

Cosplayer

Muhammad Alif Hidayat



An arrest of the century; they're still going full gears throttling the milking of the arrest of the mastermind behind the oil corruption happening somewhere in East Kalimantan. I wanted to tune in to repeat programming of the first three seasons of Spongebob, but at the state at which I have been preparing myself, I couldn't be bothered to spare time to change spare batteries to my TV's remote. So it seems that the news network wins over my laziness. Not only do I have the displeasure of tuning to them, I also have to bear their non adjustable loudness. Could I have gone on without the TV going? I might find myself be allured by the slumber demon slumping me down to a deep slumber that could possibly cost me my eardrums after my phone keeps getting spammed by notifications notifying me to wake up, get up, and get to my destination, right then and there. That's despite today being Sunday, but today Sunday is the second and last day of my city's local *anime* convention yearly existence. For the reasons of promise and duty, must I bring myself with aching limbs still resting to be up and readying by the earliest of morning. For friends and work, really? Why do I strongly persevere with it yearly? Having made up my mind to go with it despite the ebb and flow of another go, I wouldn't be able to lay still in bed weighing on that alternative of 'No' with how final plus one day it has been.

The tunes of news spokesmen change to a cheery chant of a cigarette brand commercialized in a commercial that has nothing to do with smoking filtered tobacco. TV commercials are often my lifesaver when I'm bringing myself to go and prepare before having to head out. They can be calculated to be about three to five to seven or ten minutes from any showing of the TV current programming. If I spaced and my TV brings in a commercial, I can more or less calculate how much time I've superficially wasted. Some of the people I know and used to know like to poke fun at this habit I've developed. It doesn't bother me, I suppose that they just know little in life considering how most of them tend to be celebrators of time's carelessness. To see me holding strong onto the foundation of active duties surprised them for a minute or two if I brought it up to them. Maybe only apparent to me, but little do they know how taxing it is to be me. I don't blame them, I just wish when I'm out of my house in the next hour, I'll find no disappointment in my friends and hirers' lack of accomplishment.

By the time the advertisement break is over, I'm done with showering. I find it interesting that many of us consider our time to shower to be the time when we ponder the greatest, next to our solace in prayers. It was a conversation topic I had explored when me and my friends had too much to drink. The result of our thinking then was too fogged up to form any coherent result. Yet, I constantly wander in wondering why many epiphanies come at the moment we're most often naked and in touch with water. A friend of mine reads. He reads to me what he reads; that a lesser-known but undoubtedly important figure of Ancient Greek philosopher, Thales of Miletus, who preceded the likes of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, deduced from his observation that everything is made of water. Water is a must component, it's that simple. It forms, is essential, can be in motion, and can change; what doesn't it have?—likely argued Thales. Thales today could have landed himself in a mental institution, said one of my friends who studies in STEM. To me, there's certainly a merit of truth to what he's proposing. Under the gush of water, I feel strong in my weakness. Though, I'm afraid I don't know why... It's just like how people's tears hidden by water running down their face are often not shed until the water is present.

I didn't cry this time, I didn't have the time to spare. I did quarrel with that initial wave of anxiety I got from time-to-time having to shower. Finishing your shower means that you're ready to start the day, however productive or not it becomes. Most often, I would delay having to do it until the clock just almost strikes twelve. I consider noon a period where the day starts and continues whether you're ready or not. Therefore, I've long developed a habit of waking up early, at around six and a maximum of seven in the morning. That way I have a few hours to digest my breakfast as well as lounge around in the warmth of what morning brings. It's a habit partially inspired by my schooling's educational system as well as my parents' routine. School used to start at around seven-past-fifteen ever since my primary grade. Those experiences of waking up at about six in the morning, six days a week were truly character building. Up until now, I followed that similar routine, so every time I wake up I see my parents up as well. It used to be Mother and Father taking care of themselves, now it's Mother taking care of Father while I still take all the remaining care for myself. And what I'll have is our bathroom at around seven needing to accommodate the cleaning of Father while Mother does all the work. I constrain my selfishness through convincing myself that I too am a constant busybody. Even so, I believe that I have erected around my own self ever-expanding monoliths of lies which layers needed peeling are now so out of the naked eyes. If one ever falls, it won't be a situation I need to look upon like the rebuilding of Rome. It's scary. When I see it in others, I would feel contempt to how they're building themselves, but then I would still live in the exact scenario. A preacher to the choir I am. It's a possibility that these erected monoliths carved my personality and I have made today's outing a justification to stay out of my parents' way today.

