said it, not us,” I retorted.

Chami-chan was right, though. We could stream comfortably now, sure, but only because we had as much experience as we did. It wouldn’t be fair to expect the same from a newbie straight from the get-go.

Then again, that wasn’t the only reason I’d added the caveat “based on her character.” While Dagger-chan might have looked like a jumbled mess of a character on the surface, with all her missteps and blunders, there seemed to be an underlying sense of consistency tying it all together. I was aware it all

sounded very contradictory, but... I still couldn't help thinking there was a certain element that brought coherence to her chaos.

Then it hit me.

"I see... So this is what you were going for, Live-On!" I exclaimed.

"Sh-Shuwa-chan?" Chami-chan inquired.

"What's wrong? Have you realized something?" Nekoma-senpai asked.

They both seemed surprised, but undaunted, I continued. "Yes, I realized exactly what it is about Dagger-chan that's been bugging us this whole time!"

"R-Really?" Chami-chan said.

"Oh, most excellent!" Nekoma-senpai remarked. "It's true that we haven't yet touched on just what makes her tick. With Tadasu-chan we knew that she was anti-Live-On from the beginning, but with Dagger-chan it's a lot more vague."

"Okay, are you both ready? You might want to sit down for this."

I knew it! I couldn't be more sure! There was one thing that tied Dagger-chan together! And that one thing was...!

"Dagger-chan...is cute!"

Silence.

"Uh? Hello?" *Wh-Why isn't anyone talking?*

"It's happening..." Chami-chan said. "Shuwa-chan's human sensibilities are finally starting to go..."

"To think her StroZerofication has gotten this bad... We should've realized sooner."

"G-Guys, cut it out, quit pitying me! This was supposed to be my big moment—like 'figuring out who the criminal is in a whodunit before the answer is revealed' big!"

"Shuwa-chan, everyone and their mother thinks Dagger-chan is cute. In fact, it'd be weird if you *didn't* find that face cute," Nekoma-senpai retorted.

"Yeah, didn't you already say she was cute?" Chami-chan added.

“Ah! Um, no! There’s more to it than that!”

They both grunted in confusion.

I couldn’t blame them for not understanding. I’d gotten too excited at solving the mystery and my explanation had suffered for it. I composed myself and tried again. “I mean, think about it. Dagger-chan is chock-full of all these cuteness-inducing elements. You have her appearance, of course, but also her personality and the gap between the two. Not to mention her airheadedness, honesty—even her ditziness just now. It’s all part of what makes her tick: cuteness!”

“I see...” Chami-chan murmured. “Now that you mention it...”

But Nekoma-senpai didn’t seem as convinced. “Hm? I understand that, but why would that bug us? It’s not like cuteness is exactly frowned upon or hard to find.”

“Yes, but remember what we initially said, Nekoma-senpai? ‘Live-On only hires weirdos.’ We, like the viewers, had our assumptions before the stream even started! Live-On had this trap set from the very beginning.”

“I-Impossible!”

“Exactly! At Live-On, being cute—normally a prerequisite for virtual streamers—was a rarity. Right when we think we’ve got them all figured out, Live-On shatters our expectations by bringing in someone as cute as Dagger-chan!”

In fact, I’d argue the bias we’d all had going into this only worked to bring out her cuteness even more. Live-On had managed to use the negative(?) corporate image they’d cultivated to their advantage and promote their new talent!

“But don’t you think the fact that she walked into Live-On offices claiming amnesia and getting interviewed makes her pretty sketchy?” Nekoma-senpai said.

“She’s like Live-On’s secret weapon! Daring to plant a beacon of cuteness within a gaggle of perverts so they can shine all the brighter—how delightfully devilish, Live-On!”

“What, no, are you even listening? I’m saying this girl is just as Live-On in the

head as any other.”

“But still, I want to protect her nonetheless!”

“Quit trying to brute-force your way past me and address my argument!”

“Glad to see Shuwa-chan is as free-spirited as ever...” Chami-chan said wryly.

Man. I’d been genuinely excited to have my big moment there. I’d been really expecting a “Shuwa-chan, you’re so smart!” *Womp womp.*

“Well, Nekoma doesn’t think you’re completely wrong. I think you're right about cuteness being her thing.”

Chami-chan picked up the thread. “Though there are cutesy streamers in Live-On, they’ve never really made it a main selling point, have they? Since, you know, the perverted aspect is so much more popular...”

“Oho, so you two *do* get my point! Very well, I shall grant you both the right to join me in my holy beverage pilgrimage!”

“Holy beverage? Lemme guess, StroZero?” Nekoma-senpai quipped.

“Are we...touring the factory?” Chami-chan added.

“Did you all forget? Ha-hum! Good job! I expected nothing less of Live-On viewers!”

During our conversation, Dagger-chan seemed to have regained her composure and returned to her usual self. Despite this being her first stream, the chat already seemed to be doing a great job patrolling itself. *Viewers, you da real MVPs!* Also, I could say this now because the crisis was over, but Dagger-chan’s anxious face was the cutest. The way her little eyebrows had scrunched up was so good.

: Ha-hum! (cute)

: her brand of non-kusogaki kiddiness is hard to hate. i kinda like

: here I go simping again

“Okay! Well, that wraps it up for the stream! Ahem. Destiny has guided the lonely traveler to the realm of Live-On, where kindred souls and benevolent friends abound. Though my loathsome past besets me on all sides, I could do worse than yield myself to the flow of time alongside these newfound allies of mine. Just as futures are wrought from days gone by, so might there be pasts written by the days to come. When our spirits intertwine, we shall meet once more!”

With a few more clearly scripted parting remarks, Dagger-chan’s debut stream drew to a close.

: well that was a doozy

: just what *was* that...

: she would probably remember everything after she took a nap

: i don't think she even understood what she was saying at the end there

: you can't be mad at her she's cute

“We finally have a promising newcomer on our hands! Woo! Cheers!” I said.

“Sh-Shuwa-chan? You seem rather happy?” Chami-chan asked.

“Of course I’m happy! Just when I thought we were going to end up with another pervert, we luck out and get such a little cutie instead! I can’t wait to collab with her!”

“You’re not thinking of rubbing one out, are ya?”

“Nekoma-senpai! I am shocked and appalled! I would never—not in public.”

“And I am shocked and appalled you would imply you do so in private,” Nekoma-senpai retorted.

“Gahhh, she’s just so cute! Even cuter than Chami-chan!” Due to a certain zookeeper, the growth of Chami-chan’s pervert factor had been accelerating. But now a new oasis had appeared!

“Huh? Sh-Shuwa-chan!”

“Hm? What’s up, Chami-chan?”

“Now you see me... Now you don’t!”

“Oooh. Wild-caught is good, but farm-raised isn’t bad either!”

“Yay! She praised me, Nekoma-senpai!”

“...Did she? Farm-raised? Wild-caught? Ahhh! Nekoma has lost the plot!”

An exciting new addition to the family? I’ll drink to that!

It’s Huntin’ Time 2

With a few streams and collabs with her genmate Tadasu-chan now under her belt, Dagger-chan announced in the group chat that her moratorium on collabs with her senpai was finally over. I didn’t waste a moment and sent her an invitation straightaway.

As previously mentioned at the end of her debut stream, I truly had great expectations for her. She was going to become Live-On’s new beacon of hope, and I was *not* about to let her pass me by. My plan was to play the part of the considerate senpai on her first intergen collab. Surely she’d warm up to me, and the rest of the dominos should fall like a house of cards—checkmate!

Mua ha ha... Mua ha ha ha ha!

Hm. Saying that out loud really does make me sound rather unsavory. Well, at least my intentions to support her were in the right place—more so than those weirdo cohorts of mine, anyway.

Ultimately, the ever-adorable Dagger-chan accepted my invitation with an enthusiastic “Yay!” and from there, we dived into the details.

Awayuki Kokorone: what do you want to do?

Dagger: MonSlay!

Awayuki Kokorone: !!! you like MonSlay?

Dagger: I do!

Awayuki Kokorone: thats cool! The new game just came out right? tbh ive been thinking of playing it

Dagger: Oh, im already a few hours into it...

Awayuki Kokorone: how far have you gotten?

Dagger: I'm at the second 2-star urgent quest

Awayuki Kokorone: Roger that. I'll get there before the day of our collab.

Dagger: Are you sure?

Awayuki Kokorone: Piece of cake. I've been itching to get back into MonSlay. Oh, do you mind if I invite someone else?

Dagger: Thanks, and sure!

And so it was decided—our collab would be a co-op *MonSlay* stream. I'd been a complete beginner last time, but by now, I'd cleared the previous installment in the series. I still remembered fighting the last boss and trying my hardest not to lose my shit at her and her “sacs.”

Ahead of the big day, I brought Kaeru-chan on stream so we could catch up to where Dagger-chan was in the game.

“Thanks for agreeing to join our collab, Kaeru-chan!” I said.

“It's Kaeru's pleasure, but she's curious. Why Kaeru, mommy? Have you finally started to miss your dear child?”

“No, I just thought it'd be a good idea to have our resident lost cause join Dagger-chan in her first senpai-collab—so she's less nervous, you know?”

“Harsh. Kaeru has her good points too, you know?”

“Such as?”

“Such as how she brings smiles to her chat mommies' faces every day.” She made a smug little noise.

“By being the butt of the joke, yeah.”

“Well, if Kaeru’s the kettle, then mommy’s the pot.”

By the day of the collab, we were all caught up. Wanting to be perfectly sober in front of our newcomer, I abstained from Shuwa mode. We began with introductions.

“Good evening, everyone. It looks like another nice, light snow is falling tonight. I'm Awayuki Kokorone, of Live-On's third generation. Today we will be playing the latest installment in the *MonSlay* series in honor of its recent release. Though it’s perhaps more accurate to call it an expansion pack, as it’s an extension of the previous game, we’ll be referring to it as a stand-alone game to avoid any confusion. Now, please welcome my trusty companion joining me on this adventure!”

“Ey, kon-chiku, kon-chiku. Live-On fourth gen’s Kaeru Yamatani, here to get carried!”

“Sorry, I said ‘trusty companion,’ not ‘dead weight.’ Now, will the real trusty companion introduce herself?”

Kaeru-chan, with her stupid-ass introduction, had set the stage for Dagger-chan far better than I could’ve ever hoped for. *Go for it, baby, shoot your shot!*

“Hi. I’m Dagger. Live-On fifth gen. Thanks for having me.”

That was it?! Where was the amnesia? The chuuni? The cringe? Why is she being so polite?!

: who's the new girl?

: lol the formality

: if you were gonna correct her then at least do it on stream

: listen if you were told to suddenly hop on stream with some of the most famous streamers out there you'd get nervous too

: infamous, you mean

: nervous or afraid for her safety?

“A-Ahem, thank you for the introduction! On that note, Live-On’s new hope, Dagger-chan, will be joining us today! Yay!”

“Is something wrong, Dagger-chan?” asked Kaeru-chan. “You don’t sound so happy to be here.”

“Ah, um, no. That’s not true.”

“You sure? You can nurse on mommy’s titty if you want to?”

“Remind me when I consented to that again?”

That’s it, Kaeru-chan! That’s exactly what I brought you here to do! Keep talking that degenerate garbage and relax Dagger-chan! Make her think this is what we’re all about!

Wait. Is it just me or have all we done so far is slap her across the face with a dirty joke? Did I miscalculate? This isn’t just straight-up hazing, is it? I didn’t choose the wrong person for the job, did I?

Should I...put a stop to it?

“Dagger-chan, Kaeru may be your senpai, but you can drop any of that pretense around her.”

“Huh? I couldn’t!” Dagger-chan protested.

“In exchange, Kaeru will call you Dagger-mama and you’ll adopt her!”

Yup, I had to put a stop to this right now. “Hey, you, the baby goblin hag.”

“What’s wrong, mommy? You sound rather angry and abusive for a mother talking to their child right now.”

“Shut up and listen! You’re a bona fide senpai now, so you need to act like one! Drop the whole baby act around your kouhai!”

“Hm? I mean, mommy’s younger than me, but that doesn’t stop mommy from being top-mommy, does it?”

“I’m not being anything—that’s all you!”

“Listen carefully, because Kaeru’s only going to say this once: you can never have enough mommies.”

“Yes, you can! And that’s not even what I’m concerned about! I’m concerned why the senpai is trying to lean on the kouhai when it should be the other way around!”

“Well, that’s because the more removed a mommy is from being a mommy, the more mommy they are.”

“Fucking *what?*”

“In summary, Kaeru is a baby, so even her kouhai can be her mommies and there’s nothing wrong with that.”

“Chat, this is all your fault! You’ve spoiled Kaeru-chan for far too long and now look what you’ve done!”

: KEK

: good ol kaeru-chan

: what's wrong with spoiling a baby, huh?!

: the kaeru gachimoms have been angered

: what the hell are gachimoms and why do they exist

: yo you got dagger-chan going like this (°Д°) yo

Oh shit, Dagger-chan! She hadn’t said a thing since we’d started going off on our manzai tangent. Hopefully she wasn’t too put off!

Wait, huh? What’s that sound? That sniveling, wet, mucus-y sound?

Don’t tell me she’s...crying?

SNIFF SOB SNIFF HIC SNIFF

“...”

Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit.

We’d made the newcomer cry.

“Ah, um, mommy, what do we do, she’s crying?!”

Instead of doubling down on her antics, as I’d expected and hoped for, Kaeru-chan turned into a stuttering mess. I couldn’t blame her. My thoughts deserted me as well.

Okay, calm down. It wouldn’t do well to panic here. Let’s go through the facts. What happened? Well, two senpai sexually harassed a newcomer to the point of tears.

...

“Canceled... We are so getting canceled...”

“Mommy?!”

“I can see it now... The title ‘Famous VTuber Harasses Kouhai to the Point of Tears [Live-On]’ on some aggregator site, linking to an article where fact takes a back seat to fiction. The antis being interviewed street-side. ‘Live-On? Always knew they’d blow it sooner or later LOL,’ they’ll say...”

“Th-That can’t be! All Kaeru did was faithfully carry out her mommy’s order to say the most degenerate things possible! How’s that fair? Wait, of course! This is where her baby status comes in handy! Kaeru can’t be held culpable!”

“Huh?! No, don’t! You’ll only make things worse!”

“Goo goo, gaga, I want milk!”

“Kaeru-chan, listen to me. You need to calm down. Shirking responsibility in times like these will only add fuel to the fire. The best thing you can do is admit wrongdoing and apologize—sincerely.”

“You can cross the mountains and dales, but you can always return here. My name is Kaeru Yamatani. Twenty-eight years young, I take full responsibility for any inconvenience I might have caused.”

“Oh yeah, because that was the perfect chance to bust out your official bio for the first time! Would it kill you to feel some shame?”

: it's over... it's so over...

: it was good while it lasted

: ok kaeru-chan, you can stop being good ol kaeru-chan now

: wait are they seriously in trouble?

: no, no, this is just that mesugaki correction I've heard so much about, right?

: when you make them cry *before* they act bratty, it's less correction than it is bullying

: we don't even know why she's crying. it could be unrelated

: yeah I don't even think what they said was all that bad but maybe i'm just too used to it???

I didn't know what to do. I'd never expected in a million years that we'd make her cry. I was at a loss. A total loss. I mean, if I were the only one implicated, I couldn't care less, but at this rate I was going to drag all of Live-On down with me.

I gazed up at the heavens, teary-eyed and filled with despair, when suddenly, Dagger-chan's mic lit up once more.

SNIFF "I-I'm... I'm zo habby to be alibe..."

Huh? Was my imagination playing tricks on me, or had she just said, "I'm so happy to be alive" through snot-filled tears? There was no way she'd just said something *positive*, right?

"Mommy, Kaeru thinks she's dissociating so hard she's beginning to hear things..."

"No, I think I heard that too..."

"...You don't think people like us exist just to get burned at the stake, right?"

"I'd prefer to live not thinking I'm a walking human sacrifice, thank you very much."

SOB “I’ve...I’ve always wanted to experience Live-On up close and personal like this... Th-This is a dream come true! I’m so glaaaaaad!”

Huh?! Her quiet sobs turned into straight-up bawling!

“D-Dagger-chan?” I said. “I think we really need you to set the record straight, so could you please stop crying for one second?”

“O-Okay... W-Waaahhh!”

“Well, that didn’t work. In fact, I think she’s crying even harder...” Then I had a great idea. “Kaeru-chan!”

“Y-Yes, mommy?”

“Your baby rattle! You have one, don’t you? Now’s the time to use it!”

“Of course! Dagger-mama, look what Kaeru has! Rattle rattle, rattle rattle! Finally, it’s getting used for its intended purpose!”

“Ew, you actually had one? Ick. Kids, stay away from thirty-year-old women who shake baby rattles and call their kouhai ‘mama.’”

“Excuse me?! This was your idea!”

“Waaaaaa ha ha ha ha, that’s so funnyyyyyy!”

“She’s cry-laughing?!” we both exclaimed.

Somebody throw me a bone—anything, I beg you!

“Um, Dagger-mama? Would you please listen to us and calm down? Kaeru stocks are currently in free fall in the chat and she fears that if you don’t clear up the misunderstanding, Kaeru will be forever branded as the baby who tried to abandon her mama and that’s not really a good look for her, ha ha...”

“Where’s the misunderstanding in all that?” I quipped.

“Kaeru apologizes...”

I sighed. “Apology accepted. You did come here to do me a favor and ease Dagger-chan’s nerves, after all.”

“Oh, the Holy Mother herself blesses me with her mercy!”

“Besides, I doubt you’d face much backlash for this, anyway.”

“Hm? Why is that?”

“Can’t fall much farther when you’re already at rock bottom.”

“...Rattle rattle, rattle rattle.”

Dagger-chan still hadn’t stopped crying, but had the bullet been tentatively dodged? From what I could gather between her sobs, she’d joined Live-On because she was a fan, and seeing us interact so closely moved her to tears.

Yes? No?

: ohhh so they were tears of joy www

: after finally reaching the promised land

: that's what this was all about?!

: didn't see that one coming

: whew, live-on lives on to fight another day

I’d been hesitant to sound too optimistic too soon, but when I saw the chat echoing my interpretation, I let out a huge sigh of relief. *Phew, my poor heart...* The relief was so powerful that I felt I might be next in line to shed tears. But it was too soon to start patting myself on the back. Dagger-chan was still in tears and that wasn’t a good look for us. We still had to find a way to calm her down.

: has amnesia yet is a big enough live-on fan to cry over them? (thunk)

“...”

“Huh? She stopped crying,” I said.

“Aha! Kaeru’s rattle worked like a charm!”

“I-I wasn’t crying!” The sobbing had ceased, only to be replaced by a shaky, petulant voice.

“Excuse me?” Kaeru-chan and I exclaimed at the same time. *Uh, sorry, what?*

“Y-Yes, you were? Quite loudly, in fact?” I said.

“Kaeru was rattling her heart out—please don’t take that away from her.”

“Was not! I had something in my eye, is all!”

“That’s pushing it a little...” Kaeru-chan said.

“Wait, Kaeru-chan,” I said. “Is she suggesting our opening exchange was so terrible it was nothing more than a speck of dust in her eye?”

“Huh?!” Dagger-chan exclaimed.

“Is that so, Dagger-mama? Very well. Kaeru shall rattle you to sleep once more—this time for good.”

“No! That’s not what I meant at all!” Dagger-chan sounded more petulant by the minute.

: this baby is dangerous. someone take that rattle away from her

: methinks that dagger-chan is trying her hardest to stay in character

: there was a comment in chat pointing out her inconsistent memory loss

“Hm? Ohhh, so that’s why. Kaeru-chan, look at chat.”

“Chat? ...Ah.”

It seemed that while Kaeru-chan and I had been focused on getting Dagger-chan to stop crying, the chat had rather pointedly struck a nerve.

“Hey, Dagger-chan,” I said.

“Wh-What is it?” she replied grumpily (read: cutely).

