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Introduction

Killer is Dead is an episodic novel, a side-story to the 2005 game killer7, originally published on Dengeki Playstation between September of 2005 and March of 2006, on issues 322, 326, 329, 332, 336, 339, and 343. It is unrelated to the 2013 Grasshopper Manufacture game of the same name. Taking place in the world of killer7, it follows Shigeki "Batman" Birkin, a professional killer active in 1973's Seattle.

Publication ceased after the sixth chapter, without reaching a conclusion. A post on [Grasshopper's own website](#) during April of 2006 announced that the seventh and final chapter would be delayed, and the interview portion (which was originally published after the sixth chapter) indicates that plans were underway to complete the story, despite Suda's reluctance on closing the book on the world of killer7, but this fabled final chapter never saw the light of day.

The first four chapters of Killer is Dead were then posted on [Famitsu's website](#) as part of the 51FABLES column in January of 2016. The story was purportedly going to be completed as part of the column; however, the fifth and sixth chapters were never posted, let alone a brand-new conclusion. 51FABLES was abruptly closed in April of 2016, leaving a second episodic novel, Makkana Onnanoko, incomplete.

Killer is Dead was then fully reprinted in the Suda51 Official Complete Book in January of 2018. Once again, the story remained without a finale, and the Interview portion was reprinted with no alterations.

Shigeki Birkin ultimately made his on-screen debut as "Badman" in the 2019 game Travis Strikes Again, for which several aspects of his backstory from Killer is Dead were taken into consideration.

The [Devil Have Mercy](#) group had begun producing a translation for the episodic novel, although they were forced to abandon the project before it could be properly finished and cleaned up.

The following translation has been produced by PT and the Paradise Hotel team, using their original draft as a basis. Needless to say, the text has been double and triple checked, so it is quite different. We would also like to thank Nyarlathotep, for checking the text against Birkin's dialogue in Travis Strikes Again and providing some other valuable insights, and John Hinckley Jr. Some sections of the interview portion have been translated by NewWorldOrder, while the original cover art has been drawn by [BYYONI](#).

Killer is Dead makes peculiar use of [Furigana](#); while it is generally used to specify the enunciation of certain Kanji, it is used in the story to display completely different words that may serve to expand on the character's state of mind and real opinions. As there is no direct English equivalent of Furigana, we opted to use ruby characters to convey it in this translation. (For reference, the 51FABLES version of the story opted to include the Furigana words in parenthesis instead. The placement of red words is also slightly different between the printed version and the 51FABLES version.)

Kills7th

I'm gonna **die** in **seven days**.

I just got a neatly sealed letter complete with a delivery certificate.

P R E Y
The mailman handed it to me without saying a word, like it was some routine shit, with a face like he was gonna **kill** himself before the end of the year. I can't fucking stand that. When I see a rude civil servant, I just wanna hit a **home-run** through their brains. In the form of the great Mickey Mantle, the sensation of my bat's core making perfect contact with their JUST MEAT skull flows up my arm. That CRITICAL HIT **killing blow** is my way of fixing their bad manners.

M Y P R E Y
The mailman was all flustered and wasn't even looking at me, so I was able to go all out and land a **direct hit** right to his face. Knocked it out of the fucking park. I could see a glimpse of terror in his eyes; almost felt bad for him, but it's not like it makes a difference whether he **dies** now or **kills** himself later. His body hit the ground like a KO'd boxer, bent at a weird angle with his head as the cornerstone, his eyes fixated on my shoes. Not the worst expression to die with. Almost like he was trying to tell me something. Was it proof that he had regrets? That's all I could gather at that time. PATTERN

S A N D B A G
Whatever, he was weak..... Just another meatbag for my collection.

V I C T I M
The texture of the envelope delivered by the mailman is soft and smooth, like the touch of a fine woman from the good side of town. It's the kind of letter that can only bring good news. Could this be my big break? An invitation to join the CHEAP WHORE major leagues? Or better yet, a love letter from that elegant woman I met at the EXECUTIVE JOB hotel. B I T C H Classy women enjoy this kind of old-fashioned thing... B R O A D S

ONE HUNDRED
Sadly, such convenient daydreams have a 100 % chance of being wrong.

V E N U S Once again, Lady Luck gives me the cold shoulder. A meticulous professional has signed off on my SWAN SONG **death**. The bold, neat handwriting and the precise, neurotic W O R K A H O L I C

contents of the letter are indicative of a man with more than a few screws loose.
Goddamn it... Guess I finally stepped on that landmine.

There are three types of people you should always avoid in life.

One: People who don't H E A D B A N G nod their heads during a song.

Two: People who don't W I N K blink.

Three: People who smile for no reason H A V E A D U M B A S S G R I N .

In other words, J U N K I E S addicts. These three types of addict are possessed by J U N K I E **Death** and are well acquainted with the souls of the damned. Or maybe I should say that they're on good terms with the **Grim Reaper**¹ himself. Not that it matters either way. The fact is, that second kind of J U N K I E addict has now taken a shine to me. The signature reads 'Curtis Blackburn'... I'm fucked.

*It is a good season to **die**.*

*In seven days, I shall deliver your **death**.*

I politely suggest wearing formal attire.

Bollinger² would be an appropriate pairing.

Parting is such sweet sorrow.

In search of vintage,

Curtis Blackburn

¹ In the original text, both "Death" and "Grim Reaper" are "Shinigami", Japanese gods of death.

² A brand of Champagne.

UNDERWORLD

Here in Seattle, there's no one in the business who hasn't heard of this big shot.
There's a ^{ONE HUNDRED} 100 % chance I'm goin' down like a dog. I'm gonna have to organize a closeout sale on my life within the next seven days. Gonna be busy.

WORKAHOLIC

When you get down to it..... It's actually pretty simple. No matter where I am in seven days, that professional is going to find me - the letter he sent is overflowing with confidence in his ability to **kill**.

BLACK HOLE

I'm pretty good at reading between the lines. But maybe, in this case, I shouldn't even try. Any dumbass can chug some tequila, shoot at a spinning globe, and get a first-class ticket with one checked bag to wherever the bullet hole landed on the map. (Of course, you'd better rob a schmancy mansion first if you wanna afford the plane ride.) At some point, during the three connecting flights, you get to know the flight attendant, and upon arriving at your mysterious, foreign destination, you finally hook up with the duty-free supermodel of your dreams. You fall in **love** with her, she falls in **love** with you, and the plan after that is to forget about the world and spend the next three months in bed, holding each other without a worry.

W H O R E

PROJECT

DARK SIDE

Twenty years later, you'll have made a name for yourself in the local business in this fresh new life, and the rest will be smooth sailing.

Hold it! You can't spell 'life' without an 'if'. What 'if' the bullet hole ends up in a developed country instead of a secluded spot? Still no problem. When one door closes, another one opens. Just flip your globe over, and your 'black hole' becomes a 'wormhole'. If you go from an urban area to the other side of the Earth, it usually ends up being unexplored territory. This planet's not as small as people say. Let's go then, somewhere far away like Greenland.

BLACK HOLE

All right! Isn't that my best game plan? That monologue was so long, I'm ready to just jet right now. Never been more grateful to be that dumbass. Thank you, Mother, for giving birth to such a dumbass!

ESCAPE

MOMMY

DAN: "Sounds like a plan. Alright, I'll bite. So long as you don't screw me over....."

L I M I T

My name is Shigeki Birkin. The seven-day deadline already felt like a bad dream. But then, of course, this guy comes into the picture. He's ^{ONE HUNDRED} 100% bad news. I can feel it in my gut. I've never seen such a terrifying face in my life. A huge revolver in a black suit, his glare pulsating with **killer instinct**. This guy..... He's grinning, but it sure as hell don't feel like a smile.

GREENLAND

DAN: "I'll take you there myself. To a Paradise of fear."

A gunshot rung out, and my world went pitch black.

July 1st, 11:45 AM
Shigeki Birkin's Apartment

Christopher Mills is running more than five hours behind schedule.

As soon as he shows up, he starts making excuses with an innocent smile on his face. Says he was tied up for hours and couldn't get here any sooner. Seattle's most epic action story right there. Whenever he starts running his mouth, his words reek of lies and gunsmoke, his gestures get overblown, and 'fake' magically becomes 'fantasy'. Nobody trusts ^{THE FUCKER} h i m, but nobody hates ^{THE FUCKER} h i m either.

He's a mysterious little ^{S H I T} punk. This delay jumped straight into my top 20 reasons to **kill** him. That makes him a pretty high priority... Too high. I'd be happy to **do it** at any time, but he still has his uses. Despite the ^{FUCKER} brat being only twelve, there's a lot of channels that only he can access, and if he were to disappear, it would disrupt all balance in Seattle. It gets on my nerves that he's such a ^{HIGH-LEVEL} k e y player, but in the long run, it's better to just accept it. The image he gives off by driving a Lincoln is just an angle, carefully constructed to increase his appraisal in the eyes of his peers. He knows how to play the game.

^{A W F U L} What an amazing little ^{SHIT} kid.

MILLS: "I've got some valuable intel just for you. Don't tell anyone, OK? A ship from Antwerp is docking next weekend, and it's loaded with unregulated synthetic drugs - we're talking about hardcore stuff, nobody's even tried it yet. I thought you could handle this for me. How about it? You interested?"

BIRKIN: "Don't get carried away, kid. My body's still cranky over last month's product. There's no way I'm letting another nutjob European scientist ^{R A P E} stick his whatever in me. Next time you wanna hire me, gimme an ingredients list, so I can at least look into it."

MILLS: "I get it, I get it... My bad. I was just trying to look out for you. I thought it was good info. To me, you're the toughest pharmacist in the world!"