I should deviate from that thought, I'm no mean under the blast of my shower head anymore.

During that short time inside that bathroom, alleviating myself away from anxious thoughts, I thought about what my friend talked about as shower's thoughts. A lighthearted little concept where miniature epiphanies come collected containing brainstormed comedic thoughts. That's how it's apparently seen nowadays. You definitely can see the definition of shower thoughts under its larger all-encompassing dome of any thoughts humanly possible, but you would be the ruiner of the party's fun if you do so. When I was first told about it, it didn't take me long to agree with the definition the rest of mainstream populations had agreed upon. They say laughter is the best medicine. Makes the most sense to strive to define one of our most commonly occurring moments of vulnerability into a stage for comedy writing. Me and that friend went over several of these brainstormed comedies. Like how only the poorest rich people fly in first class because the rest has a private jet. How being bored in your own house is somehow better than being bored at someone else's house. And how if Apple is going to build a house, will they have windows? I have an infatuation with the one regarding Apple. Ever since I first heard it, I imagined if Steve Jobs would be laughing over it wherever he is right now. In the afterlife of whatever is the truth of it comes to. Death and the afterlife is another interestingly harrowing concept to ponder and explore by yourself. Bringing others into the discussion often leads me to them mentioning the concept of Heaven and Hell, the cycle of rebirth, or being outright offended. You really only have yourself in the face of death, that's the one universal truth on the foundation of it. Others may accompany you during your funeral procession, cremation, or however you decide to go on your way out, but after your soul (as they say) have been separated from the body you inhabit on this Earth, can you say that they're still with you? I'm not afraid of death, I'm afraid of living. Death is the end to the mean, living is the mean until the end. Nobody knows if you retain any memories you have right now after you die, so as long as death has taken over you, you can't feel any worry. Yet, as long as you're living, you worry, because death is still an abstraction. Even today, I'm still not sure to whose side I side with. If Heaven and Hell do exist, it's better for there to never be either than for them to exist and my place to be in Hell. If the cycle of reincarnation exists, I should place bets on my deathbed asking my loved ones how many times they believe my karma would lead me to not be reborn as a human. I could ask Mother where Father might go when his time comes. I know her answer, of course. I hope it will reign true for him. He deserves it, doesn't he?

As my mind continued to wander, I seemed to have put on the clothes I had picked out the previous night. Through that unconscious automation, I'm simply dressed in a simple white shirt over a black slack and a pair of Converse. I had to adjust my shirt to have it loosely tucked in before I grabbed my glasses and a choker which I'll know will still be around my neck later. Dressing well should be viewed less of a lifestyle choice than it is a necessity. Not in the conventional sense that there's a measurement of wellness in this well, but more so that everyone adheres to themselves a fashion aesthetic which speaks to who they are. Too many people whom I have seen lived in a fashion of carelessness. No care for aesthetics painted at even the bare minimum when they carry themselves anywhere and anytime. I dream about fashion. For it to have a stronger grasp in the presence of this country's society. Nowadays, it seems like my dream is slowly being paid off. Although, I still rather see no individuality to it when many who're into it follow those who follow whoever up there in their niche corners of their social media. Considering this, could I possibly say those people who don't care about their fashion aesthetic to be much more original than those who do? What an interesting question to ponder and ask in due time, don't you think, Myself? I decided to keep this thought as long as possible because I'm sure today's weather won't be too pleasant for me. Running out of topics to talk about is the worst when you're having a physical conversation with someone. Having them half-listen to what you're saying would at least scratch your ego, but when you stop, the world soon stops revolving around you, and then you would corner yourself in an awkward silence encompassing the two or more of you. I hate it. Maybe that's why I strive for any new thing, even considering how trivial they can be. I can talk when the trivias are present.

