

K Powerless

Von Alma

Kapitel 2: A Cold Awakening

A cold shiver ran down his spine and tingled uncomfortably on his scorching hot skin. Sweat spread over his forehead, leaving him panting heavily for air. The heat was everywhere, burning him up from inside out. He felt like he was aflame, like his skin would melt under this horrible torridity just like wax did from a candle. It was a well-known heat. Like destructive burning coals of fire scorching his skin, like lava striking against his body, leaving him to ashes. It felt as if he would burn up for good.

And yet, over and over again, there was that frosty chill that descended abruptly into him. Like an ice cold bath after a long time spent in an overheated sauna. The constant alternation of cold and heat gradually rose to his head and made him dizzy. His muscles tensed as if they were close to be torn apart. He heard a faint echo in the distance. Someone called for him, it seemed. Only slowly, his heavy eyelids opened and he stared through the fog that surrounded him. There was a smell of charred flesh and blood. His muscles began to tremble, this time because of a renewed cold snap. With blurred eyes he stared into the grey thick mist, hearing the echo approaching.

A few awkward steps long he tried to move, but when he realized his body would not obey him as he wished; he stopped midway. The echo grew louder, as the mist around him darkened until he was surrounded by a dim starless night. He heard voices talking in a tangled mess. There was Izumo's voice and Anna's... and other ones, he believed he knew. An image flared up in front of him. He needed to blink before he could recognize the big man coming closer. With his elegant sword drawn, the man in the uniform ran towards him, his violet eyes stinging with emotion. Blood dripped down his forehead and from his shoulder down to his feet. Mikoto held his breath as he saw how the white floor began soaking in red until there was nothing but blood below his feet. He could not understand what was going on. Desperately, he opened his mouth to say something, but before he could even make a sound, the man in the uniform crashed to his knees. A painful scream parted Reisi's lips, as flames rose between his fingers clutching around his throat. The cry pierced through his heart, resounding brutally in his head. Pained, Mikoto bit his lips.

Another icy shiver flashed through him, followed by more violent growing heat. He could feel his heart pounding fiercely against his chest as he watched Reisi's motionless body sink to the ground. The soil beneath him seemed to lose solidity until it turned into a blood red sea of quicksand. Mikoto stumbled to regain his footing, but

Reisi's fallen body began sinking into the sand until he was close to drowning in this sea of his own sandy blood. The fog grew even thicker and made it harder for Mikoto to breathe. Every breath started burning like fire and tasting like blood. Frantically he made a step forward, felt his feet being sucked into the drift sand. His hand was reaching for Reisi. He stumbled one more step forward until he eventually fell headlong into the red sea of blood.

Another blow of heat pressed against him, causing his eyelids to squeeze shut. Blood went into his lungs as he tried to breathe. Coughing, he opened his eyes once more, finding himself in a dark sea of hazy hot blood. Reisi was in front of him, his lifeless body sinking further and further into the darkness below.

Fear nestled in his heart, causing him to swim after the foundering body. But with every stroke he made, with every inch he came closer to Reisi, the heat became even more unbearable. It was as if the sea in which he swam was boiling. He felt his mind slipping away from him, his body slowing dying because of the fever that plagued him. Strands of black hair sunk deeper and deeper into the hot dark void below and the more he struggled to save him, the quicker Reisi seemed to disappear. Around him it grew darker and darker, and even hotter. And then, for one moment, he thought he could not bear it any longer. He was asphyxiating.

A voice gouged into his heart and burned it to ashes. It was a laugh that pierced him, like a spearhead. The mask of a fox appeared in front of him, sending another icy rain of arrows through his soul. All of a sudden he was no longer in a sea of blood, but in a ubiquitous hell of fire. He could feel every lick of the flames biting holes into his skin, torturing him, promising to burn him alive. With each passing second, he felt the power being sucked out of his muscles as if the fire would melt every sinew and nerve and cell of his existence. There were other, unfamiliar voices that roared around him, trying to speak to him. But he did not understand. All he was able to hear was the devilish laugh that made his blood boil with anger. Vigorously, he tried to defend himself against the flames, aiming to be freed from this hell. But all of that just made the heat even more unbearable. Mikoto could barely breathe; every gasp was filled with acid. The dizziness was close to seizing him for good. He felt his life being ripped out of his chest.

