

Carry On My Wayward Son

Final Countdown

Von CronosTantei-san

*Carry on my wayward son
There'll be peace when you are done
Lay your weary head to rest
Don't you cry no more*

24 hours. Time was running way too fast. It felt like it was running through his fingers. It took him way too long until he found the message, way too long till he realized Ran's disappearing. He was an idiot! Such an idiot!

Ran... Watashi wa kono yona bakadeshita. BAKA BAKA BAKA!

He was a God damn idiot. Why the hell was he hiding all this time? Why did he torture her so much with his disappearance? Why had Conan, that dumb brat, to dry her tears – again and again? Why, if those bastards kidnapped his precious Ran anyway? He tried to protect her. He really tried. But he had failed. It was his most important case. And he had failed.

He had no choice. He didn't even want one. He would do whatever it took to save her. Anything. He knew, that it was crazy and silly to do this on his own. His smart mind didn't stop working. Not yet. But he also knew, that one important person being in danger was enough, was one too many. He wouldn't risk the lives of his other friends too.

Hattori, Haibara, Agasa and the others were already risking way too much by sharing his "little" secret with him. He sucked at this whole charade. It was almost a miracle that it has taken those men in black so long to figure out the truth about him. The dice had been cast. All in.

*Once I rose above the noise and confusion
Just to get a glimpse beyond this illusion
I was soaring ever higher
But I flew too high*

He was nearly blind with rage when he slipped into the modern villa in front of him. Carefully he went forward, one hand touching the cold wall next to him. Only a few steps until he's reached the stairs. One. Two. Three. He froze. There was a sound. Could it be? Wasn't he alone? He was listening very cautious. But there was nothing beside his own strong, fast heartbeat. He waited a few more seconds, then started walking again. There was no time for that. He had to hurry.

Okay. The stairs. He knew, that the third and the last one were damaged and might make a noise, so he skipped them.

Nearly done. Keep calm, boy.

He pressed his back against the wooden door and listened. Nothing. Not even the PC was running. Good. Very good. He opened the door to the lab nearly in slow motion. Now being in the windowless room he risked to use his flashlight-watch, that the professor had created for him. Quickly he checked the desk and all its drawers. One was locked.

A smile flickered across his face. Finally, the Tantei became a thief like that annoying always smiling wizard. Let's hope he was as good as his annoying doppelganger. With shaking fingers he tampered with the damn lock, until he finally heard that redemptive snap-sound.

Not even five minutes later he was already breathing the fresh air of the night – in his hands the well-deserved haul. But he did not stop running until he reached his own home next door. Finally inside, he slid down to the ground, leaning on the inside of his front door. Slowly he opened his fist around his haul. Looking at that red-white pill made him so extremely angry. He felt helpless and alone. This antidote might change him for a few hours, but every painful changing would lower his chance to finally get back to his original form forever.

Perhaps Haibara was right. Perhaps it would be even better to stay like he was now. There was only that one big reason. That one blue eyed, caring, karate kicks sharing reason. If he only knew if she would still accept him... like him... love him... after figuring out the whole truth...

*Though my eyes could see, I still was a blind man
Though my mind could think, I still was a mad man*

He took a deep breath. His gaze changed.

Shinjitsu wa itsumo hitotsu!

The detective was back. He would find that truth. But first things first. He shouldn't get distracted by that creepy, shrunken woman (thanks God, she wasn't in the lab this night). He had to save Ran – no matter, how she might feel about him. He was owing her much more than that.

During the next minutes Conan sped up. Collecting clothes, his tools, some extras. He checked everything twice and finally his hand stopped on his jacket pocket, feeling for

the antidote. He didn't know how long it would change him that time, so he decided to wait with the transformation as long as possible.

One last time he read the letter. The message from hell. No, there was no mistake. He understood it pretty well:

One hour before the light is conquering the darkness...

– at this time of the year: around 4:30 am.

...on the very end of his own...

– in the outskirts of Edogawa. Maybe Urayasu. What also meant, that they knew about his second identity.

...the knight will find his eternal grave where the land loses against the sea,

– so it has to be a place on the coast.

...stained with blood.

– with the reflecting sea and morning sun in the East.