I continue with imagining an anti-fashion figure like glory days Yohji Yamamoto or Martin Margiela being perplexed that their vision of anti-fashion is so so wrong compared to a guy who can't color coordinate his plaid shirt, chino, and moccasins. How would it feel for these enigmatic figures of the fashion world to react when they're taken off a notch? I have often found myself being a spectator of this mob mentality mobbing upon figures unaware of their existence. Loud with open mouths they feed on and demand to be fed more and more perfunctory *problems*. Flying off the bat at the slightest hint of a new trend to gawk. *Like how they feast upon the little helpless priest, poor poor Don Amindo*, as a friend of mine had said. He's the one with animosity of this little loud niche of the internet ecosystem. I uphold his animosity through a frustrating hatred that he has to bring this up once too many times that I took it from him to be like he is. They say there's the dead internet (because the "internet is dead" is not yet), that all I see are faked man-made... for God sake. I might pray for its coming when I do come to pray for anything. But, I would hate to lose @etchinamyuzu01. Oh, how I quite adore the chilling thought of the me who's not me being the me to be last remembered by many.

As I muse my muse, @etchniamyuzu01, on top of my belligerent brain I noticed that I have done a good job packing everything necessary into my suitcase. A small one with rooms just enough for one or two sets of clothes, fit for daily travel. Bought for a suspiciously undiscounted, discounted price. It was Mother's money, not mine, so I couldn't exactly work out how to be stressed about the suspicious price. A trick of the trade I noticed professionals Japanese implement in their work-to-work basis. Not only done by cosplayers like myself, but also models in general. Carrying a backpack isn't only easily messy, but unprofessional and childish looking as well. Its existence poses only as a persona-ruining object of interest. Whenever I see someone at a convention bringing their stuff around in anything that isn't a suitcase or whatever as sophisticated, it always leads me to stand on a platform of judgment. Having little to no care how you carry yourself outside of the character you played translates, to me, how little you deserve to be playing that character, who's most likely beyond you. A speaker of the business world once said in a conference I had to forcibly sit for that, *you may hate an investment banker VP who acts like an investment banker VP. But, come on—would you trust your investment to a guy who tries so hard to not be so?* He wasn't the audiences' favorite, though his words spoke to me. Then, I unknowingly had been so focused that my friend who was sitting beside me had noticed I was sitting like someone who's about to beat you in a multiplayer versus video game match. She didn't trouble me as she was more troubled by the crowds' booing. The speaker stepped off with a giant grin plastered from one end to another across his face, I did too. *Gee... he was kind of like Patrick Bateman, you know?* Said she. In a way, yes; just a tiny bit. While Bateman wants to bring himself to kill, I wanted to bring myself to speak – against these-and-those so called “cosplayers” – though, jeez, I'm a coward in my own way. I can admire that I'm physically fitter to cosplay than they are, at least that holds a certain kind of merit; like a merit that Bateman plays along in his coworkers' stupid game, being a king to no pawns.

It's a blurry image in my mind to fathom myself a queen, because I can't fathom who's my pawns though I know them who can. I should say I fit more like a servant than a queen. A viperous one who would never forget to hide a dagger under her garter, always one step ahead and creating false steps for her master and mistress, their sons or daughters are puppets meant to take my fallings; the dagger strikes at the strike of the thunder, the drained pleased body of the son laid on top of his mom, evidences framed of incestuousness, stricken furnitures fall for our father's forty winks, bluntly following forfeiting to blindness, the door drummed, blind rage tears through his teary eyes, torn bodies lie at last, false victims claimed, I make it out an implausible lagoon. I haven't read Shakespeare, I have read tall tales of adolescent's fantasies in a certainty that one of them pertains to what I had just told. Many of us fantasize less as we grow older, though I have seen myself still fantastic in that regard, I've also noticed that my fantasies are often encouraged by depravity. A sick sense of a loss of morality, I couldn't see myself doing it platonically. Why can't I discourage my romanticization of the non-romantic in the romance I had just taken you through? Would you hate me if all there is in my mind are imaginations and fantasies such as these? Please, don't hate me. I could be – anything – your Virgil – count that as anything; sure, anytime... Agh, I dart my eyes all the way across my room to find an outlet to pour out this never ending morning dread. I couldn't do it to my bed because of how normalized everyday it is to see my bed as a chaotic mess that I take no pleasure in outing myself out with her. I'm going ton-eighty darting like this. It sucks. It hurts. Aha, nevertheless, I see that the shirt I'm packing isn't tucked as neatly as I had hoped it would be. Making a deal with dread, I convinced him to let me speak in order to rectify my current chaos.

