Stitches

by stubborngal

Summary

That two-faced brat wouldn’t dare to return unannounced, but he did. He did it after ten heinous years.

Notes

SECOND PAR OF THIS. OMG that, and did you guys saw that magazine with totty and atsu obvs flirting? In addition to that, it is Totty's month and my b-day.

Don't be afraid to tell me if i messed up somewhere!
Have fun and comment if you liked it~!

All rights reserved to the creators of Osomatsu-San. This is a fanfiction.
Some things changed, some stayed as they would always do, others had no other way but to keep working on their path to lessen the damage they inevitably took.

The third son had a decent office job in a well-known company, and a gentle wife that blessed him with two wonderful girls. Although his rising devotion as a doting parent and husband grew more and more every living day, he was slightly annoyed to always be the one that had to go out to get everything they needed. Nor the chilling winter or the scolding summer was capable of bestowing him with a brilliant excuse to remain in the confines of his house. However, he was not going to deny that it was a nice push for him to get some air instead of poorly doing it in his way to the office. So, here he was; once again, driving in his day off to a supermarket.

An International one to say the least.

His beautiful wife wanted something different to drink that could accompany her exquisite biscuits, and he just couldn't find it in him to tell her how tight they were going to be for the rest of the month if he purchased that foreign brand of tea for her. Naturally his head was deep in his wallet. Since he opted to not acquire an excessive amount of merchandise now that he considered himself a more mature adult, but he also dwelled on how much he loved his wife and what it meant for him to see her happy, even if it was at the expenses of his perfectly monitored finances.

With an overlook regret, Choromatsu pulled over and parked his car.

It wasn't as full as he thought it would be, the foreigners were a vast majority of the customers that waltzed around the unsoiled halls, looking for that wannabe commodity that could potentially try to offer them a warm hug from what it used to be their home. In addition to those sensible souls, there were many others interested in tasting a new palette; whether be out of curiosity, respect or plain stupidity. Needless to say, Choromatsu was not fond of such an extravagant choice, his wife by other hand, had a different opinion in that kind of investments.

And, so there he was, taking an evening stroll through those halls full of unfamiliar faces; which have been a recurrent activity for the last few years. After all, he can't simply meet one of his twin brothers on the street anymore, not when they were all immersed in their own lives. Unless they find a way to match their days off. Minus one of course.

What was the name of that tea again?

Seriously, sometimes Choromatsu just couldn't understand why his wife wanted to drink this kind of brand, when green tea was perfectly fine; if not better in his opinion. Still, he was not going to bail on pampering her. Vaguely observing the stacked boxes with intricate designs and sumptuous names, he stopped in front of the one that would punch his wallet to death. Money was meant to be spent, right? Taking a box of twelve tea bags of that oh so called special blend in his hands, he sighed, thinking in how annoyingly expensive it was.

He took one step backwards to pay for the bloody tea when someone bumped into him. Apologizing more than once for his mundane mistake, got him nothing but a half assed sorry that
rubbed him in the wrong way. Even more now, than any other day, Choromatsu wasn't feeling exactly nice to let that disrespectful person slide as it pleased. Facing that rude customer ready to give them a piece of his mind, his breath hitched.

He saw a bloom of rose colored strands, freely swaying along an elegant stride.

Enhancing her proficient grace with a peculiar choose of hair tone, she got on her tiptoes to obtain two boxes of the same brew of tea. Her unmistakably pink hair cascaded down to her shoulders, barely managing to cover them. Struck by a muddled veil of the past, he stared at that eye-catching lady that flaunted a softer shade from what Nyaa-chan used to have. Pastel pink, was the exact term, right?
Still, Choromatsu thought that it was a bit too much for a woman of her age to parade such a youthful bold decision; again, this supposedly rude person was cladded from head to toe in the same soft color palette. It shouldn’t be a surprise.

— Darling, did you find it? – asked a tall man, who walked pass Choromatsu’s side with a bundle in flourishing pink clinging in his arms.

— Yes. I just had to get lost for fifteen minutes. But this is our favorite brand – answered the unique lady he had been awkwardly staring at with an unexpectedly low voice.

Low voice?

There was something in that voice that struck him as familiar... It couldn't be, could be?