Another scream cut the air, and made him lose control. And then, all of a sudden, he broke out and an avalanche of fire rolled through him. Someone screamed for mercy and he saw a face contorting with pain. Then, he began to fall. The ground below his feet gave away and the voices turned into bitter screams as he saw the mask getting farther and farther away. Helplessly, he tried to hold onto something, but there was absolutely nothing there except for the flames. The deeper he fell, the more he was embraced by the raging fire until the abyss of the scorching heat engrossed him completely.

And then, from one second to the other, he plunged into a sea of icy cold.

A chill, so cold he thought he would freeze to death, cut through his body. Slowly and

brutally, as if he were a fish that was cut sideways to be filleted. All of a sudden, there was only coldness, an icy wind that whistled through his emptied body like a squall through a vacant house. And darkness, a dangerous and frosty darkness. It seemed to cut his skin off his bones, making him unable to move. For a few painful moments, he was not even able to breathe. It felt as if he were still falling, sinking endlessly into the dark icy water, into the void that spread beneath him. Something was missing. Something was not there. He felt helpless and terribly weak. There was a reflection of himself falling. He tried to reach out for it, to save himself from being sucked into the black hole that opened. Hopeless. His face contorted with panic, as he plunged into the nothingness - the void devouring him completely. And it was cold. Terribly cold.

"Mikoto."

Abruptly, his eyes tore open. The fog disappeared, and with it the flames, the unbearable heat, the sea of blood and the echo in his ears. Only the cold remained, glued to him, promising to dismember him if he would dare to defy it. Mikoto stared blindly through the stained reality that spread out before him. He saw a few colours, red and green, a little blue and an excessive white. He couldn't make out more than that. The only thing that was completely clear were the voices that floated through the air.

"Mikoto?"

"He's finally waking up!"

"Shut up! Quit making such noise!"

"Mikoto-san!"

"Mikoto..."

He felt a hand on his, and it was as if the touch would burn him. Hissing violently for air, he began to blink. And with every glance, the colors and shapes mixed anew. He was so terribly dizzy, every inch of his body ached, burned and itched. He felt so weak, as if the next gust of wind could tear him off his feet. And then there was this cold - this dreadful cold that seemed to freeze him to the ground. It was so painful, so stressful to focus on the voices, and the colors in front of him that he was almost willing to give up trying. Only the thought of returning to the inferno and the sea of blood stopped him, made him fight against his senses.

"Mikoto."

Sluggishly, his head fell to the side. The first thing he saw were two large, beautiful eyes, framed by hair as white as ice. A smile appeared on her thin lips, as she noticed that their visions met. Her voice was so soft and quiet like falling snow.

"I knew you'd wake up..."

"Mikoto-san!" a loud, euphoric shouting made him wince, as Yata suddenly came into

his field of vision. The smile on his face was as bright as the sun. Yet at the same time, however, the young man with the beanie got a tremendous clout. Izumo hissed angrily and pushed him back. "Are you mad? Shut up! And pay some attention, damn it!"

"Hah... I'm sorry..." The young man blushed out of embarrassment, but could not resist a grin.

Mikoto felt a lump in his throat that made breathing impossible. Slowly, powerless, he let his eyes slide through the round. Anna and Izumo were right next to him, then Yata, Kamamoto... Shōhei and Chitose, Kosuke and Erik... Dewa and Bando... they were all here. A new flash of cold shook him when he moved his gaze further through the crowd. There was a vase of flowers beside him and the beeping of a device in his ears. It smelled strange in here and it was way too bright. The realization froze him to the bed he was lying in. He was... in a hospital, wasn't he?

"Mikoto-san! We're so glad you're awake!"

"Yeah, we were all worried!"

"How are you? Can we do something to make you feel better?"

"We have bought you a cake!"

"Would you let him wake up properly first?! Nobody wants your stupid cake!"

"...How could you say such a cruel thing?"

"Shut up."

"Do not tell me what I have to do!"

"Do you want to pick a fight or what?"

"Just come at me!"

"I told you all to shut up!"