With my cosplay settled nicely inside my briefcase, I quickly settled for tidying all of my room's necessities. The bed, the desk, the books, and the masks will all be well to live life for another day. In my impatience to later be Marin on this day, I hear my stomach rumbling, needing caring. Going to the kitchen I find Mother preparing the rice for breakfast. I tell her that I'm going soon and she makes a fuss about me having to fill my stomach with rice first. I ignored her for the fridge, getting myself two slices of leftover pizzas from yesterday's order. Not using a microwave, I use our rice cooker as a substitute heater. Leftover rice cooker-warmed pizzas for breakfast; I justified it to Mother that her daily big breakfast would ruin my stomach later on (there're back-and-forths but she gives up). It's such a childish excitement to be this excited about pizzas that it leads me to ignore everything else around me, especially Mother's orders to take the trash out before eating. What even is there to expect from a Pizza Hut's leftovers? I sit thinking, chewing on this piece of cardboard bun. As I keep indulging, I expect less and accept more. This pizza, it tasted "good" because it isn't meant to be considered a real pizza, nor eaten for breakfast, nor not microwaved; and for that it stands out as a product of gastro-consumption. A real rebellious piece of – wonder which leads me to wonder how I feel a wonderful excitement from consuming this mockery of culinary. Who knows, maybe it's how it may make certain men repel in disgust while the others flock to their existence. Something that is both should and shouldn't be; neither able to be taken further nor less than what they already are. So much like judging others, so much like judging myself.

I'll seize my chance in taking pleasure in being judgmental of others! I'm ready, set, and go to bolster out of our front door, but Mother stopped me by my track to get me to go to Father, the cats, and the trashbags. I figure I'll get to Father last. I hear Mother's voice trailing behind me making remarks about why I had gotten dressed so early so quickly that the trash is about to leave much later than I would have been. The plastic bag is tied poorly, my bloodstream feels like it would cut completely at any second. I hurry and I reach our front gate. The neighborhood cats are waiting for me, waiting for meals. I make a three-pointer just outside where the stench of the trash pile can be smelled. The cats I'm feeding are a bunch of cute creatures. Their display of their feline-exclusive emotions are always subtle but it has quickly been the main reason for me to continuously love them. Though this trait which appears human to me, makes me judge them like I would judge a fellow man. I tell it to their face what I think of them, whether I believe they're actually cute, ugly, lusty, stupid, or anything. Either meow or silence serves an answer to my good conscience. That these cats belong less to me than the neighborhood in general, makes me think of our relationship as that of a baroness and her peasants. They let me step on them as long their mouths are fed. These cats are pathetic, they should organize an attack at someone like me who openly makes a mockery of who they are. Down with the baroness! Power to the people! (or cats); so I can further my justification in humanizing them. Alas, what can be done to this one God's creature who serves naught but decorations to houses' yards along the stretch of our street. Still, I happily kneel as I scoop a spoonful of treats to any cats who come visit. I'll surely do until he comes...

He drags with him a deplorable body and decrepit limbs. Unkempt unsightly pattern of furs of gray as unsightly as his pair of ears which looked to be blighted by leprosy. A she who was similar to him had died a few weeks ago, found by the drainage three houses from ours. All these kind creatures known to bring are veiled miasmas which distinguish no victims. I run back into the garage to grab a mop, and with an utmost resistance I shoo him away from the others; peaceful to their share of meals. There's nothing he can do but wait for his death. I can't wait for him to die. The other cats don't understand, they're cats, not humans. They may cry over the death of their siblings and friend, while only the holiest of angels would cry for that ailing animus.