I'll be 30 in October. I'm nowhere near old enough for my body to start falling apart, but lately my joints and nodes ^{L Y M P H} have been feeling weird. I was worried it

might be some serious illness, but the back-alley doctor assured me my bill of health was more than satisfactory. The next day the pain got so bad I couldn't stand it, so I went to the hospital, but the doctor there told me the exact same thing. I **killed** him on the spot. I gave him 20 injections to the face and he fell to the ground in agony, foaming at the mouth. I've never seen anything like that before, he was like a crab out of water.

No matter how I look at it, even if I consider it from every angle like every idiot on Earth is fond of saying nowadays, there's no way that drug is safe. Sometimes I feel an immense pain spreading through my body, like my bodily flesh is being molded into something else entirely. I've never felt anything like that before taking it, and it's definitely not healthy.

THE FUCKER

He said it was some German drug, and he did warn me that it was an unstable product, developed by a research student at some university. But the pay was really good, so it's not like I was gonna say no.....

BIRKIN: "Let's get down to business, I don't have much time."

MILLS: "Birkin, what's wrong with you today? You're not trying to fuck me over, are you? You're acting pretty suspicious..."

BIRKIN: "If I was gonna fuck you over, I'd just drag you in the woods and drown you in the lake. Do I look like I've got the time for that?"

MILLS: "OK, OK! I get it, don't worry... No harm, no foul."

BIRKIN: "If you *do* get it, then gimme the rundown on this guy. Curtis Blackburn."

MILLS: "Curtis, you say... What exactly do you want to know?"

BIRKIN: "I've been targeted by him. He sent me an advance notice."

MILLS: "..... A **death** sentence. Trouble follows you everywhere, huh. Even someone as skilled as you would be no match for Curtis."

BIRKIN: "Yeah, no shit, that's why I'm asking you for information! Anything's fine. Just keep track of his movements a week from now!"

MILLS: "..... I understand. You're not a bad guy, Birkin. I'll find out as much as I can. I'll do my best, I promise."

BIRKIN: "I'm counting on you..... I'd much prefer not to **die**."

MILLS: "Curtis is a TRUE FRIEND buddy of mine. Don't worry. You'll survive."

And there he goes, jumping back into his Lincoln, ready to get out of there HIGHTAIL IT.
Couldn't wipe the SMILE grin off his face. That brat has a talent for sniffing out the smell of **death**. Having a good nose is a must if you're gonna survive in our line of work. No matter how hard you can hit, or how fast you can draw, a guy who can't smell **death** will be drawn by her magnetic field and lose himself in her sweet bosom. A BITCH topless woman and the Grim Reaper - in my opinion, they're the same person, ONE HUNDRED 100%.

MILLS: "By the way, Birkin..... Have you **killed** anyone today?"

BIRKIN: "Yeah, **killed** two already. Does that put your mind at ease?"

MILLS: "It does..... I'm RELIEVED glad to know you're still in good graces with the Devil....."

BIRKIN: "What's that supposed to mean?"

MILLS: "Sorry... I really don't want to get involved with him. I'll contact you later."

He reversed the Lincoln, then shifted into drive and sped out, leaving tire marks like he dropped a hot chocolate on the ground. It's about time he replaced his tires. A buddy of mine runs a repair shop; I should introduce them, and make sure the little shit gets ripped off while I'm at it.....

Wait..... Something's wrong. There's a chill running up my spine. The kind of chill that makes your blood freeze and your heart stop. The feeling of being targeted,

not by a man, but by a beast. I've never once been attacked by a beast, but my gut doesn't lie. I'm scared to turn around. It's the same panic that overtook me just a few hours ago.....

I can hear footsteps. Shit shit shit shit shit my body won't move. Am I paralyzed?
PISS MY PANTS
This is bad. I'm in danger. At this rate, I'm gonna wet myself. The footsteps stopped right behind me. The pressure lifted for a moment and I was able to hold it in right in the nick of time.

He just saved a 30-year-old man from pissing himself... Maybe I should thank him.

But, well, this isn't the time.

DAN: "We meet again, Birkin. I'll introduce myself properly this time. My name's Dan Smith. I'm the only man who can **kill** Curtis. You've got one ugly mug, you look like you've been through hell. I'll be the one to send you to Paradise, before Curtis gets the chance to **kill** you."
SMILE
H E A V E N

At this point, I have to wonder if I'm already **dead**...

July 1st, 2:32 PM

Parking Lot of the 'Knoxville' Diner

Kills6th

I'm gonna **die** in **six days**.

The name's Shigeki Birkin. There's a saying where I'm from that's reserved for lost causes... The saying goes, "Quit Birkin' around."

Despite that, I've managed to make a name for myself as a ^{B A T M A N}batting machine in the underworld.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not the same ^{DARK HERO}Batman from that kids' cartoon. It's literally because I use a bat for my work. I practice my swing every day, just like a true ^{S L U G G E R}professional batter. They get to face the other team's best ^{SLUGGERS}pitchers, while my ^{A C E}opponents are just ^{D E A D M E A T}second-rate piles of shit. While their job is to hit balls ^{H O M E - R U N}out of the park like ping-pong balls, mine is to ^{S K U L L S}**smash** pomegranates into little bits.

Last night's ^{ROTTEN}fruit was a bit unsettling, though. I wish I could forget it. The worst ^{FUCKER}guy to meet, on the worst night to meet him.

*July 2nd, 11:00AM
Shigeki Birkin's Apartment*

SAMAYORU: "Please, aim carefully.

That's why I contracted ^{THE BATMAN} y o u."

I found him at the construction site. He was a small man, sitting in a folding chair, wearing a ghastly expression on his frail, pointy face. He told me that his name was 'Samayoru', but nothing else.

SAMAYORU: "I would like you to bash my ^{JUST MEAT} face in so they can't even identify the remains. I beg of you, give me your best shot."

Countless **corpses** littered the ground around him. All of them smiling, all of them **dead**. I think they looked Asian, but I'm not sure. It was just that kind of **corpse**. In a way, the strange ^{H I S W O R K} pile of **bodies** made up a mountain of authority, a ^{S H O O T I N G} testament to this guy's gunslinging skills. There was a sense of majesty to it. A ^{PERFECTION} shootout isn't just about putting one's life on the line. It's about burdening someone else with the heavy weight of the bullet, a dangerous piece of lead that can take a very long time to bury itself into someone's heart, slowly eating away at their soul before **killing** them.

^{E S C A P E D}
I should've ran away.

^{W H Y}
But I couldn't, for some reason.

BIRKIN: "You want me to **bash** your face in, here and now?"

SAMAYORU: "Yes, that's right."

BIRKIN: "This should be easy, then. Close your eyes."

SAMAYORU: "I understand. But please, before you get to it, ^{KNOCK OUT} **erase** *their* identities³ as well."

³ The same term (身元抹消) is used in The 25th Ward in regards to Kamijo having his identity erased.

BIRKIN: "*Them?* You mean these guys around you?"

SAMAYORU: "Yes."

BIRKIN: "I don't follow. I get paid by the unit. I'm just here to get rid of you."

SAMAYORU: "I mean, if you're willing to fudge the numbers a little bit, Paradise could be within your reach. If that *is* what you wish for..."

And for that reason, I erased their identities one after the other.

There must have been hundreds of **corpses**, and all that grueling work made me feel like a first-timer still in training. My heart was pumping, my body was on fire and my consciousness faded away. All that bashing and smashing was almost like **making love**. I really mean that. Despite my age, I was dragged into a wild dance in a world of **red**. I completely lost track of time. My mind and body became one, and all I could see was **red**. It covered my entire field of vision, as if I scratched my retinas or something. A place where existence is not divided by color... Don't you think that would be more fair and impartial? If everyone's **red**, everyone's equal: All conflict would disappear overnight. That's a great idea, isn't it? Let's paint the whole world **red**. In a world dyed in **blood**, people would be free to understand one another. If we all stand up, participation becomes power, and the movement will grow into a revolution.

Let's break all boundaries!
Let's shine a light on our new **crimson** world!
Let's **kill** each other regardless of color!

With my catchphrase decided, I was able to find my groove and started swinging in furious tempo. When I came back to sanity, the **knock out** job was done.

SAMAYORU: "Superbly done."

BIRKIN: "It was a good match, wasn't it?"

SAMAYORU: "And I was lucky enough to get a front-row seat."

BIRKIN: "Back to the original job, then?"

SAMAYORU: "Yes, and please keep in mind your latest match - hit me with your best shot, right out of the park."

BIRKIN: "Lemme ask you something."

SAMAYORU: "That's a breach of contract."

BIRKIN: "I don't give a shit."

SAMAYORU: "Fine, then."

BIRKIN: "What's with the ^{TRASH}stiffs?"

SAMAYORU: "That's not something I can answer."

BIRKIN: "Then let me change my question. Beating on a ^{SMASHING}corpse makes it hard to ID the body. That's what you mean by 'erasing their identities', right? So, what's the danger in these being recognized?"

SAMAYORU: "What do you think? Is there an answer?"

BIRKIN: "That's what I'm askin' you. Don't turn this around on me."

SAMAYORU: "You know the answer, don't you?"

BIRKIN: "I told you, don't ask me!"

SAMAYORU: "What, you're not confident enough to answer?"

BIRKIN: "Quit it with all the questions!"

SAMAYORU: "Why, are you getting scared?"

BIRKIN: "Shut it."

SAMAYORU: "Fine, I'll tell you."

BIRKIN: "Go on then."

SAMAYORU: "Your answer is wrong."

BIRKIN: "Fuck off."

SAMAYORU: "Too bad then. I won't tell you the answer."

BIRKIN: "Who are you?"

SAMAYORU: "I told you, my name is Samayoru."

BIRKIN: "Which means what, exactly?"

SAMAYORU: "Now it's my turn to ask questions."

BIRKIN: "Answer me! Who the fuck are you?"

SAMAYORU: "Why did you choose to become the **Batman**?"

BIRKIN: "Huh?"

SAMAYORU: "Please, tell me why you don't use a **gun**."

BIRKIN: "A bat is easier to use."

SAMAYORU: "But you could do **your job** more easily with a **gun**."

BIRKIN: "To each their own."

