

Chapter 04: Hibernal nightmare – Part One

„GREEN! GREEEEEEEEEEEN!“ Awakened because of a nightmare, Pink jumped out of her warm, comfy bed and ran around as if lightning has struck her; crisscross through her and Green’s apartment, searching for her housemate, because Pink absolutely had to tell Green about her nightmare. It was vitally important! All sorts of things could happen if she wouldn’t notify her.

At once she dashed into Green’s bedroom, but there was nobody in there.
„GREEN!“ Out of pure panic the first tears started to form in her eyes, which quickly grew to be fast-flowing streams of tears. But then a sudden thought struck her:
Green had said something...but...what had it been?

Pink tried to concentrate and stood motionless in the middle of the room for a long time, until she remembered Green saying something about a trip. She had told her the previous day that her class would be going on a class trip and hence she would stay over at Sho’s the day before their departure. Or...something like that? But Green didn’t seem to be too excited about it... But what to do about Pink’s nightmare, now?! Well, it wasn’t *that* important...

...

Of course it was IMPORTANT! It was VITALLY important!
But how on earth could she inform Green... Pink sighed.
And then she came to a decision; she would simply go back to sleep!

The train chattered over the rails, fully loaded with jolly students who couldn’t wait for the end of the journey - they wanted to reach the destination and lunge at the class trip with full power, with everything it offered. Sho was one of those looking forward to their trip the most. Although she had visited places all over the world and she wasn’t as athletic as Green, she looked forward to the difference a class trip offered contrary to a family trip: one could cause mischief. Aside from that the trip was mostly her doing...her’s and her money’s.
Green didn’t seem to share her euphoria.

„Oh Green, come one! We’re on our way to Hokkaidô! That’s simply wonderful, isn’t it...oh... a true winter dream!“ Sho went on gushing, talked about romantic and the flair of a fireplace, paired with snow and a can of hot chocolate – and of course, the matching guy...
„I’d rather call it a hibernal nightmare“, Green said more to herself than to the raving Sho.
Said one looked at her questioningly.

„What did you just say?“ But the brown-haired girl shook her head.

„N-Nothing, really...it's not important. Umm, say....will it snow on Hokkaidô – because of the season?“ Her voice was slightly trembling when she asked it. Her friend shot her a bewildered look, which wasn't surprising due to Green's predication.

„Umm, Green, why don't you take a look out of the window? It's been snowing for half an hour already.“ Green's reply was a mere sigh. She didn't want this to be true...why did it have to snow...the sheer thought made her feel cold. She tugged her jacket even tighter. A whole week of snow and ice...the worst case scenario to her, a true hibernal nightmare...

The snow crunched below her feet and called forth none too pleasant memories. Memories she had pushed aside a long time ago, memories which haunted her only in her nightmares... She tried not to look up into the sky, which would be too white, hidden through the white glory coming from above. It sufficed to see the tiny little snow-flakes just in front of her eyes, when they reunited with the snow from the ground, to make Green tremble – even though she already wore two jackets, which should do a good job at protecting her from the cold.

A slap on her back made her emerge from her daydreams and she noticed Sho's face in front of hers.

„You don't look well, your face even got a bit pale...“ Sho's concern for Green got interrupted by their classmates, who had already detected the hotel they'd stay in for four days. They weren't speechless without cause, and Sho enjoyed it to the fullest. After all she had been the one to select the hotel, since her family had funded the trip to more than 60% - like they did with most of the school's arrangements (sometimes Green wondered *who* owned that school).

Sho loved luxury, and therefore one could somehow imagine what their doss looked like. In any case, it wasn't your usual youth hostel. It was truly a western-styled luxus hotel. The first thing that entered Green's mind was the fact that they could never pay for such an expensive stay. But – truth to be told – she had been prepared for such a view, after all she had lived with Sho – and they'd been a few times in a foreign country. The rooms were charmingly furnished. The girls's had a gentle green, while the boys's had a light blue. Sho inspected their minibar with scrutiny, whereas Green dropped down on the canopy bed.

„We're in room 443. We should keep that in mind, here are a lot of rooms we could get lost in. “ Shortly after saying these words she crossed the room and opened a huge window. The snowing had stopped and frosty wind blew in.

„Ah, isn't it lovely! The snow shines so prettily! I think we could even go ice skating!“ Sho's eyes downright gleamed with joy, contrary to Green, who pulled the blanket over her head.