Despite how miserable I attribute this one cat to be, he still possesses the selling attributes of a cat at the end of the day. Unlike the one who died before him, his face doesn't seek death yet. Sadly, I couldn't be the one to embrace him with such open arms as I do the others. I retreat back inside to make my way to Father's bedroom. Everything's engulfed in darkness. I hearken my heart to bear the sight of him. I, by his side, have no light, no object, no Mother, nothing to carry my superfluous conversation with him except my own voice and motion. I get myself to bring his coarse face to face me; not accounting whether his eyes do follow mine or not. Father is paralyzed; only natural. I'm paralyzed; I'm sorry, it's my fault. My tiny voice trails through unknown tracks asking Father small talks normal for the average man. I tell him that I'm about to head out for the day, uncertain if he understands what I'm implying at all. Both of them trusted me to be whoever I want to become, though I've been finding myself wanting to be in the shoes of some someone's else. I wish Mother was with me, but I couldn't call for her or else she might think I couldn't care less about Father. Nevertheless, am I really wrong to think that Father, who I knew throughout my childhood to be a reserved man, prefers the company of short but intimate conversation? Compared to Mother's antics of hyper-optimism? The realist versus the idealist, I long have wished for this "fight" to have no reason to occur. I can't entirely blame Mother's belief, I too have taken steps in bettering myself as a more optimistic and spiritual individual. Though her attempts to reinforce my development often makes me want to bare myself from those goals. But with Father's case, it's a case of optimism where I believe his payment for what he has endured is able to be found not in this world anymore, but what comes after. Hence, why I hope Heaven is real; not even for me, but for him. Yet, I must confess that, my optimism sometimes leads me to be as farcical in idealizing as Mother is in hoping for him a perfect administration of cure. Much like that cat suffering from leprosy, why shouldn't I alleviate Father so he can come and go with his angels without further ado? The times I spend sitting by Father's side in his remaining short amount of times bring me back to happier and simpler times. My love for him then is unquestionably genuine because I have yet to understand the purpose of questioning. Now, I feel as if we're all a victim of paralysis under this household. Father has it the least painful despite what you might see on the surface. He's an indisputable candidate to be amongst the vast lands of God's kingdom. Mother too perhaps, but her time to ascend so that her paralysis only occurs throughout her physical form is yet to come. I'll outlive them with the last laugh and last tears as I fear my suffering has a due price exceeding anything I could think befitting the love of a child like me.

Sadness didn't build up inside of me unlike annoyance did. Both Father and I can't read each other's minds. At the end, I can only share with him my melancholic stare. On his face I could see a similar – no, the same set of stares. Maybe not, it's hard enough to assume, would be too painful to actually understand. I leave Father with the now seeping gleams of morning lights through the room's closed curtains. Hopefully, it reaches him, that he understands, he can come counting that it's now a new day. I hound for this hope to lessen this lumping annoyance. An annoyance committed through repression of unguided feelings and unclearness of possible solutions to how I could be the curer to our paralysis. Leaving him compels me into forgetting about him for the rest of the day until I have to come back. Might he want me to enjoy my life more than he does his? I already have my phone out, quickly sending out necessary messages to my friends and colleagues as well as an order for a car ride-hailing at my location. The car and its driver has been dispatched. The clock which takes control of me like how the news and ad breaks did comes for their right to control. I have gathered my suitcase, Mother's permission, and the key out-front. All necessary steps were fulfilled, necessary for my erasure of most of this morning's thoughts. As I plop down in the backseat of the car to come – forgive me – I wouldn't be able to care less about what I have done, or at the very least, thought about doing, and thought about as it was when I would still be at home, still preparing. I find myself to already be suppressing them at this very moment. A car ride is most often my strengthening catalyst for that suppression. Therefore, it doesn't take long for me to be this prepared. The driver messages me that he has arrived. I loudly call out to Mother that I'm going, and without waiting for her answer we're already driving away.

It's an uneventful trip. I keep checking-rechecking for any new replies for the messages I have sent. Even with the knowledge that any new messages will instantly be notified to me, I couldn't bring myself to stop. I'm a hypocrite who rejects the idea of normalizing our over-reliance on smartphones and social media, but I too seem coerced to stand with the supporters of the cause. Though in the case of this court, I'll defend myself. I'm fixated because I'm obliged to keep an eye out to anything new and substantial coming in from my notifications. Anything I consumed in-between this regulated checking is fulfilled with media pertaining to today's outing (cosplay, *anime*, the likes, you get it). And lastly, I'm all alone on this trip with no chance I'm striking a conversation beyond trite small talks with the old man behind the wheel.