SAMAYORU: "No... There's a reason you became the 'Batman'."

BIRKIN: "There is none. I just like using a bat."

SAMAYORU: "You've always admired Batman. You wanted to be a hero, just like him... But even at a young age, you were smart enough to see yourself and the world around you for what they really are. With that knowledge, all you could do was forge a new kind of 'Batman'."

BIRKIN: "Who the fuck do you think you are?"

SAMAYORU: "A kindred spirit."

BIRKIN: "Are you making fun of me?"

SAMAYORU: "Please, hurry up and take your **shot**."

BIRKIN: "Alright, then."

SAMAYORU: "I'll be waiting for you in GREENLAND Paradise."

It was a beautiful **home-run**.

July 2nd, 2:30 AM

Construction site of the Horizon Tower

GREENLAND

I can't go to Paradise just yet.

DAN SMITH

That's my divine punishment for making a deal with **the Devil**. No matter how you spin it, that sneer of his, full of confidence that he can **kill** Curtis, is a dangerous thing. I know he's no Boy Wonder to my Batman, but a part of me wishes that's how we'd made our names. The power of **the Devil** is enough to bring a man to his knees in prayer. That being said, even though I would obviously **die**... I'd love to land a **good swing** on this guy! Is that the limit of my pride? I'm amazed I even have any left.

D A N

In seven days, **the Devil** will **kill** Curtis. And I will sell my soul to **the Devil**. After all, there's no point in being attached to your life when your only fate is to be **killed**. I might as well give it away, even if it is to **the Devil**.

D A N

The Devil roared with laughter.

GET YOUR SHIT

DAN: "Pull yourself together, Birkin. When it comes to **killing**, there's different levels of mastery. You're still spinning your bat around like an amateur. We're aiming for the big leagues, here. You need to learn how to **knock out** screwballs."

SAMAYORU

That was the beginning of my nightmare.

D A N

KNOCK OUT

The Devil started training me on how to **erase** someone's being. I don't really get it, but I guess only **the Devil** can understand **the Devil**.

THIS FUCKER

HIMSELF

Still, I picked up on some new techniques. The key is to position of your wrist correctly at moment of impact. It's not just about **hitting** the pomegranate. If you adjust the wrist even a little bit, you can control its path. Hit it to **center field**. Hit it into **opposite field**. Hit it right along a **foul line**. If you put your heart into it, anything's possible.

S K U L L

D E A T H

D E A T H

D E A T H

MAJOR LEAGUE B A T M A N

I've been reborn as a first class batting machine. It's a total changeup, an infield shift. When you lowball it, you get a safe hit.

It's time to get to work. I need to put my new skills to the test.

July 2nd, 11:30 AM

Shigeki Birkin's Apartment

I got a small-time job from 'Rare' Ray Zack.

When you need some chump change, Mills just won't cut it. That kid's got principles, he doesn't lift a finger unless he gets a lucrative cut. He wouldn't care about anything this small. He's been cautious ever since he almost **died** during a job on the south side. He's the high risk - high reward kind of guy. The kind who likes to **check** and **double-check** everyone involved with him. Not a bad way of running things, I guess.

Rare is the exact opposite. His only principle is to not have any. When he smells something good, he **eats** it right up. He doesn't care about risk or reward. He's a **pig** **bastard** who's satisfied just to be in on the action. Or rather, if he doesn't have a finger in all of the pies, he starts getting anxious, and turns into an unstable **junkie** who gets high on **off-label** **pills**. He fancies himself a big-shot, trusted and admired by all those around him. He cooks up these arrangements, and then basks in everyone's approval, bragging his ass off to all the ladies at the bar and his entourage. Just making eye contact with this guy makes me wanna vomit. At some point, I'm planning to **take my bat** to his skull. Cannot fucking *wait*.

RARE: "I've already made the necessary arrangements, this one's on me. Always in your best interest to do business directly, huh, Mr. Birkin?"

BIRKIN: "Can it, loser. Gimme the lowdown already."

RARE: "It's been a while since I've had the honor of working with the legendary heavy-hitter. You've been on my mind, you know? Wasting talent is a horrible **crime**, even worse than **murder**!"

This guy's speeches are both long-winded and meaningless. **I** endured that drivel until **he** was satisfied, then headed out to the scene.

It's an easy enough job. Just **kill** one man at the new construction site. Places with a lot of blind spots and **dead** spaces are the best setups in this business. They're also

great for ^{OFFICE LOVE}romance. The mark sits on a chair in a partially completed living room with no ceiling. What a well-behaved target.

SAMAYORU: "Welcome to ^{GREENLAND}Paradise."

Last night's ^{HOME-RUN}victory must have been a no-contest, then.

July 2nd, 3:11 PM

Construction site of a new building

Kills5th

I'm gonna **die** in **five days**.

There's been no sign of Curtis Blackburn. Maybe, just maybe, ^{D A N}the **Devil** already ^{E R A S E D}**disposed of** him. But if that was case, he would have contacted me... I just have to stay calm and wait. Nice and quiet. I'll hold my breath and still my heart until I can sense Curtis Blackburn's **killer instinct** through my entire body. I don't need any damn pride. In the world of **killing**, the ability to *not* get **killed** is the bare minimum. It's important to know when to admit defeat. That's right - ^{A U R A}I ^{THIS DUMBASS}can't **kill** Curtis Blackburn. I've got no choice but to face the facts.

Besides, it's as if I've already been **killed** by that ^{D A N}**Devil**. The moment he showed up at my door, I lost control of my bladder for the first time in my life. The legendary ^{B A T M A N}batting machine, reduced to a pants-pissing ^{MOTHERFUCKER}**l o s e r**. What an all-time low. It makes me wanna **kill myself**... Might as well just hand myself over to Curtis Blackburn right now. Knowing him, if I show up ahead of schedule, he'll probably **kill** me straight away. That's not a bad idea, actually. I'll just get dressed, and then I'll go see him. I'll be dressing for my own **funeral** - I should get my hands on a nice suit ^{T U X E D O}or something.

MILLS: "If you're planning to **die**, it'd be best to go with your work clothes. **Dying** on the job is befitting of a **killer**."

BIRKIN: "No thanks! I've got my heart set on **going out** all dressed to the nines." ^{H A U T E C O U T U R E}

MILLS: "In that case... You should hurry up and get changed."

BIRKIN: "Huh? What do you mean?"

MILLS: "Don't ask questions, just listen to me. You need to get out of here immediately. You might get **put down** before Curtis even gets to you!"

BIRKIN: "The hell's that supposed to mean? You're not making any sense. An informant who can't communicate is as good as **dead**."

MILLS: "That's my genuine advice. I'm begging you, take it to heart, because it's real bad news. Curtis is not the only one who's after you."

BIRKIN: "I'm that popular, huh?"

MILLS: "Yeah. Those guys from Antwerp got here on a boat yesterday."

BIRKIN: "What happened to 'next weekend'?"

MILLS: "That's why I'm here - it's *that* serious."

BIRKIN: "So, what's their angle?"

MILLS: "Remember that **experimental drug**? They're **disposing** of all test subjects. You're the only one left. If we stay here, it's only a matter of time before they **get us**."

BIRKIN: "Then hurry up, you ^{DUMBASS} **idiot**!"

MILLS: "That's what I keep telling you!"

BIRKIN: "... Mills, what kind of car do you drive again?"

MILLS: "A Lincoln, you know that."

BIRKIN: "So then, the black one that parked just now. That creepy-ass car right there. Whoever's in there is here to **kill you**, isn't it?"

MILLS: "Bingo... I guess?"

The **gunshot** had excellent timing.

July 3rd, 7:05 AM⁴
Shigeki Birkin's Apartment

⁴ The original Japanese text actually said 7:05 PM. However, the context of the story makes it clear that this is a typo, so I took the liberty of correcting it.

At the discretion of Christopher Mills, I was brought to a luxury hotel.

He dropped me off at the roundabout and got out of there real quick. Didn't even say goodbye. I've heard that usually, guys who survive on the **battlefield** together end up developing a strong bond of camaraderie, but in this area, Mills lacks the ^{S P E C S} basic requirements to be considered human. There's **no cure** for a bad upbringing. ^{S H I T H E A D} Straight out of the orphanage, full of **tenacity** and **blind ambition**, he wears his overconfidence like a badge of honor, and is unyieldingly selfish; yet a shadow of doubt hides in the depths of his eyes. Those are the eyes of someone who's gripped by fear. Yeah, that's it. Just like that guy, the ^{POSTAL WORKER} **mailman**. He had the same eyes. So did that guy from my ^{S A M A Y O R U} **nightmare**. All three of them have something in common... I understand it subconsciously, but I can't quite put my finger on what that 'something' is. What could it be...? Being caught up in those **eyes**... There's no point in thinking about it, and yet it worries me.

RECEPTIONIST: "Mr. Birkin, correct? We've been expecting you."

BIRKIN: "Sharp one, aren't you?"

RECEPTIONIST: "Of course. You're an important client of Mr. Blackburn."

BIRKIN: "... Who arranged this?"

RECEPTIONIST: "Curtis Blackburn is waiting for you on the top floor."

BIRKIN: "Was it Mills? That little shit, he set me up..."

RECEPTIONIST: "Let me escort you."

BIRKIN: "Sorry, I just remembered I've got something to do and..."

RECEPTIONIST: "Mr. Blackburn is a very **impatient man**. Please, let us proceed."

I felt the prickling sensation of **bloodlust** on every inch of my **skin**. I've been honing this sense. Curtis Blackburn is definitely here. I'm behind enemy lines. This hotel is

under ^{CURTIS'} h i s management. No, actually... It'd be more accurate to call it ^{CURTIS'} h i s property. It's his get-away. The ^{GOOD LOOKING GUY} receptionist is giving me his best smile, but it's not out of courtesy. It's a condescending smile, one that looks down on you. Someday, I'd like to give this guy a nice, ^{HEAVEN SMILE} angelic grin on his way to the afterlife.