... leaving all joy, the place where all begun, behind him...

– next to the Tropical Land.

...dying while trying to save the precious princess from that dark and round, old castle.

– a dark and round old place that offers protection like that old water tower with the industrial district in Urayasu...

Hurry, dark knight. Hurry, because your princess won't wait for long. With the rising light she'll go ahead on your way to eternal darkness.

Once again he was boiling with rage. His hands – his fists were shivering, scrunching that white paper up. He wouldn't let this happen. No one else but those creatures of hell would follow him into his personal darkness. They would feel the pain, the fear, the hopelessness – while rotting in their cells.

He threw his backpack on his shoulder and opened the front door.

"What the—", he gasped.

"I can't let you do this, Kudo-kun. Gomenasai", someone whispered next to his ear before he lost consciousness.

I hear the voices when I'm dreaming

I can hear them say

Carry on, my wayward son

There'll be peace when you are done

Lay your weary head to rest

Don't you cry no more

"You are late", a deep voice echoed quietly through the darkness.

"Sorry. Something came up", a light children's voice replied.

"Show yourself, little brat. Playtime is over." *Game Over*. A cold smile appeared on Gin's face.

"First I wish to see Ran. Alive."

"Vodka, get the little princess. Her stupid, little knight is here", Gin shouted into the darkness. After a few seconds of absolute silence there was a quiet crying, hard

breathing, the sound of steps – unwillingly made.
Shinichi's heart stopped beating for a moment. *Ran...*

Vodka pushed her onto an old chair in the middle of the room and tied her hands and legs to it. For sure he had already figured out about her special skills. She looked tired. Her eyes were red from crying, her skin dirty, her clothes damaged. *Oh please! Let her be unharmed!*

"So here is your girl. Show yourself or I'll make you." Gin unlocked his gun and directed it directly at Ran's face – without turning his face off the entry, that was hidden in the dark.

"I'm here to join a little exchange-program. You'll get me and therefore you'll let her go." While speaking a small boy with glasses walked out of the deeper shadows. His eyes were like ice. His hands hidden in the pockets of his trousers.

"Why should I agree? You are already here. I asked for it and you came. Alone, unprepared, without any chance. I guess you are not in a position to negotiate."

"Because the girl has nothing to do with all this."

Ran stopped crying when she heard Conan's voice for the first time. Why was he here? What the hell were those men talking about? *What's going on here, Conan?* Again her eyes filled with tears. "Shinichi... Where are you?", she whispered while watching Conan. *I need you so badly! We do!*

Ran. Only a bit more and you'll be safe. Please. Stay calm...

"You didn't tell her? You really tried to protect her, hm? How stupid. As far as we heard, you are a little genius. But you thought, we wouldn't harm her to get you as long as she doesn't know a thing? Seriously?" Again Gin's laughter echoed through the hall.

Shinichi clenched his fists. How he hated them. He always had. All this for nothing? He had brought unspeakable suffering to the woman he loves/loved – without saving her.

*Masquerading as a man with a reason
My charade is the event of the season
And if I claim to be a wise man, well
It surely means that I don't know*

Ran was still trying to understand what was happening here. She was staring at Conan. She always knew, that there was something different about that kid. How many times did she think, that he was Shinichi... and now? Those two men... they somehow were looking familiar to her. There was something in her mind. Deep down in her memories.

For a short moment she saw Shinichi in front of her. Waving and telling her she should leave. She blinked to get rid of her tears. She should have had followed him...

"What is so funny here? Do you really think, you already won?" Conan sounded so different. Far different than/from a child. But she was used to hear that kind of adult-talk from his mouth. There was something else.

Cold.

"Oh. I don't think so. I *know*, I did."

Yes. He sounded cold – like those men in black.

Suddenly a hand appeared above her mouth. For one second she planned to rebel. But that smell... that hand... *could it be?*

"Ssssch", it whispered next to her left ear. The hand changed into one finger, gently touching her lips. She lightly nodded. The finger disappeared and the next she felt was losing her shackles.

"Yeah. You know a lot. But you are missing something in your deductions."