„Care to take a look what the ice looks like? The program of the hotel says they would also lend skates!“ When the overeager Sho turned around to face Green, she met disappointment itself – because Green had fallen asleep. She watched her friend for a moment and wondered whether she slept for real, and if she did, if one was supposed to rouse her. After all she couldn't be that immersed in her dreamland just yet. Sho didn't feel like joining up with everyone in their class, but she allowed Green to sleep nonetheless. She took a hold of her jacket, her scarf and her gloves and left their room.

The cold wind curled Green's hair. She squinted her eyes and fidgety turned from one side to the other, at which her bell gently dropped upon the mint-green blanket. The girl was deeply drowned in her sleep and not even the icy wind coming from the open window could wake

her. Rather contrary to it. The wind seemed to lure her even further into her ill-omened sleep...

... and she also did not notice she was no longer alone in their room. Calm and motionless she lay there, didn't move when the intruder came closer. She was already too lost in her dreams.

Not until he grasped at the bell the girl reacted; she grabbed his wrist out of the blue. Said intruder froze inwardly, didn't dare to breathe anymore, but still, she remained asleep; her reaction had been nothing but a reflex. Without waking her, he skillfully disengaged himself from her delicate fingers.

His goal was within his grasp, but when his fingertips practically touched it, Green said:
„...It...is...so...very...cold...“

An exactly these words petrified his movement. All of sudden the girl started to squint her eyes tightly, her breathing started to accelerate and her face got paler and paler. A second source of intrusion made itself felt, because one could hear steps from the corridor.

The door got literally knocked open and Sho stood as an aside. She caught sight of the widely opened window and then – slightly frustrated – of still asleep Green. Right before their departure she had headed back to their room, hoping her friend would have woken by now. But she could see all too well: her friend was still slumbering. Sho had no choice but to turn on her heels and leave the room for a second time that day. With it she left Green on her own, accompanied by nightmares only...

Snow, snow all over the place...Coldness, daring to swallow...a grey sky, enshrouded by large, white fir trees...

Roaring laughter filled Green's head; these memories felt as if they shattered her thoughts. „Schwester Green, won't you try it one more time? It's not that hard!“ The girl looked at her imploratory, while she slowly lowered her skates. Presumably because she knew her pleading wouldn't work in the end. Instead she used her gloved hands to take a hold of Green's, wanting to warm them up again.

*Coldness, which won't ever set you free...
Which clings to you....*

„She won't ever learn it! She's simply too stupid! Am I right, Green?
Just go and admit it! You're scared to disgrace yourself!“

Which makes you lose any power to go on...

The girl, who wanted to give Green her skates, did not pay any attention to them. She continued rubbing her small warm fingers with Green's, seriously attempting to grow them warm. That girl's hands were always warm...while Green's were always cold. „Don't mind them, you know! If you don't want to, you don't have to.“ The group's peals of laughter erupted even more. „Are you going to side with her, Kari?!“

Which awakens weariness and weakness in your heart...

Still, the girl didn't pay any attention, but Green moved herself away of the girl's grasp. The laughter promptly fell silent. Frozen, but lurking, they watched Green pulling on said skates and taking hold on the ice rink's boundary.

Her legs were shaking when she took the first step, and she had just barely let go of the boundary when she came a cropper.

Seething snow...

Their reaction came quickly; they had braced themselves for this situation. The rhythm which applied to the snow falling down from the sky, also applied to the tears rolling down on Green's cheeks. Her face was reddened because of all the water streaming down, and she could do nothing to stop crying.

...which doesn't let pass a sound...

„Crybaby! Crybaby! Look guys! Just the way I told you! Green is not even able to do a simple step on the icy surface!“

...you'll meld with the snow by yourself...

The laughter inside of Green's mind got louder and louder. It replicated thousandfold and spread through her body as quickly as the cold, fluttering inside of her body. Coldness embraces her, wouldn't let go of her, wouldn't ever let go of her... The louder their peals of laughter got, the more it sparked the fire of hate inside of her; hatred for everyone who laughed at her in her childhood, who left her all alone, hatred for all of them!

That mixture of coldness and hatred educed a helix, which seemed to impale her, but in the end it also managed to jolt her out of her dreams. Despite the fact that her whole body quivered because of the cold, she was covered in beads of sweat.

Out of breath she simply lay there, misty-eyedly staring at the ceiling as if she had a fever. She struggled not to think, but the laughter went on and on like an echo through her mind.

Without being aware of it she clutched her belly tightly with both hands, as if it would have been able to help her overcome these shadows of the past...

Shortly after Green had showered extensively and for a long time, it was dinner-time. She felt better than she did before, even if the hot water wasn't able to utterly defeat the coldness.

Well, how should it be? The cold came from inside, where water couldn't reach...