Suoh needed a long moment before he could breathe properly again. He was able to distinguish reality from dreams now and so he knew that this was really happening. Yet, he still felt miserable, nothing but miserable. His muscles barely obeyed him. The pull of gravity seemed to have increased tenfold, pressing him brutally into his blankets. It felt as if someone had sucked him dry. He had no power left. Not even to move a toe. And then again, there was still this cold that just would not go away. This relentless cold that made him shiver constantly and with every painful breath he took. The cold, which froze him onto the bed in which he lay, made him unable to move. He was still alive? But why...?

"Oh, ignore these fools Mikoto." It was Izumo's quiet voice that was laughing now. "We're all just glad you woke up. For a moment... well... we really thought you were dead..."

The red-haired man slowly shook his head and ran his fingers over the sweat on his forehead. "What happened?" His voice was weak, tense as a string just before the rupture. It made him cringe in fear.

"Uh... to be honest... we were hoping you could tell us." The blond man grinned, scratching the back of his head. "But it doesn't really matter right now. Try to get

some rest first. You look terrible. Hahaha, no offense."

"What..." Mikoto gasped and blinked back to his friends. "What... happened?"
The short, helpless silence was broken by a silky, young voice. "...You were asleep. For three days."

Silently, Suoh looked at the girl and their eyes met in a very deep and intimate moment. For a second it seemed as if she could look into his soul, down to his very core, falling prey to the frosty devouring cold as well. Violently, the man had to swallow, but his throat was too dry for it to bring any relief.

"Ah yes..." Izumo sighed. "We brought you to the hospital after you had broken down."

Heavily, the leader closed his eyes and felt a stab in his heart. He opened his mouth, but did not have the strength to speak. So he was alive. But what about...

"The Blue King has helped us." Anna whispered, almost as if she had read his thoughts.

"Tsk!" Hissed Yata and crossed his arms. "Yes, like we needed his help. Damn Blues."

"Yata, just calm down already." The blond tall guy admonished him with a sharp look before he turned back to his friend. "Well, there is not much to tell, Mikoto. The Colorless King seems to be dead, and therefore, the whole incident is shelved."

Briefly, Mikoto shook his head to recollect his thoughts. But this terrible cold did not stop jerking him.

"Yes, we all knew that our leader would defeat him!"

"Yoooosh!"

"Homra is unbeatable!"

"No blood - no bones – no-!"

"Would you finally stop making such a rumpus?!"

Again, it was Yata who came closer, grinning, while the others in the background sang their anthem. The relief made his lips curve into a beautiful smile. "We're so glad you've finally woken up, Mikoto-san. I knew you could do it! I always believed in you! But still... when your sword of Damocles disappeared, we thought we would never see you again."

"Ah..." was all that Mikoto could squeeze out of his bruised throat. Incredulously, he looked at him. Yata confidently waved and gave him a poised smile. "Do not worry, Mikoto-san! We will always be Homra! Who cares if we have powers or not!"

Time seemed to stand still. All of the sudden Mikoto widened his eyes and opened his mouth. His heart stopped and he heard a clatter in his chest as if something had been broken. The cold was holding him in its frosty claws, seemed to poison him from

within. Now he knew where it came from and what it was. Instinctively, he tried to activate his magic, to awaken the flames within himself - even at the risk of burning down the whole room. But nothing happened. Nothing moved. There was absolutely nothing. And where once the flames had been giving him nightmares, there was only icy emptiness now. A sea of a vacuum in whose heart he perished in the cold.

He was alone. He was completely alone in this endless wintry naught. The realization froze his heart. With huge eyes, he stared at his friends. His voice cracked like a sheet of ice.

"I... am... no longer a king?"

"Captain." High heels clacked and clashed, as the blonde woman saluted and bowed reverently. With her usual businesslike, solidified face she turned to the man in the big comfy chair. "...We have received word that Suoh Mikoto has just awakened."

For the young woman it was hardly possible to capture the reaction of her boss adequately. It seemed there was no movement of his at all, he didn't even look at her – just fitting another jigsaw piece into its place with an unfazed expression on his lips. And yet, she had the feeling he held his breath for a moment, as if his eyelids lowered out of the much needed relief. Or perhaps it was just her imagination. Maybe it really was. With a calm and untouched expression Munakata Reisi closed his eyes and paused for a moment before he turned back to his puzzle.

"Good. You know what to do, Awashima-kun."