Wait a minute... Where did he see that man before?

— Collateral damage – smartly added the classy guy with a smirk on his face.

Oh! But if he was there, then the one in pink...

— How's our princess doing? – finally turning around, that person; that was most definitely not a woman, furrowed his eyebrows to check on the little baby girl. Choromatsu gawked at him, wide eyed in disbelieve.

— She's being a little fussy – slightly bouncing her in his arms, he lets her seldom reach for the other man, only to end up changing her mind and rubbing her eyes.

Choromatsu could easily forget a plethora of new faces, but how could he ever start to ignore the intimidating semblance of the man that took his younger brother away, that had the nerve to threaten him and Ichimatsu the last time they tried to talk to him, the last time they saw him. He just couldn’t wrap his head around the wild idea of seeing Todomatsu again. Not so casually, not like he was doing it right now.

— She looks so tired dear – pouting, Todomatsu caressed her chubby cheeks with his free hand.

— Well, she took two steps today. That does sound tiring – his brown eyes softened when he looked at him.

— Let's go then – smiling at him with a faint tint on his cheeks, Todomatsu lead the way to the cashier, immediately followed by whom Choromatsu knew at that time as his boyfriend.
No fucking way.

That can't be true, can it? Choromatsu was a hundred percent sure that he was not losing his grasp in reality itself either. They all admitted at one point in their lives to have a tendency of taking a few seconds to stare at any trinket or charm that resembled them of their youngest sibling. But, if Todomatsu was going to do such a thing as walk on the streets of Tokyo, he would have the decency, or the heart to tell one of them, right? Although, the way they separated was not ideal, they had a little faith in being reached by him at any circumstances. Nevertheless, there was no way in hell, Choromatsu would ever forget nor confuse his own face with someone else's. They were six same faces for a reason, and he was somewhat convinced that recognizing each other was one of the many upper hands they had.

— Totty...

He saw him smile like he had never recalled seeing since they were in their sweet childish years, walking right next to a man they didn’t have the chance to even approve of, and with a child in his arms nonetheless. Speechless, he did the best he could to sketch that image of his baby brother in a local supermarket, until he remembered that he was a full-grown man with a decent job, that actually owned a decent phone. A bit too slow, Choromatsu scolded himself; he should've taken a picture like a normal person before he disappeared from his sight.

The adrenaline that should have worked minutes ago, hit him a bit too late to go after them, to finally see him face to face, to confront him and pull him close. With the vivid images of what he observed stomping every other thought out of his head, he forced his body to move and rush back to his car, leaving the tea where it already was. And the only thing in his mind at the moment was to inform the rest of his brothers.

Sitting back on his seat, Choromatsu located his phone as fast as he could, planning to text them about this unbelievable story in their group chat. Aware of being the only one active at this time of the day, he let his body slowly normalize itself, to ease his shallow breathing and calm his nerves. He still had the whole day to go about, he couldn't just stop everything. Also, he had to get back there and purchase that brew of tea for his wife. Ah… He would seriously appreciate another break to put himself back together.

— I can't believe this is really happening... - Choromatsu whispered to his own self, to make sure he was not hallucinating about his younger brother anymore. It was one thing to think he saw him strolling around Tokyo the first few years, but now this? After they all came to the same burdened end, of letting him go as he wished before everything went out of their hands. It happened so fast, they couldn’t stop to sit and talk, they went straight to try and give him the seconds Todomatsu needed to get out of that house. With his head leaning over the steering wheel, he focused in how much air he was inhaling, when the alarming sound of his phone made him jump in his seat.

Fumbling to get the cursed device in a firm grip, he rolled his eyes at his own innadecuance.

Despicable Human

yeah sure

Karamatsu niisan
Saying such a thing... is not funny
My dear brother

Ichimatsu

hate to say it.
but shittymatsu is right.

Jyushimatsu

Niisan why would you joke like that!
It's not a nice joke!!

Not only they replied, they also had the audacity to not believe him at all. Calling him on his bullshit as if it wasn't real. In all seriousness, what part of 'I saw him' they did not get? Fueled by the legitimate truth, he quickly typed his response.