After considering my options, I decided to accept my fate. It'd be a breeze to ^{GOOD LOOKING GUY} kill the receptionist here in the elevator, but that'd get me nowhere. I know that unless I ^{CAN SEE} meet with Curtis Blackburn, the whole set-up falls apart. The plan itself is fine, it's me who's feeling dejected. You might say that my spirit is broken. The enormity of ^{CURTIS'} h i s killer instinct has completely drained me of energy. It's the birth of a new, lethargic human being! That's where I'm at right now. I've got no choice but to ^{B A D M A N} follow my inner dumbass, but at least that comes natural.

I thought back to my ^{D O P I N G} epic saga to give myself some courage, sort of a psychological pick-me-up. Handling disposal for Rare and fending off those goons from Antwerp, no one could deny my performance was spectacular.

We arrived on the top floor.

RECEPTIONIST: "Mr. Blackburn is waiting for you inside."

BIRKIN: "That's a lovely smile."

RECEPTIONIST: "Thank you. I practice it every day."

BIRKIN: ^{BULLSHIT} "Stellar."

RECEPTIONIST: "Mr. Blackburn, it is my pleasure to introduce you to Mr. Birkin."

The room was empty. Curtis' aura disappeared completely. He's not here; in fact, no one's here. There's no fooling my ^{NEW TYPE POWERS} n o s e anymore.

RECEPTIONIST: "If you'll excuse me."

BIRKIN: "Hold on, what the hell's this?"

GOOD LOOKING GUY

The receptionist left the room without a word. What a well-mannered **asshole**. Next time, I'll definitely **kill** him. Definitely... Definitely.....

D I A R R H E A

Huh? Oh shit, **literal shit**. My breakfast cereal had gone bad. It's way too **risky** to let the expiration date exceed five months. I'll engrave that knowledge into my heart. Three months is the longest it can go. I **dumped** my newfound resolve into the toilet, and as I opened the door... It was time for a **heartfelt reunion**.

SAMAYORU: "Hello there, Mr. Birkin! What a **coincidence** to meet you here."

BIRKIN: "If it ain't my old pal Samayoru⁵! You're right, it is a crazy **coincidence**. We must be bound by **fate**. That must be it, right?"

SAMAYORU: "Still alive and kicking, I see. You look well."

BIRKIN: "So, what is it this time?"

GREENLAND

SAMAYORU: "My request is pretty much the same. Please, guide me to **Paradise**. Though my body may **perish**, I can never truly **die**."

BIRKIN: "I must be **goin' crazy**..."

GREAT SWING

SAMAYORU: "I don't want to hear that from the Batman. You were in **top form** during our last encounter."

BIRKIN: "Can I ask you a serious question?"

SAMAYORU: "That's still a breach of contract."

BIRKIN: "My question's about the contract, too. Just how many times do I have to **kill** you? I'm already taking a loss here. Just let me off the hook."

KNOCK ME OUT

SAMAYORU: "That's not what I asked of you. I just want you to **erase my identity**."

⁵ The Japanese text uses the "-kun" suffix here, indicating an informal tone.

BIRKIN: "That's why I'm asking, I don't know how to 'erase' someone. Can't I just kill you?"

SAMAYORU: "You probably just need more training. Even the legendary B A T M A N **batting machine** needs to practice every day. A true S L U G G E R professional knows how to forge his inner discipline. Have you been slacking on your exercises, Mr. Birkin?"

BIRKIN: "This is goin' nowhere. There's no point in talking. Feel free to come back anytime. Come see me every goddamn day until I'm **dead**! I'll send you flying every single time."

SAMAYORU: "Well then, I'll be waiting for you in GREENLAND Paradise."

BIRKIN: "See you around, Samayoru."

SAMAYORU: "You have a lovely smile, Mr. Birkin."

*July 3rd, 1:30 PM
Hotel Don't Move*

Today is July 3rd.

I've got a big job coming up in four days. We were supposed to go over the details today, but I'm no position to go out. I called Roswell and Phillip to explain my situation, but they didn't listen to me at all. They thought I was making up excuses. Those ^{FUCKING SHIT S} damned bastards. As if that weren't enough, they told me they'd lower my ^{T R I P} cut. They believe they can just ^{GODFATHER} parade Castiglione's ^{S E A T T L E} influence around as if it were their own. Castiglione has been the ^{GODFATHER} boss here in my hometown since as far back as I can remember. He's the kind of big shot who can mobilize thousands with the blink of an ^{eye}. His relationship with Curtis Blackburn and his gang of upstart thugs is pretty shaky; he's letting that punk run free at the moment, but I don't think the Don will stay silent forever. He knows that Curtis will ^{come after} his ^{head} eventually. From the outside, Castiglione's faction seems to be at the end of its rope. That pressure is what was putting ^{ROSWELL} Fuckhead and ^{PHILLIP} Shithead on edge. They're just two small fries, who like to use Castiglione's name to hire ^{ASSHOLES} me as ^{THIS DUMBASS} an independent agent to handle some disposal jobs. Sometimes they even delay my ^{SHITHEAD} payments by setting up our meetings in the afternoon. I had to take Phillip's mistakes out of my paycheck more than once. Whatever, it's only a matter of time. Curtis Blackburn is coming to take me out in four days. Maybe I'll send ^{ROSWELL} Fuckhead ^{PHILLIP} and ^{GREENLAND} Shithead to ^{GODFATHER} Paradise before that happens. A ^{double home-run}. I'll send the bill to the ^{boss} too. Fleece those guys for all they've got.

RECEPTIONIST: "Mr. Birkin, there's a guest here for you. Shall I accompany them to your room?"

BIRKIN: "Who is it?"

RECEPTIONIST: "Of course, right away Sir. Please, follow me."

BIRKIN: "Hey, hold on! Did you even listen to me?"

The service at this hotel sure knows the score. If you don't leave a nice tip, you get the boot. Or maybe I should say, you get **the bat**. You've got to be real generous to get the **VIP** treatment.

"Are you the famous ^{B A T M A N}**batting machine**?"

BIRKIN: "Who are you!?"

"Could you let me in first? We've got a lot to talk about."

BIRKIN: "Fuck off!"

"That won't do. This is not the kind of offer you can turn down. It's a compulsory request, you understand?"

BIRKIN: "Are you **threatening** me?"

"Open up already."

There he is, the man of the hour. Though I doubt he's bringing good news. A double-breasted suit and striped necktie, hair neatly slicked back with ^{POMADE}o i l. He looks at me with a fiery gaze, staring right into my **soul**. A terrifying glare. He opened his ^{BRIEFCASE}b a g and laid out some documents. By licking his fingers and getting the pages wet, his well-trained hands were able to flip, flip, flip, flip through the ^{F I L E S}documents at lightning speed...

BIRKIN: "So, who are you?"

PEDRO: "Huh? Oh, right, I forgot to introduce myself... I'm Pedro Montana. Pleased to make your acquaintance. I'm Curtis Blackburn's personal attorney. I came here today at his request."

BIRKIN: "Is that so? Is he finally making a move? What are you, some corrupt lawyer?"

PEDRO: "Corruption is completely inexcusable, don't you think? An honest lawyer can make a **killing** from high-profile clients."

BIRKIN: "Why are you here, then?"

PEDRO: "Take it easy, this won't take long. I'm here to confirm your identity for the insurance. I just need to make sure you're the real Shigeki Birkin. I'll have to collect a few signatures. It's no big deal, just make yourself comfortable."

BIRKIN: "Let's see... What's this thing you want me to sign?"

PEDRO: "Huh? Does it matter? Do you really need to know? You're going to **die** anyway, you know."

BIRKIN: "I'm just curious. It's not like I *need* to know, but I can't really ask you after I've **killed** you."

PEDRO: "I wouldn't try anything if I were you. I may not be a **killer**, but the **bodyguards** standing outside that door are way beyond your level. You wouldn't stand a chance."

BIRKIN: "Wow, guess I should have known. You can never be too careful, huh? You really thought of everything."

PEDRO: "Of course. That's what a smart lawyer does."

BIRKIN: "Then, how about this?"

All in all, it took about 10 seconds. Nah, maybe I fudged the numbers a bit... Alright, 18 seconds were more than enough to take them down. Working as a bodyguard doesn't put you on the brink of life or **death**, and your emotions read easy, right on your face. Three guys - three lowballs. I'm aiming for a foul. It's as easy as aiming for a tree - the hit rate is ^{ONE HUNDRED} 100%. Then, once they fall, a **full swing** to the head. This isn't baseball, it's golf. What ^{BULLSHIT} a **letdown**. Golf is **tacky** and **disgusting**. Makes me want to **puke**.

BIRKIN: "So, who's up to bat? A good lawyer like you can never be too careful, isn't that right? You must have someone else lined up."

PEDRO: "....."

BIRKIN: "You wanna go next?"

PEDRO: "Let's negotiate. Just **you** and **me**. Private negotiations."

BIRKIN: "Where do you want me to hit you? Any body parts you're particularly attached to?"

PEDRO: "Wait wait wait wait wait wait wait HEY! ANYBODY, HEEEEEEELP!!!"

The winds of change are blowing. A good catch just fell into my lap. Maybe, just maybe, Curtis Blackburn may still allow me to live... What should I do? How do I use this to my advantage?

That's right, I still have a trump card up my sleeve - the Devil.

I have to call Dan Smith.

July 3rd, 6:12 PM

Hotel Don't Move

Kills4th

I'm gonna **die** in **four days**.

My ^{SKULL}head is pounding. I drank as much as I could - top shelf Californian wine for no less than **500\$** a bottle. Must have downed around 40 of them, 'cause I'm about to pass out. Pedro is lying on his side, having a **fit**. Looks like a carp thrashing around in the dirt. The other one's lying on the bed, sleeping like a baby with a ^{SNORING}**creepy** ^{SICK}smile on his face, dreamin' of **luxury**.