"Yes." Her body tensed up some more and her voice fell into a monotonous tone as she closely examined his mien. "Of course, Captain. We will have the hospital guarded by our men. Also, the Silver King calls for an appointment with you."

"Hm." Was all the man in the uniform replied for a long moment. Seri was not sure if he could feel how intense she was staring at him. But she just couldn't dissuade herself from watching him closely. While the long black strands of his silky hair may have hidden the stitched wound on his forehead, the black burn marks on his neck grabbed her attention vividly – despite his attempt to conceal them with his uniform buttoned up to his chin. The sight made her shiver.

"Tell him he may visit me, whenever he wants." Munakata finally replied, still not awarding the woman with any eye contact. "Is there anything else, Awashima-kun?"

"No." Seri answered abruptly, but she did not move an inch from the spot she stood on. Her body stiffened even more and she stopped breathing. Her heart began to beat violently in her chest as she struggled with herself. "Nothing... that's on the agenda, at least."

She could feel the look he was giving her now, making her cringe inevitably. He seemed to try making his face look friendly, but she felt something dangerous emanating from his eyes. His voice was very calm and collected, but at the same time

watchful and very admonishing. "Nothing... that would be on the agenda?"

"Captain." It was too late now. Too late for her to back down. She lowered her eyes as well as her head and bowed slightly before she could muster the courage to speak. "I hope you know that you are not obliged to be here, Captain. You... have the right to recover from the fight. ...Your injuries--"

"My injuries are no excuse to avoid my duties." He cut her off pitilessly. The blonde woman recoiled at this rebuke. She could feel the voice of her superior growing even colder. "Moreover, a couple of scratches won't be able to stop me from doing my job."

"...My apologies." Awashima replied reverently and bowed her head even lower. "It's just that..."

"I am honored by your concern, Awashima-kun. But it is not something you should concern yourself with. ...Is there anything else?"

"No." She swallowed hard and held her breath. "Excuse me."

Very quickly, she turned around and left the room. Outside the door, Awashima stopped and allowed herself to exhale again. Her eyes met the floor and for a moment she stayed where she was. If only she were able to help him...

A dark, cold and starry darkness embraced the sky furiously that night. The wind had snowflakes dancing through the streets, as it brushed the ice from the roofs of the buildings. It was particularly cold this night, for the clouds had been driven away by a glowing firmament which smoldered hazily through the bright lights of the lanterns. Two days had passed since word had reached out concerning the official "death" of another king. It was 2 a.m. and the streets were swept clean. Most buildings were dark and the big lanterns on the sidewalks looked like waiting guards keeping the sleeping safe. Except for one part of a certain street.

The light of the lamps above them were turned off, leaving the street in a dark and dangerous twilight. Except for the snow which occasionally drifted in their paths, there were no signs of movement at all. And except for the gentle wind there was only one sound breaking through the silence of the night. The clicking of a lighter being snapped open and shut playfully, forcing a flame to dance dangerously in the darkness of a little alley. A choked and mischievous chuckle followed and materialized in the cold as a thin, wet fog. A glance drifted through the night and a grin flashed on a pair of slim lips. The house they could see from across the street was asleep it seemed.

"Now or never, boys."

The men behind him joined in a destructive, thirsty murmur, as they dashed forward

through the darkened street. And their reflection shimmered against the silver plate of the bar they approached.

"Maaan... I really have to say, it is strange without our powers." With his hands buried in his pockets, Shōhei wandered through the dark streets, pulling a long face.

"Pfft tell be about it..." A short moan escaped Saburōta's mouth as he folded his arms behind his head. "...But who cares? As long as all of us are alive, everything's fine."

"Yeah, probably." Sighed the boy with the baseball cap and the short, auburn hair. "...Still... Mikoto-san looked pretty beaten... Must have been a really tough fight he had."

"Well, but we can do nothing about that now. All he needs is some more rest. Everything else depends on the future. I mean... whether with or without his Sword of Damocles, our boss is a tough one. Another two or three days in the hospital and he is back on his feet."

"I don't know..." Shōhei whispered uncertainly. "It's almost three days since he woke up... and he still looks terrible."

A clout made the boy groan and drove him close to tears. "Ouch! What was that for?" Saburōta bared his teeth and looked at him offended. "Mikoto-san isn't our leader for nothing! No one can compete with him! And even if he just sleeps all day – that means he needs to gather his strength! So don't talk nonsense like that and believe in him!"