It's NOT a joke.
I saw him at the supermarket with that man, Atsushi.
And a baby too.
Besides, why would I ever lie about something like that?

Since Todomatsu left, since they lost him to that man, they did all in their power to go after him, to bring him back home in the best possible way they could have thought. After numerous tries of a futile idolized outcome; the now quintuplets, not ever they imagined to end up incarcerated in a set of minds where with each glance of a cute item, a figure cladded in pink surrounded by girls or a simple hat, would be all it took to make them create a connection to approach a stranger, hoping for them to turn around as the one they were looking for. It wouldn’t be so distressing if at least one of the countless faces happened to be the same as theirs.
Eventually, they all decided to take action about their own lives, reaching a mutual agreement of not staying in the past and not parting ways by any means. As bad as might sound, their fraternal ties strengthen when Todomatsu decided to disappear, to no longer been a part of their group. Fearing the worst and expecting the best from their missing brother, they preferred to not touch the topic. Needless to say, birthdays were never the same.

Karamatsu-niisan

Did you really see him?

Not wanting to drag the rest into a painful reality, he received a private text from the second oldest.
Choromatsu knew he was the only one that kept believing in seeing their baby brother once again. Well, all of them had a feeling that Karamatsu was missing him in a really unhealthy way; which served him right for all those high school years he turned him down without a real reason, they could only watch that unfold and crash. In spite of karma and unlike the rest, he just refused to let go, when someone else tried to explain to him that Todomatsu was not going to stroll back into their lives, he simply smiled at them and said: ‘Give him time, my brothers. He needs it.’ Like he was some kind of saint.

Who would have thought Karamatsu would be right?

Yes.

You know that I would never lie about this.

Sighing, Choromatsu solely focused on texting with his older brother. If he could make one of them believe in his words, he would feel a lot better, even if that one brother had to be Karamatsu. It was better than nothing, right? RIGHT?

How was he?
Did he look okay?
Did you talk to him?

What were they going to do with him?

From the very beginning, those two were joined to the hip, despite of their tortuous separation, they mostly found at ease with each other when things were going inevitable bad for them. Perhaps, Karamatsu needed him more now that he was an adult than Todomatsu did? If that was the case, they were only digging this shit hole deeper than it needed to be; that, or karma really was a bitch.

Well...He had pink hair.
As in, pink hair niisan.
I didn’t pay much attention to anything else besides that.
And the fact that his boyfriend was there too.
But, he still dresses in the same style.
I couldn’t talk to him...

Going back to that fleeting point, he wished he could have done something else, besides staring at him. There were so many questions continuously flowing in such a short time, so much he wanted to learn about him, to listen to. They...No. He couldn’t let him slip through time like an old memory, he wasn’t going to leave him an escape route where he could flee anymore.

They needed him.

They missed him so terribly bad.

He missed that little dry monster like he never thought he would.

It came to a point in their lives that when they all realized they were uncappable to find him, that the plans they once had ceased to be. Choromatsu broke down, distressing tears poured from his eyes down to his face, a memory that up to this day left a sour taste in his mouth and a tight clench in his heart.

That two-faced brat wouldn’t dare to return unannounced, but he did. He did it after ten heinous years.

That does sounds like Totty.
Indeed. Another sigh went through his lips while he finally stopped staring at the screen. Ugh, his sight was going to get worse if he kept forcing it like that. Looking for his glasses, he slid them back on his face, already delighting in the soothing change.

I have to go Karamatsu niisan. But I’ll text you later, okay?

Not waiting for any response, he turned his phone off and put it away in his back pockets. Getting out of the car, he walked back to the supermarket to do what he came to do in the first place. Purchasing expensive foreign tea.

For two weeks, their group chat stopped the flourishing text messages they had kept coming for eight years; the stupid comments, silly jokes and the occasional pictures made no apparition whatsoever. Meanwhile, the second brother never ceased his consistent nagging to get a word with Choromatsu, all because of his short-lived experience with the past.

It would’ve stayed the same old way if it wasn’t forIchimatsu’s sudden picture, that made everyone in their group gape at their own phones for the cruel reality of their lives.

