Mental Apocalypse

Last Chapter

The air was thick with smoke, and the distant fires cast a dim, flickering glow over the ruined city. Mira sat gracefully on a cracked marble bench, pouring tea as if the world hadn't already fallen apart. Her refined black dress was laying perfectly flat, she had a white pearl necklace on, and bright red lipstick suiting her sharp dark brown eyes. The streets were empty, lifeless, except for the three of them.

Tao and Ryota stood across from her, their bodies tense. They had seen what she had done to the others. She didn't kill with weapons—she killed with words, twisting people's minds until they lost themselves completely. No blood, no violence. Just whispers, illusions, and slow, creeping madness.

"You should sit," Mira said, her voice smooth and inviting. "There's no need to be so afraid."

Ryota kept his gun lowered but firm in his grip. Tao glanced at him, her knife trembling slightly in her hand. They had to be careful. Mira could turn reality into a lie, make them believe anything she wanted.

Mira sighed, taking a delicate sip of tea. "You've been fighting for so long," she said, tilting her head slightly. "But you don't have to. I can make it all stop. Just… let go."

Ryota's head suddenly felt heavy. The ground beneath him seemed to shift. His vision blurred.

Then, in an instant, the burning city was gone.

He was sitting in a hospital room.

The walls were bright white. The air smelled of disinfectant. A doctor sat across from him, smiling gently. She looked familiar, as almost very familiar. It was Mira. She has her silk black hair tied up in a bun, and was wearing a white hospital robe.

“Ryota,” the doctor said. “You’ve been here for months. There was never an apocalypse. No Mira. No Tao. You imagined everything.”

His breath caught in his throat. His hands were wrapped in bandages. His wrists stung as if they had been cut. He glanced at the table in front. A small cup with two white pills sat there, waiting for him.

“It’s time to wake up,” Mira said kindly. “Take your medicine.”

Ryota’s hands trembled as he reached for the pills. Maybe this was real. Maybe he had lost his mind. Maybe Tao had never existed.

Then he heard it.

A faint whisper.

“Ryota.”

His head snapped up. Tao was sitting on the floor in hospital room, just beyond the glass window. Her hospital gown was soaked in blood. A scalpel lay in her hand, her wrists sliced open.

“Tao!” Ryota lurched forward, but his feet wouldn’t move.

The doctor placed a firm hand on his shoulder. “She isn’t real,” she said gently. “You need to let go.”

Tao met his eyes, her face pale and desperate. Then, with shaking hands, she lifted the scalpel again.

Ryota's breath caught in his chest. No.

"Ryota, she isn't real. Take the medicine. Her blood isn't real."

Ryota's gaze flickered to Tao. Her eyes—those were hers. She owned them. It was her. It had to be.

"Ryota… if I'm not real, then it shouldn't matter if I die, right?" Tao's voice wavered, her breath unsteady. "You have to understand—she's lying. She's playing with your mind, just like she did to the others. If I don't exist, then…"

She inhaled sharply, trembling, before a ragged cough forced its way out. Slowly, she raised the scalpel again, pressing it against her wrist. A fresh scar bloomed beneath the blade, merging with the rivers of crimson that already painted her skin.

"Tao, don't—Tao, I… I know you're real." Ryota whispered.

A voice interrupted, soft yet firm.

"Oh dear… who are you talking to?"

Mira's tone was laced with pity, her movements intentional as she slid a cup of water and two white pills across the table. "Your hallucinations are getting worse. Take this."

She stood, stepping toward Ryota. He reached out for the pills.

"Don't!" Tao's voice cracked as she shouted.

But Mira didn't flinch. She didn't even acknowledge her. She walked forward, her gaze never leaving Ryota. As she moved, her high heels came down—hard—on Tao's fragile spine.

A strangled cry ripped from Tao's throat.

"AHH—Ryota, help! Wake up! RYOTA, WAKE UP!"

Her eyes locked onto his, wide with desperation.

"Ryota, don't listen to her. Take the medicine," Mira urged, her voice eerily calm.

Tao gasped, voice raw. “So you hear me now?” Her body shook, her blood pooling around her. “RYOTA, WAKE UP! PLEASE!”

Something inside him snapped.

He shoved the doctor away, knocking over the stool beneath him. The walls flickered like a broken screen. The lights above cracked and sparked. The hospital room trembled—

Then it all shattered.

He gasped as he was thrown back into reality. Tao clutched his arm, her grip strong, though the scars weren’t gone. His bandages weren’t either. The ruins of the city surrounded them once more. The fires still burned. And Mira sat across from them, watching with quiet amusement.

“You almost fell for it,” she said, smiling, “How disappointing.”

Ryota’s breath was ragged as he raised his gun.

“No more games.”

Mira sighed as if she’d been through this countless times before. “Oh, Ryota. You still don’t understand, do you?”

She lifted her hand. At first, nothing happened. Then Tao’s grip on his arm suddenly tightened—no, not tightened. Crushed.

Tao let out a choked scream as her fingers twisted unnaturally, her bones snapping like twigs. She dropped to her knees, clutching her hand, her face pale with agony.

“You think you can defy me?” Mira whispered, standing gracefully. “I don’t need illusions to break you.”

Ryota turned his gun to her, but the ground beneath his feet melted. The ruined city blurred, twisting into a dark canyon. The air turned heavy, suffocating. He felt something slithering up his legs, cold and wet, wrapping around his chest, his throat—he was drowning.

His lungs screamed for air. He clawed at the unseen force suffocating him. But through the darkness, Mira's voice rang clear:

"This is what you wanted, isn't it? To resist me? To fight?" Her tone was sickly sweet, almost adoring. "But Ryota… you were never meant to win."

A second voice—barely a whisper, raw with pain—cut through the void.

"Ryota…"

Tao.

He turned toward the sound, his vision spinning. She was still there, barely holding herself up, blood running from her mouth. Through the agony in her eyes, there was something stronger. Defiance.

He wasn't going to lose himself. Not again.

With every ounce of willpower, he forced himself to move. The abyss cracked. The suffocating darkness ripped apart. He fell forward, back into reality, gasping. Tao's trembling hand reached for him. He grabbed it, grounding himself.

Mira tilted her head, the barest flicker of disappointment crossing her face. Then she smiled again.

"How resilient," she murmured. "But it won't matter."

She traced a finger along the rim of her teacup, her voice turning distant.

"I was never meant to exist. My mother didn't want me. My father only wanted an heir. I was nothing to them—just a problem to be solved."

Her fingers brushed the spilled tea on the table, as if lost in thought.

“I tried to love once. There was someone who promised me a way out, someone who said he cared. But in the end, he was afraid of me too. Because I saw through him. Because I knew he was weak.” Her voice dropped to a whisper. “So I let him go. And after that, I stopped pretending.”

Mira let out a small giggle and met Ryota’s gaze, unafraid.

“I never lied to you. The world is cruel. People are fragile. I only showed them the truth.”

Ryota’s hands shook, but Tao’s steadying touch grounded him.

He pulled the trigger.

Mira’s smile didn’t fade, even as the bullet struck.

She collapsed, tea spilling onto the cracked ground. The last illusion fading with her.