Christopher Mills is not the most cautious kid. As soon as he smells a ^{BIG MONEY}**deal**, his nose perks up and his **eyes** shut down. When I called him, he showed up at the hotel in less than 8 minutes. A real **cash money** guy. I ^{THAT BASTARD}**knocked** Pedro around a bit, **scared** ^{LOSER}**the shit** out of the guy, but I didn't **kill** him. I told him to make some shit up and ask Mills to run the blockade to settle accounts between Curtis and Castiglione. The bait smelled a bit **fishy**, but sharks are known for their quick bite. Mills **ate it** right up.

Last night, the three of us carefully planned the settlement talks over some wine. It was actually pretty exciting. Mills was all giddy about the ^{V I P}**luxury box** seat he had been offered, complete with a full-course dinner for two at the best ^{R I N G}**theater** in Seattle, while the executives have to watch from the audience seats. It's just a freakshow by a different name, and the executives are relegated to the supporting act. An exceptional card to rival any year-end ^{B I G F I G H T}**MMA** Grudge Match - the finest ^{M A F I O S O}**showman** couldn't have done any better. This show is going to be like a fireworks ^{R I N G S I D E}blowout. A **dreamy fantasia** that transports you from the **front-row** to the **world beyond**, with lavish flashes of color.

So, here's a question.

Q: How do you **take out** Seattle's Top Two? You have 30 seconds to come up with the right answer. If you run out of time, you **die**.

The answer is simple: Mills booked someone to **kill** both of them... I can't remember who it was though. In fact, I can't remember jack shit. I feel like I'm gonna blow

chunks. And ^{THIS DUMBASS} I was the one who gave him the contact!

Wine's just a **poison** that **wipes** your memory. Quit fucking around, Birkin, this is important! You have to remember! Who's got the best shot at **killing** Curtis and Castiglione? 30 seconds is pretty short. I don't wanna **die** in a shithole like this!

DAN: "That's easy. That would be ^{THE DARK STAR} m e ."

BIRKIN: "That's right, I knew that one!"

^{D A N} **The Devil** is sitting on the sofa, chugging his ^{W I N E} **poison**.

July 4th, 10:18 AM

Hotel Don't Move

Try to keep up with the story I'm about to tell you.

Imagine the best ^{FUCK}ride of your life. Taking your brand-new **Trans Am** on a trip down south, along the coast, to your destination. Farewell to the north, ^{M I R A C L E S}your wildest dreams are waiting for you down south. I'm done with this gloomy, damp town. The West Coast is calling me. I'm going to make a name for myself somewhere else. That's right, with a bouquet of a ^{B I T C H}dame in the passenger seat. ^{THAT BITCH}S h e'll definitely ^{GO CRAZY}fall for me after I get a good, headliner job. I've gotta stand out if I want to age into a stylish ^{L É O N}daddy, the kind that a flashy ^{N I K I T A}femme fatale can't resist. My only enemy will be ^{H E R N I A}back pain. That is, until ^{THAT CUNT}s h e drags me into a battlefield of courts and lawyers. That'd be the life... Sounds even better than ^{GREENLAND}Paradise.

So what the hell is going on here? Sure, the lovely lady in the passenger seat is ^{W H O R E}dolled up alright, but she's flashing a huge fucking revolver. Is this some new Fendi shit? They really went all out with the bold design concepts... Is that how you were picturing it?

Now let me tell you what's actually going on. It's true, I'm driving, but I'm also being taken for a ride. Glancing to my side, rather than the beautiful legs of a ^{B R O A D}dame, I see ^{D A N R E V O L V E R}the Devil's handgun glistening with bloodlust. In other words, I'm going on a Death Drive.

BIRKIN: "Dan, can I ask you something?"

DAN: "What, you wanna go on a date?"

BIRKIN: "... What?"

DAN: "If that's what you want, I'll take you out."

A figure of speech becomes a figure of death. Not a bad pun, if I do say so myself⁶.

⁶ This joke, which is reprised a few times through the chapter, was originally an untranslatable Japanese pun based around the usage of やる, meaning "to do", which can also have vulgar implications depending on the context. It can also mean "to kill". The most direct translation would be something like "Dan Smith, can I ask

DAN: "I will *tell you* one thing."

BIRKIN: "What, you wanna propose?"

I don't even wanna think about what happened next. That ^{M O N S T E R} *son of a bitch* shot my right hand, *blew my little finger clean off*. For a left-handed batter, the pinkie grip is a crucial ^{PRECISION MACHINE} *t o o l* that can control the direction of the ball down to the ^{PERFORMANCE FEE} millimeter. My *batting average* is definitely gonna take a hit. If I wasn't driving, I ^{DAN'S} would *bash his brains out* right here and now, it'd be an easy home-run at this distance. Losing a finger is a small price to pay to *kill the Devil* himself. But the ^{THE GODDESS} time's not right yet, and besides, Lady Luck's still not returning my ^{THIS DUMBASS'} *m y* calls.

^{THIS DUMBASS} DAN: "Y o u comin' after *me*? Huh? Don't mix up your *targets*."

BIRKIN: "The fuck are you on about? Our target is Curtis. That ain't changing."

DAN: "Do you really think you have ^{CRIMINAL POWER} *what it takes* to take down your ^{K I L L E R 7} *superiors*? You've got the *killer instinct* of a *booger*."

BIRKIN: "What the hell..."

DAN: "Listen carefully. I don't like to repeat myself. Words are the prelude to action. Every word you say is *recorded*. They're recorded within ^{THE TAPE RECORDER} *yourself* as *statements* of your intentions. Statements move people. If words are what spurs the world into action, then every word must carry the *resolve* of a monolith. You can't afford to make mistakes. Even a shitty *assassin* like *you* should at least make sure to spell-check his *manifesto*."

BIRKIN: "Yeah... You've *carved* that lesson into my *pinkie finger*."

you one thing?" "Really just one? If it was two, what would happen?" "Huh?" "I'd do it (answer/kill you) immediately/on the spot."

Obviously it cannot be translated directly, so we came up with this replacement.

^{TROUBLE}
DAN: "A big mouth can spell **disaster** for the rest of your body, and for your soul.
Watch it, or next time I won't hesitate to **kill** you."

^{D A N} ^{TROUBLE}
The way I see it, **the Devil**'s the one who **stirs up disaster**. No, no - **his very**
^{TROUBLE} ^{TROUBLE} ^{TROUBLE}
existence is a disaster. I'm driving with **disaster** towards **disaster**. Is something even
worse waiting for me at our destination?

The **sun** beats down on the Trans Am. The heat is **boiling** my **brain**, while **terror**
boils my **heart**. I have no clue what I'm trying to say, but the point is, I'm at my
^{D A N}
limit. I shouldn't have made a deal with the Devil.

We arrived at Castiglione's mansion.

July 4th, 12:00 PM
Castiglione's Mansion

I don't remember how many henchmen there were.

But there were a lot of 'em. There must have been more than 100 ^{P U N K S} **henchmen**⁷ in the mansion. With his **careful aim** and **lightning-speed reloading**, Dan made short work of ^{THOSE PUNKS} **them**. He made it look as easy as **shooting** stationary targets in the bowling alley's arcade shooter - Castiglione's ^{P U N K S} **goons** are actually a fairly agile bunch. A crafty ^{P U N K} **one** might take cover, sneak up on you and then shoot you at **point-blank range**. But for some reason, bullets can't seem to hit the ^{D A N} Devil.

As my eyes gradually got used to it, I realized he was reading the trajectory of the **bullet** and dodging it, wavering like a flame in the wind. This guy's **killing ability** is in a different league - I was mesmerized just watching him. Being able to pick up tricks like that is directly linked to your **criminal power**. The reason I'm stuck as a cheap ^{B A T M A N} **batting machine** is because I'm missing the repetition of basic practice. By comparison, the Devil is like a ^{D A N} **home-run calculator**,^{COMPUTER} it's a completely different system. There's **no way** I could match up.

All of the **small fries** have been taken out. Castiglione's the only one left.

BIRKIN: "Do me a favor. Promise you won't **kill** Castiglione."

DAN: "I can't make any promises. Wanna know why? My gun takes on a **life** of its own when it sees a **rotten** face. All ^{THIS DUMBASS} **y o u** can do is pray."

BIRKIN: "We need him alive. Our goal is to set up a meet with Curtis. Don't forget that."

DAN: "A meeting? Not interested."

It's all over. The ^{PROJECT} plan is **ruined**. ^{ONE HUNDRED} **1 0 0 %** fucked.

⁷ Lit. "Chinpira" (ちんぴら), a low ranking Yakuza goon. Yakuza hierarchies are used through the story in place of Mafia hierarchies.

CASTIGLIONE: "You're a tenacious little bastard."

DAN: "That's right. I'm here to **kill** you, and there's no stopping me now."

CASTIGLIONE: "No need to rush things, let's talk about this. Sit with me."

DAN: "Don't talk to me like that if you care about your **life, scumbag.**"

CASTIGLIONE: "'Scumbag' is a bit cold, isn't it? Mario is fine. Just call me Mario."

DAN: "Well then, Mario. I'm going to offer you a choice."

CASTIGLIONE: "Go on."

DAN: "I could **kill** Curtis and let you live. Or I could **kill** you and let Curtis live. Which will it be?"

CASTIGLIONE: "Can I ask you a question before I answer?"

DAN: "I don't mind."

CASTIGLIONE: "What's your name, kid?"

BIRKIN: "That's Dan Smith. Pretty good, isn't he?"

CASTIGLIONE: "I didn't ask your ^{P U N K}**sidekick**. Shut **the fuck** up. What kind of company do you keep?"

DAN: " ^{THAT DUMBASS} H e 's just the driver. Nothing more, nothing less."

CASTIGLIONE: "Back to my question. Dan, what's your **play** in all this? Neither side seems very profitable. What's your objective?"

DAN: "Objective?"

CASTIGLIONE: "That's right. Your goal."