We're stuck in traffic at an intersection near my old high school. I just scrolled past another of @Indonesans Instagram posts. Something-something spiritual as usual. I have always wanted to bring myself to be a better reader – start small then you can move onto big beefy books – but I got lost on my way and it led me to skip the one they just posted. Another friend of mine is influenced by his generational lineage line of interest to be a connoisseur collector of rare books. Like his father, he believes that the quality of a man can be measured by the amount of books he has read. No doubt in my mind that he's one hell-of-a reader, and even further, I've no doubt that he will never ever stop reading and collecting until the end of his life. I draw a correlation between him and whoever is responsible behind @Indonesans. Incredible figures with incredible minds who've read and remembered a lot of what they've read that they've become one of the select few people in this world whom if I asked what the point of reading is, they'll know what answer I'm hoping for. Spirituality! That's it! I believe they would answer... or as I supposed so. In my experience of befriending fond readers, they're most fond of finding themselves reaching a point of spiritual discussion in their regular meandering. The results of it – at least when they're with me – are never settled in one objectively-answered agreement. It would almost always be left in a constant state where I should have understood that their position on what each of them agrees upon will never change but with each new point explored in their respective positions yielding results which still wow me each and every time. As I've previously mentioned, I'm not sure if I can call myself a spiritual person. In this country, in its current day-and-age, you can call yourself that or be called as such only if you land on the extreme of an either side arrangement. So, I say, I call them such because it makes me feel good. This is how you create yourself an idol in an image to your liking, right? Goddamnit...

Now I feel hopeless. Took me long enough to get it again... that—that carrying out my obsession like that is disgusting. Determining that I too can be just because I think that their experience can substitute the lack of mine; oh, so that way it takes less for me to get to the point where I might take it that my act of pseudo-spirituality triumph over other who're honest and earnest in encapsulating the necessary knowledge than painting a pretty picture containing themselves as the center subject. If I change my tune to chant spirituality is dead, where will I have thrown myself into, for better or worse? I was told of a man named Nidje or something, who sounded like someone from the Dutch colonial era to me. He had written once that God is dead and we killed Him. Many run with his statement literally and it leads to privileged teenagers posing as nihilist's posers clogging up my social media feed at least once every three nights a few years back. The case of Nidje and the nihilists discrepancy bode similarly to this for and against neo-resurgence of spirituality. A road started paved with sincerity hazarded by insensibility that anything and everything between the start, middle, and end have fallen into deep troubling obscurity masked with a propagation of an *esoteric* constricting commutuality. Unfortunately, a treatment like this can – but shouldn't – fly in the postulation of such a foundation of fundamentals. Since a long time ago, it has carried within itself a war for control. What ends is never the war, but the question of foes visiting and revisiting men, who's an unchangeable agent.

The same thing fortunately can't be said about the attraction I have finding myself amongst the world of cosplay. Can you imagine having to go through the hoops it takes to prepare yourself to be a spiritualist? I snicker at myself for having thought of that but it doesn't take me long to stop. Our car has stopped at the agreed destination and I've stopped agreeing that the juxtaposition I've attempted to make, makes even the slightest bit of sense. Not only is it not far, but it will also be very stupid of me to act as if I don't believe in cosplay's gatekeeping. Modesty of the soul is a key principle in both religion and spirituality which expanse is far wider than only maintaining external and explicit actions. In a lecture during middle school, our religion teacher told us that the most pious of men would consider themselves still a sinner. Therefore, if a man comes up to you and tells you about how pious he is, beware that he's amongst the worst kinds of sinners. Cut us some slack because we were middle schoolers that we thought it was stupid not to believe someone who can prove that he's pious. But now, I see where my teacher was coming from. It's not the end, but the means which brings a man from sin to piety. An end to a pious man can ultimately be his downfall because he has clouded his intention with quantitative measurement while the sinner seeks for an everlasting quality. All this just so I can corroborate my thoughts regarding where I'm wrong on cosplaying... So here it is – in short – I've gone on long enough without considering modesty. My ego brings a liaison of superiority. And while I can't kill my ego completely, I can put up with an air of cordiality.

Can't expect anything from a hypocritical gung-ho. I hurriedly speed walked through the bazaar's area where everyone's busy setting their stalls up to the second floor of the Japanese literature department's building. There, in one of the empty classrooms, I waited until I met with my friends and colleagues. After a share of greetings and small talks, we discuss our workshare for the day as we change to our respective cosplay. Don't call me by my name anymore, because now, I'm Marin Kitagawa!