The way she was trying so hard to return to character was very adorable, but I still had to ask. “Why are you insistent on the whole amnesia shtick? It feels at odds with the rest of your backstory.”

“I-It’s not a shtick! I really don’t remember anything!”

“So, what, the first thing you saw after you regained consciousness was Live-On?” I said, trying to reconcile the different parts of her story.

“That’s a bit of a stretch, isn’t it?” Kaeru-chan interjected. “If Kaeru woke up to see Live-On, her mind would break.”

“That’s a stretch, but a thirty-year-old woman calling herself a baby isn’t?!” Dagger-chan retorted.

“True!”

“Why agree with her, mommy?”

“Sorry, it just kinda came out.”

“Good grief. And don’t think I don’t see you too, chat-mommies. No agreeing with her either! Goo goo gaga, this is baby. Do you copy, over?”

: LOL not everything should segue into a joke kaeru-chan
: certified kaeru moment
: you can't just say "over" and expect us to understand...
: at least we know kaeru-chan hasn't completely lost it yet
: cut the new girl some slack

Chat was right. We were her senpai. We should’ve been backing her up on this. If Dagger-chan felt it right to preserve the memory-loss aspect of her character, who were we to question her choice, even if we couldn’t comprehend it?

That being said, her misstep just now hadn’t been exactly trivial. Come to think of it, she’d goofed up similarly on her debut stream. Poor kid. How could we help her? How could we steer this ship into calmer waters?

Wait, speaking of her debut stream, how’d she recover from the blunder back

then?

Aha, that's it!

"Dagger-chan! You want to prove you have amnesia, right? Then take off your hood!"

"My hood? Why?"

"Just do it! I'm here to help!"

"Awayuki-senpai, you're so kind! Like this?"

"Perfect! And now you just need to yell what I just typed to you at the top of your lungs!"

"Oh, you sent me something? Let's see... *F-Forget-It Beeeaaam!*"



“AhaaaAAAAaaaAAAA that was every bit as cute as I thought it would be.”

“Mommy, you’re being icky.”

“Wh-What the heck, Awayuki-senpai?! The chat’s filling up with messages saying I’m cute! Stop it! Say you forgot, not that I’m cute!”

: okay, I forgot I forgot, just keep the hood off

: if you got a problem with dagger-chan's amnesia then you have a problem with me and i suggest you let that one marinate

: that loli face is just unreal

: so as long as we keep forgetting we're good?

“See? What’d I tell ya?” I said.

“Wow! It’s true, all the words of doubt have disappeared! You’re the best, Awayuki-senpai!”

“This game is rigged,” I thought I heard Kaeru-chan mutter under her breath.

Facts and logic? Try cuteness instead.

“Ahhh, she’s just so cute. I can’t,” I said.

“Mommy? Kaeru doesn't want to rain on your parade, but you should be careful. Never mind that it worked on this occasion—continue caving to her cuteness and you’ll spoil her.”

“Do I even need to point out the hypocrisy of what you just said?”

“If mommy’s going to spoil anyone, it should be Kaeru.”

“Good grief...”

“That’s so mean XD.”

She had a point, though. Supporting her as her senpai was one thing; spoiling her because she was cute was another. *You know what, fine! From this moment forth, I shall not cave to cuteness! Loli, shmoli! I’ll look you dead in the eye!*

STARE

“Hm?”

STAAAARE

“Ah?” :D

Ofjweufaipwuefhaiwuefhffioaefjoiefwaiahfiue?!?!?

“Whoa?! What was that?!”

“Wh-What happened, mommy? What was that noise?!”

“Sorry, sorry, I fell off my chair.”

“Are you okay, mommy?”

“Awayuki-senpai, are you hurt?”

“Not physically, no. But it feels like I had something precious stolen from me.”

“Um?”

“It’s mommy, so no doubt she’s talking about StroZero.”

“No, it’s my heart. My heart was stolen, okay? Don’t you dare come over to my house looking for StroZero now.”

: dagger-chan is yet a riddle wrapped in a mystery
wrapped in an enigma

: excuse me i was promised gameplay

: streamer pls start playing the video game

The stream intro had dragged on for so long that we’d nearly forgotten what we were here to do in the first place. Once the mood settled a bit, we bounced back and dived into *MonSlay*. Thanks to our efforts in catching up to Dagger-chan’s progress, along with a little bit of luck, our next target was one of the monsters introduced in the new game. It was good content—interesting to the viewer *and* fun for the streamer. Nice!

We accepted the quest, set out on our way, and bam, there it was—our

target for today.

“Whoa, that is one jacked gorilla,” I said.

“Do gorillas have tails?” Kaeru-chan questioned.

“It’s no gorilla,” Dagger-chan interjected, “but a creature based on Frankenstein’s monster, or so I hear!”

Kaeru-chan and I both acknowledged that new piece of information with a curious hum. It looked like a gorilla from afar, but as we approached, it certainly was much more than that. Big, burly, and lumbering, its face gave off “gentle giant” vibes, which made it kind of cute, actually.

: oh is that what it's based on?

: wrong, that's Ehrai Sonokaze's monster

: I heard it's an escapee from the laboratory deep underneath Ehrai Zoo, a chimera part gorilla and part something else

: wrong, it's the zookeeper's personal pet

: I heard it's the zookeeper herself just in hulk mode

: fuck it's her?

All right! Less talking, more doing! I was using my lance as usual, so it was death by a thousand pokes! “Okay, its attacks seem to be pretty telegraphed, so just play safe, dodge, and we win.”

“Ugyaaa!”

“Kaeru-chan, what are you doing?! I just said to play safe, didn’t I? Also, why are you even running in? Is that bow just for show?”

“I...I live. What a despicable creature, attacking a defenseless baby. You too, mommy—be more protective of your baby. Be Kaeru’s shield so she can focus on being the group carver.”

“That’s not an actual role and you know it! Whoa, hey! Don’t get knocked

back again! Are you really okay?!”

“I’ll heal her with lifepowder!” Dagger-chan said.

“Th-Thank you... Ah, I’m stunned?!”

“Stunned? Anyone scared because Kaeru-chan’s bud got stunned? See? There’s no one!”

“You just wanted to quote *Tokyo Revengers*, didn’t you? Okay, Kaeru’s fully recovered. Jeez, she wonders who’s dumber, the baby or the person who expects the baby to be able to dodge.”

“Well, I guess you are at that age where reflexes start to go, huh? ...Sorry, don’t hate me!”

“Becoming hard of hearing as well, are we, mommy? Um, actually, should we be flaming each other like this in front of Dagger-chan? We are her hypothetical senpai, after all.”

“We *are* her senpai, there’s nothing hypothetical about it,” I clapped back. Well, everything else she’d said was right, though. It wouldn’t be surprising if Dagger-chan was fed up with us, the way we were acting.

“(●>▽<●) Kyaaa! Kya kya kya! ★≡” CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

All right, never mind, she was having the time of her life. “Almost forgot she was a fan.”

“Am not! I don’t even know you!” she cackled.

: Kya kya kya kya!

: is she fucking clapping LOL

: she's more pure joy and less like alice-chan with her awayuki worship, which is great

: also great seeing our two clueless senpai not knowing what to do with her

: good job staying in character!

Ouch! I took an unexpected hit from the boss. *No worries, just calm down, heal, and back to poking.* “I love the lance. You just block, then counterthrust—there’s just something so nice about the way it plays.”

“It’s the least-used weapon in the game, though!”

“Huh?” Dagger-chan’s unexpected tidbit rendered me mute.

“Aw poor baby using an unpopular weapon awww,” Kaeru-chan taunted.

“Sh-Shut up, hag! You just couldn’t wait to get me back one, could you? But wait, really? Why does no one use the lance? I won’t deny it isn’t the flashiest thing in the world, but it’s fun to use...”

“Probably because *you* use it, mommy, and no one wants to be associated with you. What did you say last time? ‘I want to rob every monster of its virginity’? ‘My lance is the lance that will pierce the hymens’?”

“I did *not* say that last one! And it was Shuwa-chan who said the first one, not me!”

“Trying to retcon the past now, are we?”

“Am not!”

“Now you just sound like Dagger-mama.”

“Hahhh... Hahhh... In any case, let’s stop with the dirty jokes in front of Dagger-chan, all right?”

“That, Kaeru is sorry about.”

“Ah? Why stop in front of me?”

“Because...you’re...not...good...with...dirty jokes?” I ventured.

“That’s not true.”

“It’s not?”

“It’s not! Penis!”

“AAAAAAHHHH!!!” Kaeru-chan and I both shrieked.

“Wah! That scared me.”

Does this kid even know what she’s saying?! “You can’t be saying things like

that, young lady!” I chided.

“Ah? Why not?”

“Mommy, wait. She’s a fan of Live-On. Why were we expecting her not to be okay with dirty jokes again?”

“Crap, you’re right...”

“I’m not a fan!”

I see. This girl was fine with dirty jokes, huh? Well, she definitely did a great job masking it over with all her cuteness, I’ll say that much.

: ?!?!

: surprised pikachu face

: i was lying down and fucking dropped my phone on my face

: this feels more criminal than it does taboo

: it's only funny when awayuki-chan says it

: jiro dreams of seiso...

About five minutes into our expedition, I’d gotten relatively comfortable with the fight. As more and more of my brainpower was freed up to wander beyond the battle at hand, something increasingly nagged at me.

Ahhh, I can’t stand it anymore, I have to ask!

“Dagger-chan!”

“Ah?”

“We need to talk.”

“Kaeru thinks she knows where mommy is going with this because Kaeru’s been just as bothered.”

“Huh?! What did I do? Am I playing wrong?!”

No, there was nothing wrong with her gameplay. In fact, she might’ve been

the best player out of all of us. The issue, Dagger-chan, was something else, something you've been *very* inconsistent with this whole time. *You know what I'm talking about, don't you?*

"Dagger-chan. *Where did the chuuni part of your character go?*"

"This."

"Ah...?" She paused. "Ah?!"

Indeed, since the start of the stream, I couldn't remember her saying or doing anything remotely chuuni-like. I'd given her a pass initially, since she'd cried and all, but once we began playing, she just seemed like any other girl having fun, enjoying a video game. The more I noticed the absence of her chuuni antics, the more it stood out! Every time she missed out on an easy opportunity to interject with something chuuni, I felt it—viscerally.

"C-Crap! I was too focused on my amnesia, so I forgot about that!"

"Oh, *did* you now?!"

"Kaeru's seen tissue paper stronger than your character."

"Like that charge blade you're using!" I started to rant. "Yeah, yeah, subjectivity and everything, but that is a genuinely cool weapon choice! A chuuni's got better—cornier options! Like long sword or dual blades!"

: a... LOL

: not false

: i legitimately forgot that was even part of her character

: kaeru-chan nippy today

: she's actually not as chuuni as you would think in her solo streams either

Exactly! The guy in chat was right. This girl didn't seem to know what it meant to be truly chuuni. On her streams she'd say the odd chuuni-ish thing every now

and then, but it felt more like an afterthought than a central part of her character.

“Are you going for a more subtle, less forward style of chuuni?” I asked.

“No! I have to be cool, is all!”

“Then...what’s going on? You did a pretty good job during the intro and outro of your debut stream—what happened to that?”

“Well, management helped me out with that part...”

“See, that’s the part you can’t say out loud.”

“Was that what the whole ‘that was a lot to read’ thing was about?” Kaeru-chan said. “Management spoils her way more than they spoil Kaeru. She’s jealous...”

You know what? This was a great chance to give her a little pop quiz. “Dagger-chan, the boss we’re fighting now has a move in which it slams its magma-imbued fist into the ground, hurling itself through the air toward you. If you were to give that ability a chuuni-esque name, what would you name it?”

“Ah, um... Jump?”

“See, that’s no good.”

“Huh?! How’d you know so fast? Did you even think about it?”

“I didn’t need to think about it—your name sucked! At least go for, like, ‘Meteor Break’ or something if you wanted to keep it simple!”

“Say that ability name one more time, mommy?”

“Meteor Break!”

“Again?”

“M-Meteor Break,” I repeated, more hesitantly.

“Again?” she snickered.

“...Meteor Break,” I whispered.

“See, Awayuki-senpai, you find it embarrassing too!” Dagger-chan exclaimed.

Of course it’s embarrassing! That’s what chuunibyou-ism is all about! Once

reason prevails, it's freaking torture just to think about it! Even now, when I remember my chuuni past, I just want to crawl into a hole and die!

But it was too late. It could no longer be stopped. My past, the one I'd thought I'd banished for good, was threatening to resurface, all because of Dagger-chan. "And what the hell is that character name? Just 'Dagger'? Seriously? Are you even trying? How about adding some †s to that bad boy? †Dagger†. How about that, huh?!"

"Whoa! I see!"

"Careful not to cut yourself on that edge, mommy."

: el classico

: dagger dagger dagger? Like a certain western lowland gorilla?

: maybe we should just call her †-chan instead

: you think people will get that?

"Awayuki-senpai is right. This will help me become cooler. But how did you think of that on the spot? I could never."

"Easy. Just read *Bleach*."

"*Bleach*? Like the manga?"

"Indeed. *Bleach* is the chuuni bible. Read it all in one sitting and I guarantee it'll have even the strongest, most independent female CEO you know coming to work sporting a captain's haori and a zanpakuto before instantly renaming the company *Soul Society*."

"And going bankrupt in the process," Kaeru-chan quipped.

"Whoa! That sounds awesome! You know so much about chuuni-ism, Awayuki-senpai! You're like a chuuni master!"

"A *what* master now?" I shot back. "Are you making fun of me?"

"Chuuni-mama, more like."

“Baby hag be quiet!”

: is awa-chan kinda into it or what

: ex-chuunis can't stand to see chuunibyou being half-assed

: corny-ass lookin chuuni master

“Hey, hey, chuuni master, teach me more of your ways!”

“I said I’m not your chuuni master!”

“Huh? Y-You won’t be my chuuni master?” Her lower lip trembled.

“...”

Her huge puppy-dog eyes pleaded with me.

“F-Fine, but drop the ‘chuuni’ and just call me ‘master,’ okay?”

She burst into another radiant smile. “Yay! Master!”

“Hey, mommy? Kaeru screwed up and got carted.” Her huge puppy-dog eyes pleaded with me.

“Okay, and?”

“And that, chat-mommies, is social polarization in action.”

From that point on, Dagger-chan began addressing me as “master,” not just for the rest of the stream, but well beyond it. In return, I guided her in the ways of everything chuuni. It was a phase of my life I’d rather not reminisce about if at all possible, so how had it even come to this...? How...?

: completely serious but has awa-chan felt more motherly lately or what?

: a fine, caring senpai she is

: oh how she's grown. I think I'm gonna cry tears of StroZero

Idle Talk: Dagger-chan Is...

Sharp as her namesake, yet a danger to no one but herself, the enigmatic Dagger burst onto the scene as the second member of Live-On's fifth generation. Her most defining trait? Amnesia. As the term implied, she possessed no memories—the very information and experiences that shape one's identity. To lack that foundation is to suffer in ways indescribable by any words known to this plane of existence.

The following are a few glimpses into Dagger's interactions with her fellow fifth-generation member, Tadasu Miyauchi.

—First Meeting—

"Hey. I heard you've lost your memories. Is that true?" asked Tadasu.

"Yup! I'm here to turn over a new leaf!"

"Hmm, I see... Perhaps this isn't my place to say, as I've never experienced memory loss myself, but you have my sympathies."

"Oh! Um, it's really not like that for me..."

"Really? Just the thought of losing my memories sends a shiver down my spine."

"U-Um, I'm sure normally it's like that! But for me, I have Live-On, right? They helped me get back on my feet, and they're the reason I can stay positive. Besides, through them, I even got to meet you!"

"Dagger-chan... Your mettle is most inspiring! With your condition, the journey ahead may be tough, but whenever you falter, know that I'm here for you. I may be anti-Live-On, but as your genmate, I'm genuinely glad to have met you!"

Dagger's voice started to quiver. "I-I'm glad you think so, I really am, but please don't make me do this..."

"H-Hey! What's wrong? Do what? You're crying? ...But of course—of course

you would. There, there, everything's going to be okay. You don't have to say anything." Tadasu sniffed. "Oh, now you're going to make me cry too!"

"Waaaaah!" Dagger wailed. "She's too good of a girl!" she exclaimed between sobs.

—One Month Later—

"Hey. Did you *really* lose your memory?" asked Tadasu.

"Wuh-huh?! What's this all of a sudden?!" stammered back a flustered Dagger.

"If I'm being honest, your memory loss doesn't seem to hamper you one bit. In fact, sometimes you appear to be more informed about Live-On than I am, and I've studied them religiously."

"Th-That's not true! Remember when I helped you study for your exams that one time? Remember how bad I was even at simple arithmetic? S-See? I'm hampered!"

"Are you sure that wasn't just because you're plain stupid?"

"Am not!"

"Suspicious... Veeery suspicious."

"N-No, I'm not..." Dagger murmured, her voice reduced to a whisper.

"Hmmmmm?" Tadasu droned knowingly.

Dagger trembled under the weight of her inquisition. "N-Nooo..."

"Well, suit yourself."

"Huh?"

"Whether you're hiding something or not, our shared time together will always be genuine. You are already my treasured companion."

"Waaaaaaaaah!" Dagger wailed again. "She really is too good of a girl!!!"

—Present Day—

"Hey. Do you remember the address of the Live-On office in full?" asked Tadasu.

“Yup!” Dagger puffed out her chest in pride. “My memory’s real good!”

“An odd claim to make for one with amnesia, but okay.”

From the outset, Dagger’s identity—or lack thereof—should have raised more than a few eyebrows. Yet who was the more outrageous persona in this whole situation? Was it Tadasu, who’d never once doubted Dagger’s claims for an entire month, or was it Dagger, who remained oblivious to Tadasu’s unwavering trust until the truth was finally aired out on stream?

Chapter 3

Fifth Gen, Part 3

A month had passed since the debut of Live-On gen five's second member, Dagger-chan, and things seemed to be going well for her. The threat of her breaking character was ever present and still concerning, but quite frankly, I couldn't really blame her. She was probably having a blast streaming as part of Live-On, especially given her history as a fan. It was as if she was shining, truly. Her genuine enthusiasm paired perfectly with her character's adorable design, and her fanbase continued to grow at a steady pace. I wasn't exactly exempt from her charm either. The way she looked up to me, chanting, "Master, master!" was dangerously adorable. If only that "master" weren't short for "chuuni master," how much better it would've been.

But even that quirk grew on me over time. At the end of the day, Dagger-chan was just adorable, period, and that was enough to make her an angel here at Live-On.

Today, however, was not about Dagger-chan. As the month swiftly passed, it marked the anticipated debut of the third and final member of Live-On gen five.

"You know, Ehrai-kun, I'd offer you my body for a chance to fondle a breast of yours."

"Your body, eh? Very well. I'm sure even a body like yours would fetch a handsome price on the open market~."

"Why, it almost sounds like it's my organs you're after. That's not what I meant—not what I meant at all. At least take me in as your pet? No doubt a specimen like me is hard to find."

"You're pretty if nothing else, so perhaps we can have you stuffed and mounted instead. A Sei-sama taxidermy could be quite the attraction."

"Nooo! Don't stuff me or mount me! Unless it's in *that* way!"

“What the hell are you two talking about?” I couldn’t help but ask.

Joining me for today’s watch party were Sei-sama and Ehrai-chan, the participants of this conversation that was either grossly violent or grossly sexual—I couldn’t tell. On this occasion, I’d come at Sei-sama’s behest, but after what had just happened, I was having second thoughts. It was genuinely frightening how quickly the dialogue had gone from normal to whatever the hell this was. StroZero-less, I felt like Yamcha, a simple human among Saiyans.

“You might want to tone the sexual harassment down a notch, Sei-sama,” I added. “Or else Shion-senpai’ll get mad at you, you know? Why aren’t the two lovebirds at their own private watch party, anyway?”

“We did that for both Tadasu-kun and Dagger-kun. While it’s nice with just the two of us, Shion and I both agreed that it wouldn’t do to neglect the rest of you. Besides, she’s never complained once about my behavior. She must know—that I only have eyes for her.”