The last thing she saw was, how Conan slowly took off his glasses. Then she was softly pushed towards the darker areas of the hall. A warm body was covering her, an arm pushing her close behind it. Her heart was beating so incredible fast. She knew who was saving her. She was feeling it. But Conan was over there. About ten or more meters away. How was that even possible? She thought...

"Your big mistake was to believe, I would be so stupid and willing to sacrifice myself, that I would come alone."

"What?!" While Conan was lifting his watch, targeting Gin, he turned around, checking for his hostage. "NO WAY! Where is she?! Vodka!"

"Urg—" with a thunk Vodka fell on the ground. Unconscious.

Gin turned around, taking aim at Conan. "I have no idea, how you did that. But that was your last little trick. Time to die!"

The shot was loud. Breathtaking. The whole scene seemed to happen in slow motion. Gin's cold smile. Conan's surprised face.

Ran's scream.

Then. Silence. Darkness.

*On a stormy sea of moving emotion
Tossed about, I'm like a ship on the ocean
I set a course for winds of fortune*

"If someone is playing tricks here, it's me, ugly, old man." The voice seemed to come from the roof of the water tower. Like a light that is falling into darkness to bring hope, a man, dressed all in white flew through the darkness.

Kid! How could he know?? Shinichi was shaking his head. Not able to believe, who was helping him here. Again. His gaze was switching between Conan and Kid while he was fighting to stop Ran from running to Conan.

The child was falling down onto his knees. His eyes were staring at an Ace of Hearts, drilled into the ground directly in front of him. That crazy thief stopped a bullet with a game card?!

"Ran. Listen to me. Stay here." Shinichi's words tolerated no objections. He pushed Ran deeper into the shadows and started walking into the scene. Meanwhile Kid landed safely on his feet.

Gin was turning around again and again. Staring at Conan, Kid and finally Shinichi.

"Well. So... for whom of us are you looking for, Gin?"

"No way...", he mumbled.

"Who knows... Maybe your poison didn't kill me..."

"...but made more versions of me. Two...", added Conan.

"...or three", Kid joined the conversation.

Shinichi felt a lot better now. *She* was right. He was not alone. But he knew there wasn't much time left. They had to hurry.

"No matter, how many of you existed until now. Tomorrow, there won't be any!", Gin screamed and started shooting. His next victim was Kid, but the wizard disappeared and the bullets only met his cape.

"Conan!", summoned Shinichi. The child understood. A light push on his belt buckle and a football appeared. Gin targeted the boy now, but the boy was quicker. Many months of training. The pass was perfect. Shinichi chested the ball down and shot before Gin was even able to turn around to take aim again.

The young man put everything into this one shot. All the anger, the frustration, the fear. With more power than any power-kick-boot would have, he pushed the criminal through half the hall.

Again the room was filled with silence. But that time it was a good one.

Shinichi and Conan took a deep breath and sighed at the same time. The older one nodded slightly into Conan's direction. *Run Haibara. That was more than enough. Hide! Neither the Organization nor the police need to know your role in this whole game.*

She nodded back, threw Conan's glasses to Shinichi and ran away, becoming one with the darkness. *Don't get lost, my friend.* He *had been* so stupid and reckless when he wanted to do this alone. It had been Haibara, who stopped him at his front door and pressed him to execute this plan.

"Arigatou, Haibara-san", he mumbled quietly while he was checking Vodka and Gin. He used Ran's shackles to bind both. He also frisked them for more weapons, took one small gun from Vodka and two knives from Gin.

When he stood up, two arms wrapped around him. He didn't need to check, to know who was hugging him. The body at his back was shivering, the hands were gentle but strong.

Ran...

Shinichi just laid his hands over hers and stood still. How many months... yes, years, did they have to wait for this moment. But there was still that big fat lie between them. She saw both Conan and him. This could be his chance to keep his secret forever. But was it right to keep silent about his other version? Was it even smart to do so?

But I hear the voices say

*Carry on, my wayward son
There'll be peace when you are done
Lay your weary head to rest
Don't you cry no more*

"No, guys, seriously. After all these months... can't you wait a bit longer? We are not done yet, am I right, Tantei-kun?"

Kid. He was still here. And most importantly: he was right. Shinichi sighed one more time, gently lifted Rans arms and turned her around. "Ran... I am so sorry. You will be safe, okay?"