Amidst the dinner, which seemed to be more of a feast in Green's opinion, Sho barged in. She had had so much fun with skating that she lost track of time. Whilst she tucked in - even though she complained about dinner (she preferred her personal cook's abilities) - she talked about her afternoon and went on and on about all these handsome men she had seen - no surprise: the skating was a minor matter.

Some hours later both girls were back in their room, after having talked about this and that with their female classmates. Sho was completely exhausted and only had one last wish:

her bed. She was also too tired to argue with Green about their open window:

Sho always slept with it widely open, but Green insisted on closing it.

When Green got herself ready for bed, something crossed Sho's mind and she had to say it before sleep would embrace her.

„But if you hate sleeping with an unclosed window – why didn't you shut it a short while ago, when you were sleeping in here?“ Out of the bathroom Green said she wouldn't have opened it in the first place; she had been sleeping all that time.

„It's simple, you didn't shut it correctly.“

After hearing such an accusation, Sho couldn't stay in bed anymore.

„Of course I did!“, she furthermore insisted.

„I've got the same windows at home. They lock on their own.“

„It's called autolock“, Green added and got slightly more musing when she said it.

„Uhu! Maybe someone broke into our room! So exhilarating! But aren't these locks unbreakable?“ Even though she was currently brushing her teeth, Green had to roll her eyes. There couldn't possibly be anyone but Sho, who'd get excited about a raid. Maybe it was because she could simply re-buy anything which could have been stolen – if it came to the situation, of course. Most definitely *she* didn't have *any* money troubles.

When Green had finished her nightly health care and put on her pajama she returned to their shared room, in which she discovered Sho, deep in thoughts. She probably already wrote the next extravagant story for the student magazine in her head. Not for nothing Sho was known for making a mountain out of a molehill; if there was even the slightest suspicion of a suitable story, she drew it up until it became a headline. Almost certainly that was the reason the student magazine was so well liked, even if everyone knew not even half of its content was true; it was more Sho's captivating writing style, and sometimes you had to think twice in order to catch the hoax.

However, Green wasn't in the mood to read any burglary-story regarding their hotel's room, and therefore she tried to talk Sho out of it:

„Even autolock isn't unbreakable as people say. It *is* hard to force it open, but there won't ever be a lock which cannot be cracked: You just need to know *how*.“

Sho's eyes started glow and she leaned forward to her friend slightly.

„Are you sure someone has broken in?“ Green shook her head.

„For one there's nothing missing. I just checked and our money's still there, just like anything else worth to be stolen.“ By now Sho looked at her sceptically.

How could Green know where she hid her money?

„...and for another, I doubt anyone in our class is able to crack an autolock type APX D3 by Xerion!“ Sho stared at her for a long time and with widely opened eyes – in silence.

One could read quite clearly by looking at her face that she was yet again surprised because of Green's slightly criminalistic knowledge, and most likely she would have loved to clasp her purse to check if the contents were still in there. Green only smiled innocently and said:

„General knowledge.“

„Okay, then my general knowledge is definitely not general.“

When the girls had finally stopped talking, they were fast asleep. Green had inspected the locks a few more times before they went to sleep and checked if it was shut tightly. She didn't

consider someone could have broken in. Neither lock nor the rest of their room showed any signs of an intruder. Even so, she slept with her money directly under her pillow.

Slowly Green's winged bell rose from her chest. It glowed in a silver-ish light, and suddenly it made an earpiercing ring, which instantly managed to awaken Green. Her eyes still closed in annoyance, she clasped her bell and the sound died.

Sleepily Green rubbed her eyes and yawned heartily as a start. Only then she noticed the bell had a light circle enclosed. Green simply stared at it, unsure, if she could simply act, as if she had only seen the light in her dreams. She looked sideways to Sho, but said was fast asleep. It seemed to be weird to her, that she didn't rise up by the sheer enormous noise the bell presented.

Green sighed deeply. Did she really have to stand up, go into that icy cold and fight against one of these oversized demons? She fell backwards into her pillow.

No; if she had to do it, she'd do it tomorrow – and not in the middle of the night.

That sounded not as dangerous...she closed her eyes again, but sleep wouldn't embrace her. And the cause of that were obviously Pink's words: „*It's our holy duty!*“

„Pink, I want to sleep in peace!“, Green hissed, but it wouldn't work anymore – she would not be able to sleep anymore, so she could just as well go outside. Careful not to wake Sho she pulled on extra warm clothing and sneaked outside, her body still trembling.

The freezing nightly air blew towards her and it sent shivers through her spine.

The first problem was quite obvious: it was pitch-dark.

The second one was, that if someone would catch her trying to sneak away, she'd get more than a simple scold.