“Gush one more word about Shion-senpai and I’ll have you removed from this watch party,” I warned.

“You’re going to remove me from my own watch party?!”

“Well, Shion-senpai too,” Ehrai-chan added. “Not like she’s any better, always going on about how she wants to be everyone’s mommy. There must be something deeper to their bond than what they show on the surface~.”

Sei-sama gave a short, amused snort. “Well said, Ehrai-kun.”

“But the gushing pissed me off as well, so don’t think I’ll be letting it slide~,” Ehrai-chan continued. “Left or right?”

“Oh dear, I’m afraid I won’t be giving up a kidney that easily,” Sei-sama said.

“How in the world did you know *that* was what she was talking about?” I said, flabbergasted at how in sync they were.

Ehrai-chan and Sei-sama. While they might have seemed an unlikely pair at first glance, their compatibility was undeniable. The draw for their viewers lay in their dynamic: Sei-sama would nonchalantly pitch something audacious, and Ehrai-chan, with her razor-sharp wit and equally sharp tongue, would

effortlessly knock it out of the park. It was a winning combination, something to look forward to whenever they collabed.

Ehrai-chan, Ehrai-chan... Another showcase of her high-level communication skills, huh? Lost in thought, I found myself murmuring aloud, “Hmm...”

“Hm~?” Ehrai-chan seemed to notice. “Awayuki-senpai, what are you muttering on about~?”

“I guess we can talk about it since we’re off stream, but remember when we met IRL? I still can’t get over how different you were.”

“Huuuh? Whatever could you mean~? Who else could I be but Ehrai Sonokaze~?”

“Now that you mention it,” interjected Sei-sama, “I haven’t met Ehrai-kun offline either. What’s she like?”

“What’s she like?” I replied. “The most handsome ikemen ever is what she’s like!”

“Oh, actually?” Sei-sama hummed thoughtfully. “That makes two of us, then, Ehrai-kun.”

“No, no,” Ehrai-chan denied. “That’s not me at all. And just so you know, Sei-sama, if you try to equate the two of us ever again, I’ll beat you to within an inch of your life~. That’s the eighth dirty word, you hear?”

“How terrifying,” mocked Sei-sama. “Wait, what’s a dirty word? Equating you with me?”

“Though we had a whole-ass conversation without even realizing who the other was. That was fun,” I said.

“Kusa. Ehrai-kun’s so funny. She always has me smoking my grass off.”

“You mean ‘laughing my ass off’! Saying ‘smoke’ and ‘grass’ in the same sentence makes it sound super sketchy!” Ehrai-chan snapped.

“Sorry, slip of the penis.”

“We’ll see how feisty you still are when I cut out that tongue of yours...”

At the end of the day, I wasn’t too concerned about Ehrai-chan. If I could

come to grips with the kindergarten-principal-ization (newly coined) of her character à la *Crayon Shin-chan*, I didn't see why I wouldn't be able to internalize her IRL persona either.

As we talked about this and that, time flew. Before we knew it, only minutes remained until the debut stream. "Strange how we get nervous just from watching, huh?" I mused.

Sei-sama laughed softly. "Indeed. Speaking of nerves, Awayuki-kun, no StroZero today? You might not be streaming, but why not make an exception? Revel in the impending chaos with me."

"She has a point, you know~? Are you sure you want to go into the grand finale of gen five stone-cold sober?"

"You both make compelling arguments, but truth be told, I'm still holding on to hope. I want to believe in our last newcomer."

Both Sei-sama and Ehrai-chan grunted in confusion.

I'd clung to a sliver of hope ever since that fateful day which found me resigned and drunk—the day Dagger-chan took me by surprise. "Like, sure, Dagger-chan's debut was a lot, but you can't deny that she's genuinely cute. She gave me hope that maybe Live-On *wasn't* just randomly throwing things into the pot and making a big ole everything stew—that maybe they were carefully selecting premium ingredients and cooking something up in a big way. That's why I want to believe in our newcomer—believe in Live-On!"

"I see." Sei-sama hummed. "I never saw it that way, but perhaps you're onto something."

"Awayuki-senpai," Ehrai-chan chimed in, "that's a great way to put it!"

With a self-satisfied chuckle, I said, "My abstaining from StroZero is a quiet endorsement. A show of solidarity that I yet believe Live-On means well."

Live-On, my dearest, I believe in you. Now, as the final act unfolds, show me what you've got!

As the stream flickered to life, the first thing to catch my eye was the large blackboard that dominated the background. Then, a familiar sound: the

timeless rattle of a sliding door brushed past my right ear. Striding in from the same direction on-screen came an elegant avatar dressed in a suit. Pausing to clear her throat, she transitioned into an introduction enunciated in the clearest, most crisp Japanese possible. *“Ahem. Good morning, class! My name is Churiri-sensei, and I am very excited to be starting as your new teacher today!”*

There was no doubt about it. The blackboard, the door, the persona—we were in a quintessential school classroom. That meant her character was, unmistakably, a— “She’s a teacher~!” Ehrai-chan gushed.

“Indeed,” Sei-sama echoed. “The teacher. A staple of erogé side characters.”

“Do not ever call her a side character to her face,” I said sternly.

“You misunderstand, Awayuki-kun. It is exactly their side-character nature that makes the teacher so alluring. They offer a whiff of naughtiness, a dash of the forbidden that the main dish just can’t provide.”

She...has a point. Not that I’d ever let her know, but she had a point.

Eroge aside, Live-On hadn’t yet seen a teacher—or sensei archetype, rather—so this was new. Sensei characters were great, though! I had a whole laundry list of beloved teacher characters from various anime I’d watched.

Yep, sensei characters were great.

...They were great, but something was...off about this one. Her peppy introduction had left more of a positive impression than not, but the more I looked at her, the more that impression wavered.

First of all, if she *was* a teacher, then why was her hair so...*crazy*? And second, if her voice was so peppy and her hair so crazy, then why were her eyes *dead*, *lifeless orbs sunk into dark, baggy circles*?! That didn’t look right!

: G-Good morning?

: are you okay, sensei?

: her eyes look dedge...

: she looks like she's about to die on the spot from overwork and re-debut as a spirit lol

: she looks a little 2meirl4meirl

: right in front of my salad...

I'd seen sparkless, glazed-over eyes before, but hers were ominous, utterly devoid of life...

"Unsettling... How unsettling..." Ehrai-chan muttered.

"Awayuki-kun, ready to call this one a wash?"

"No, not yet! It's too early to throw in the towel! An overworked sensei is a classic trope, right? It's the perfect gap. She puts on a strong face for her students but falls apart in private! That can work!"

That *could* work, but it still wouldn't explain why she looked the way she did. *Whatever, just don't think about it!*

"But what's in a name, anyway? Since today is our very first day together, I want to share with you all a special story about myself!"

S-Stop it! Stop sounding so upbeat and forcing such a radiant smile to your lips when your eyes tell a different story! That fake happiness is breaking my heart!

"Fun fact: I'm not originally from Earth! I come from way out in the stars, from a place in outer space!"

Come again?

"But don't worry, I'm the most peaceful space visitor you'll ever meet! You see, when I was just a little alien, I was traveling in a spaceship when suddenly, there was a big explosion, likely killing everyone on board except for me. You see, I'd sneaked off to play in an escape pod, inadvertently saving my life. Although I was unharmed, the pod was damaged in the blast, rendering it inoperable. I drifted and drifted across the big, empty universe, until, just when I thought I'd drift forever and ever, I stumbled upon it—Earth! I found my new home, and have been living in secret among you earthlings ever since!"

: amazing lol

: scary how she recounted that so casually

: wake up babe new Live-On lore just dropped

: weren't satisfied just making her a teacher now were you, Live-On

: kakarot!!!!

: wrong alien sir

“My name here is ‘Churiri,’ but that’s just a small part of my actual, very long space name! The rest of it is too tricky to say in any of Earth’s languages. Oh, and my hair? It’s definitely not like what most people here have. It’s such a handful just to live with every day...”

“That explains the iridescent, indescribable color her hair is~,” Ehrai-chan said.

“Then maybe those eyes and the dark circles under them are also alien in nature?” Sei-sama added.

“Ah!” I exclaimed. “That must be it! Sei-sama, you’re an idiot!”

“It really is such a handful. Just look how exhausted I am.”

“I take that back, you’re an idiot!”

“But you said idiot twice, though? Aren’t you supposed to call me a genius first before taking it back?”

“I love it when my friends get along~.”

: so the face is an acquired look huh

: if it weren't for those eyes we would have another cute face on our hands...

: could be worse

“Now, then! With that dark and depressing story out of the way, let’s talk about subject matter. That is to say, what I teach.”

Oh, she seemed to specialize in a particular subject. I wondered what it could

be. *Japanese, perhaps? Wait, no, why would an alien be teaching humans their own language?* I pondered and pondered, but ended up drawing a blank.

With a flourish, she announced, *"I...am here to teach you all about the wonders of love."*

"Love~," Ehrai-chan murmured.

"Love, eh?" Sei-sama arched a brow.

"Hm, love," I mused.

All three of us blinked in surprise. "...Love?"

Why... Why do I hear boss music?

: ?!

: uh-oh, is it starting?

: Live-On had us in the first half, I'm not gonna lie...and also in the second half

: aight hop on, servers up

: no i think in fact they are shutting the game down

: after hours is where live-on thrives anyway

"But Churiri-sensei!" some of you might be thinking, 'love isn't a subject!' Not so fast, my dear students. Let's start with a simple question, shall we: What do you all think love is? Come on, don't be shy now. Your answer doesn't have to be perfect."

: uhhh

: two people brought together by fate!

: tender loving care or something? idk

: just, you know, having romantic feelings for each other?

“Wrong, all of you.”

Huh?!

“Oh dear, I might have come off a bit strong there. Please bear with me, I’m new, aha ha... Ahem. What I meant to say is that sometimes, you humans are too myopic when it comes to love. You all think of it in terms of feelings and emotions, and that is lamentable, because true love is a concept much richer and deeper, certainly not something that can be qualified by something as worthless as human emotion—not by a long shot.”

: YABE

: haha, i'm in danger

: anyone else just start trembling from fear?

“Let’s start simple. Love is a concept. It has nothing to do with emotion—nor is it anything absolute at all. It springs into existence at one moment, vanishes at another. Depending on the observer, love can take on myriad shapes and forms. Are you all still following so far?”

: no

: feeling like i wandered into a lecture at UTokyo

: you mean a shady cult

: is this supposed to be philosophical?

: There are no absolutes in life... aha! she's talking about Samurai 8

: love is samurai 8?!

: in all seriousness tho i have never been more confused in my life

“I’ve already lost you all? How pitiful...”

: hey! the teacher just called her students pitiful! her fake students but still!

: lmao

: i don't *want* to understand

“But don’t worry, I’m here to help as your teacher. Why don’t we work through an example to understand love better? Today, we’ll discuss ‘The Eraser and the Pencil.’ On your screen, you’ll see two images: one of a mechanical pencil, and one of an eraser.”

: saying we don't want to be taught but teaches us anyway. quite literally compulsory education

: she brought props :skull:

: what does a mechanical pencil and eraser have to do with love?

“Love, and lots of it, can be found in these two images! That, in essence, is what I am trying to convey!”

: ?!

: scuse?

: LOL?

“Now, allow me to explain in a way your peanut brains can understand. First, think about pencils and erasers—and about how one cannot exist without the other. What good is a pencil if its lines cannot be erased? What purpose does an eraser have if it cannot, well, erase? This dependency, this relationship—what is it, if not love?”

+ + +

Pencil: “It’s only because of you, Eraser, that I can be who I’m meant to be.”

Eraser: “Oh, Pencil, it’s like we were made for each other.”

+ + +

“Aaaaand, scene! But there’s more to love than that. What about that dinky eraser that comes attached to the butt of the pencil that can’t erase to save its life? Well, it makes its appearance when the eraser is left behind at home.”

+ + +

Pencil: “Eraser, my love, where are you?! How can I correct this blunder without you by my side?! Trying to write ‘chick,’ I wrote ‘dick’ instead! At this rate, I’ll be known as a lecherous pencil...”

???: “Fear not, dear Pencil.”

Pencil: “Who speaks?!”

???: “Up here.”

Pencil: “Butt Eraser?! Is it truly you?”

Butt Eraser: “Indeed, Pencil. Please, use me.”

Pencil: “But this... This is your first time! For me to be the one to defile your unsullied, alabaster beauty... How could I?”

Butt Eraser: “It’s fine, Pencil—I want it to be you. Oh, how long have I watched you from the shadows as you found solace in a more capable eraser’s embrace. But now, when I can finally be of aid, might you grant me this one selfish wish?”

Pencil: “Butt Eraser...”

+ + +

“Aaaaand scene! Butt Eraser-chan’s touching act has clearly stirred the heart of our Pencil. Moved by her determination, caught up in the heat of the moment, Pencil and Butt Eraser intertwine in a one-erase stand. Love has, once again, blossomed before our eyes. But that’s not all—there is yet more love to be uncovered in these two images. Perhaps some eagle-eyed students have

already noticed? I'm, of course, referring to—"

+ + +

Eraser: *SNIFF* "Oh, Pencil! How could he? He tried to hide it, but I know what I saw! Those unmistakable smudges upon his rear...the proof of his dalliance! How dare he be led astray by that minx!"

???: "Dry those tears, sweet Eraser."

Eraser: "You're...my eraser cover?!"

Eraser Cover: "Indeed. It is I, everyone's old friend: the MONO eraser cover."

Eraser: "But...why...?"

Eraser Cover: "Well, I was literally made to swaddle you. This is what I'm supposed to do."

Eraser: "All this time...? But why emerge now, after all these silent years?"

Eraser Cover: "Ha ha ha... Because I suppose this is about all I'm good for. I'd convinced myself I'd be content cheering you and Pencil on from the sidelines—or at least, I thought I had. Today, however, I just couldn't hold myself back any longer. Aha ha ha. I've made a mess of things, haven't I?"

Eraser: "No, not at all! But I see. So you've always been by my side, supporting me... Thank you."

+ + +

"And—UOOOOHHHH! Precious! Just precious! Fleeting, ephemeral, beautiful! True, genuine affection! Not to be confused with the deceitful, impure affair you humans demonstrate!"

I was speechless.

What in the ever-loving *fuck*—I repeat, in the ever-loving *fuck*—was this girl talking about? Overwhelmed by a sense of impending doom, I reached out to Ehrai-chan for help. "Eh-Ehrai-chan..."

"What—in the ever-loving *fuck*—is this girl talking about?"

N-No! Not you too, Ehrai-chan!

Wait, of course! If anyone knows what's going on, it's Live-On's preeminent pervert! "Sei-sama!"

"What—in the ever-loving fuck—is this girl talking about?"

No... That's...not possible... Not even Sei-sama knows what she's talking about?!

"Ahem! That concludes the exercise. Well? Wasn't that straightforward? This is true love. Not the shallow imitation you've mistaken for it until now."

: (㇏) (㇏㇏) RUB RUB (; ㇏) (㇏㇏) RUB RUB (; ㇏) ...?! (㇏㇏) RUB RUB RUB RUB RUB (㇏)

: nope. nope nope nope nope nope

: i understand wanting to put on a grande finale, but this...

: dattebayon't

: and not a single kusa was to be found. the newcomer, with a single stroke, transformed this once-verdant land into a desolate desert

: look at her. doesn't she resemble something that reaps grass?

: you know what they say, you reap what you sow. and we sowed, umm

: i ain't never seen no alien but she sure seem like one to me

"Hey, you, the StroZero-obsessed *BEEEEEP*. Bite the pillow because I'm going in dry."

"What?!" I yelped.

"Not what I wanted to hear from the woman who admonished me about language just a moment ago," Sei-sama said.

I wasn't losing my mind, was I? Ehrai-chan was mad at...*me*? What for?!

"You just *had* to run your damn mouth before the stream, didn't ya?! Now look what happened. How ya gonna make this right, huh?!"

"Excuuuse me?! There's no way you're blaming me for this right now, are you?"

"You know," Sei-sama cut in, "I did a little teacher role once. They asked me to ad-lib a little introduction. 'If you listen real close, you can hear these faces from the past whisper their legacy to you. Go on, lean in. Hear it? Carpe Penem. Seize the dick, students; make your lives extraordinary,' I said to a crowd of naked students. I must've struck a chord, as they stared at me dumbstruck and we had to redo the take."

"What gives, Ehrai-chan?! You even agreed with me! You said that was a great way to put it!"

"Because if I *didn't* agree with your take, that would've jinxed the situation for good! I had to resist the urge to call you out to give us a fighting chance! And that whole thing 'bout everything stew? That was rich coming from the woman whose only contribution to the potluck was StroZero!"

"N-No, you! You think you're the only one mad about this?! Ehrai-chan, you inconsiderate dummy!"

"Huh?! You itchin' to lose a digit, huh, you little rat?!"

"You big dummy! You jerk! I hate you!"

"What's it gonna be, kid? If you wanna lose a finger, I got options for ya—plenty of options."

Sei-sama cut in again. "Never thought I'd witness an argument between a grade-schooler and a mob boss, but here we are. You know, I also did a yakuza flick once. 'Lose an appendage or get this one up yer ass,' I said, before putting on a strap-on and really going at it. Now *that* was hot."

"Hmph!" I grunted in indignation. "You know what? I'm just gonna come out and say it! Everyone's been saying how you two make such a great pair, but that's a good joke! Compared to Ehrai-chan, you're nothing but the dirt beneath

her fingernails, Sei-sama!”

“H-How dare you! The dirt beneath my fingernails takes offense to that~!”

“Hm?” murmured Sei-sama. “Wasn’t I supposed to be the one taking offense?”

Whew, I managed to calm down a bit after getting all that nonsense out of my system. Returning to the stream at hand—what were we talking about again? Something about erasers and pencils and butt erasers? Ugh, I gave myself a headache just thinking about it.

“Goodness, was that still too hard to grasp?” the alien on-screen said. *“Please raise your hand if you understand—anyone?”*

Silence.

“Ugh, earthlings.”

: HUH?!

: come in peace, my ass!

: just like an invading alien to say something like that.

: now i'm SURE live-on mistook "newbie" for something else

: "newbie? new breed? aliens!" --Live-On, probably

: I'd like to speak to your manager please

: Hareru: "i can drink water upside down!" President: "Kabaddi!"

: Good god, there is no manager

“But that’s okay! At the end of our time together, I promise you’ll all know everything about love! That’s why I’m here!”

That didn’t sound right—that didn’t sound right at all. In fact, nothing about this girl sounded right. *You’re telling me we were going to play senpai to this person? That there is a nonzero chance I’ll have to collab with this Lovecraftian*

horror of a virtual streamer?

...My sanity meter is dwindling by the second.

“All right, well, that’s all I had regarding the syllabus. We have time until the end of homeroom for a quick Q and A. Anybody have any questions?”

:

:

:

: so...about regular love between you know, people...

: a brave soul appears

“Yes, what about that grift you humans call relationships?”

Huh?!

“You see, I hate people. Despise them. Humans shouldn’t even qualify as living creatures if you ask me. Just observe the world around you. Don’t you think humans, evolved to have large brains but not much of anything else, are anomalies in the natural order? When humans apply their advanced intellect to something as instinctual and basal as love, it becomes contrived. You see, love permeates every corner of this planet except for the one that humans occupy. Now do you see why the answer to your question is a big, fat, resounding no?”



What'd you just say?!

Come in peace, my ass!

Just like an invading alien to say something like that

I'd like to speak to your manager

: school teacher? more like sect leader

: i need a change of pants

: mom come pick me up i'm scared

: is...is there something you want to tell us, sensei?

: and you're one to talk?! alien or not, just what makes you so different from the rest of us, huh?!