The fourth brother had been holed up in his tiny apartment for a week or so, working tenuous hours in one of his many paints. He was deeply thankful of being part of the lucky percentage of the population that got to work at home. There were some jobs that required him to actually go to the place he was going to be working on, but he was not going to whine about it. It could’ve been worse. It always could.

The special commission he had been sweating and bleeding on, had managed to finish the last of his whites; and he owned a lot of those. Without much of a choice he had to put a stop to his flowing inspiration to buy more paint. Oh. And wet food too.

With that list on his mind, he made his way to the same store he had been visiting since he decided to start polishing his art in a more serious way. Also, he really didn’t want to go out and get ‘a real job’. That kind of life was anything but ideal for him. It wasn’t like he didn’t try, it just didn’t suit him.

Ichimatsu would have remembered to restock his monthly supply like he always did, if it wasn’t for that stupid stunt his older brother did days ago. It took him by surprise how sure he seemed about encountering their missing little brother, although he did ruin that believable story when he added the pink hair.

Really?

Of all the colors he had to choose pink?

If he wanted to make a believable story, he could have avoided that fickle detail. Besides, he did mention a baby and that Atsushi guy. At most, it picked his curiosity. Make him doubt what they already knew? Not much.

With all that mingling in his head, he walked into the store, paid for his supplies and rushed to the door, ready to visit his next favorite spot. The pet store.

Step by step, he put himself in that lonely set of mind, to ease the itching that found great
entertainment in taking over his body at the most random of times; as of now, it was when he was being stared at. As bitchy as it may sound, he didn’t like the strong burn of someone else’s eyes on his back; he didn’t fancy it then, he didn’t do it now.
The noise of the afternoon never caused him that peace that some of the locals found as the reason of being alive. Instead of succumbing to his personal hell, he brought his own sacred space with him through music, making the whole delirium of going outside an almost decent experience.
Usually, he would let one of his three cats follow him around. However, since he was living in a rather high building, he opted not to risk their friends lives over his selfishness.

Avoiding those useless attempts of being a social person with their small talks, he kept his own world to himself and his friends at home, rejecting any chances to exchange a word with the store clerk; he had a certain liking to him that made him wait for his sour mood to get back from the pits of hell every time he visited them, just to get a weak ‘Hm’ from him. After all, he was a regular at that place.

Reaching his limit of human interaction for the week, he rushed through the copious bodies of the residents that rejoiced in the park to get back home. Eager to hear the loud meows bouncing against the walls, to taste that lukewarm sweet coffee he loved to put next to his cleaning water, to rest his tired back on the couch and stare at the white ceiling for hours.

He needed to go back.

— Hiro-chan! Be careful when you run sweetie!

Right in front of his eyes, a kid attempted to run to the other side of the park only to end up tripping with his own feet and landing on his face. That must have hurt.

Regardless of wanting to flee the situation as a whole, Ichimatsu was going to be a decent human being by helping that kid up. At least, that was what he was planning to do, until the inconceivable resemblance in the toddler put a stop to his already staggering breath.

A pink haired man appeared from the same direction the little kid did. Ichimatsu gaped at him while the other calmly walked to the fallen one. Crouching down, he carefully helped him sit up to check him. He quickly examined his knees, scrapped hands and lastly his blushing face. When he found nothing severe, he sighed. Taking a handkerchief out of his pocket jacket, the man gently wiped the dirt off his skin, along with the toddler silent tears.

— Sweetie… What did I tell you? – the adult started talking, scooping the poor kid up in his arms and giving him soft pecks on his rosy cheeks.

His older brother was NOT lying.

— T-to be careful… - throwing his short arms around his neck, he snuggled up close to him. – B-but Mama I didn’t mean to trip. I…I just wanted to get that pretty leaf – he whimpered, pointing at one of the many trees that made the park an ideal place to spend with their loved ones.

— Which one, sweetie? – asked his parent, clearly distracting him so he wouldn’t burst out in tears while he kept wiping off that gunk between one of his scrapped little hands.

— That one – he pouted, pointing out again with his now clean hand, permitting the man to move onto the other one.

— How about I go with you? I could help you get it, right? – beamed the adult with a cat like smile.
— … But Daddy says Mama is too short to meddle around tall things.