Sadly, the third problem was also majorly important:

How was she supposed to fight under these circumstances?

And the fourth and by far worst problem: it was cold as ice.

Green dragged herself through the snow and tried to assure herself that it wasn't cold. This attempt had a rueful outcome and bit by bit the cold seemed to devour her skin and her bones. Green wondered what the degree-scale would say and for another, if she really wanted to know the answer to it. Whatever it was, she surely felt the degrees were way too low.

The bell she held in her hand glimmered and showed her the way. From time to time, she could hear the faintest ring emitting from the bell. And the further she went into that icy hell, the louder the ringing of her jewellery got.

It also took too much time till the bell's glow got finally swallowed by darkness just like the soft jingle. Because Green's eyes had already gotten used to the obscurity, she noticed that she had arrived on a huge clearance. The moon broke through the cloud's blanket and got dimly reflected on the frozen up surface of a lake. Most likely this one was the lake Sho and her classmates had been skating on hours ago, because one could see the skid-marks clearly in the dull light.

Green sensed the feeling of hatred bubbling up from her past - just like the fitting images.

She shook her head, trying not to pay attention to it, not to be distracted by it.

It was much more important to focus on her mission than to lose herself in ancient times.

Even so she couldn't make out anything menacing – not to speak of a demon – caution was

advised. She took a look down on her resting bell, noticing it surprisingly looked just like any normal bell at the moment.

But as if it wanted to prove Green wrong, the bell suddenly blasted in a glaring light and again one could hear the earpiercing sound – it was way louder than ever before, and Green dropped the bell unvoluntarily because she had to block her ears in pain. Since Green did not want to face the demon without any weapon, she quickly stooped down to clasp the bell once again. Immediately it fell silent.

Green sighed in relief, what the hell had just happened?

She eyed it up, standing in the shadows.

In the *shadows*?!

Wait, she was on a *clearing*...how could there be a *shadow*?!

Green barely dared to turn around, because accompanied by a horrible feeling in her belly she had already found an answer. And she didn't even have to turn around. A decuman power ignited a true hellfire of pains when it slashed her back. The pressure was so tremendous she got catapulted away. A few centimetres from the lake Green came to a sudden halt. She had shut her eyes tightly.

That „something“ had managed to tear the clothes on her back apart, and the warm streaming blood was quickly chilled down by the coldness surrounding her. Green gasped and opened her eyes to look into the “something”'s face. But it proved to be more difficult than expected; that was because said “something” shaped up as an oversized demon was already preparing for the next attack. Green swayed the bell, whereby it turned into her faithful weapon. She was prepared; prepared to make this dense oversized demon pay for her pretty now torn clothing!

Green knew this wouldn't be an easy go - for one this monster was larger than the ones she had fought before regarding its size; it was surely more than ten metres in high. But aside from that, that demon seemed to lack braincells, because it lashed about without any concept or plan and had already shattered a few bystanding trees. It wasn't that difficult for Green to dodge his attacks – he obviously couldn't aim very well – in spite of her injury.

The distinction in height was a clear advantage for as it seemed, because for comparatively small Green it was easy to slip through his attack pattern and avoid any further damage.

But a fight couldn't go on with endless darting away, and she decided to put an end to it.

She used the next attack of said demon to put it into practise: the emerging wave of pressure enabled Green to use it as boost to jump into the sky. When she felt she was high enough, just slightly above the tree's crown, she struck out with her bell-stick;

„DARKLIGHTNING!“, she screamed into the chilly nightly air.

The energy concentrated in her stick and shot a direct hit onto the demon. Just when Green proudly wanted to give herself a pat on the back, she noticed – still hanging in midair – that the demon didn't even have a scratch. The demon played on Green's inability to avoid his attack now and shot a dark beam towards Green. Said one met its goal and blood splashed in front of the round moonsurface. The Wächterin's arm was done for; and right into the bargain it was the arm which was supposed to carry the stick.

Green wasn't able to hold onto it any longer and it dropped to the ground, ending up in the snow. Its master nearly ended up beside it, but in the last moment she was able to use her healthy arm in order to clasp a branch. Now, she had only one arm left – which meant it

would be considerably harder to avoid the next attack of the demon and she tried to gather herself as quick as possible.

Green quickly looked for her stick on the ground. It wasn't all that far away from the demon...to be precise, it was way too close to its huge feet beset with clutches.

If Green wanted to get her weapon back, there was not only a danger to be smashed herself, but for the weapon as well. But without any weapon – and possibility to attack – it would be hard to make it out alive. Green felt that her finger, desperately clasping the branch, got numb by each second and with a queasy feeling she tried to calculate the meters to the ground – and detected that it weren't just a few. But she only had two choices anyway: to fall down or to get hit by the next attack – and just before said one could reach her she let go of the branch.