“Yes, you’re quite right about that. Regrettably, I, much like the rest of you, possess a rather developed prefrontal cortex. A sad state of affairs, I know—but that’s precisely why I only ship objects with other objects. The instant I involve myself in my fantasies, love ceases to exist. But what distinguishes me from you, my foolish earthling friends, is that at my core, even after my time here, I remain an alien—I can still perceive love for what it truly is.”

Eek! She is freaking intense! She was giving off more puppet master than newcomer vibes right now!

“...Sorry. All I’m doing is imposing my beliefs onto you—I’m well aware of that. Claiming to teach when I know good and well that my views might come off as obscure... What am I thinking, talking about love this, love that, while drawing from inorganic examples? Of course you’d be confused. I’m just being snarky, and for what?”

Wait, huh? I wasn’t expecting a genuine-sounding apology to follow on the heels of all that soapboxing. The tonal whiplash was so jarring, it was like she’d suddenly snapped out of a trance. Once again, she left me completely baffled.

“You see, I don’t find people sexually attractive. The only things I’m attracted to—and have always been attracted to—are objects. See? I’m different from you. I’m...alien.”

Her eyes seemed to drift off into the distance as she spoke with the demeanor of someone finally giving the introduction they’d intended to give all along.

“The part about me hating people is true, though,” she added, letting out a

short, wry chuckle.

I stole a glance at the chat, realizing that neither the viewers nor I knew how to respond to this revelation. But what I did know was at that moment, her lifeless eyes and the pronounced dark circles beneath them seemed right at home.

In the next instant, her energy bounced back. *“Okay! Anyone else with a question? Ask me anything, literally!”*

While it was true we were at a bit of a loss, it was equally true that we were curious beyond belief. Sporadically, questions began to repopulate the chat again.

: why join live-on if you hate people?

“Hm? So I can flip society the bird, of course.”

“Pfff!” All three participants of our little watch party let out simultaneous spit takes at the sheer honesty of her answer.

“And right when I thought we were getting into some depressing backstory—nope, more Live-On,” I said.

“I won’t deny that there are a few streamers who take advantage of their freedom here, but to admit that on your first stream...” Ehrai-chan followed.

“Those who live in glass houses, my dears...”

“Shut your glass ass up!” both Ehrai-chan and I screamed back.

“Did you know that the mogul Birdman is five foot eleven and a former rapper? I’m also five foot eleven, by the way—and a former fucker.”

“What the hell are you even saying?!” we yelled again.

“My, have you two always been this difficult?”

: WWW

: confused? well don't be, because this is pure, 100%

concentrated essence of Live-On

: makes sense

“When you’re as much of an outcast as I am, it wears on you... I was at my lowest when I remembered there was a VTuber agency called Live-On, where I might be able to hack it. If I’m to continue living this way, I might as well do it unapologetically, I thought. Shame and public humiliation be damned.”

“How much more open can this person get?!” Sei-sama exclaimed.

“You say open, I say completely given up on life~,” added Ehrai-chan. “Even I’m not ready to toss away my dignity and concern for public perception.”

“Ditto,” I agreed. “The only person in Live-On who can is Sei-sama.”

Sei-sama chuckled. “What are you two on about? Don’t hate me just because I’m able to derive pleasure from public humiliation. Now, avert your eyes—spare yourselves the sight of my humiliation.”

“Way ahead of you there, chief,” I quipped.

“You weren’t looking?”

“You literally just told me not to!”

“Not even when I’m being *this* humiliated?”

“Call me again when you’re having a moment that isn’t humiliating.”

“I’d love to see the day~,” Ehrai-chan remarked playfully.

“Hmph. Nothing makes me drier than a pair of naughty kouhais.”

: someone please tell me what to think I beg you

: im equal parts excited and worried about the future

: question! are you not a fujoshi, sensei?

: hmm true. she does give off that vibe with
her...powerful imagination

: ^ lol powerful indeed

“I don’t think so. I mainly do straight pairings, after all. Though there’s nothing wrong with BL, and GL—well, for GL, it really depends. But disclaimer: this is just my speculation and I don’t mean to generalize, but you know how there are fujoshi out there who ship floors with ceilings and the periodic table and all that? Well, I think when they do that, they’re unconsciously turning those objects into people in their heads. I, on the other hand, ship objects as they are... Also, they probably wouldn’t like being associated with me very much.”

: that last reason is the real reason isn't it? lol

: wait people ship floors and ceilings and periodic tables now what?

: shhh it's better if you don't know

“Oh, would you look at the time, homeroom’s almost over.”

I unintentionally let out a sigh of relief to learn that our *colorful* time together was finally coming to an end, but it seemed there was one last hurdle to get past.

“There was one specific streamer I wanted to thank before our time was up today. I’m sure she’s watching, so please bear with me.”

Really? Acknowledgments? Already? On her debut stream? Had she already known them before joining Live-On or something? Interesting.

“Ahem! Gen three’s Awayuki Kokorone! It is thanks to your mention that I stand here today behind this podium! I can’t thank you enough for what you’ve done for me! Thank you!”

Uh?

“Awayuki-kun...”

“It’s you... It’s always you...”

“Uh? Hm? ...Üh?”

Silence.

“Excuuuuse meeee?!” I yelled at the top of my lungs.

: All right gang, let's see who the monster really is...
Awayuki Kokorone?!

: WWWWWWWWWWWWW

: she's even meddling with them predebut now???

: Where there's a StroZero, there's an Awayuki. Nowhere in this land can you escape her gaze.

: An ally of justice, she scours the streets for girls lost to despair and injects them with StroZero. Shuwa-chan is StroZero Rider!

: LOL yep only girls, no men

: idk going around exploiting the darkness in people's souls sounds pretty villainous to me

: nah, come on. no matter how you slice it the rider is StroZero. StroZero is the Awayuki Rider.

: noo don't draw an anthropomorphized StroZero can riding atop an Awayuki bike nooo

: a cybernetically augmented bike...a cybike...?

: VTuber Awayuki Kokorone wa kaizou BIKE de aru! (OG narrator voice)

: de aru my ass

: this baby runs on pure, unadulterated StroZero

: 440 yen a liter? yikes

: StroZero! Henshin!

: special-grade cursed object awayuki kokorone

“Huh?! Why me?! I don’t know her, swear to God! In fact, I don’t know anyone outside Live-On!” Wait, wait, wait. “Thanks to your mention?” When? Where?

“You see, if it weren’t for Awayuki-san, I wouldn’t even know about VTubers, let alone Live-On. She kept me from ending up in the dregs of society. Well, not that I know her personally or anything.”

I combed through my memories, searching for something that could possibly relate to what she was talking about, when suddenly, it came to me.

“One day, I was scouring social media, wondering if there were people like me out there when I happened upon a clip of Awayuki-san. If I remember correctly, it was a clip from her ‘Live-On Common Sense Squad’ stream.”

Of course. How could I have overlooked it when it was so uniquely seared into my memory?

“In that clip, Awayuki-san—”

No.

No.

“—talked about me. The Mushiking BL shipper she ran into at a video rental store!”

*“No freaking way!!!” I couldn’t contain my voice. Not the *The pairing of the classic hottie Hercules Beetle and the muscular, stocky Elephant Beetle is just too good! They crash their vigorously erect male symbols together so roughly, aiming for each other’s weak spots... Mushiking is the greatest BL work of all time!* lady!*

There was no chance. Not a single chance *that* conversation had inspired a member of the next generation.

: true source of my bewilderment: found

: lmao that???

: back then I just wrote her off as some weird insect-loving fujoshi. how far she's come

: damn awa-chan is scouting for live-on?

: thank you based ace of live-on for ensuring the return of grass to our barren fields

“It was that stream that introduced me to Live-On, prompting me to apply for an interview. Now here I am, standing before you all today, preaching the ways of true love—or objective love, as I dub it. Okay! That’s all the time we had today. Thank you, everyone! Ding dong dang dong! ♪”

With her best impression of the school chime that we all know and love, Churiri-sensei exited stage left, and the stream was over.

“Welp, I’m gonna go blow up Live-On for betraying my trust, who’s with me?” I asked.

“Sure, right after I blow you up first, buddy,” Ehrai-chan said.

“Why me?!” I yelped.

“I’m not sure what’s going on, but your asshole is in danger!” Sei-sama added.

“And why do you sound like a certain man who’s gone on a virginity graduation trip?!” I yelped.

Is this really going to be okay? Sensei and I are going to get along...right?

In the middle of our poststream discussion-turned-Awayuki-bullying-session, Churiri-sensei’s stream suddenly came back to life.

“Upsy-daisy. Is this thing on? Test, test.”

“Hm?” all three of us muttered.

That voice... It wasn’t Sensei’s, but it sounded eerily familiar...

“All right! Seems like it’s working!”

Is that...Dagger-chan?

“Dagger-chan, how many times have I told you to introduce yourself properly!” a second voice scolded. “Ahem. How do you all do, everyone? It is I, the sole daughter of the venerable Miyauchi lineage, the anti-Live-On icon herself, Tadasu Miyauchi.”

And Tadasu-chan?! What's happening?!

Ignoring the confusion in the chat, they immediately launched into a conversation, complete with their models on-screen.

"That sure was some debut, huh?" Dagger-chan remarked.

"Wildly unprofessional. Yammering on and on while leaving the viewers in the dark like that—and to be that emotionally unstable?" Tadasu-chan added.

"Sorry about Sensei, everyone. She's...well, Sensei."

"Yeah, I'll say so. She even had *us* not knowing what the hell she was talking about," Sei-sama said.

"Ah!" Ehrai-chan exclaimed. "I know what this is! Did they come to cover for Churiri-sensei coming on too strong?"

"That makes sense!" I said. "Aw, the genmates have each other's backs, that's so sweet!"

"Churiri-sensei is just the worst," Tadasu-chan continued. *"If she doesn't have a schedule, her day falls apart... She never washes the dishes no matter how high the pile gets..."*

"She doesn't sort her laundry, she wears wrinkly clothes straight from the wash..."

"Th-They did come to cover for her, right?" I said.

"If by 'cover' you mean 'expose her more,' then yes~."

"Wait, you two," Sei-sama interjected. "I think we're overlooking a crucial piece of information here."

What crucial piece of information? As I pondered Sei-sama's cryptic remark, I saw the chat going crazy.

: how do you two know that?

: well-informed, aren't we? (smirk)

: do you three cohabit?

Oh! Is that it? That's it, isn't it! To think these three were close enough to openly complain about one another!

"No, not together. But I'm in the same building. We're neighbors, so I pop over to her place a lot," Dagger-chan explained.

"I live at home," Tadasu-chan added. *"But Sensei is just so much of a slob, I feel obliged to drop by often."*

"It's been a long time coming, but with Sensei, the Fifth Division is finally complete!"

"Let's stick to 'gen five,' shall we, Dagger-chan? But you're right: it really has been a long time coming. After my debut, then Dagger's, Sensei was inconsolable for a while afterward. She really is a handful."

I'd somewhat inferred from the past month that Dagger-chan and Tadasu-chan were friends, but wow, Sensei too, huh? I supposed it made sense. Given the staggered debuts, gen five would've known each other for much longer than we'd known them.

It was still kind of funny to think about. Dagger-chan, Tadasu-chan, and Sensei, huh?

"Sensei's not all bad, though. She's actually a pretty hard worker," Dagger-chan continued.

"Indeed."

"HEY."

A third, very angry voice that instinctively made me tense up suddenly interrupted Dagger-chan and Tadasu-chan's laid-back discussion.

"Ah, welcome back, Sensei," Dagger-chan said nonchalantly.

"What are you doing here? I thought your part of the stream was over?" Tadasu-chan added.

"What am I doing here?! This is my stream—what are you doing here?! Here I was in the other room about to crack open a can of coffee and relax, when I thought I'd open my own stream on my phone just for the hell of it, and who do I see but you two! Coffee went everywhere!" Churiri-sensei panted, evidently

short of breath.

"Deep breaths, Chuririri-sensei," Dagger-chan said.

"That's one 'ri' too many!"

“We’re only here because you so shamelessly asked us to come with you, isn’t that right, Churi-sensei?” Tadasu-chan responded.

"I invited you to the office, not my stream! Also, you're a 'ri' short!"

"Take it easy, Churiririririririririririririririrrrrr—ah, I flubbed it."

“Churiri-sensei’s real name is quite a tough one to pronounce, isn’t it, Dagger-chan?”

"That's not my real name! Quit making shit up! In fact, just zip it—both of you—before you humiliate me any further! This stream is over! C'mere!"

“Whoa, hands off the merchandise!”

"No need to be so impatient. We'll still have that celebratory party later, don't you worry."

"They don't need to hear that!!!"

: just a couple of pals lol

```
: do i detect a tsundere in the vicinity
```

```
: real name churrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr?
```

: a party huh? what happened to i hate people?

```
: what did i just tune into
```

The panicking Sensei and her two carefree genmates. Their voices slowly faded into nothingness as Sensei seemingly dragged them out of the room. Then, the stream ended.

An already puzzling stream had been capped off with an even more baffling encore. Our latest addition was undeniably a character, but...

"I've got a feeling things will work out," Sei-sama mused.

“Right~?”

“Yep.”

Despite the chaos, and in part due to Tadasu-chan and Dagger-chan’s intervention, everything felt right.

And so, with three dynamic introductions for three equally dynamic streamers, the curtain fell on gen five’s debut.

Lessons in Love

A few days after Churiri-sensei’s unforgettable debut, I found myself staring at my phone, my face contorted into the wryest of smiles. The reason? The message I’d just received:

Churiri-sensei: Awayuki Kokorone, see below for details of your class schedule. Please ensure that you can make it. (I'm asking if you would like to collab. If you can't make it, let me know and I'll see if I can't accommodate.)

That...was certainly a way of inviting someone to collab. Was she dictating the time or asking me for my input? Was she looking down at me or up at me? Should I see it from the bottom or the side? What was she, fireworks?

I had nothing going on that day. Had this been any other streamer, I would’ve accepted in a heartbeat, but this...was Churiri-sensei. I could drum up countless reasons for my apprehension, but the most accurate one boiled down to “Because she’s Churiri-sensei.” Just as grass grows, birds fly, and the sun shines, Churiri-sensei was weird.

Weird? Yes. Dangerous? Probably not. After what her genmates had done for her on her debut stream, my impression of her had softened quite a bit. So, while I was a little wary, I wasn’t considering declining. The concern was whether I’d be able to match her energy if I went in absolutely blind. No matter how overpowering she might come across as, she was still the rookie in this equation, and I the senior. It would be my responsibility to steer the collab and

foster a space where she could shine. But at the same time, I couldn't let her lead me around by the nose; that would be negligent.

It would be nice if I had a little more intel on her as a person, just so I can hold my own, I mused.

Suddenly, genius struck. "Why don't I just ask her genmates? They've known her for a while now, haven't they?"

Immediately, I fired off a message to Dagger-chan.

Awayuki Kokorone: Hey, Dagger-chan. Sorry to bother you. I just received a collab invite from Churiri-sensei, and I wanted to learn more about her just so I know what to expect and maybe take some precautions and countermeasures if necessary. Could you tell me what she's like?

"Precautions" and "countermeasures." Look at me sounding all learned when talking about Sensei.

Her reply came shortly.

†Dagger†: She's basically Sei-sama but too far gone!

Awayuki Kokorone: Implying that Sei-sama's not too far gone.

†Dagger†: Okay, then she's like you if you were too far gone!

Awayuki Kokorone: Implying I'm even out there to begin with.

†Dagger†: Aha ha ha! Good one, master! You're really funny!

Awayuki Kokorone: Hm? I was dead serious, though? What, do you think I'm out there? Hm? Hm?

†Dagger†: Oh, uh, no, sorry, master. Wait, why did I just

send that message again? I forgot...

Awayuki Kokorone: only playing up your backstory when it suits you I see...

Oh, Dagger-chan was just a ray of sunshine. It was always a treat talking to her. Beyond her delightful face and slightly cheeky nature, she was just such a good sport about everything that she never failed to make me smile. She'd even done as I'd told and added some ts to her name immediately!

Ah, time out, time out. This wasn't the time to get carried away. As much as I wanted to chat casually with her, I'd approached her with a purpose in mind.

Awayuki Kokorone: So, what did you mean by "too far gone" exactly?

†Dagger†: Well you see, Sensei's older than both me and Tadasu-chan, right? She's been a part of society long enough that she knows what it's really like. Plus, she's super earnest, so the darker sides of society just chipped and chipped away at her until there was nothing left.

Awayuki Kokorone: Do you just mean she's an adult facing adult realities?

†Dagger†: No, being an adult implies you have some degree of control over your life. She's a little like you and Seisama in the sense that all three of you were nails that stuck out. But while you two managed to join Live-On and flourish before you got hammered down, Sensei didn't. She didn't make it out in time, so that's why she's too far gone.

Awayuki Kokorone: That's quite insightful. And dark...

†Dagger†: It's quite messed up, yeah. She's not a bad person though! I mean, it's always the good guys that end up succumbing to society's darker underbelly, right? It's

like the brightest flame always casts the darkest shadow.

Awayuki Kokorone: Dagger-chan, why is it that you can only sound perfectly chuuni at a time like this? Save that for your stream, we're trying to have a serious conversation here.

†Dagger†: Wait, I didnt even mean to just now, though!

How ditzy can she be, this girl.

†Dagger†: Anyways, what were we talking about again? Precautions and countermeasures? Just be yourself! Don't try to match her energy or anything, because you'll probably do a bad job anyway! If she throws you a curveball, just catch it! Yeah, that should do the trick.

Awayuki Kokorone: Hmm... that sounds a little too straightforward

†Dagger†: It'll work I promise! That's how Tadasu-chan and I got to know her! She's an easy girl, trust me!

An easy girl? She did know what she was saying, right? Probably, right? Given what she'd said about dirty jokes last time.

In that case... My fingers trembled as I typed out my next message.

Awayuki Kokorone: Just like in all those teacher doujins huh?

Heh heh heh. Dagger-chan's not such a tough nut to—

†Dagger†: Huh? Dou-what now?

OKAY, NEVER MIND!!! My face met my desk with overwhelming force. *Ah, why is she so airheaded?*

†Dagger†: By the way, that invite message she sent you? Sensei asked me for help writing it and it still took her five hours! That's how serious she is!

Wait, huh? Where had that message gone? It'd looked super-duper important, but it had only appeared for a few seconds before poof, gone, like she'd deleted it.

Awayuki Kokorone: Wait, huh? I didn't finish reading it!

†Dagger†: Sorry... my memory...

Awayuki Kokorone: blink twice if Shukuro Tsukishima is next to you

†Dagger†: Huh? Who's that?

Awayuki Kokorone: oops, guess you haven't reached that part yet

Now that I'd finished getting Dagger-chan's side of the story, Tadasu-chan was next. I sent her the exact same message I'd sent Dagger-chan.

Miyauchi Tadasu: She's an earnest soul.

I received the above reply after a little while, echoing the same sentiment as Dagger-chan.

Miyauchi Tadasu: She's also beyond saving.

A contradiction quickly followed. I couldn't even bother to act surprised at

this point.

Awayuki Kokorone: Dagger-chan said she's like Sei-sama but too far gone.

Miyauchi Tadasu: A strange yet apt comparison. But the way I see it, she's strayed down the wrong path, is all. She can still find herself anew if she tries.

Spoken like a true young person, I thought. I mean, I wasn't exactly that old myself, but that was such a distinctly hopeful way of looking at things.

Miyauchi Tadasu: As for a precaution or whatever, it would do you well to know that Sensei is clueless when it comes to Live-On.

Awayuki Kokorone: Wait, really?

Miyauchi Tadasu: She was never interested in Live-On, remember? It was you she was after.

Awayuki Kokorone: So even after joining, she didn't take the time to do any research?

Miyauchi Tadasu: Management said her lack of knowledge would add to her charm. She's curious, to be sure, but she's deliberately avoided looking into it.

Awayuki Kokorone: I see...

Miyauchi Tadasu: Earnest, is she not?

Awayuki Kokorone: Definitely...