"Shinichi. What is going on here? Who was Conan? What—" Shinichi stopped Ran's flush of questions simply. He did what he wanted to do since that one afternoon at that tunnel of horror in Tropical Land: he kissed her and at the same time he opened his tranquilizer wristwatch to send her into a nice and safe dream.

With Ran in his arms he turned around to Kid. His eyes had a strange gaze...

"Please take care of Ran."

"What? But... Hey!" Without waiting for an answer, he handed her over to his fairest enemy.

"It's not over yet, Kaito. I need to finish this – once and for all."

"Oh come on, Tantei-kun. I won't leave you in a dangerous place twice. What do you think, how many lives you have to abandon them?"

"Kid! No discussion! Get her out here!" He didn't care. He knew, the chances to survive in here were kind of nonexistent. But what kind of victory would it be? Could he be safe? Could *she* be safe? No. This had to end here and now. He grabbed Kids pistol and shot into the roof, put it back into his hand and pushed the trigger to get him up.

"HEY!", Kid was screaming while he was drawn up – together with Ran.

Just like he thought: A hook and a rope. His escape-plan: a flight from the roof with his glider. "HURRY AND SHUT UP!" For a few seconds his gaze was following his love and that thief. "Well. Time for step three: Taking the boss down", he mumbled. He took Conan's glasses and put the wiretap – including a tracking device – inside Gins trousers.

Oh!

*Carry on, you will always remember
Carry on, none can equal the splendor
Now your life's no longer empty
Surely heaven waits for you*

Shinichi hadn't to wait for long. Technically he managed to get Ran out of here just in time. A few minutes after the young man found a good hiding place, Gin woke up. Like planned the criminal found the little wire to get rid of his shackles. And like expected, he ignored the sleeping Vodka. Since Shinichi got Gins phone (and turned it off), Gin had to contact the boss directly.

At least that was, what Shinichi was hoping for. He already took his skateboard out of

his backpack to follow Gin even across long distances. And it seemed to work. Gin was searching for his phone, cursed for a while and finally left the water tower. Shinichi activated Conan's glasses and started to follow Gin as soon as he was far enough away. With a distance of at least half a mile the young detective followed his target. One more time today, his heart was beating like crazy. While he was driving, he used his earring-phone to call the professor.

On the one side he needed to know if Ai arrived back safely and on the other side he needed someone to inform the police.

No sooner said than done.

Ai took the call herself and so Shinichi was able to thank her again and focus on instructions instead of explanations. Good thing. But only a few minutes later he had to hang up. Gin stopped. So did Shinichi. Again he was looking for a good hiding place. But he did not only find what he was looking for. He now realized. His heart wasn't beating so fast because of the adrenalin, but because of the APTX 4869. The antidote was losing its effect.

Not yet! Please! Only a bit longer!

"Gin. What are you doing here? You had clear instructions." That voice. Shinichi knew that voice somehow... Who...? "Useless soldier..."

"Rum, listen! That boy, he—"

"Please don't tell me, that he is still alive. Can't you even handle a little child?"

"It wasn't just him, Rum. That bastard had help. It was an ambush!"

"For some reason I thought, it was the plan to ambush HIM!"

"Yes! Damn it! But he ran away instead of calling the police. We still have a chance!"

"He did WHAT?!" That voice! If Shinichi wasn't already fevering, he would be freezing because of that damn voice. "You idiot! You brought him here! It was a trap! Baka desu ne?!"

"What?! No way! I double-checked everything!"

"Anything of importance, you didn't tell me yet?"

Gin shook his head. "Rum, let me take care of it." He was coming closer. Did Shinichi underestimate his opponent? Hell, why wasn't he more careful? In the meantime, the police should have been at least able to put Vodka in jail. At least one good thing. The other good thing was: if Gin or Rum killed him, no one would spy on Ran or the others anymore. At least he hoped so while he was listening for Gin's foot steps – coming closer.

Shinichi originally planned to unarm both men before their backup would arrive and call the police. Until tonight his wish was to arrest them all. But right now... within the bloody-red light of the morning sun... he was just wishing to survive. He unlocked and loaded Vodka's gun. He hated to shoot it. But he had no choice.