The next beam just barely missed her. Sadly, the huge demon concentrated on his victim now - instead of lashing around without any coordination. Green wasn't sure whether she's call it luck or bad luck when she ended up in a huge pile of snow - and nearly drowned in it. Her legs were surely thankful, because without the very soft landing place her legs would most likely been broken...the rest of her body revolted against the situation, though.

Green cursed herself and her weakness, when she entangled herself out of the snowy masses. The coldness managed to weaken her pains, but the remaining ones were enough to weaken her further and even if the time between the demon's attacks sufficed for taking her weapon back – she knew there was not much time left till her body would give up. And there was also a rather negative possibility ahead...

And she couldn't dodge for ever. But what was she supposed to do – her one attack was not effective, Pink was more than a hundred kilometres away from her and therefore not able to help Green in any way. Why did something like this happen to her – of all things?!

She looked at her stick pleadingly, as if said one would have a help-option – but all that thing did was being silent and watching without lifting a finger how its master got more tired with each dodging she had to do, her injuries bleeding strongly.

Just when she had dodged another attack – for the felt thousandth time – her legs caved in and she fell down.

That would be her *end*.

She could listen to the demon behind her, which already prepared to give her the finishing blow. She clasped her stick tightly, hell – she didn't want to die just yet...! Please! That thing she held to her chest so tightly, it just had to have more options than that!

When she opened her eyes weakly, she threw a glance at the two energy-sectors which were embedded into the stick. The black one was nearly half-full; it showed the energy she had absorbed in her previous fights, but what was it about the other sector? The *white* one? Presumably through her slight trace of panic she didn't take long to notice – there was still a way *out* of this mess.

Green begged her palsied legs to last a tick longer and struggled to her feet once again.

Utterly surprised the demon halted his movements, surprised Green was still able to stand up. In a feisty way Green held her stick in front of her, daring the demon. Of course it didn't realize Green aimed to achieve something with that action; and it was not to die with an upraised head.

It just had to work this way; if she was able to absorb the dark energy with her stick to fill the black sector, then there had to be a way to fill up the white sector, too, right? Maybe she had to convert the black energy to white energy? It was worth a try – after all she had no other choice left. The demon struck out and fired a gigantic mass of energy at Green. She closed her eyes and prayed her plan would work – it just had to work this way, she did not have the slightest desire to die just yet...and definitely not in such a manner.

She sensed when the enormous energy shot into her direction and also the way her hands, still clutching the stick, started to tremble. When she also felt dizziness intruding her mind, she started to panic once again – it didn't work the way she had planned it to! Her stick started trembling, too – or were it her nervous fingers?

Her inner turmoil stopped when the white sector had been filled half way. Suddenly – and without knowing the cause – the girl knew exactly what it had to do. It was just as if she wasn't herself anymore, as if someone else controlled her body. Again, she used one of the demon's attacks as a boost. The moonlight glowing at her she raised the stick and a bell-like voice echoed through the nocturnal sky:

„You dare to lay a hand onto this girl? You dared to hurt her? I won't allow you, creature of the darkness, to ever harm Green again! SPIRIT OF LIGHT! “

The dazzling light blazed down on the demon and entirely pulverized the demon. The remaining energy got absorbed by the bell-stick.

The young woman closed her eyes for a mere second. When she opened them again, she seemed to be a different person yet again. Green was shocked to see she was floating in midair, but she lacked time to overthink it, since she fell down towards the frozen lake. Without being able to stop it, her body broke through the ice. The cold water enclosed her. In her condition it was impossible to swim...and everything around her started to fade into black...

Red hair streamed in the cold wind of the night, stained with white snow-flakes, since it had started to snow again. With a skillful gesture he drew his hair behind his ear, even though he liked the way it swayed with the breeze.

He had observed the battle closely. Battle. Ha!

You couldn't really call it that way.

A “battle” was something entirely different...but there *was* something that caught his eye. It didn't amaze him that the pretty girl won – no, he had been sure of that from the start.

The true cause for his astonishment was the end of the battle.

According to his information that girl had darkblue-ish eyes – had it been an optical illusion, or was he supposed to trust his impression that her eyes were white?

He closed his eyes.

Well, it didn't really matter, he told himself in his thoughts.

He was not a guy who would waste time thinking about a trifle - he was a guy who had to act. A smirk played upon his handsome features; the next action was surely to his taste. The male's smirk got even wider and his slightly pointed teeth twinkled dangerously in the moonlight, before he averted his eyes from the clearing and got swallowed by the shadows...