But, wow, that was honestly kind of commendable. Being the last to debut and holding back for so long must've been tough for her. In fact, why hadn't management let her debut first? That could've saved her a lot of heartache... But then again, with her character, having the other two set the stage first

probably was a good idea.

After my conversation with these two, I felt like I had a good idea of how to engage with Churiri-sensei. I quickly sent her a reply confirming my participation.

I just had to, you know, do the thing.

The StroZero thing.

“Gooooood morning, class! It’s your teacher in all things love and Live-On gen fiver, Churiri-sensei! Class is about to begin, so let’s start with attendance! Let’s see... Shion Kaminari-san!”

“Here!”

“Hikari Matsuriya-san!”

“Here!”

“Awayuki Kokorone-san!”

“Cheers!” *GLUG GLUG GLUG*

“...”

And so the day of my first-ever collab with Churiri-sensei was finally here! It would’ve been weird having just one student, so it was me, Hikari-chan, and Shion-mama, the three of us!

“Awayuki-san?” Churiri-sensei asked.

“Hm?” I returned.

“What do you think you’re doing?”

“Drinking, ma’am!”

“And you don’t see anything wrong with that?”

“Nope. In fact, why don’t *you* tell *me* what’s wrong?”

“...”

: ah yes, the seiso who blows up at the teacher for telling them to quit drinking in class.

: what a problem child

: even Ozaki would be taken aback

: man I miss public school

: welcome to shuwa high

“Perhaps we got off on the wrong foot,” Churiri-sensei said. “You see, I don’t know much about Live-On. I’ve only read your official bios and know that you’re all quite eccentric, but still, is this...normal?”

“Yes ma’am! Hikari thinks it’s rock and roll!”

“Yes ma’am! A crying baby is a healthy baby!”

“...”

: o now she looks even more tired

: she's dead serious btw. she said on her solo stream that she doesn't know much about live-on

: this is normal (help)

: crazy how sensei seems the sane one by comparison lol

: not for long. better buckle up, buckaroo

“R-Really... Hm, I didn’t make a mistake joining Live-On, did I? No, no, what am I doing second-guessing myself now? I came here to act out, didn’t I? Ahem! All right now, class. Before we dive in, I’d like to get to know my students better. Who wants to go first and tell us a little something about themselves?”

“Sensei!”

“Yes, Shion-san? Would you like to go first?”

“Can I make you my baby?”

“What kind of ‘is mayonnaise an instrument’ type of question is that?!”

“Okay! Then from now on, I’m your mommy! Call me Shion-mama! Thank you, bye!”

“No! Get back here! At least introduce yourself!”

“Live-On gen two, Shion Kaminari! Have a problem? Feeling down and out? Shion-mama will kiss it all better!”

“Oh, well, that’s nice!”

“My hobby is mama-katsu!”

“I am never coming to you no matter what problem I have.”

“Oh, but don’t get it twisted! By mama-katsu, I mean forcing my fellow streamers to be my babies so I can impose my love and care on them, and not the other thing!”

“Please get away from me.”

: kusa

: shion-mama is just excited to finally add another baby to her collection

: it wasn't twisted until you started talking

: the other thing would be preferable at this point

: and she's one of the good ones

“Not that you’d ever find me turning to an earthling for anything anyways, hmph! Next up, Awayuki Kokorone-san, can you please introduce yourself?”

“Sensei, is it true you needed Dagger-chan to help you write that train wreck of a collab invite?”

“GYAAAAAAH! How do you know that?!”

“And is it true you spent five hours on it?”

“I’m gonna kill her... That brat...”

“Sensei, you can’t be using that kind of language~.”

“Th-That’s enough from you. I know the most about you anyway. In fact, I find you a touch sympathetic. You might be one of the rare earthlings I can get along with.”

“Sensei, you can’t be feeling sympathetic for a student who’s day drinking in class~.”

I heard a vein pop. “Grrr, you Contrarian Andy, you! That’s it! I’m done! We’ll come back to you later!”

God, I love messing with people not used to Live-On. It’s so funny.

“Lastly, Hikari Matsuriya. Please tell us a little something about yourself.”

“I’m Hikari Matsuriya from Live-On gen three!”

“Genmates with Awayuki-san, eh?”

“N-No, I wouldn’t say that... Eh heh heh...”

“Hm? You’re in gen three, are you not?”

“Well, you see, I’m not her genmate... I’m her gen-slave.”

“Awayuki-san.”

“Yes ma’am.”

“Is Live-On an extraterritoriality, exempt from the jurisdiction of local and national laws?”

“No ma’am.”

Hikari-chan, I’d really appreciate it if you didn’t look at me with those feverish, lovestruck eyes. You can still do it, just...give me a break every now and then. I’m about to sober up from all this guilt I’m feeling. I didn’t even know that was a face you could make before what happened that day.

“Hikari-chan,” I said. “You’re my genmate, and an outgoing and bright young girl. And that’s it, okay?”

“But Shuwa-chan, this is all your fault. You’re the one who taught me there could be so much pleasure in pain...”

“Awayuki-san. I take back what I said about us getting along. You can also stay the hell away from me.”

“Aha ha ha... I’m just gonna crack this second can open real quick...”

: gen slave loooooool

: you're scum, awayuki, scum!!!

: you won't survive Live-On if you make an enemy of awayuki.

: true, she's too well-connected

: all right let's stop villainizing shuwa-chan for a hot second lol

I don't even remember the last time we did a proper set of introductions anymore...

“Okay, well, that’s attendance done with. Let’s dive into today’s lesson. This being our first lesson, and to best ensure that you can all see that my objective love is the correct love, I’d like to spend a little time deconstructing your views on love and telling each and every one of you just how wrong you are. I’m no Tadasu-chan. I have no interest in engaging in constructive dialogue or anything of the sort. I hope you’re all ready to be turned into my little stress balls, because boy, do I have an axe to grind.”

: ma'am your true nature is showing

: teaching's a good line of work to get into if you have an axe to grind

: ^ no, not true. don't listen to this guy

: so she's the guy I keep getting into flame wars on twitter with

: this is where we cut to Miyauchi begging for mercy if it were her stream

“Hah. Funny how you think I’m anything like that sheltered princess. All I see are puny earthlings before me with their flimsy views on love just waiting to be crushed.”

“Motherly love is the purest love!”

“The love between a master and her slave is the only love Hikari knows!”

“<I LOVE STR.>”

“I...I know I’m not one to talk, but are you guys okay? Do you need help? I’m curious. I’m so, so curious to learn how you all got the way you are, but in the interest of time, I’m going to pretend I don’t care and continue on with the lesson. Also, I know I just said I would crush you, but the truth is, you all terrify me.”

After all, here at Live-On, the company culture is freedom.

“Moving on... Why don’t we start with Shion-san, since she was just so eager to go first? You believe there’s no purer love than a mother’s love, correct?”

“Yep! Mom’s up!”

“Okay, well, hopefully chat doesn’t hate me too much after what I’m about to say. This is quite the touchy subject, after all.”

“M-Meaning?”

“Meaning that when it comes to mothers, and by extension family, the matter isn’t as cut-and-dried as you might think. A mother’s love is true love? When stories of abuse and neglect are on the news every single day? How can something that differs based on the circumstances of one’s birth be called ‘true’ or ‘pure’ love? Perhaps the only thing pure here is your perspective? Your argument for motherly love is untenable—at least when it comes to human mothers.”

“Grrr...”

“Yes... In fact, maybe you’d like to discuss the concept of fleeting familial love as it applies to creatures such as insects, where they give birth and then die?”

“Grrr?”

Just when I thought she was ready to assert dominance over Shion-senpai, she cranked a ninety-degree turn at the last second and walked away.

“And... When I called you pure, I didn’t mean it in a snarky way. I actually do think it’s great that you love your children.”

“Oh, uh, thanks?” replied a confused Shion-mama.

And then she follows it up with a warmhearted affirmation of her character. What.

: why did you feel the need to qualify that statement
: she seems like a good person at heart, doesn't she
: maybe pure recognize pure
: it's like she's trying her best to play the heel but just can't
: oh now i'm sad

Given my own troubled past, I’d thought maybe there’d be a part of her argument I could resonate with, but nope, ruined it.

“Okay, now that Shion-san has been forced to submit, moving on to Hikari-san.”

“Hikari-chan!” Shion-senpai yelled. “It’s all up to you now!”

“Yuh-hup!”

“Hikari-san, you believe true love lies in a master-slave relationship, correct?”

“That’s correct! How can anyone offer their total servitude to someone else without at least a little bit of love in the mix?”

“Hah! Naive, just naive! Almost as naive as the people who subtitle cute animal videos with their own made-up thoughts!”

“Uh, huh?” a confused Hikari-chan replied. “Wait, what’s wrong with that?”

“It’s like, I’m over here trying to decompress and watch some cute animals doing cute things, hoping to get away from people, but noooo. You just *had* to add your stupid little touch to your stupid little video so now I have to just sit here and pretend like your quirky little ‘meows’ and ‘borks’ don’t sicken me while the truth is you’ve ruined a perfectly good animal video! And don’t even get me started on when the subs *clearly* don’t match what the animal is going through, like...” *GRUMBLE GRUMBLE GRUMBLE*

Churiri-sensei continued to ramble on and on. “Huh? Huh?” muttered Hikari-chan as she tried to follow her train of thought.

And like, yeah, what does this have to do with anything? Did she come here just to vent?

: damn is she going to take a breath anytime soon

: I getcha, that pisses me off too

: weird how I never had a problem with those videos when I was younger... is this what it means to grow up?

: hm. guess there are people like that out there

: okay we get it but can you please stop ignoring hikari-chan now

“Ahem, sorry about that.” Churiri-sensei said, taking a breath after her rant. “What were we talking about again? Master-slave relationships? I take it you’re the subservient one, Hikari-san? Who’s your master?”

“Shuwa-chan, of course!”

“Awayuki-san?”

“Nope. Don’t know who she is, swear to god.”

“Hikari-san?”

“Mmm,” Hikari-chan moaned. “Act like you don’t know me more, mommy.”
TWITCH TWITCH

“You two don’t need me to tell you this isn’t love, right?”

“Yup. Totally.”

I had to agree. It was for Hikari-chan’s own good. And stop twitching! What the heck! We already knew what your whole master-servant thing was a cover for—you didn’t need to make it more explicit!

“Hikari-san,” Churiri-sensei began with a tone of understanding, “you don’t need me to explain it, do you? Masochism, power dynamics, I could go on and on, but the bottom line is, that is not an equal relationship, and thus not true love. You understand that, right?”

Hear, hear, Teach! Truer words had never been spoken.

But Hikari-chan didn’t seem convinced. “Tsk, tsk, tsk, Sensei. To think that you can’t even realize Shuwa-chan is only acting cold to please Hikari. You still have a long way to go, don’t you?”

“Is that true, Awayuki-san?”

“No ma’am. In fact, she’s bullying me. Help.”

“Shuwa-chan!” Hikari-chan suddenly piped up. “You need help?! As in you’re stressed?! As in you’ll step on Hikari again like last time?! As in you’re propositioning Hikari, right?! Right?!”

“I’m sorry, ‘step on me’? ‘Like last time’? Awayuki-san, please see me after class.”

“See, this is why masochists are unbeatable. You could walk right over them and they’d still be happy.” *GULP GULP GULP*

: kusa

: Hikari-chan's all growed up *sniff*

: goddamnit shuwa-chan now I'm thirsty too

: is it just me or are shuwa-chan's glugs getting sadder?

: is sensei a tsukkomi o: ?

Churiri-sensei sighed. “Okay, well, Hikari-san didn’t prove to be much of a challenge either.”

“Shuwa-chan! Go ahead and trample all over Hikari’s corpse on your way to victory!”

“Ha ha, miss me with that!”

All right, let’s bring this one home, wooooooo!

“Ahem. I see that Awayuki-san is last. Now that we’re finally face-to-face, I just wanted to thank you once again for what you did for me.”

“Thanking me makes it sound like you’re my fault, so I don’t know ’bout that one, chief~.”

“Like I said earlier, this old alien sees something special in you.”

“Mmm, maybe get your eyes checked, chief~.”

“And, um, Awayuki-san, I heard that you married StroZero.”

“Mmm, maybe get your ears checked, chief~.”

“Fine! I didn’t want to talk to you either! Hmph!”

“Ahhh! Sorry, I’m sorry! Don’t pout, Sensei!”

“You’ve changed! Awayuki-san, you’ve changed! You used to be reckless, but I guess that isn’t you any longer! A little bit of fame and you’ve let it all go to your head! Now you’re just like all the rest of them! Streamers who used to do provocative and interesting things, but they get a little notoriety and suddenly turn into React Andys whose only form of content becomes hate-watching viral videos as they fleece their viewership for all they’re worth! Like, how sad do you have to be to let something as silly as ego change who you are! And don’t even get me started on...” *GRUMBLE GRUMBLE GRUMBLE*

“Earth to Churiri-sensei!” I yelled, quickly halting Churiri-sensei before she could go on another oddly specific but specifically odd rant. *Just how much does this woman have to say?*

: Sensei is actually quite needy, isn't she?

: "hmph!" (cute)

: lmaooo what is she even saying this time

: i can name a few streamers off the top of my head that fit the bill

: so this is the power of a woman with nothing to lose

"Ahem, excuse me. What I meant to say was that, Awayuki-san—your view on love is adjacent to mine."

"Nice save, Sensei! Good job! Um, 'adjacent'? What do you mean by that?"

"The objective love that I advocate, put simply, is shipping objects with objects. 'Object x Object,' as it were. And you, Awayuki-san, love StroZero, don't you? And what is StroZero but an object? So you see, you're basically a person shipped with an object: 'Person x Object'! We're going to ignore who's the top and who's the bottom right now because that's a whole can of worms we don't want to get into."

"So what are you saying? That I'm halfway there?"

"Exactly! And don't be discouraged by the fact that you're *only* halfway there. I've looked my entire life and you're the earthling closest to my ideal, by far!"

Hm, strange. It sounded like she was complimenting me, but for some reason, I refused to be happy about it.

"How about it, Awayuki-san? Will you take the plunge with me?"

"Hmm... How do I take said plunge?"

"By removing yourself from the equation, of course! Instead of Awayuki x StroZero, revel in the joy that is Object x StroZero! After that, it's just a hop, step, and a jump to replace StroZero with anything else! And then your understanding of objective love will be complete!"

"Mmm... I dunno... I'm not really a NTR kinda gal."

"Huh? Who said anything about NTR?"

"Huh?"

“Huh?”

“Shion-senpai, what’s NTR?” Hikari-chan interrupted.

“Something you’d like very much, probably.”

“Serious? ‘Kay, Hikari’ll look it up later!”

“Cease.”

“Why?! Oh! Is this like a form of teasing? Daring to deny yourself what you love—oh ho ho, I’m onto you, Shion-senpai!”

“Bless this girl’s heart,” Shion-senpai muttered.

: im kinda feeling the sensei and shuwa-chan synergy
: well they are like mother and daughter in a way
: too bad they don't seem to be on the same page right
now LMAO
: hikari-chan cannot be stopped
: it just makes sense that the world's happiest person is
a masochist

“Anyway, how about it, Awayuki-san? Divorce yourself from your love of StroZero!”

“Huh? Divorce myself? When I’m the one who promised to make StroZero-chan happy?!”

“W-Well, no, you see... Aha! Don’t you think that StroZero is too good to be with mere earthlings? You don’t want her to be marrying down, do you?”

“You take that back! StroZero-chan is Japan’s super idol! A source of joy and smiles for the Japanese people! How dare you say she’s too good for the people she works so hard for!”

“S-Super idol, you say? R-Really? Oh, well then, I’m sorry?”

“You tell ‘em yourself, StroZero-chan! Cling-clang! *Yeah, that’s right desu-*

troZero!"

"Was...that supposed to be its speech quirk? Ahh, no, that's beside the point! How can you marry StroZero if she's an idol? That's...not okay for an idol to do, is it?"

"Why not?! 'Sfine! StroZero-chan is emotional support for the people! A super idol is born every time someone cracks open a tall can!"

"R-Right, of course! What am I even saying, ha ha... No, no, wait, that didn't make sense. Awayuki-san, repeat your argument just now so I can rip it apart with facts and logic."

"I can't. I forgot."

"You forgot what now?"

"I forgot what I just said, okay?! You try spouting pure stream of consciousness and see if you can remember anything! Some teacher you are, huh?"

"Excuse me?! First of all, that's irresponsible as all hell for you to do. And second, just what do you think a teacher does?!"

"Nope, that's it. Yer done. I want your badge and your gun. Apologize to StroZero and get outta here."

"If *that* were enough to get me fired, there wouldn't be a single teacher left on this planet!"

"Remember what I just said? Please. The only thing I can remember is the taste of the StroZero I drank on this day one year ago."

"You, Awayuki-san...are not normal. I take back what I said earlier about how you *used* to be more reckless..."

: all of my kusa

: how is this even a real conversation LOL

: she really is StroZero personified...

: "Apologize to StroZero and get outta here" has gotta be

a brand-new sentence

: she's all over the place and none of it makes sense.
all praise our lord and savior shuwa-chan!

: she's like kokushi musou come to life

: I love how sensei can't even be bothered to sugarcoat herself anymore

StroZero-chan... I did it... I protected your honor...

The bond! Between StroZero-chan and I! Cannot be broken! By anyone!

Churiri-sensei exhaled sharply. "I...I can't believe it... I was outdone... That's it! The kid gloves are coming off—Churiri-sensei's class is now in session, for real this time! Y'all are in my world now, and here, what I say goes! Brace yourselves, for the true beatdown is about to begin!"

"You know, this might just be my StroZero postnut clarity talking, but since when did teachers treat their students like this?"

"Why don't we see just how much of objective love you all understand? I have a practice problem for you all to work through. Consider it a placement test. Any questions?"

"Oh, me, me, me, me, me, me!" all three of us students shouted.

"Nobody, fantastic."

"You can't do that!" all three students shouted again.

"I'm not falling for that again. I asked for questions just to sound teacherly, but I'm taking it back."

Tsk. She's a sharp one, ain't she.

"Your test: find an example of love using everyday objects that can be found at school. And...go."

I see, I see... Basically she wanted us to find ships like she'd done with the eraser and pencil that one time, except with other school supplies. In that case...

“Me, me, me!”

“Yes, Awayuki-san?”

“We can have a foursome!”

“A foursome with...?”

“With me, Sensei, Shion-mama, and Hikari-chan, of course!”

“Zero points, thank you for playing.”

“Oh, you. Don’t you know that to give the almighty Shuwa-chan a zero is to give her a hundred?”

“Don’t know, don’t care. I’m only looking for answers based on objective love. In other words, if it has people in it, I don’t want it.”

“...”

“Wa ha ha ha ha! What did I say? Y’all in my court now, bitches! Not even the rowdy Awayuki-san can come up with anything to say! Flawless victory! Come on, earthlings, did you really think you could best me?”

“...Heh.”

“Hm? And just what are you laughing at?”

“Nothing, nothing. I was just thinking how new you are to all this.”

“Excuse me?!”

“You know what? I’ll do you a favor and explain it to you since I’m nice like that. You see, your original question was quite hard to understand. But, by purposefully giving a wrong answer from the jump, I managed to clarify to the viewers what exactly it is you’re looking for!”

“Huh?! R-Really? Now that I think about it, perhaps I could have worded what I was looking for a little more clearly...”

“Aha ha ha!”

“Right. You’re totally right. I’m a streamer now. I have to prioritize my viewers...”

“Aha ha ha ha ha ha ha!”

“Thank you, Awayuki-san, that was very helpful.”

“Aha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!” *Muah ha ha! Mu-wa ha ha ha!* “Not bad for something I came up with on the spot, huh?”

“I will throw you out of a window, I swear to God!!!”

: I thought as much

: her laugh gave it away

: that just means she cares so much about her viewers she does things for them unconsciously

: if saying foursome was her idea of caring about us id rather she not

: sensei is a tsukkomi o: !

: at least she took that advice to heart? surprisingly

“Me, me!”