"Alright already! Relax!" He dodged a second clout and danced a few steps forward. "How about telling me that nicely next time?! Why are you so mean to me?!"

"I would be nice to you if you weren't such an idiot!"

"You're the one to talk!"

"Grrr, now you've done it! Prepare yourself to die!"

Shōhei was just starting to run away from his friend, when he turned into the next street and suddenly came to an abrupt halt. Saburōta was just about to hit him again, but as he followed his gaze, he stopped as well. A red violent light reflected in his widened eyes. In the darkness of the street, flames shot their way out of a building. It was Shōhei who was able to form words first. His voice trembled mightily.

"Hey... isn't that our bar?"

The sun stabbed his eyes uncomfortably and he had to raise his hand to grant them

some shade. It was such a beautiful day. An almost cloudless sky, a pleasant, bright sunlight and a warm wind from the sea. A much too nice picture for the sight that presented itself to him. The soot from the flames had spread up into the street. The windows were smashed and its wood frames charred. They looked like skeletons reaching for help with their bony fingers. The entire facade was black with the remnants of smoke and where the shimmering platinum sign of "Homra" had once shone, now was another message sprayed all over it.

Don't mess with us.

A click snapped his tongue and he folded his arms. Around him were crowds of police officers. Some talked with his subordinates, some with members of Homra. And he was sure, Kusanagi-san was here somewhere, clinging to the last remnants of his whole pride. Fushimi clicked his tongue again, for he had long noticed that Misaki was not here. And he himself shouldn't be either. When his captain had learned of the incident, he had explicitly excluded him from the mission. Not that this would have fazed Fushimi - he had come anyway. The worst punishment his boss could give him was to suspend him from duty for a while. And even that would not bother the black-haired man. He would not be deterred from doing what he wanted. Especially not by an arrogant boss like that.

Unerring, Saruhiko went to the police chief, who was just being questioned by Kamo Ryūhō - the appointed leader of this little mission. He slid between them and forced the long-haired man in blue to take a step backwards. "Scepter 4 takes over the case. The police may now turn to more important things. "

Kamo gave him an icy look and growled softly as he drew an aggressive step closer again. "Fushimi... you should not be here."

"And yet here I am. Have a little more respect for your superiors." Hissed Fushimi and was well aware of the irony of him saying such words. But he was too cranky now to think about it. With a bored and antiseptic look, he turned to the older man with the mustache, who led the local police. "Send the current information your men have gathered to our headquarters. Captain Munakata will deal with it. Have you found anything interesting?"

Kamo still growled in the background, a fact that made the police chief look irritated and frightened at the same time. He did not trust these men in blue. But he was way too afraid of their powers to say something inappropriate. So all he did was nod at Fushimi and tried to hide his emotions. "Not much. The inside of the bar was severely damaged, as well as the upper rooms. Stolen were some alcohol and some valuables. We're still unclear about who could have done it."

Annoyed, Fushimi turned away from him and walked past his subordinate. "Pffft... and you call that police work."

He barely noticed the two evil eyes which plowed into his back. And he wasn't interested in the slightest. With heavy feet, he joined the remnants of the bar. It

smelled pungently of soot and alcohol and nitrogen from the fire extinguishers that had been used. With all this smut and grime the room seemed even darker and more stifling than it had always felt. In the middle of the debris Saruhiko stopped and looked around. Tables were overturned, chairs smashed and half the alcohol demolished with the broken bottles hanging lost in the rack. The ceiling was barely visible below the soot and the rest of the room had been ravaged by the flames as well. Everywhere lay fragments of glass and wood, a baseball bat and some other things the fire made unrecognizable. The jukebox in the corner was knocked over and its records were on the ground - scattered and destroyed.

"Tsk". Once again, the black-haired man with the glasses folded his arms and let his view circle. He felt strangely afflicted in this place. It was like a stab in his chest. Not because this room might have meant something to him - no, indeed he really didn't care at all about that. It left a bitter taste because he knew that this probably meant the end of Homra.