Marin Kitagawa; the main female character of the series *My Dress-up Darling*. An outgoing spirited *gyaru gal* who has a secret knack for cosplaying (especially scantily clad characters). Beautiful blond hair, mesmerizing red eyes, fair pale skin, assertive affectionate but still demure, and a no-stopping me attitude. I wish I could be her, or in her kind of place, or her be with me. I concur with my current reality where I find that in the traces of fakeness lie still realities, and that's what cosplay is, baby!

I hold out my hands wide to the side. A shit-eating grin plastered on my face. I looked at the mirror to see the others looking right at me. I stop what I'm doing; embarrassed. They ask if I'm fine, I have to tell them that I am. It's a simple fact that I simply ignore to accept that I can't be more of the character than the costume and acting I can bring myself to show. To the world, to myself, whatever. When this day comes to an end – as it will be – I'll lose Marin. With the worst possibility being forever as there's no way for me to explain that the reason I go through a great length for this stupid shit is because I hate how much my love for myself causes me to go beyond any length of love I can give to it. I love myself in an ever changing way. Invincible to the eyes of any spectators. I'm kind to myself through a kind of abstraction. In a freedom given by God that I be who I am, I choose to play through the crescendo of tiptoeing the line of the fragile vanity of the self and ego. You'll never see my fall because I have made a deal with its endlessness to purposefully illustrate that I'm floating in peace rather than falling in despair. So carry me, Kitagawa, as Shizuku Kuroe carried you through your love in life.

Wigs; check, lenses; check, ears' piercings; check, choker and necklace; check, shirt and tie; check, skirt's length; check, bracelets and rings; check, shoes and socks; check – and I'm off. I made sure that the wig is Marin's curly hair variation as seen in episode three and as accurate as the accessories I went to at length to acquire. The piercings, choker, necklace, bracelets, and rings are all bought not shying away in details to how they can be seen in the *anime*. These piercings had posed problems between me and Mother because she thought I had been hanging around the wrong crowd to get myself to dress that certain way. It was a painfully drawn-out talk between the two of us until I managed to convince her that they are crucial for me on this day and that I'll take it off the week after the convention has ended. I managed to get everyone's attention on this effort that I have put in, but there isn't any sort of engagement from them beyond a passing compliment. Needless to say, I'm bitter. I could lurch at them. Pointing out toward their carelessness that they're exhibiting as what being passionate is. No, they should prostrate before me and spell out their apology because passion isn't the one thing that any of them have. Though I've wallowed in my hateful disappointment of these so-called cosplayers residing within the cosplaying circles in my city, I can't help but judge whenever there's a possible occurrence to. Like a reader who has read so much he's accustomed to almost every trope and cliché shortcuts an author might use that he becomes a writer, intensifying his frustration poured into motivations to prove how wrong these authors are to have been considered as one.

They should be thankful that I haven't yet lost my temper for others, only for myself. Also, the three of them are friends of mine or colleagues – they're interchangeable. They're most certainly familiar with my want to fish for attention, and I'm graciously glad that they're always there for me to be lured in by these baits. They can hate me however they want behind my back. I'll continue loving them until I don't. Why? Because they love me more than they hate me! They surely do! Throw me away and who would they have as a figure to look up to that this so-called "just a hobby" for them can actually be anything substantial, even in the substance as a mere hobby? You can't survive picking up an interest without knowing who inspires you alongside who your competitors are. Figures of inspirations, figures of competitions, they go hand-in-hand. My competitors – who're more accurately deserved victims – need to understand that the world they're inhabiting needs people such as me in order for them to peacefully dwell within their lowly environment. An environment exhibiting the lowest denomination of competitions, specifically catering to the bliss of ignorance of a purpose beyond the congenial agreement with temporal satisfaction. The steps they'll take within the circles of limitation inside this convention will lull them into the false belief of circling life in the peace of a koi fish, while I calculate each and every last one of those steps like a resting heron who always flies for clearer rivers.