Churiri-sensei heaved a deep sigh. “Yes, Hikari-san? Just letting you know that if I get two nonserious answers in a row, I might just lose it~.”

“A dry-erase marker and a desk!”

“Oh?! Yes—yes, exactly! See, that wasn’t so hard, was it? Maybe you got the idea for a dry-erase marker from the time I talked about a pencil, but that’s okay! We can work with this! Now, tell me about the love you see!”

“The marker...drawing all kinds of...naughty and demeaning things on the desk...”

“Hm?”

“Shuwa-chan...defacing Hikari’s desk...with her marker... Haaah. Haaah. Haaah. Haaah.”

“Goddamnit, we were so close. Three points.”

“Hah! Looks like I’m still in the lead!” I exclaimed.

“How? You have zero points,” Churiri-sensei shot back.

“I have four points for a *foursome*! Tee hee hee hee!”

“I will throw you off the *roof*.” Churiri-sensei sighed. “Hikari-san, you’re almost there, can you try a little bit harder?”

“A little bit harder...” she gasped. “You want her to draw on my body directly, forget the desk?!”

“And I’ve lost her. Now, if you’d said, ‘Despite their insurmountable size difference, the marker found herself drawn to the desk because of how dedicated he is at holding her up, and rolls around on top of him to show affection,’ then maybe I would’ve given you...eh, twenty points.”

: ONLY 20?!

: bro what is this curve

: day by day, the list of hikari-chan's fetishes expands

“What about you, Shion-san?” Churiri-sensei continued. “Anything?”

“Um, um... Let’s see... A...a clock?”

“A clock? And?”

“Ummm... Errrr...indoor slippers?”

“A clock and indoor slippers?!” Hikari-chan and I yelled alongside Churiri-sensei.

“N-No?” a flustered Shion-senpai stammered back.

“Shion-san... You’re more of a contrarian than I thought,” Churiri-sensei said thoughtfully.

“Contrary to *what* even? I have no idea! You know what? Just forget it!”

: there's the shion-mama tsukkomi. all is right in the world

: fear is knowing sensei isn't trying to play up a gag here

: i betcha shion-mama just said the first two things that came to her mind hehe

: is there love between those two?

: common sense has left the chat

Churiri-sensei let out another deep, soulful sigh. “You know what? Fine. Since it’s come to this, I’ll give you all an example. Let’s see... What do I have that’s so simple, even earthlings can understand? Ah, how about ‘the gymnasium and the nurse’s office’?”

+ + +

Nurse’s Office: “I hate you.”

Gymnasium: “Harsh. What did I do?”

Nurse’s Office: “Another student was sent to me today. Your fault.”

Gymnasium: “Ah, that? Well, that’s a shame, because I kinda like you.”

Nurse’s Office: “Y-You what?! Why?!”

Gymnasium: “Because if it weren’t for you, all the students wouldn’t feel safe exercising.”

Nurse’s Office: “...”

Gymnasium: “...”

Nurse’s Office: “Y-You’re not all bad either...”

Gymnasium: “Sorry, what was that? Sometimes you’re so quiet I can barely hear you. You gotta speak from your belly—your belly!”

Nurse’s Office: “Ugh, shut up. You jocks are so annoying.”

Gymnasium: “Better to be annoying than to be a buzzkill, ya know? Ah, I also like how white and sterile you are. Plus, you smell like medicine—my favorite.”

Nurse’s Office: “Hahhh?! What are you... You’re the worst, I hate you! Quit

staring at me!”

Gymnasium: “Aha ha ha ha ha!”

+ + +

“See? See?! Isn’t this that bittersweetness, that teen spirit, that romance that makes your heart just *sing*?”

“I don’t get it, but Hikari’s just happy to be here!” Hikari-chan remarked.

“Do I *really* need to dumb this down any further? Just imagine this is *Kimi ni Todoke*.”

“The only thing going from him to her in this situation is injured people!” Shion-senpai snapped.

“Then *Nisekoi*!”

“Well, it is fake, I’ll give you that,” I retorted finally.

“Awayuki-san, you’re expelled.”

“?!” all three of us said.

: where were you when the newbie fired her senpai?

: the senpai that made her join up in the first place
LMAO

: I don't know why the rooms are talking, and at this point i'm too afraid to ask

“Fine. *Fine*. Clearly this is all going over your heads; I’ll approach this a different way.”

Oh my God, how are we still going...?

“Okay, I think I know where I went wrong,” Sensei continued. “The issue is that none of you are sexually aroused by nonhuman objects—of course you wouldn’t be able to solve that question. That’s my bad; I underestimated just how stupid you all are.”

“Aw, hell no. I will sink you to the bottom of the StroZero ocean.”

“To fix this, I will be showing you the images that arouse me—sexually.”

“Is the sexy part of class starting?”

“It is.”

“Aw, hell yeah. Do you take cash or credit?”

“Shuwa-chan, calm yourself!” Shion-senpai admonished. “At least carry more than two sentences in your short-term memory! You’re fixating on the ‘images that arouse me sexually’ part so much, you’re forgetting this is Churiri-sensei we’re talking about! There’s no way this can end well!”

“What kinda images do you think she’s gonna show? A world where there’s one man for every ten billion women?”

“That’s not even a remotely realistic ratio!!!”

“You’re right, why do we even need a man? Just have me and ten billion women. Nice, there we go.”

“What do you have against the world we live in...?”

“Shuwa-chan!” Hikari-chan suddenly cut in. “What’s ‘sexual arousal’?”

“Oh? Are you interested, girly?”

“Yeah!”

“Then come here. Daddy’ll teach you all about it!”

“I don’t want this baby anymore... All she has is sex on the brain...” Shion-senpai groaned.

“Yeah, I don’t think she was a baby to begin with...” Churiri-sensei commented as she finished setting up her presentation. Screensharing her computer desktop to her stream, she opened a video file. “This is my desktop PC,” she stated simply.

The video played, showing what seemed to be a fairly innocuous desktop PC tower (Churiri-sensei’s?). A gloved hand suddenly appeared in the frame and pressed the eject button near the optical drive.

WHIRRRR

The disc tray eased open; an unknown disc was placed onto it.

WHIRRRR

Another click of the button, and the disc tray slid back shut. Just as I thought we were getting a look at the secretive contents of the disc, the gloved hand pressed the button once more.

WHIRRRR

The tray ejected. The hand went for the button again.

WHIRRRR

The tray closed; this cycle repeated several times.

WHIRRRR (open)

WHIRRRR (close)

WHIRRRR (open)

WHIRRRR (close)

WHIRRRR (open)

WHIRRRR (close)

After several minutes of this opening and closing business, the tray finally closed one last time for good. The camera panned up to the monitor to show a music player. The disc was a music CD. But it only showed one track, titled “Birth.” The video ended without the song playing.

???

“Well? Wasn’t that just the hottest thing you’ve ever seen, or what?”

“What,” the rest of us grunted.

??????

“Yes? No?” Churiri-sensei asked again.

“Um, what did I just watch?”

“Were you not paying attention, Hikari-san? An erotic video of a PC

copulating with an optical drive that ends with the drive ejaculating its CD into the PC, impregnating it, and the child being carried to term, obviously.”

?????????

“I know, I know. This video is just something else, isn’t it? If I weren’t streaming, I’d be sopping wet right now.”

????????????

“Funny story, I actually broke my optical drive from doing it too much. Sad news. It’s a bit of a loose box now, but that’s also hot in its own way.”

.....

“Um, say something, guys? Please?”

“You win,” I muttered.

“I win?” Churiri-sensei echoed.

It was over. How was I supposed to compete against that?

“Hikari prostrates herself before you, Sensei.”

“I... Huh?”

“Just you wait, Sensei! I, Shion-mama, swear to someday become someone who can accept you for all that you are!”

“Um, well... To tell the truth, I played the video for educational purposes, not because I wanted to show you all up or anything, but... I...I won, huh? Yay? For some reason it doesn’t feel like it...”

: im so sorry for saying sensei was a tsukkomi

: for some reason the first thing I thought of was the intro of the darkness devil

: a way to defeat Churiri-sensei, give it to me

: wh-what do you mean-pi?

: yup, didn't think so either

“Ah, would you look at the time? Class is almost over and we’ve barely made any headway. But I guess this is the best Live-On can do. In fact, I’m ashamed of myself for putting any faith in Awayuki-san.”

“You’re right. I don’t understand. In fact, how could I? You make me and my StroZero fetish look absolutely tame by comparison. But even so, you know what? You’re all right.”

“I’m...all right?”

“Yup. I mean, you’re super different, aren’tcha? You break the mold in so many more ways than one. And besides, after actually talking to you, I’m convinced—you’re not a bad person. So, what I mean when I say you’re all right is... Ah, of course. Welcome to Live-On, that’s what I mean!”

“...”

“Shuwa-chan’s right,” Shion-mama said. “I might have lost a few brain cells today, but what would Live-On be without a little bit of that?”

“Hikari loves meeting people who are different from her! It’s how we learn and grow!”

: hear, hear!

: another funny live-on girl, you can never have too many of those

: she can be cute too which is a nice surprise

: welcome!

: Now with all of gen five here, it's the dawn of a brand new Live-On!

A moment of silence passed. Then Churiri-sensei sighed. “Seriously, just what is wrong with all of you...?” she finally said, her words accompanied by a laugh. Not a snarky or resigned laugh, but a laugh brimming with genuine warmth and joy.



Idle Talk: A Day in the Life of Churiri-Sensei

Churiri, the ultimate weapon of Live-On's fifth generation, emerged as an inky enigma, eclipsing even the notorious quagmire that is Live-On, and rocked the virtual boat with her debut. Even Live-On's seasoned audience, trained for just about anything, was caught between dread and anticipation as she took the stage. However, as days passed, the initial fear began to dissipate. Tadasu and Dagger, through their streams, unveiled snippets of Churiri's private life, demystifying the persona that had once unsettled the virtual world.

Now, shall we take a peek into her daily life? The scene shifts, revealing a simple interaction between neighbors—Dagger and Churiri, sharing a humble meal. How did this camaraderie come to pass? It all started with Dagger, who made the move shortly after their debuts were set in stone. Her relocation was spurred partly by the allure of Churiri's streamer-friendly apartment complex and partly by Dagger's burgeoning concern for Churiri's not-so-wholesome lifestyle. As rumor had it, they planned to move to a better place, with Tadasu joining them.

"Thanks for the food," Churiri muttered, taking a tentative first bite. "Mmm, this is great."

Dagger stared at Churiri in silence.

"Why are you looking at me like that? Hurry up and eat," Churiri urged. "Unless... Am I doing something weird?"

"Everything you do is weird," Dagger shot back.

"Tell me or I will flip this table over right now, so help me God."

"No, I was just thinking... It's kinda weird how you actually compliment me on my cooking."

"And why would that be weird?"

"You seem like the kind of person who has a lot to complain about, especially when it comes to food."

“Isn’t that just your bias?”

“Doesn’t really feel like a bias when everything you do proves me right.”

“Oh, pipe down,” Churiri grumbled. “It’s not like I compliment food all the time. I don’t say anything when I eat alone, for example.”

“Then why do you go out of your way to say it when you’re with me or Tadasu-chan? Sometimes, you say it so often that even I start to get embarrassed.”

“What’s the big deal, anyway? Can’t you just let me be?” She paused to think. “Ugh, maybe I should just tell you.”

“Just tell me.”

Churiri sighed. “It’s because you cooked for me,” she mumbled quietly.

“Ah?”

“Oh, come on! Do I have to spell it out for you? Because you cooked for me, all right? Either you or Tadasu-san, today and all the other days! It’d be rude of me to just eat the food you make for me without saying anything! Jeez, this is why I hate kids. They just can’t take a hint.”

“Sensei,” Dagger said after a beat.

“Wh-What?”

“I think you’d win major brownie points with your viewers if you said that on stream.”

“Nobody asked!”

“Also, feel free to let me or Tadasu-chan know if we make something you don’t like.”

“I would, if only food made by someone else didn’t taste so good. Especially to someone like me who subsisted solely on convenience-store bentos and cup noodles.”

“Oh! Is that why you froze up the first time you had our cooking? You were just so overwhelmed, huh? I see, I see...”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever, just shut up and eat already!”

“In that case, how about we scrap our sushi takeout plans and just make our own instead?”

“Sometimes I wonder just how much of a basket case you think I am? I can’t cook, but I can at least reciprocate on special occasions. Just let me have this one, all right?”

“Ohhh, so that’s why you’re so insistent on picking up the tab all the time! And here I was, thinking you only did it because you felt like you had to as the oldest.”

“Enough!!!”

Unable to discard her personal convictions, no matter the depths to which she fell. To many, this was Churiri’s greatest flaw, but to those who knew her the best, it was her most endearing strength.

Later, Dagger took it upon herself to spread the gospel of Churiri’s true nature to the world. “If she won’t do it, I’ll just have to do it myself!” she resolved, sharing the aforementioned anecdote on her next live stream, which sent public opinion of Churiri soaring. Predictably, Churiri had reservations about her business being made public, but that did little to deter Dagger and Tadasu. They took it upon themselves to share glimpses into Churiri’s personal life, seizing every opportunity to do so.

Epilogue 1: The Gang's All Here

The day after our collab with Churiri-sensei...

"Tadasu Miyauchi!"

"Dagger!"

"Churiri!"

"By our powers combined, we are—Live-On gen five!"

...I kicked back, relaxed, and stared at my phone as all members of Live-On gen five came together for the first time.

Well, no, technically speaking the first time they'd all come together had been at the end of Sensei's debut stream, but did that really count? Sensei had been caught with her pants down, after all. All right, allow me to rephrase: this was the first time all of gen five had come together—willingly.

"Tadasu-san!" Sensei chided. *"Why didn't you say that last line with us? We talked about this!"*

"Uh, well, you see. I, Miyauchi, am antiLive-On, after all..."

"We should be grateful she even played along for part of it," Dagger-chan remarked. *"In fact, I was more surprised by how readily you agreed to do the intro, Sensei!"*

"Huh?! You asked me to! What am I supposed to say, no?!"

"Maybe! I thought you'd balk at that kind of stuff. But I guess in the end, you're just a big softy for your friends, huh?"

"Mm-hmm, she's our big softy," Tadasu-chan added.

"I am not your friend, nor am I a softy! Ahhh! How am I already this embarrassed?" Sensei groaned. *"This is what I get. This is what I get for fraternizing! Hmph!"*

I'd tuned in wondering what kind of chemistry we'd see with all three

gathered in the same place...

“There, there, don’t pout, Sensei!” Dagger-chan said. *“We had to push back our collab all the way from your debut until now because you were too embarrassed!”*

“And whose fault is that, embarrassing me on my debut stream?!”

“Funny. For someone so embarrassed, you seemed perfectly happy at our celebration afterward.”

“AHHH! Tadasu-san! Shut! Up!”

...But what I saw was three pals simply having a good time.

: Congrats on the debut!

: live-on gen five is my favorite sol show

: the teacher being run ragged by her two younger genmates is such a good dynamic, like holy shit.

: Sensei...is...a softy...around her friends... Got it!

: Is a Slice of Life with Characters You Can't Relate to Truly a Slice of Life? (in the style of LN titles from Christmases past)

“Today, we’ll just be hanging out at Sensei’s place, casually chatting and enjoying some take-out sushi!” Dagger-chan shared enthusiastically.

“Here, Sensei. Soy sauce.”

“Oh, thanks, Tadasu-san.”

“Pickled ginger, Sensei?”

“Oh, yes, sure, Dagger-san.”

“I’ll get us some plates, hold on,” Dagger-chan continued.

“I-I appreciate it, you two, but I can handle all that myself...”

“What are you talking about, Sensei?” Dagger-chan asked. *“You always ask us*

to do this kind of stuff around the house.”

“It’s a little late to behave like a proper teacher now,” Tadasu-chan added.

“Ahhh! Why do you two always go out of your way to expose me in the most unnecessary ways! Zip it! Please, I’m begging you!”

“Hey, Sensei.”

“Wh-What is it, Dagger-san?”

“Mmmmm...aaaaAAAAAA-PAHHHH!”

“Ahhh! Why...does...this...kid...have...to...be...so... AHFFF!”

“Allow me to explain,” Tadasu-chan interjected. “What Dagger-chan did just now was firmly close her mouth, then, with her hand, as if unzipping a zipper, slowly opened her mouth from one side to the other before breaking out into a big smile.”

What? What?! No fair! I wanna see! I’m gonna go crash the party!

: this sensei needs everything done for her. Yup, that tracks.

: what is this... I liked... not sure what's going on... but i liked... is this teetee?

: if dagger-chan did that in front of me i'd probably die of heart attack then and there

: she keeps her hood off with her genmates, that's sweet

: Hmmm? even the misanthropic Sensei can't resist dagger-chan's cuteness?

“M-Me? H-Hah! Like I’d ever think that brat is cute!”

“Yep, yep! Not possible! Cool is what I am, after all!”

“Sensei, say aah.”

“Hm? Ahhh...” NOM “That’s delicious—thank you, Tadasu-san.”

"Sensei, me too, me too! Say aah."

NOM

"Here Sensei, your tea. Aah."

"Aah."

"Aah."

"Aah."

"Aah."

"Are you two messing with me?"

"What gave it away?" said the two troublemakers.

"Jeez..."

: hahaha wtf

: the vibes are immaculate

: it's starting to sound a little bit like moaning

: so sensei is receptive to being fed, interesting

: go, imagination, go!

Wow... I knew they were close, but not *this* close. The way they interacted just felt so *natural*, like they weren't trying at all, but in the best possible way. The atmosphere was so relaxed, you'd think Tadasu-chan had forgotten all about being an anti and Dagger-chan about being a chuuni. Even Sensei seemed happy to be the victim of their antics. Basically, what I was trying to say was, I'd love to be a fly on the wall of Sensei's apartment and watch them forever. And, lo and behold, chat seemed to share in that very same sentiment.

: how do they get along so well

: I feel like even if they didn't, they'd make an oddly apt trio

: they've each got their quirks, after all
: the anti, the amnesiac (allegedly), and the alien
: we're a whole-ass metaverse at this point
: regretaverse, more like

"Who says we're friends?" Churiri-sensei interrupted. "Do you know how isolating it is to debut for a major VTuber organization? You can't talk about it at all, it sucks. If you were stranded on a deserted island with two other people, wouldn't you work with them even if you hated them? It's the same thing."

"Don't say that, Zorori-sensei!" Dagger-chan said.

"Wrong sensei!"

"Indeed, don't say that, Furry-ri-sensei."

"Who you calling furry?! Even I shave my leg hairs, thank you very much!"

"What's wrong, Sensei? You seem nervous. Don't feel like you have to hold back just because we're streaming. You can scream 'CHURYYYYYYYY!!!' in frustration like you always do," Dagger-chan encouraged.

"Since when did I scream like an infantile Dio?!"

"Tadasu-chan, wanna do a skit about the moment of Dio's birth?"

"A more nonsensical statement has never been uttered, but sure."

"Okay, then you be the mom."

"Uuugh. Hee, hee, hoooo. He's crowning...and he's out!"

"CHURYYYYYYYY!!!!!"

"It's a healthy baby boy!"

"I'm kicking off my humanity, Mamaaaaa!"

"Too healthy, in fact."

"See?" Sensei finally spoke. "Is this how friends behave around each other? At least when we first met, there was at least a modicum of respect between us, but now look at us. In fact, I feel like we've regressed."

"She says that, but really she's stuck to us like glue," Dagger-chan said.

"If we don't reply to her texts within five hours, she'll send a follow-up saying, 'Um, I didn't say anything to offend you, did I?'" Tadasu-chan followed up.

"AHHHHH! THAT'S IT, THIS STREAM IS OVER!"

Through my phone speaker, I could hear them scuffling and wrestling about as they tried to stop Sensei from pulling the plug. *Ah, amazing. Pure chicken soup for the soul, this is.*

: sensei's so cute

: the off-stream anecdotes are too cute. the gap is too precious

: who knew that her two genmates who knew her true nature were needed to complete her character?