DUMBASS
DAN: "Don't ask me. Ask the driver."

CASTIGLIONE: "Huh?"

BIRKIN: "The goal is to have a sit down with you and Curtis. The two biggest names in Seattle, teaming up. For that to happen, I need Dan."

CASTIGLIONE: "Why do you need him in particular?"

BIRKIN: "Well, that's... We want you to **take over**. Dan will **kill** Curtis at the meeting."

CASTIGLIONE: "Why?"

BIRKIN: "What do you mean why?"

CASTIGLIONE: "Why do you want him **dead**?"

BIRKIN: "I told you, it's so you can be in charge."

CASTIGLIONE: "Your façade has slipped. Well, I guess I could see through it from the beginning."

BIRKIN: "Huh?"

CASTIGLIONE: "That's a pretty flimsy plan. You just want me in the same room as CURTIS him so you can't dispose of us both. How stupid are you?"

BIRKIN: "No, that's not what I meant."

CASTIGLIONE: "It's a shame that your stupidity had to waste so many of my men."

BIRKIN: "Shit!"

CASTIGLIONE: "You're not getting out of here alive..."

DAN: "Oh, how do you figure that?"

Castiglione blew the **whistle** hanging around his neck. As the sound echoed through the mansion, I could hear the sound of swarming footsteps, ten, twenty... More and more just sprouting up. No, no, they're **countless**. We're talking hundreds of **troops**.
FAMILY MEN

Roswell and Phillip entered the room first, ready for trouble. But what caught my eye was the crowd behind them... They look familiar. I've seen them before, quite recently too. Yeah, it's that guy. They're all **Samayoru**. Maybe two or three hundred **Samayoru**. When you see that many identical faces, your **instincts** tell you something's **wrong**. Am I dreaming? Is this an illusion?

BIRKIN: "Dan, can I ask you something?"

DAN: "Now's not the time for romance, Birkin."

BIRKIN: "I'm serious, don't get mad. Are you seeing this too? An army of people with the **same face**..."
S A M A -

DAN: "'**Same faces**', huh. Yeah, I see them clear as day. 'Cause they're my **prey**..."
C O P I E S T A R G E T

BIRKIN: "Huh?"

DAN: "These things aren't people. They're **tactical weapons**..."
T E R R O R I S T S

BIRKIN: "Samayoru is a tactical weapon?"
T E R R O R I S T

DAN: "Look, humans all share the same basic framework. Emotions and environment then give birth to individual differences. This is just basic subtraction. Subtracting the emotions and environment."

BIRKIN: "The same framework? What are you talking about!?"

DAN: "You're slower than usual, asking all these **stupid** questions. Mario is **desperate**. The stakes are **too high**."

The inside of the mansion is becoming a **strange** space. Roswell and Phillip's faces are slowly morphing into Samayoru's.

CASTIGLIONE: "You're going to **die** here, so that you can be turned into raw materials for your country."

ROSWELL: "Come with us, Birkin. Hurry up."

PHILLIP: "It's only a matter of time. You can count on that **drug**. It never fails!"

DAN: "I can see your **true colors** now. What will you do?"

BIRKIN: "What will I do? The fuck do you mean?"

DAN: "You don't understand yet?"

BIRKIN: "Understand what?"

DAN: "You're one of them. You have the same face."

BIRKIN: "You're **full of shit**! There's **no way** that's..."

DAN: "Why would I be bullshitting you? Go look in a mirror if you don't believe me."

BIRKIN: "..... Goddamn it!"

I rushed to the mirror in the back of the room, certain of my appearance...

What a fucking letdown. When I looked in the mirror, **Samayoru** looked back.

He was smiling at me.

*July 4th, 2:48 PM
Castiglione's Mansion*

Kills3rd

I'm gonna **die in three days**.

I **cried** in front of my mirror until dawn. I cried and cried and cried... I couldn't stop. Every time I saw my face, I started to **cry**. Samayoru would always look back at me with a ^{SMILE} **ghastly grin**. He was laughing, though he wanted to cry. I wanted to laugh, but I kept **crying**. And so we laughed, and we cried.

SAMAYORU

He looks like he really needs someone to talk to, even though he's ^{SAMAYORU} **me**. I guess life in **hiding** can get pretty boring.

SAMAYORU: "Mr. Birkin, you look well."

BIRKIN: "You think so?"

SAMAYORU: "You've got a lovely smile."

BIRKIN: "So do you. You've got one **creepy face**."

SAMAYORU: "I agree, you make a very good impression of me."

BIRKIN: "I'll send your head flying."

SAMAYORU: "One of your **double home-runs**? I look forward to it."

BIRKIN: "You know, it's strange..."

SAMAYORU: "What is?"

BIRKIN: "Whenever I meet you, it's like I'm free from any **fear of death**."

SAMAYORU: "I'm honored to be of service."

BIRKIN: "But still, I can't stop **crying**. The tears just keep on flowing."

SAMAYORU: "And why is that?"

BIRKIN: "It can't be **sorrow**, but it's not **joy** either, or pain. Maybe it just means I'm ready."

SAMAYORU: "Ah, yes, I understand your feelings all too well."

BIRKIN: "Don't **coddle** me."

SAMAYORU: "You and I are **one**, Mr. Birkin. S M I L E Your tears are my tears. Your S M I L E wavering heart is also my own. The **true depths** of your resignation are etched inside of me as well."

BIRKIN: "How noble. I'm **amazed** I could even bring myself to acknowledge your existence. Why do you **haunt me**?"

SAMAYORU: "You're not the only one. HEAVEN S M I L E S Your **neighbors** are also in need of me. They're in the same situation."

BIRKIN: "So there's other guys who can see you? Are they experiencing the same thing?"

SAMAYORU: "My form is visible to all your HEAVEN S M I L E S **neighbors**. I don't know the reason; however, my role is **simple**. I am merely a **lancet** that relieves their **pain**."

BIRKIN: "Just a **prick**, huh? You think you're **really something**, don't you?"

SAMAYORU: "The **tumors** inside you cause unbelievable pain, that's what creates HEAVEN SMILES the Smiling Faces. To fight that pain, you need to laugh. I'm just a prick that makes S M I L E you laugh."

BIRKIN: "I don't get it at all."

SAMAYORU: "You will, sooner or later. Before long, **pain** will become the master of your **mortified body**. That's when I'll get to work."

BIRKIN: "Are you fucking **kidding me**?"

SAMAYORU: "Does this look like a face that would tell a joke?"

BIRKIN: "But you're laughing!"

SAMAYORU: "That's just the face I was born with."

BIRKIN: "Bullshit."

SAMAYORU: "You're a **funny guy**, Mr. Birkin."

BIRKIN: "Do you mind if I get **something** off my chest?"

SAMAYORU: "Do as you like."

BIRKIN: "I really **hate** this city. I've had enough of it."

SAMAYORU: "I understand."

BIRKIN: "Everyone here is damp. **Mold** grows on their hearts. I mean it. If you were to open up my **corpse**, you'd find moss growing inside of it."

SAMAYORU: "I understand."

BIRKIN: "This life is a **death** sentence. There's no air flow. And I'm not talking about the **humidity** - you can't get **rich**, no matter who you are. It's not just a **structural** issue. Once you've fallen off the train, you just can't climb back on."

SAMAYORU: "I understand."

BIRKIN: "And yet people cling to this town, they cling to its **syndicates**, longing desperately for some unlikely **stroke of luck** that'll finally make it worth their while. That's what **everyone** does. That's what **I** do."

SAMAYORU: "I understand."

BIRKIN: "Of course, everyone's got a **breaking point**. But I'm still looking for an **opening**, still waiting for a **chance** to sneak in."

SAMAYORU: "I understand."

BIRKIN: "I know it's **nonsense**, but I still believe that... Someday, somehow, I'm gonna get some big job. From the **East Coast**, or the **Windy City**, somewhere. I can't let go of that hope. I'm still waiting for that day. That's what **Paradise** is to me: a world within sight, but forever out of reach."

SAMAYORU: "I understand."

BIRKIN: "I know I'll never reach it, I know it, and yet I can't leave this town."

SAMAYORU: "I understand."

BIRKIN: "You know, you're a really good listener..."

SAMAYORU: "There's a trick to it."

BIRKIN: "What's the trick?"

SAMAYORU: "Don't let your **eyes** wander."

BIRKIN: "??"

SAMAYORU: "That's the best way to deal with **unstable people**. They tend to relax when they can fix their eyes onto something immovable."

BIRKIN: "Is that so..."

SAMAYORU: "It's a **rule of thumb**. I've dealt with tens of thousands of people with **death written** on their faces, it always works."

BIRKIN: "A **wealth of experience**, huh? Big deal."

SAMAYORU: "Feel free to ask me anything. I shall answer to the best of my abilities."

BIRKIN: "Well, there's something that's always on my mind. Why Curtis Blackburn? Why has **he targeted** me?"

SAMAYORU: "..."

BIRKIN: "Does it have **something** to do with you?"

SAMAYORU: "..."

BIRKIN: "Hey, are you there?"

SAMAYORU: "..... *Hahaha.*"

BIRKIN: "Huh?"

SAMAYORU: "Yeah, I wonder..."

BIRKIN: "Are you listening to me?"

SAMAYORU: "Yes."

BIRKIN: "Tell me what he wants. Why he needs to **take me out**. The **reason** he's sunk so low as to grace a ^{B A T M A N}**batting machine** like me with his acquaintance."

SAMAYORU: "Curtis Blackburn... Who's that?"

BIRKIN: "He's the one who's **comin' after me**. I have no idea why. But since he sent me that death notice, you've suddenly entered my life, and even a **ferocious devil** has gotten involved... This has to be all connected, am I wrong?"

SAMAYORU: "It's a series of **silly coincidences**. You're just the **kind** of person who ^{TROUBLE}flirts with disaster, Mr. Birkin."

BIRKIN: "If you know so much, you should be able to answer. Who am I?"