"Gin. You didn't get it. You were defeated by a school boy. Twice. Your services are no longer required."

The moment, Gin reached Shinichi's hiding-place, his eyes widened and he just fell. No noise, no doubts. Dead. That Rum-Guy just had executed his own man. Shinichi was petrified. Only a shivering was going through his body while the poison was changing him back into that damn child's body.

With a quiet clatter, the weapon fell onto the ground. He had no strength to hold it

anymore. But he needed to fight. He didn't wanted to hide anymore. He meanwhile hated Conan, that silly brat!

*Carry on, my wayward son
There'll be peace when you are done
Lay your weary head to rest
Don't you cry*

"Hey silver bullet, what's up?"

What? Silver Bullet? Was he already hallucinating?

He tried to open his eyes again. Dark, sunny skin, blond hair... "Z-Zero...", Shinichi whispered.

"I guess you need a little break. Leave this to me. I promise, I will try not to kill him. I know you attach importance to things like that."

So you are truly an enemy of the bad guys... Liar.

But what did he plan? And hell! When did that damn transformation end?! He needed to help Zero.

"Rum. Making a mess, like always", Zero shouted while leaving the cover.

"Bourbon? What are you doing here?"

"Well. Would you believe me, if I told you, that I was just out for a walk?" He spoke clearly and loud and as far as Shinichi could check it, he was walking slowly and relaxed. Just as if he truly was out for a walk in the park. Wasn't he afraid?

"What do you want?"

"So direct? Well, in that case... The APTX 4869. I used all of it. Need some more."

What was he trying to do? Did he also know, who Shinichi was?

"Should I ask for what reason? There is no current job for you – at least as far as I know."

"Well. I prefer to always be well prepared. You never know, if some annoying kid is going to disturb you in an amusement park during a transaction..." One didn't need to see Zero's face at this moment, to know about the fake smile that had just appeared on his lips. But Shinichi didn't hear anything of that conversation. He had already lost consciousness.

"Hey cool kid!", a well-known voice whispered next to Conans ear. "Wake up, boy!"

What the hell was going on here? FBI? Slowly the – now again – little boy opened his eyes.

"Miss Jodie... What are you doing here?"

"The young mister Amuro told us to come. What's going on here, cool kid?"

"This is the right hand of the boss of that organization. Would you please arrest him and put him into interrogation? We need that mastermind/brains of the organisation. As soon as possible."

Don't you cry no more...

"FBI! Guns down! You are under arrest!"

The little big surprise took the guys from the Bureau not even a minute. When

Shinichi finally got the chance, he was staring at Rum like he couldn't understand. He never had expected *HIM*. But besides that, there was one other thing, that Conan realized. Something that felt way more interesting right now: During the seizure Zero had put something into his trouser pocket. Something small... red and white...

Tired but with some new hope and a relieved smile Shinichi left that area, using his hands to protect his eyes from early sunlight. Would this sunrise be the start not only into a new day but into a new life? Free from fear? Would Megure or the FBI find the real head of the Black Organization? So many questions. He was walking through the blue and red lights of the police cars until he reached the end of the street, the edge of the land. Starring down into the dark water.

"No matter how dark... You are still reflecting the light, hu?"

He wouldn't let this happen again. He wouldn't risk anyone's life ever again. No more secrets. No more tears.

No more.

"Dude. I owe you one. So I won't arrest you today." The detective slowly dropped his tranquilizer wristwatch. His glasses covered his eyes pretty well. But the thief read the "arigatou" among his words and smiled.

"Well. Sure. I couldn't just leave you alone back there, could I? You are my favorite enemy after all. There is no one else to play with by night, Tantei-kun." Silently the white glider rose to its full size.

Shinichi just shook his head lightly. What was that stupid thief talking about? He ran his fingers through his hair and sighed. "Well. Sure", he copied Kid, "and who should finally arrest you, hu? Don't think I'd let you go next time, damn thief."

"Good Bye, smart Tantei-kun", he answered laughing. "Better focus on taking care of your princess. Don't lose her again or I'll steal her next time!" While whispering those last words, the last wizard of the century disappeared into the rising sunlight. *As long as he'll watch out for the one truth and leverage, the light will always conquer the darkness in the end.*