: someone call up tom holland, we need more bts leaks

: humbly requesting a 24-hr stream of the Churiri family

After a while, the three, seemingly finally out of energy, returned to the mic.

"These two brats are gonna be the death of me, I swear..." Sensei gasped between breaths. "Also, what family? In fact, how did my apartment even become the usual haunt in the first place? Remind me why we couldn't have done this stream remotely again?"

"Maybe if you could take care of yourself we wouldn't have to come over all the time," Dagger-chan said.

"Yes, if you really want us gone, then shape up. It's as simple as that," Tadasu-chan added.

"It's as simple as minding your own damn business..."

: I live for off-stream content

: Sensei doesn't even know how far she's fallen and

that's the best part

: gen 5 is squad goals

: other gens are tight-knit as well but you're right. gen 5 seems the most like one big happy family

<Nekoma Hirune>: Tadasu-chan, your anti attitude doesn't extend to these two?

"Ah! Crap! Nekoma-senpai is watching!" Dagger-chan exclaimed.

"Really? Where?" interjected a curious Sensei. *"Ah, the chat comment?"*

It seemed I wasn't the only one curious about the group dynamics of our newest three members. Nekoma-senpai was the only one to comment, but I would've wagered there were more lurking out there.

But now that she'd mentioned it, I was also a bit curious. Dagger-chan and Sensei were Tadasu-chan's genmates, yes, but they were also members of Live-On, and thus her enemy. From an anti's perspective, did she really have nothing to say to them? If she did, she'd kept it well concealed.

"Hm..." Tadasu-chan fell into deep thought. *"I suppose I'm fine with these two. Ah, not that I'm playing favorites or anything."*

"But why?" Dagger-chan interjected. *"I mean, that's great, but I don't think you've even told us why that is."*

"Well... Hm..." Tadasu-chan mumbled. *"You don't make crude jokes. And even if you did, what would you have me do? Pick a fight with a child? I'd likely just admonish you firmly and leave it at that. I don't discriminate based on affiliation, but on the principles of the streamer."*

"Yay! Best buds fo' life!"

"As for Sensei, well... I don't really know. But she's fine, I guess."

"Dagger-san gets a full-on paragraph but I'm just 'fine'?!"

"As much as you elaborate on your sexual inclinations, I can hardly bring myself to comprehend them. I won't fight what I don't understand."

“Hey, no harm no foul!” Dagger-chan said. “We’re one big happy family and that’s all that matters!”

“No... This...is not okay,” Sensei muttered.

<Nekoma Hirune>: *naruhodo nya~*

: and thus, a miraculous balance was achieved

: Live-On: all according to keikaku

: The keikaku: fuck it, we ball

: Live-On the type of org to make evas a reality just because they're cool

Well, in any case, I don’t think anyone could argue their relationship wasn’t meant to be...

“All right. As fun as talking to you two is, it’s time to eat some sushi! Now, which one should I go for...” Dagger-chan paused, seemingly mulling over her options. “Ooh, inari! Don’t mind if I do...”

“I-Inari?”

“Hm? What’s wrong, Tadasu-chan? Oh, did you find my choice a bit kiddish? I love inari, though!”

“N-No, in fact, I think it’s very grown-up of you.”

“Grown-up, really? Why?”

“Ah, um...” Tadasu-chan faltered. “Because of how lewd it is...”

MMPH?! COUGH COUGH HACK “My nose! There’s rice up my nose!”

“Hey, are you okay?!” Sensei cried. “Do you need a tissue?”

The stream briefly muted so Dagger-chan could blow her nose or something. Jeez, just how much fun were they having?

Dagger-chan’s voice was the first to break through the silence. *“S-Sorry, we’re back! Jeez, Tadasu-chan! At least give me a heads-up if you’re going to say*

something weird!”

“I-I mean, no matter how you look at it, the imagery of you eating inari sushi is just barely safe for work...”

“In what world, you hormone-addled wacko?! In an alternate timeline if YouTube took over the world, maybe!” Dagger-chan yelled back.

“A YouTube-dominated future? Why, that doesn’t sound so bad to me,” Tadasu-chan replied.

“That future would really suck for me as a streamer, so please no...” Dagger-chan said.

“But I get you, Tadasu-san. Inari is totally lewd.”

“R-Really? You’re not pulling my leg, are you, Sensei? Elaborate.”

“That supple sushi rice, tucked into that slick, sweet tofu pocket... My imagination is running wild just thinking about it. For example, if the act of tucking is the deed, then their current state—with tofu spooning rice—is the wonderful afterglow. The two of them, just cradling each other to sleep. Main takeaway: inari sushi equals postcoital afterglow.”

“Tadasu-chan, that was what was going through your mind?”

“I’d rather you not lump me in with that blithering idiot.”

“Hey, who said you could call your teacher a blithering idiot?!” Sensei shot back.

“The teacher isn’t supposed to call us dumb brats, but that hasn’t stopped you, has it?” Tadasu-chan retorted.

“Nope. Do as I say, not as I do. I’m the adult in the room.”

“What if you were in our shoes, Sensei?” Dagger-chan asked. *“What would you do against a teacher like you?”*

“Hah! I’d get them canceled, duh! I’d play the victim, expose their behavior online, and ruin their life for daring to mess with me! Let that dinosaur from a bygone era know who really runs the classroom in this day and age!”

“All right, Tadasu-chan, you heard her!”

"Let's do it! ...Or on second thought, maybe not today. I was scolded by a teacher at school today and I'm still upset about that."

"Save your breath. I don't even have a teaching license."

"How is that even remotely an okay thing for you to admit?" yelled Dagger-chan.

"That's even worse than being abusive. You'd be terminated on the spot," added Tadasu-chan.

"A love teacher needs no such things. Besides, this is a feature, not a bug. Without a license, I am not bound by the rules of this land. In fact, I am the rules. Remember, kids, only the impotent cling to such things as 'qualifications' and 'credentials.'"

"If obeying rules is wrong, I don't want to be right," Tadasu-chan said.

"Sensei, how did you grow up to be this way so I know what not to do?"

"You two piss me off. So you know what? This piece of tuna is mine now."

"I mean, be my guest. You've barely eaten anything," Dagger-chan said.

"We even told you to eat some of the good stuff and not leave it all for us," Tadasu-chan pointed out.

"Shush. I'm not a big fan of fatty fish, that's all."

: unlicensed is crazy

: these are the friends i can only wish I had

: where can I find that rice? asking for a friend

: a "friend"

"Anyways, you two," Dagger-chan said, *"how about we not talk about this kind of stuff when we're, you know, trying to eat?"*

"It's not my fault inari's so damn sexy," Sensei said.

"Indeed," affirmed Tadasu-chan.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa, seriously, guys. Let’s keep our conversation dinner-table-friendly, all right? We’re in a special place here. The way we behave shows our gratitude for the food and all the work that went into preparing it. You wouldn’t eat where you sleep, so let’s try to keep things respectful and appropriate.”

Sensei snorted dismissively. *“Puh-lease, I’m not about to be lectured by you about this. When I eat the food—taste it—I’m aroused by it. QED, I am showing respect for my food in the greatest possible manner.”*

“I think the jury is still out on that one...” Tadasu-chan quipped.

“All right, all right, fine,” Dagger-chan interjected. *“You can do whatever you want, just...make sure your intentions are in the right place, okay?”*

“Okay~,” Tadasu-chan agreed.

“Yeah, yeah,” Sensei grumbled.

“Now that I think about it, you do always compliment our cooking. Guess I was worried over nothing, huh?” Dagger-chan mused.

“I still haven’t forgiven you for leaking that conversation to the public!”

Dagger-chan was so eloquent, saying all the right things. I loved her for that. I really did, it was just...why did she have to be the amnesia character? That and the fact that the person she was lecturing was supposed to be the teacher...

You had one job, Dagger-chan, one job!

“Okay, seriously, what were we talking about again?” Dagger-chan said.

“We were talking about what I, Miyauchi, think of the two of you.”

“Ah, right, right. Well, you know what? To me, Tadasu-chan, you’re someone I’m truly glad to call my friend!”

“How sweet of you. Well, you know what they say. A good friend is like a four-leaf clover: hard to find and lucky to have.”

“I only wish you weren’t so sexually repressed.”

“I am not?!”

“As for Sensei...”

“...What?” Sensei’s voice had a soft pout to it.

“You’re like a super needy grown-up?”

“You couldn’t make me sound worse if you tried! Whatever, who needs you?!”

“Ahh! I meant that in a good way! Needy is cute!”

“Not when you’re grown like me!”

“Also, you’re super earnest.”

“Too bad that’s not a good thing in the world we live in! I know now—you can’t get by without being a little crazy, so that’s why I’m here!”

“You think so? I like how earnest you are, though.”

“...Suit yourself? Whatever, not like I care...”

“Sensei, you’re beet red right now,” Tadasu-chan observed.

“I’ll zip your eyes shut!”

“Well, that’s a terrifying image...” Tadasu-chan muttered.

Sensei’s transformation from hot mess to hotness could not be stopped. They say you can’t judge a book by its cover, and if that’s true, then, well, Churiri-sensei was one thick book indeed. A book we were only able to fully explore because we had two wonderful guides in the form of her genmates. Definitely a perk that is exclusive to being part of an org. *Keep up the good work exposing her, you two!*

“Well, Sensei, the stage is all yours,” Tadasu-chan said.

“Huh? What for?”

“We told you about how we feel. Now it’s your turn,” Dagger-chan explained, nudging the conversation along.

“Um...” Sensei hesitated, visibly uneasy. “Do I have to?”

“Mm-hmm,” the other two replied, relentless.

“As much as I hate to admit it,” Sensei began gingerly, “we’ve known each other for a while now. Surely we’re past the point of needing to play such silly little games?”

"Sure, we all know each other pretty well, but this is for the viewers. It's our first collab; we gotta give them something!" Dagger-chan pointed out.

"Besides, just as you were surprised to hear some of our thoughts about you, we might discover some new things about ourselves as well," Tadasu-chan added.

Sensei heaved a deep sigh. *"Fine. Fine. I'll share,"* she said before falling into thought for a while, grumbling and mumbling. *"Tadasu-san, you're...a horny little pervert in training?"*

"I will hit you, woman."

"Why?! I was just being honest!"

"I have to agree on that one," Dagger-chan admitted. *"I mean, with what you just said?"*

"No... I can't accept this..." Tadasu-chan grumbled. *"Isn't there anything else?"*

"Mmm, maybe a dumb little narcissist?"

"Well, I mean, I am an excellent student. If I seem arrogant, it's only because I'm a member of the great Miyauchi clan. It can't be helped."

"I'll let you in on a little secret, Tadasu-san: The rich? They're edible."

"All right, all right, time out right there," Dagger-chan interrupted.

<Sei Utsuki>: did someone just say my name?

<Nekoma Hirune>: no, but incredible self-own to show up at the first mention of "dumb little narcissist."

<Sei Utsuki>: that was obvious bait

: baited, just like all the people who watch your stream

: hustler honeypot scam artist flimflammer sei utsuki

<Sei Utsuki>: the chat always shows me so much love when I'm here. Why is that?

: i'll show you some love all right (cracks knuckles)

: you all leave love out of this!

: why tell someone you love them when you can lay your hands on them and show them

: Sei-sama, you and I both know exactly why

<Sei Utsuki>: maybe I do need a good bonking at the hands of my viewers

: no, bad sei-sama. no enjoying this

"You're also so very young," Sensei continued.

"Are you still poking fun at me?" Tadasu-chan shot back warily.

"I'm really not. It might come off that way to you at the moment, but as you age, you'll understand just how precious youth is, both physically and mentally. You might only be a student for a few short years, but believe me, those are the times you'll find yourself looking back on the most."

Tadasu-chan hummed in thought. *"Very well. If that's a compliment, then I suppose I'll take it."*

"Just, you know, try to tone down the attitude a little."

That must've been some genuine praise coming from Churiri-sensei; I'd never heard her sound so serious before! And what she'd said about your student years being the times you look back on the most? That was deep—and oddly bittersweet at the same time.

At that moment, I found myself fervently wishing for Sensei's success. I hoped that her new life as a live streamer would be every bit as fulfilling and rewarding as the student years she spoke about with such fondness, if not more so.

"What about me? What about me?"

"Dagger-san, you are...actually a pretty good kid?"

"Oh! I'll take it!"

"Just a little too airheaded, is all."

"Indeed," agreed Tadasu-chan. "Sometimes you even have me forgetting that you have amnesia."

"Ah...? Ah! Wh-Who you callin' airheaded?!"

"What was that pause?" Sensei questioned knowingly.

"Dagger-chan...did you yourself perhaps forget your own character?"

"N-No! Who forgot? You forgot!" Dagger-chan retorted indignantly. "Wow, my head is so empty! No memories, nothing at all! Also, who's playing a character? Not me, that's for sure!"

: It's pretty amazing how Dagger-chan is already friends with most of her senpai

: she's got the lovable kouhai act down pat

: pretty incredible

: I love her "Ah?" so much lmaooo. It's so silly and dumb

Dagger-chan, it's great that you can relax and be yourself, but just, you know, tighten it up a tiny little bit.

"But I think that was all stuff our viewers already knew," Sensei continued. "You've got your own brand of weirdness too. Different from Tadasu-san, but not any less potent."

"Whaaa?"

"It's a bit tricky to explain... It's almost like you can't help yourself sometimes," Sensei attempted to clarify.

Tadasu-chan jumped in. "She does, doesn't she? Like when she spots a butterfly on the side of the road, it looks like she's fighting every instinct to chase after it."

"What am I, a grade-schooler?!"

"I think it's actually a plus," Sensei reassured. "We all get drawn to your genuine nature and can't help but love you."

“Reeeally?” Dagger-chan replied, sounding skeptical yet curious.

“Absolutely,” Tadasu-san affirmed. *“Someone who gives their all and puts their heart into everything will outshine someone who doesn’t bother any day of the week.”*

Dagger-chan snorted derisively. *“Outshine? When I’m one with the shadows?”*

“Whatever you say, sweetie,” the other two returned.

“Hey!” Dagger-chan snapped.

: really? and here I thought she was a model child

<Kaeru Yamatani>: If you're looking for a model child then look no further for she is her. Subscribe to my YouTube.

: oh no, have you lost your memory too, my dear?

<Kaeru Yamatani>: Excuse me? I'm the kind of woman who will moan into a mic and pretend I'm your grandma if it means I won't have to get a real job. You know that right?

: You're right, I'm sorry.

<Kaeru Yamatani>: i take offense to your apology

Don’t you dare type anything, You Who Forgot to Turn Off Her Stream (mental note to self).

The more I thought about it, the more I realized just how much that incident followed me around to this day. It was as if that stream had still not been turned off, even now. In fact, perhaps it was impossible for me to ever come out from under that colossal screw-up.

Hi, it me, the meme god, sharp enough of wit to cut diamond but not her own stream, Awayuki Kokorone.

What am I even saying?

The stream continued from there without incident. A few senpai made their

appearances known in the chat every now and then, but besides that, it was a delightful low-stakes stream among friends. The atmosphere was noisy yet serene, boisterous yet soothing—a harmonious balance I could listen to forever.

The concept was extraordinarily simple: to show a slice of the life of three ordinary friends. Yet it was this exact simplicity and authenticity that made it simply extraordinary. I doubted whether they were even aware of what they had created here, but there was no mistaking it—this was a sanctuary, born of something truly special.

As the last pieces of sushi disappeared from their plates, they each leaned back with cups of tea in their hands. Finally, it seemed the stream was winding down.

“Hey, you guys wanna end the stream on a heartfelt note?” Dagger-chan asked.

“Sounds good to me,” Tadasu-chan agreed warmly. *“I, Miyauchi, would love for us to finish strong.”*

“Nah, I’m good,” Sensei replied. *“I think I’ll save myself the potential embarrassment, but you two youngins be my guest.”*

“Don’t be such a wet blanket, Sensei!” Dagger-chan reproached. *“You’re going to spoil the start of our journey of a lifetime like that?”*

“Hah! You two are something else. Just for the record, there’s nothing in this world I hate more than happy-go-lucky brats who have no idea about how the real world works!”

“Do you hear this, chat?” Tadasu-chan said dryly. *“This is the teacher we have to put up with.”*

“Who you calling a self-proclaimed guru who shows off their fancy car on YouTube promising wealth and happiness through learning but is really just hawking their stupid platitude-filled book?”

“Wow, it’s funny how I know exactly what you’re talking about yet can’t name a single one,” Dagger-chan remarked.

: it's already over?

: they sound sleepy lol

: whew, that was a lot of food

: aint nobody called you that LMAO

: but she would get kicked out for teaching without a certificate

"We don't have to make it super cheesy or anything," Dagger-chan said. "How about we just come up with, like, a collective gen-five ambition? That's fine, right?"

"Hmm, I guess..." Sensei replied, still sounding a bit skeptical.

"A collective ambition, you say..." Tadasu-chan pondered aloud. "How about 'cleansing Live-On'?"

"That's more your own personal mission..." Dagger-chan pointed out. "How about we aim to be the 'heralds of a new genesis'?"

"Please no," Sensei retorted. "How is that even an ambition to begin with?"

"'Genesis' means the beginning, Dagger-chan. The creation of the world. I hardly think it's appropriate for gen five to assume that moniker."

"I-I knew that... Sorry, then I don't know either."

"I'm over it," Sensei said, clearly wanting to move on. "How about we just say 'world domination' and call it a day?"

"Ooh! I like the sound of that! You aliens sure think big!" Dagger-chan cheered.

"Probably would never happen, though..." Sensei murmured.

"Certainly not with that attitude," Dagger-chan quipped.

"Well, I don't like it either way," Tadasu-chan said. "Dominating the world is at odds with my stated purpose of cleansing it."

"If you're feeling cynical, those two might just be two sides of the same coin,"

Sensei suggested.

Dagger-chan eyed Sensei warily. *"I'm gonna call you out for still not figuring out how to use YouTube's short-form video feature in this day and age."*

"But you just did!" Sensei shot back.

: using big words without understanding their meaning
never ends well

: one big happy chaotic family is what they are

: it ain't gon slide down easy if it ain't cheesy

: LMAO how long have YouTube shorts been a thing for

: it isn't so simple to learn new things once you get
past a certain age.

Even when they were deep in thought and brainstorming, they seemed to be having fun. It was super heartwarming to see.

Heartwarming to see, huh?

I allowed myself a wry smile at my own thoughts. Observing the gen-five girls, united and behaving like a close-knit family, stirred something within me. The person I used to be might have found this scene unbearable, yet here I was, embracing it in its entirety. I had moved on; my past no longer shackled me. I could perceive their bond, appreciate it for what it was, and it filled me with a strange feeling that was half joy, half ticklish restlessness, but one hundred percent pure bliss.

"Okay, are we ready? Remember, on 'go,'" Dagger-chan said.

"She's talking to you, Tadasu-san. You better not chicken out this time."

"Yes, I got it. This time we're all in agreement, so there's no reason for me to back out."

It seemed that while I'd been lost in self-reflection, they'd come to a conclusion.

“Ready, set—”

“We’re gonna take Live-On by storm!” the three of them shouted with all the vigor in the world.

As the sound of their voices faded into nothingness, I was left with a feeling of warm assurance that these tumultuous yet perfect days were bound to continue—escalate in their chaos, even—for just a little while longer.

We laughed, we cheered, we cried—truly, there was never a dull moment in the life of a Live-On streamer. But above all, it was the sheer joy of it that mattered most. Together, we’d forge new bonds and strengthen the old ones, aiming to not only make the most of our lives, but also transform Live-On into the most formidable force of nature the world had ever seen!

From here on out, may the stream never end!

...Uh, I meant that in a metaphorical way, and not in a I’m-never-ever-turning-my-stream-off-ever-again kind of way.

Sorry.



Epilogue 2: Hareru Asagiri's Castella Q and A

On this day, Live-On first gen's very own Hareru Asagiri was holding a Castella Q and A on stream.