SAMAYORU: "I'm afraid **Zen philosophy** is not my area of expertise."

BIRKIN: "Then, who are you?"

SAMAYORU: "*Hahaha*. What do you think?"

BIRKIN: "I changed my **mind**, I really ^{T A B O O} **don't wanna** know."

SAMAYORU: "You are... *Haha*... Looking for **punctuation** in **life**."

BIRKIN: "Not this shit again. You're in control, right?"

SAMAYORU: "I can offer you an answer for what you seek."

BIRKIN: "Alright, time to see what makes you **tick**..."

SAMAYORU: "You're **up to bat**. Will you able to return the **pitch** that Curtis Blackburn is about to throw?"

BIRKIN: "Oh, that's Phoenix... Wright⁸. Right or left - which kneecap will it be? Is this one OK?"

SAMAYORU: "*Hahaha*. Please **stop**. *Pfffffft*. It's just too funny. You're gonna **break** my bones! *HAHAHAHA!*"

BIRKIN: "'Course I am, your left **knee** is a **bloody mess**. I call it '^{S H I G E K I} **stimulation**⁹ **therapy**'. Try to hang in there for a bit."

SAMAYORU: "*Bwahaha!* Stop, stop, I'm gonna **laugh myself** to **death**! *Hahahahaha!* It's too **painful**! *Pfffffft*... It **hurts**. It **hurts**. It **hurts**! *Puahahahahahaha!*"

BIRKIN: "I guess that wasn't enough..."

⁸ Phoenix Wright is the protagonist of Capcom's Ace Attorney series. The Japanese text has a pun with his Japanese name, Ryuichi Naruhodo, with Naruhodo meaning "I understand". The same pun is used in The 25th Ward.

⁹ A pun. Stimulation can also be pronounced as Shigeki (刺激).

SAMAYORU: "Bwaha!"

Finally, it **broke**. I swung over and over at the **swollen** red kneecap until all that was left of it was **just meat**. A series of **critical hits**. **Samayoru** erupts with **laughter**. He's convulsing like he's going to **die** laughing.

SAMAYORU'S

His smile was filled with **madness**, though. Little by little, his **eyes** stopped smiling. It was hard to watch. That **terror** was no laughing matter. A face that leaves a **strong** impression. He sits deeply into the sofa, looks me straight in the face, and smiles piercingly.

SAMAYORU: "Now then, let's get down **to business**."

BIRKIN: "What?"

SAMAYORU: "I shall tell you my **true identity**. I am the prototype for the '**Smiling Faces**'. A '**thing**' manufactured in the shape of man. A person deprived of all **information**. All that remains is a **smile**."

BIRKIN: "I don't follow."

SAMAYORU: "You will. Soon enough you'll be left a husk as well."

BIRKIN: "That's not gonna happen."

SAMAYORU: "Your **joints** are already **aching**, aren't they?"

BIRKIN: "Nope, not at all, I'm fine. **Picture of health**."

SAMAYORU: "You can't lie to me, Mr. Birkin."

BIRKIN: "Ugh!"

A **sharp pain** ran through my **neck**. It was so **bad** it **overwhelmed** me, I couldn't stand... My **consciousness**... **Faded**... Away...

July 5th, 4:44 AM

Shigeki Birkin's Apartment

I can't believe the scene playing out in front of my eyes.

Dan Smith is standing in front of Curtis Blackburn's **special VIP seat**, with Mario Castiglione's freshly **severed head** as a **souvenir**. The air is filled by an indescribable **tension**. The **spark** of their so-called **criminal power**¹⁰ A U R A is giving me a **headache**; it's like being exposed to some crazy **electromagnetic waves**.

Dan placed the **miserable head** onto a fruit platter that was sitting on the table. A proper Castiglione Sundae. Curtis doesn't flinch or change expressions one bit, which **irritates** the hell out of Dan. And as for me... If I am still me... My bat-holding hand is drenched in **sweat**.

CURTIS: "Just tell me what you want, kid. No need to **scare** the **girls**."

DAN: "How about it? I think this **head** should be an adequate gift. All I want in exchange is an **executive**¹¹ job. Not a bad deal, is it?"

CURTIS: "Don't get ahead of yourself. You wouldn't know what to do with that kind of generosity, so I'll do you a favor and take you under me."

DAN: "What, you wanna give me orders?"

CURTIS: "Not good enough for you?"

DAN: "Try me."

CURTIS: D O M I N A T I N G "**Taking down** a cocky brat like you would be a walk in the park, but... I don't want to **break** your **self-confidence**."

DAN: "You think you can **break** me? You callin' me **soft**?!"

¹⁰ The Japanese uses オーラジカラ as Furigana above the term "Criminal Power". オーラ is "Aura", while ジカラ is "Jikara", a pun mixing the words Jiken/Crime (事件) and Chikara/Power (力).

¹¹ Lit. "Kanbu" (幹部), a high-ranking Yakuza.

CURTIS: "It seems that way."

DAN: "I'll make you disappear, then."

It's the most **explosive** situation of the century.

KillsTomorrow

I'm gonna die tomorrow.

There's tons of stories about the way people live out their last days. 'If you were to die tomorrow, what's the last thing you'd do?' is a common topic of conversation. Now, that's a problem, because ^{RETARDS} people will just interject their own ^{BULLSHIT} stupidity with lines like 'I'm going to die!' or 'Oh, I died for a moment, but came back to life!', making a fuss just to be the center of attention. That kind of ^{BULLSHIT} nonsense doesn't really get to the heart of the problem.

If you really are gonna die, that makes you a loser. It means there's nothing you can do. Even if you struggle, even if you desperately latch on to lost hope, it'll all slip through your fingers. Can't save a goddamn thing, that's the truth of the matter.

^{THIS DUMBASS'} I 'v e got maybe 24 hours left. Tomorrow morning, Curtis will begin the day with his usual jogging routine. After this little warm up, at 7:00 AM he'll scarf down a cereal-and-protein breakfast, maybe with some coffee, a helping of fruit or a tarte if he likes sweet. At around 8:00 AM he'll be nice and refreshed and ready to get to work.

Which means I'll be dead before 9:00 AM. That's the safe bet. Wait a minute though... He might consider the stroke of midnight to be the start of the new day, and come meet me then. If that's the case, I don't even have 24 hours! You've gotta be shitting me. That's a pretty important detail! I guess I'd better call ahead and find out what time Curtis will come get me. Wait, who am I even gonna call? If I call Curtis, it's gonna be a pretty short chat. Nothing more ^{BRAINDEAD} stupid than a ^{L O S E R} murder victim calling ^{SOME ASSHOLE} his killer. Okay then, someone in h i s ^{CURTIS'} entourage? Pedro would've been my first choice, but he's probably still bitter about being stripped naked and locked in the bathroom. I sent his new wife, Pamela, some juicy pictures as a wedding gift. I sure hope he enjoyed his fun little bath time, getting blackout drunk with those ^{BUNNY GIRLS} cute girls, 'cause payback's a bitch.

I'm at my **wit's end**. I've got no choice but to call in another favor from Mills. But first... There *is* one thing I need to do before I **die**. If I'm gonna **die** tomorrow, this'll be the last thing I do.

July 6th, 0:18 PM

Shigeki Birkin's Apartment

I've **never** felt any desire to fall in **love** like a normal person.

But sometimes, **love** has a way of falling into your lap while you're looking away. I know it's just some **meaningless bullshit**. Strangely enough though... When you know you're about to **die**, **meaningless** things tend to take on a life of their own, a new **flavor**. It's impressive how the smallest things can kickstart your **survival instinct**. I'm not talking about me, just **life** in general. For me at least, that way of **thinking** still feels **strange**.

I know I've been pretty vague, but I've reached my **limit**. That's all I'm gonna say. I'm never going to admit that I've been hangin' around the library lately, or that I've been readin' **philosophy books** for no reason. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, all for **nothing**. I thought that'd give me enough topics for a week's worth of conversation... But I'm not gonna survive the week, am I... That's no good, I'm just makin' myself **depressed**. Point is, I want to talk to ^{D E C K E R} **the library lady**! If I could just caress her **blonde** hair, if she would grant me that **wish**, I could **die** happy.

Is it just me, or is it **hot** in here? I **feverishly** pick out a book. Grab some Sartre, head for the reception. I'm so nervous I almost trip on my feet.

DECKER: "Hello there."

BIRKIN: "Hey."

DECKER: "I see you got another complicated book today."

BIRKIN: "It's 'cause I'm an **idiot**. I need these books to get smart."

DECKER: "Oh no, I'm the idiot here. Even with my job being what it is, I can't make heads or tails of these books. I only read Harlequin romances."

BIRKIN: "That's **amazing**! Harlequin romances are **true philosophy**. The Bible of our times."

DECKER: "You really think so?"

BIRKIN: "Absolutely."

DECKER: "I guess I should be pleased. I don't get many compliments."

BIRKIN: "Your name? What is your name?"

DECKER: "It's written on the plate..."

BIRKIN: "Your first name."

CLAUDIA: "Claudia Decker."

BIRKIN: "Well, Claudia, wanna get out of here?"

CLAUDIA: "But I still have work to do..."

BIRKIN: "Is it important?"

CLAUDIA: "Not really."

BIRKIN: "So we're good to go!"

CLAUDIA: "Where to?"

BIRKIN: "Outside."

CLAUDIA: "The outside world?"

BIRKIN: "That's right. The whole **wide world** awaits."

CLAUDIA: "I've been set **free**..."

BIRKIN: "Follow me."

I grabbed Claudia's hand and ran outta there. I can't believe this beautiful woman would give me the time of day. I wish the clock would **stop** ticking so that this moment could last **forever**. My chest is pounding and my heart is fluttering. I stop

running once we reach the park, where you can see Seattle Tower. I'm out of breath and out of words. Claudia, with her cheeks just a bit flushed, looks even more beautiful and sweet.