I'm left to wonder and wander after lunchtime has come. As expected, our booth had little to no traffic. If I'm being generous, I can only possibly expect around three new customers to reach out to us for an order for a ready-made cosplay of their choosing. Hours have been passed enduring the equatorial heat and shielding others from said suffering. Only fellow cosplayers are allowed under our booth's tent though; that's how the unwritten rule goes. A voyage full of banters and babes rock me through an endless sense of profession's apathy. Stepping through our poor-quality samples, I begin to assemble myself with the afternoon crowd in contention to take the center of attention. It doesn't take long until their begging begins. A desire to have me eternally enslaved behind the length of their lenses pours endlessly through one schmuck to another. Cameras' clicks can't stop coming. Not to say I extend any love for they who're behind them. Most of those "they"; men. Repressed in their sex but little to no experience with the opposite sex. A glaring of pussies in heat. How I wish I can still wish these wishes of inflictions that if wished nowadays, they would deem it winning. Alas, in every sale I smile, as if keeping a kayfabe. Only when it comes down to certain low priorities, I prioritize giving the genuine me. Regardless, there's no exactness whether they love Marin more or me most. As yet; and through these mountainous efforts, I couldn't be her. Speaking in the external and internal. Within the former, what else is there that I'm missing which halt desires from grasping me into the vapid bondage of carnality. In essence, an eternal "pick me". So then, in the latter, a lecher such as I was never ever able to have found any link redeeming me with Mrs. Kitagawa. I count it as a blessing that all of these still last.

I have come to the end of the line. After stowing myself away inside the venue's bathroom, a group of cosplayers dragged me along to sit with them at the convention's maid cafe. As the person with the most experience of having been in Japan, I got picked as our table's storyteller. These tall tales that I tell make me fall for a grasp of better days. I sneak sneers about how little of a worth there is for us to try and imitate what Japan has, in the miniscule and the maximum. Take a look at this place for example, is what I wish I could tell them, but instead I muse them with false optimism. I had thought that I had become a better person now that I have experienced what it was like to be at the peak of life. Now, I understand how the bigger you are, the harder you fall. I may never rid myself out of my cynicism, yet I still pave paths and build bridges that distance myself from its grasp and all others who're associated with it. May the joy and laughter I share at this table enrich the little remaining time I can stay with them today. With that, words keep coming out of my mouth.

Even after I've finished, we never stopped talking about Japan. We got ourselves group photos alongside some of the working maids. A commemoration depending on how long until each and everyone forgets one another, until the next year hopefully comes. I parted with some, stayed with the others. The afternoon has set its sails past three and none of us are looking as enthusiastic anymore to be here. I become the first one to go, without any half-measured feeling. No things bought but food too, and no friends to come alongside with.

I made an excuse to Mother that I'm going to a mall to find myself a new book and to eat. I didn't tell her that I'm alone. And thankfully, I'm still able to think rationally and go get dressed in my spare clothes instead. I couldn't find any book worth buying and my foods are subpar at best. The excuses that I have made to be able to go here aren't paying off. At the counter of a yogurt stall, munching on my order as a means of dessert, I ponder that I have lost touch with today. Simply being in a present where I cope with the lack of companionship and reasons to come-and-go, I can't find myself finely attuning to the thoughts that keep me intact. It's a pervasively dull emptiness to be here. The day started as fast as it had come near its end. I couldn't finish the rest of my yogurt, its disgusting combination has no way to be masked so its invasion on my mouth felt too grueling to fight.

I got home with some bread for Father. Had a warm welcome from Mother and a shower prepared. This evening, it doesn't go by as it did this morning. It was refreshing to the body but not the mind. Keeping it that way on purpose, I didn't want to bear them anymore. I stuck myself to my bed, my eyes darting to each and everything in this bedroom that brings you to knowing me. They're likely in a conflict of agreement as I never throw away the pieces of me that don't exist anymore now. They'll be here for tonight, tomorrow, and days, months, and years to come which I can believe to be believable today. I've exhausted my body and mind today for all its worth. It likely isn't worth it. It may even already be a determined circumstance that what I had thought today must be thought that way, today. Where do I go from here? I go pray. When prayers become your habit, miracles become your lifestyle, or so they say. But I pray now because it's what most often precedes before sleep. So I do, my prayers wipe my day. And when tomorrow comes, I will then be the same I as today. So let me go because I'm not the same person that I was this morning.

Goodnight. I don't know. They shouldn't let me be my own writer.