"All right, it's Q and A time!" she said exuberantly. "Got my snacks, got my questions, I'm ready!" *MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH*

Q: Longtime viewer, first-time caller. Do you think your shit luck is something you were born with?

"Shit luck? Me? You must be mistaken. I'm blessed—to live my life surrounded by such a wonderful crew of amazing friends!"

: yooo!

: Super cool! Very touching!

: long live gen 1!

: hmm but weren't you the girl whose chair broke 10 seconds into her endurance stream so she had to do the whole thing standing up?

: no other girl manages to average one zenloss every worldcraft stream, just saying

: it takes skill to be dealt a kokushi musou 13-way wait only for your opponent to call kyuushu kyuuhai and have the round aborted.

"UWAHHHHHH! Stop, stop! It's not my fault the gods punish me every time a live stream is involved! And like, it's only streaming—I don't even get it that bad in my daily life! I guess they had to nerf me for being too powerful! Aha hah hah hah." She laughed, but behind her metaphorical mask of smiles flowed a metaphorical stream of tears.

Q: I tried pulling on gacha with my crotch like you but I didn't get who I was going for. What am I doing wrong? Am I lacking in love?

“What you are lacking in is *dinero*. Pity is the greatest form of luck. If you watch my stream, you should know that by now. Ooh, speaking of gacha, here's another related Castella.”

Q: While I love watching you pull on gacha (it's like watching a train wreck—I wanna look away, but I just can't help myself), is there anyone in Live-On you wanna see stream their pulls?

“Who you callin' a train wreck? Okay, but all jokes aside... Maybe Chamakko? I think we'd get some delightful noises out of her. Also maybe Aricchi? Imagine if there was a game where you could pull for Awacchi. Do you think she'd pull until her entire game was nothing but Awacchi? Oh! Also Knife-chan! Sorry, that's gen five's Dagger-chan. She seems like she still has a good head on her shoulders, so I wanna see her whale—like *really* whale, and still fail to get what she wants. Then I wanna see the despair, the depression set in before the chat drowns her in consolation donos until her eyes turn green and her mind turns into mush!”

: why must you pray on downfalls?

: Chami-chan do be sounding like Kricketune out here

: L0000L Delelelele who000P!

: I live for Harerun's unexpected savagery

: Who the hell is Knife-chan LMAO that's a completely different blade

: Hmm... I'd be down for a broken Dagger-chan.

: you're the worst...

Q: Do you understand what Churiri-sensei is talking about? If you do, please explain it in a way us normal folk can understand. Thank you.

MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH GULP “Churiri-sensei sure is something, huh? I was

like '???' at first, then thirty seconds later I was like 'ohhh,' but then afterward I was like 'nope' again."

: goddamn not even harerun...

: but even understanding for that brief moment in time already proves she's a genius

: maybe it's one of those things where you understand in theory but in reality it's like nope

"I'll let you all in on a little behind-the-scenes secret. The decision to bring in Churi-sen was probably the toughest decision we've ever had to make. Like, even Awacchi's decision wasn't as controversial. But what sealed the deal was Prez and Knife-chan. Only after we decided on them did Churi-sen seem an appropriate choice. And look just how right we were! Live-On never fails, baby!"

: didn't know that!

: ty for a very rare peek behind the curtain

: with each and every passing day the relationship between sensei and her students grows more and more lopsided...

: even their origin story is precious

: It's like they were meant to be

Q: Now, some might say, "Doe, a deer, a female deer ♪," but I say, "Re, a drop of golden deer ♪." What about you, Harerun?

"You just want me to say, 'Me, a name, I call my deer ♪,' don't you? Get a grip!"

Q: Weren't you and Awayuki-chan going to eat some crickets together? What happened with that?

"Yup, she came to the office one day and I was ready. And I have the audio

recording to prove it! Roll the tape!”

“Awacchi! It’s cricket time!”

“HEEGYAAAA?!?! NO, STOP, STOP, GET AWAY FROM MEEEE!!!”

“Whoa, why are you acting weird, Awacchi?”

“You suddenly approach me with a voice recorder sticking a cricket in my face and I’m the one who’s weird?!”

“These ones are edible. I checked.”

“That’s not even close to the point!!!”

“Huh? But you said we’d eat crickets together on your monetization celebration stream. Did you lie to me?”

“Yes! I mean, no! I just said that in the moment, of course I wasn’t serious!”

“Really? Aw... Fine. If you really don’t want to...”

“Oh. You’re relenting? Phew.”

“I just thought we could share a cricket and chill is all...”

“And chill? Hold on just a second.”

“Hm?”

“Could you describe what you just did?”

“Um, sure? I was just offering you the other end of the cricket I had in my mouth?”

“Y-You wanted to share that single cricket? Between us? Like in your mouth? Wait, wait, wait. You didn’t want me to lean in and bite into its ass like we were sharing a kiss, did you?”

“Uh, duh? How else would we eat it together?”

“...”

“But it’s fine. If you don’t want to, you don’t want to.”

“Wait.”

“A good senpai wouldn’t force her kouhai to do things she didn’t want to do.”

“Stop.”

“I’ll keep in mind you were kidding for next time.”

“I said stop!!!”

“Whoa, what’s got you all worked up, Awacchi?”

“Let’s kiss! I mean, eat the cricket!”

“You want to kiss me?”

“Yes! I mean, no! I just suddenly got a killer hankering for some crickets is all!”

“Uh-huh... Well, fine, but no lip-on-lip contact, all right?”

“Aw... Well, I guess that’s fine. My lovely angel Mashiron would probably get upset if we went all the way anyway.”

“You may get no closer than one millimeter away from my face.”

“Haaah. Haaah. Haaah. Haaah. Y-You said it. I’m milking that millimeter for all it’s worth.”

“Given up trying to conceal your true desires, I see... Welp, whatever! Here goes!”

“Haaah. Haaah.” *CRONCH* “Mmph. Mmph?!”

MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH

“Hey, that’s not bad! What do you think, Awacchi?”

“...uogh.”

“Awacchi?”

“U-Uogh—”

☆Censored with NICE BOAT stock footage. ☆

“Awacchiiiiiii!”

“And that’s how it went down! Yep. I don’t think Awacchi liked it very much, but I thought it wasn’t bad.” *MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH*

: all of my kusa
: Harerun stays scheming
: how dare she barf off stream
: she makes vomit look good
: the girl who spewed her way to a new beginning
: YU-KI: A Girl Who Blows Chunks at the Bound of This World
: "'Awayuki is one percent vomit, ninety-nine percent StroZero' --Thomas Edison" --Michael Scott
: all these aliases are so good yet so bad at the same time
: who just implied Live-On was the Bound of This World?
: zero percent seiso loool
: what if we kissed with crickets in our mouths :flushed:
on second thought maybe not
: ...huh?

“All right, last Castella!”

Q: How about a few words from our resident first-genner to celebrate the debut of the fifth gen?

“Sure thing! Let’s wrap this up with a bang, shall we? Ahem! Wow, just wow. It’s astounding to see how far Live-On has come. Never in a million years did I think back when we were starting out that we’d ever get to be this big. If I could be honest with you all for a second, I never had a doubt in my mind that Live-On would succeed—after all, with someone like me masterminding the operation, how could it not? That being said, though, not all of this went according to plan. Not even I could have foreseen the incredible array of talents we’d come to build, or just how beloved they would be by so many. Also, never did I ever

imagine myself standing tall alongside all these phenomenal individuals, living out my dream. In fact, sometimes I can hardly believe this is real life and *not* just some fever dream that my brain cooked up. But you know what? Even if this were a dream, I'd be okay with that. Because I'd just nurture and nurture this little dream of mine until it was powerful enough to manifest itself into reality, overturning all that we held to be true! I mean, that's what Live-On is all about, isn't it? It's that devil-may-care attitude, that love for all things absurd, that burning desire to always push the envelope in never-before-seen ways! Okay, maybe I got a little sidetracked there, but the point still stands! Truth or not, dream or not, Live-On needs to continue to grow in order to thrive. But growth isn't just a switch management can flip on, nor is it something the streamers can do by themselves. There's a crucial element, an X factor, required for this journey. You all know who I'm talking about, don't you? Exactly! It's *you*—the viewers who've been with us from the very start, the audience we strive to entertain. Yes, it's you! We all have our parts to play, and without you, we are nothing! Management keeps things running, the streamers bring their flair, and the viewers, you provide the unwavering support that has brought us to where we are today. On behalf of Live-On, I extend our heartfelt gratitude. Thank you for all your support, and here's to the adventures yet to come!!!"

Afterword

Thank you so very much for picking up volume seven of *VTuber Legend*. I'm the author, Nana Nanato.

What can I really say about this volume except "hey, gen five!"? This truly was their volume, after all. You can expect to see more of them in the future, alongside all their senpai friends, so please stay tuned for more Live-On antics!

But wow, volume seven, huh? Where did the time go? Web novel included, this'll mark almost three years of *VTuber Legend*. I've learned a lot from penning this series for this long now, and I'd like to share a few insights into the process if you wouldn't mind.

First, to answer your question "Isn't it difficult to write a novel about VTubers?" Yes, yes it is. From depictions of off-stream life to VTubing-specific internet culture, even having to represent something as visual as a live stream through text only—if you are someone who is able to write all the above flawlessly, no questions asked, you have my utmost respect. With *VTuber Legend* especially, not only are there so many scenes involving live streams themselves, it is also quite the provocative work. Copyright and censorship are two big problems that have dogged me continuously post-publication. (For example, having to write 'yuri' instead of 'lesbian' in a specific scene to get around the censors. The two words don't exactly have the same connotations, so I wasn't too happy about that. *Someone please come up with another word that carries the same nuance but isn't censored! Not that I'm discriminating or have anything against the term, just...you know!*)

In a lot of the VTuber-centric works that have flourished in recent years, I've noticed many of them tend to focus on more behind-the-scenes content or integrate other light novel tropes in what I can only imagine to be an effort to get around these problems.

Damn! Nobody told me you could do that! But in all seriousness, I wouldn't trade what I'm doing for the world. I'm wholeheartedly dedicated to crafting

narratives that interest me: raw, genuine depictions of VTubers doing what they do best, capturing their reality in a way that only fiction allows. Right? I mean, isn't that what we're all here for? Unless, no? Is that just me? Oh well, who knows. Point is, it's too late to change anything now. In fact, continuing down this path I've carved for myself is probably the greatest form of respect I could pay to the scene as a whole. Yep, it's what got me this far, so it's what I'm going to continue to do.

All the moaning and grumbling about how hard I have it aside, I think this series has really managed to find its audience. I remember back when volume one came out, I had a discussion with my editor about whether or not a novel targeted *specifically* at VTuber fans would be a bit too high of a hurdle to clear, but look at us now. As VTubing continues to grow and grow in popularity, I'm sure we'll eventually forget that was ever a concern in the first place.

And personally, the growth of VTuber-related works in the light novel space and how the creative community in turn spurs more interest in VTubing is something I'm incredibly enthusiastic about. At the risk of pretending to be someone I'm not—as I am far from the first person to incorporate elements of VTubing into their writing—I genuinely encourage anyone with even the slightest interest to take the plunge, to dive right in! There are so many more aspects or possibilities in the VTubing periphery to explore—not just the ones I've outlined here! Again, not to sound preachy, I'm just plain old happy to see something I love so much get so much love in return.

Lastly, to everyone who participated in the production of volume seven, as well as to all my readers who've supported me, thank you so very much as always. Let us meet again in volume eight.

VTUBER LEGEND: HOW I WENT VIRAL

AFTER FORGETTING TO TURN OFF MY STREAM 7

AUTHOR: NANA NANATO ILLUSTRATOR: SIOKAZUNOKO





"I AM
ANTI-LIVE-ON,
AND I WILL
BE YOUR
DOWNFALL!"

"I AM A
WANDERER OF
MEMORIES, A
RENEGADE IN
THIS REALM,
ONE FORSAKEN
BY THEIR
PAST."

"I...AM
HERE TO
TEACH YOU
ALL ABOUT
THE
WONDERS
OF LOVE."

Love

LIVE comment

MANAGEMENT YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN
YOU SON OF A BITCH!
SO THIS IS LIVE-ON GEN 5...
VISUAL KEI BAKA
THE STREAM TAG IS TOO AVANT GARDE FOR ME
AND THE OTHER TWO ARE JUST LIKE HER...
WHAT IS HAPPENING...
MANAGEMENT REALLY SAID
"NEWBIE = NEW BREED (OF HUMANS)"
AWA-CHAN STRUGGLING OUT HERE
SHE'S A GOOD SENPAI
(THAT DARN ALCOHOLIC BEV NOTWITHSTANDING)
CRAZY TO THINK SHE'S NOW A
SEASONED VETERAN
THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA

Tadasu
Miyauchi
vs
Awayuki
Kokorone
#AntiLiveON

Author: NANA NANATO
Illustration: SIOKAZUINOYO

VTUBER LEGEND: HOW I WENT VIRAL
AFTER FORGETTING TO TURN OFF MY STREAM 7

VTUBER LEGEND:

HOW I WENT VIRAL AFTER
FORGETTING TO TURN OFF MY STREAM 7




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"I AM
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Love



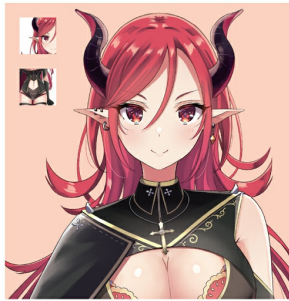
HARERU ASAGIRI

"Heya! It's me—the sunlight in everyone's hearts, Hareru Asagiri!"

An energetic high school girl who loves putting smiles on everyone's faces. Extremely curious and—carried by her momentum—frequently does or says things that nobody would have ever expected.

GEN 1

GEN 2



SEI UTSUKI

"Hey, ladies and gents! It's your girl, Sei-sama!"

In her past life, she was a succubus who lived off the vigor of men, but died of starvation since she only ever showed interest in other women. She reincarnated, bringing us to today. Her horns are a holdover from that past life.

GEN 3



MASHIRO IRODORI

"Kon-mashiro, everyone! It's me, Mashiro Irodori, also called Mashiron."

An illustrator who lives to draw. While she can be a little scathing with her remarks, she's actually a kind, friendly girl.



AWAYUKI KOKORONE

"Good evening, everyone. Another nice, light snow is falling tonight? I'm Awayuki Kokorone."

A mysterious beauty who only appears on days when a light snow is falling. Her purple eyes draw you in with the promise of something hidden deep inside them...



SHION KAMINARI

"Kon-miko, everyone! It's everyone's mama, Shion Kaminari!"

A shrine maiden whose body is inhabited by a nine-tailed fox and who safeguards the people as a servant of the kami. Because of how fiercely her nine fluffy tails swing around based on her emotions, caution is needed when standing behind her.



NEKOMA HIRUNE

"Nya-nyan! I caught a whiff of something great and came running!"

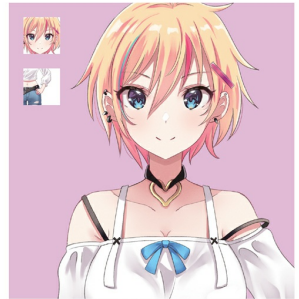
A beast girl with heterochromia who loves naps—but whenever she sees someone close by eating food, she immediately gets up and goes over to them with sparkling eyes. She'll be happy if you give her something. She'll also be happy if you pet her, even if you don't give her anything.



HIKARI MATSURIYA

"Kon-pika, everyone! The light of the festival is here for all to enjoy! It's me, Hikari Matsuriya!"

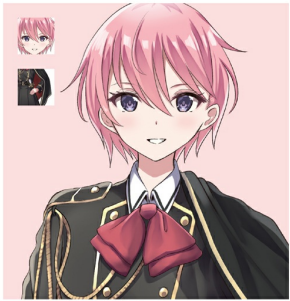
A festival girl who appears at festivals throughout Japan. Some say she's even appeared at the same time in two different festivals held in separate places.



CHAMI YANAGASE

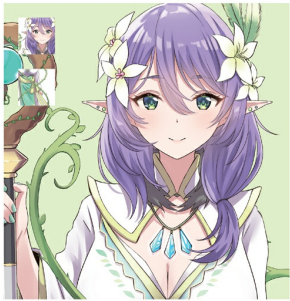
"Hello! It's Chami Yanagase-oneesan, the one who always guides everyone to the pinnacle of healing."

Originally a gloomy character, but rallied her courage and debuted as a sunny one—to thunderous applause. Inside, though, she hasn't changed, making her a gloomy character wearing the skin of a sunny one.



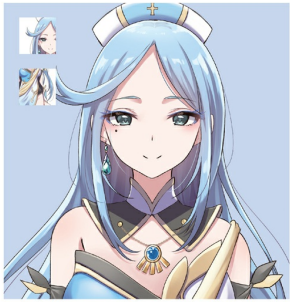
ALICE SOMA

“Ma’am! Alice Soma, at your service!”
A member of the Resistance, an idol group focused on self-liberation. Her cool looks make her popular with men and women alike, but inside she’s somewhat incompetent, so she works hard to protect her image.



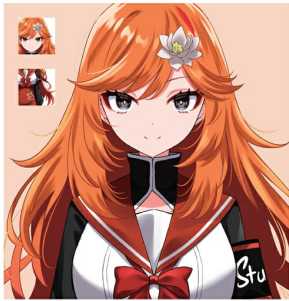
EHRAI SONOKAZE

“Heya, everyone! Are you all doing well? I am! I’m Ehrai Sonokaze, zookeeper at Ehrai Zoo!”
An elven zookeeper at Ehrai Zoo, a major theme park featuring every animal under the sun. Respected to the point of complete obedience by all the animals there, for some reason.



KAERU YAMATANI

“You can cross the mountains and dales, but you can always return here. Welcome to Kaeru Yamatani’s stream.”
A mysterious, mystical woman who is said to appear before kind, loving hearts that have been grievously wounded, grant them her healing, and then return upon the wind.



TADASU MIYAUCHI

“How do you all do, everyone? It is I, the sole daughter of the venerable Miyauchi lineage, the Anti-Live-On icon herself, Tadasu Miyauchi.”
The student council president of the prestigious all girls’ school Saika Girls Academy, she takes great pride in her family name. A lover of all things clean and virtuous, she has thus come to view Live-On as the enemy.



DAGGER

“I am a wanderer of memories, a renegade in this realm. Forsaken by my past, I am a whisper without a name. I...am Dagger.”
A young girl with amnesia. She wandered the realm without purpose or end before Live-On took her in and promptly debuted her as a streamer. What few memories she retains paint a grim picture.



CHURIRI

“Good morning, class! It’s your teacher in all things love, Churiri-sensei!”
A teacher with hair of indescribable hue who works at Live-On. An alien from outer space, her real name is much longer, comprised of sounds not replicable in any human language. She teaches love.

Live-ON
Live-On

The Chosen Shining Girls

News | Goods
Guidelines | [Talents](#) | About The Company

Contents

Chapter 1
Idle Talk: Tadasu Miyauchi’s Great Dog Poop Spiral
Chapter 2
Idle Talk: Dagger-Chan Is...
Chapter 3
Idle Talk: A Day in the Life of Churiri-Sensei
Epilogue 1: The Gang’s All Here
Epilogue 2: Hareru Asagiri’s Castella Q and A
Afterword

Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Idle Talk: Tadasu Miyauchi's Great Dog Poop Spiral](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Idle Talk: Dagger-chan Is...](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Idle Talk: A Day in the Life of Churiri-Sensei](#)

[Epilogue 1: The Gang's All Here](#)

[Epilogue 2: Hareru Asagiri's Castella Q and A](#)

[Afterword](#)

[Color Illustrations](#)

[Bonus High Resolution Illustrations](#)

[About J-Novel Club](#)

[Copyright](#)



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VTuber Legend: How I Went Viral after Forgetting to Turn Off My Stream
Volume 7

by Nana Nanato

Translated by Dawson Chen Edited by Alexandra Fresch

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