The whole thing wore him down. Not only that these idiots of Homra now no longer even had a home, but because the police was too stupid to see the connections. It was obvious who did it. Cowardly and treacherously, just like one would expect. But on the other hand, Homra had it coming. Those who made many enemies were massacred mercilessly in a moment of weakness. Once again Saruhiko hissed and closed his eyes. He had to get out of here. The stench of memory left him sick.

A gentle light drifted through the window of his room. He could watch the sun set in the distance. The sun seemed to set the sky ablaze as if the clouds were on fire and only a soft pink and dwindling blue tried to quench them. A soft, cold wind swept through the half-open window onto his bed and made him shiver. Not that it was ever really warm since he had woken up. Nevertheless, Suoh made no effort to move or slip under his blanket to escape from the cold. Wordlessly, he looked out the window and waited. For what he did not know. Maybe he waited for the cold that had imprisoned him to finally release him from that unconscious state. Maybe he waited for himself to finally feel better, finally feel stronger. Maybe for a return of his fire, the hot flames that had devoured him for so long. Or maybe he was just waiting for a visit. A visit from Anna, Izumo and his friends. Or for *him* finally giving a sign of life.

Gulping down a quick surge of anger, Suoh lowered his head and closed his eyes. Since he had lost his powers, he was terribly unbalanced. Cold anger seethed in him, over and over again, ever since he started to remember correctly what had happened. He remembered how that bastard of a king had taken over his body. And what he had done to him. He remembered how he had had to watch helplessly as the Colorless King had tortured Reisi. Even now he was shaking with rage at the very thought of these images. He remembered exactly now. How he had tried to fight back. How he had tried to stop him. How it had driven him mad.

And then everything had gone blurry. He remembered that he had tried to direct the flames towards the Colorless King. The very flames that had brought him so many years of nightmares. And then, quite suddenly, it had somehow worked. His fire had

turned against the new king and had gone out of control. He remembered the king slowly being devoured by his flames, the new power he had quenched to obtain. And he remembered clutching to his soul, forbidding the colorless spirit to leave his body. Someone had helped him, he guessed. Mikoto recalled other voices, other personalities buzzing around him, pinning the king down to where he was. And the flames had gone even more out of control, burning everything in their path, cracking the very core of this alien soul in his body. Then all had been quiet. Still and cold and without the burning which had tormented him for so long.

He had done a lot of thinking, tried to explain it logically. But it seemed sure the Colorless King had fallen victim to the flames that he himself had endured for so long. The King had not been able to withstand the brutal raging fire that had come with his new power. He was consumed by the power he had wanted and had burned to ashes through it until neither his soul nor his stolen powers were anymore.

With the death of the Colorless King, his Sword of Damocles was gone. His power had been taken from him the moment, the Colorless King had entered his body. And with his power gone, the only thing that remained were his body and his soul. Suoh's gaze went down at his hands grievously. There was a ghastly itching everywhere - his fingers, his arms, even his chest. The rampant flames had engulfed his body and had left their disgusting remains all over his upper body. Black and charred, red and hurt, the burn marks curled across his skin and made him cringe. It burned, itched and felt as if it would never stop. But even though he felt faint, exhausted and without any footing to hold on to - he knew that burning. He was already used to it.

Reisi must have endured the same pain, the same marks. The thought made him sick.

His eyes closed anew and he held his breath. Never would he have thought, he would feel so empty without his powers - so eerily weak and useless. Every attempt to get up gave him a hard time. He felt so heavy, his legs so weak, every step an insecure tumbling. That was humiliating enough. Even worse was the cold that still had him in a firm grip. He did not know if it just stemmed from the fact there were no more flames burning him from the inside any longer, or whether it was something else which grew in his chest, making him feel as if he would freeze to death. He knew only one thing: never in his life had he felt so miserable, had his body felt so alien and wrong; never had he felt so fragile.

Nearly ... but just nearly, he wished it would have ended differently.

A knock drew his attention to the door. His head turned only ponderously. Unsolicited, someone entered and closed the door with a gentle push behind him. A blond man was standing at the door, not sure if he was able to look at his friend or not. Izumo looked awful, beaten and at the end of his tether. Only for a short instant, he managed to look at him before his eyes slid back to the ground. He shook his head and his voice was barely more than a thin breath when he finally managed to squeeze the words out between his teeth.

"Mikoto... I... something happened."