I wonder, is the face she sees still my ^{UGLY MUG} own? Last I checked in the mirror, I was still ^{SAMAYORU} smiling. But maybe, just maybe, the face reflected in ^{CLAUDIA'S} her eyes would be the one of ^{T H A T D U M B A S S} our first meeting.

CLAUDIA: "I haven't ran this much since track and field. My legs hurt..."

BIRKIN: "You OK?"

CLAUDIA: "I'm fine. It felt good, refreshing."

BIRKIN: "I still can't believe it."

CLAUDIA: "Me neither. This is the first time I've skipped out on work."

BIRKIN: "Not that - I mean, being here with you."

CLAUDIA: "I always dreamed that someday, a mysterious stranger would take me away to see the world..."

BIRKIN: "You too, huh?"

CLAUDIA: "And when I first saw you. Mr. Birkin..."

BIRKIN: "Call me Shigeki."

CLAUDIA: "When I saw you, Shigeki, I knew you were the one."

BIRKIN: "Claudia, please listen to me. I don't have much time, so I promise I'll keep ^{MY SPEECH} **t h i s**¹² short. I give you my word that I **truly mean** everything I'm about to tell you. I have been in **love** with you since I first saw you, three months ago. I fell for you

¹² In the original Japanese text, "my speech" is literally [Kudoki](#).

right away. I've been thinkin' of nothing but you. I tried to forget by throwing myself into my job, but it didn't work. You still dwelled within my heart. But today, my prayers were answered. Claudia, I love you with all my heart!"

CLAUDIA: "Your smile... You're **scaring me...**"

I suddenly grabbed my **metal bat** and took a **full swing**. Claudia's **brain** was a beautiful, innocent shade of **pink**, and it fell down like **scattered cherry blossoms**. In the end, before **dying**, I didn't manage to do anything.

July 6th, 2:52 PM

Seattle Tower

Mills invited me to a first-class restaurant.

This could be my **Last Supper**... My goal is to empty his pockets and drink the **finest** wine he can afford.

BIRKIN: "Has anything changed?"

MILLS: "I know you feel strongly about it, but I still don't like the idea of formal attire."

BIRKIN: "I'm choosing the wine."

MILLS: "Sure, go ahead."

We drank more than 10 bottles.

MILLS: "If you drink that much, they'll all taste the same."

BIRKIN: "There's still some of the branded stuff left."

MILLS: "At least leave me a glass, Birkin. I brought a **present** for you. That's why I called."

BIRKIN: "And this present comes with a **catch**, I'm sure."

MILLS: "Of course. A **catch**, and a lot of **caution**. I had to go behind quite a few **backs** to get this ^{S H I T} **stuff**. Here, have your pick."

BIRKIN: "It's a pill case... The hell's this?"

MILLS: "Open it and you'll see."

BIRKIN: "... Oh? This a fucking joke?"

MILLS: ^{S H I T} "This stuff's what you really need. The **red** and **blue** capsule will blow your consciousness away in a haze of **confusion**. If you take it on the tower's observation deck, it'll be over before you know it. The yellow and purple capsule will make you

bleed out in less than a minute. The white and black one accelerates the progression of ^{HEAVEN SMILE}Smiling Face. Gulp it down, give it five seconds, and BOOM! You're ^{STERIODS}blown to smithereens. You can choose whichever of these miracle cures you like."

BIRKIN: "Is this really any better than being killed?"

MILLS: "Don't underestimate Curtis."

BIRKIN: "Trust me, I won't. I met him yesterday. That guy's ^{PURE DARKNESS}the worst of the worst."

MILLS: "You're going to die either way, swallowing a ^{STERIOD}pill is at least painless. I'm saying this for your own good. There's no reason to hesitate."

BIRKIN: "What happens if I take all of 'em?"

MILLS: "Don't be an idiot."

BIRKIN: "Well then, watch this idiot go to town."

MILLS: "Stop it! Birkin!"

BIRKIN: "Gulp. 3... 4... 5... 6... 7? I count 10 seconds."

MILLS: "You jackass..."

BIRKIN: ^{CANDIES}"Placebos don't work on me."

MILLS: "I guess the ^{BATMAN}batting machine isn't all talk. I'll toast to your stubbornness."

BIRKIN: "If you're going for the Romanée, lemme at it first. And then call Curtis."

MILLS: "Bullseye, huh... Curtis is waiting to hear from you. I'm just an ordinary messenger."

BIRKIN: "Bullshit. You're an awful messenger. If you fuck me over on this, I'm knockin' your head out of the park."

July 6th, 10:30 PM

Ristorante Dioxin

Special Interview - Story & Characters

The next installment of the episodic novel 'Killer is Dead' will be the final one. In this special episode we asked Goichi Suda, its author, to describe its story and characters.

Story

The expression of a novel

The idea behind this novel was not to adapt the entirety of killer7, but rather to depict a part of the killer7 world as seen through the eyes of a character who does not appear in the game. It is set in the past, so I decided to have the story take place in Seattle, where Dan and Curtis were located. This was actually my first time writing a novel, so it was quite refreshing. In a game, the text is only part of the overall picture, with the programmers implementing the visuals and sounds. So the story ends up coming together through not just words, and it changes through the interaction of these elements. That's why it doesn't just come straight from my head, but it is built in real time by the cooperation of all staff members. This time I'm working alone, so I can't really fool anybody (laughs).

The connection between the world of 'Killer is Dead' and the game

In 'Killer is Dead', the persona of Dan existed decades before the events of the game, during a time when the existence of the Heaven Smiles was not yet public, and they were still in the manufacturing phase. How did the Heaven Smiles come to be? The story shows how Dan and Curtis were part of that process. By the way, Samayoru is also one of the triggers for the birth of Heaven Smile.

Samayoru is a hallucination, but he also represents the idea of looking into a mirror and seeing someone who's completely different. Samayoru is the connection point between human and monster, as one turns into a Heaven Smile. In other words, he is a kind of 'neighbor'. Birkin turns into Samayoru because he has been

administered a drug manufactured in Antwerp, as he was taking part in clinical trials for money.

Originally, I wrote a scenario about the scientists which were involved in developing the drug, but it was not clear how it was distributed and weaponized. That's why I opted to have Birkin act as a test subject.

In the game, you can see that Dan and Curtis share a history. Unfortunately, the scenario depicting their storied and tense relationship was cut. That's why I thought of including it in a supplementary work. In this novel, I wanted to show their teacher-student relationship.

Paradise - Greenland -

Paradise - Greenland - is a location where to escape for the characters in the story. It is a place where you can escape from reality. Depending on the person, it could mean 'death' or something else entirely. All of these things are represented by Paradise - Greenland -.

The Final Chapter

One of the major themes of the story is whether Birkin dies or not, so I'm currently thinking about how to conclude the story. Will he become a Heaven Smile? Will he killed by Curtis? There are a number of fateful conclusions that I'm thinking about writing in an interesting manner. Incidentally, of the options that remain to Birkin, there aren't any that will allow him to survive, are there? (laughs) But I think it's still interesting to try and predict how the final chapter will play out.

Characters

Shigeki Birkin

Birkin is an ordinary assassin. I wanted to write a grounded character, as opposed to those who appear in killer7. How do ordinary people see Curtis and Dan? What

kind of people are they? These are the sorts of questions I wanted to answer. When it comes to characters who appear during the game, Mills and Birkin are of similar status. The story is shown through the point of view of the assassin, Birkin, and I feel that he turned out to be quite good a character. Actually, there were only a few scenes of Birkin working, so now that I look back on it, maybe I should have included more depictions of his assassin job. As for Birkin's killing technique, the reason why he uses a bat was because I wanted to name him "Batman." So I named him Batman first, and then I decided he would kill with a bat. (laughs)

Dan Smith

Since Dan is surprisingly chatty in this era, I thought it would interesting to give him a lot of dialogue. I had fun. Even though he's younger, his personality is not much different from the one depicted in killer7. However, since a lot of his scenes were cut from the game, he comes off as a lot more talkative. Even as a young man, you can probably pick up on Dan's cruel nature.

Curtis Blackburn

Curtis is the end point of the story, so I didn't think about his depiction too much. You should look forward to the final episode to see how he's involved. It's going to revolve around a face-off between Curtis and Birkin, in the truest sense of the word, so I hope you enjoy it.

Christopher Mills

He's very young in this story, about 12 years old. Despite his age, he has an important job and he's really good at networking. I wanted to write about Mills as a high-level informant when he was 12 or 13 years old. Because of that, I'm not sure if his age really came across in the finished story... I wanted to give the readers a glimpse of the Seattle Underworld, but I'm not sure it was conveyed properly. What do you think?

Claudia Decker

When it comes to Claudia, I wanted to write a love story for Birkin. It's just that... It doesn't end well. (laughs) I wanted to depict another grounded part of Birkin's life, rather than focusing exclusively on his work. It's a good love story, but a very short one. (laughs)

Other Characters

This is more about the novel in general, but I wanted to depict the dark side of this era, one that reeks of dust and mold, and is very damp. I wanted to portray the atmosphere surrounding those who live at the bottom rungs of society, which I could not express in the game. I think the presence of characters like Mario and Pedro helped bring that idea to life... Show that dark side. Although they belong to a higher class than Birkin, they still manage to convey that smell of mold. I guess this is a story about people who can't walk on the main streets.

Originally, Birkin was supposed to appear in the game itself. He was in the very first draft. I've wanted to depict Birkin properly since then, and I'm glad I got the chance to do so.

The next episode is going to be the actual end of 'killer7', in a sense. After that, it's going to be over. It makes me quite emotional, so I don't want to write it yet. But don't worry, the wait's not going to be as long as the countdown to Tatsumi Fujinami's retirement (laughs).

[TL NOTE: Tatsumi Fujinami is a Japanese Pro Wrestler from NJPW. He is known for often announcing his retirement and then going back on his word, with his countdown (i.e. the series of matches preceding retirement) being even longer than that of Antonio Inoki.]

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