Choromatsu was most definitely not lying. But he did say baby not toddler. What in the world was going on?

That sugary smile vanished like a coin in a dessert, instantly replaced by a strained, fake one.

— Is Daddy in trouble? – asked the innocent looking kid, strongly aware of his parent sudden change of will.

— Well… if Daddy doesn’t help us get your pretty leaf from that tree. He will be, sweetie – holding an insignificant grudge like his life depended on it, he took his phone out; probably sending a quick text.

— Is Daddy going to ask for permission to get in the room again? – the little one wondered, twirling a few strands of his parent pink hair with his fingers, while the adult kept his sight focused on the screen.

— He will have to do more if he wants to touch the door knob – putting his phone back in his pocket, he happily hummed, oddly content for someone who could hold a grudge for years.

— Daddy is in big trouble! – he happily said, tightening his hold around his neck and snuggling up to his father.

With his usual sly smile in check, he walked pass him, leaving a faint scent of peaches mixing with the wind.

— T-todo…matsu… - he whispered as he watched him walk away from him, exactly like the last time he saw him.

As fast as he could, he reached for his phone with clammy hands. Thinking in nothing else but to get the proof they all needed. It was simply ironic for him, that he was the one that had to get it. Snapping a quick picture of their youngest brother and their little nephew before they could vanish from his sight.

Ichimatsu let his mind wonder about how did his life developed without them by his side. Did he achieve everything he wanted at that time? Without them as a leverage to pull him back into their cursed circle, he must have; and he certainly looked like he did. But, did he have a thought time by his own? Of course, everyone had to overcome some hardships in life. The real question here was: Did he even need them now? Did he want to see them as badly as they wanted to see him?

Although part of him craved to fulfill years of an incomplete heart with one of those pesky talks, the rational part of his head screamed to do things in a certain order, to not drag himself deeper into the kind of problems he would not be able to handle on his own.

What he just did, should be considered enough for now.

The walk back to his apartment was short, fleeting, rushed. It seemed like it took him seconds to reach his front door, unlocked it and finally closed it behind him. Exhaling, Ichimatsu leant against the door, letting everything settle in his mind. Taking his shoes off, he dragged his tired feet to the main room, where he had his artistic mess in all his glory. Leaving the bags over the cluttered table, he eyed the comfy, covered in cat hair couch with all his might. No second thoughts came to haunt him when he went straight to it.
How did Choromatsu did it in the first place?

Should he add a text before or after he sends the picture? Was it really needed to type one?

There were so many things he had to think of, all because of a silly text.

— Tch… This is stupid.

Sighing, he felt the heavy body of one of his friends sit on his chest. The cat slowly blinked at him, making him smile for how cute he was.

— What would you do? Would you just send it and add something simple? – petting his soft cheeks with two of his fingers, earned him a loud meow. He would be an idiot not to listen to that clever advice. – You are right, Muffin. Let’s get this over with, so we can get a snack.

Now using his whole hand to pet the cat, from the top of his head to the rest of his body, Ichimatsu took his phone out with his free hand and opened the darn group chat.

Ah. He felt like an idiot for not believing Choromatsu in the first place.

I saw him at the park.

fuck.jpg

Should he wait to see what they were going to respond? How they were going to react? No, he was so not ready to see that unfold in front of his eyes. Time to get a snack and pretend like he didn’t send that bomb, it is then.

Jyushimatsu

He looks like totty!!
Totty is really back then!!
We have to find him niisan!!

Ah, crap. At least Jyushimatsu was the first one to answer. Either way, it was a bit too late for him to run.

Choromatsu niisan

That’s him!
See?
I told you I wasn’t lying.
But that kid is a bit too old…
The one I saw was a girl and a baby.
Jyushimatsu

Totty has two kids then!!
I have more nephews and nieces!!
Mom is going to be extra happy now!!

Osomatsu niisan

he looks like a girl

Choromatsu niisan

REALLY?
Is that all you are going to say?

Shittymatsu niisan

He looks like he is doing fine.
Isn’t that what’s truly important
My brothers?

Osomatsu niisan

it is
i just think he looks like a girl

Well, he wasn’t wrong. Todomatsu did look like one. From far away anyone could mistake him from a woman, until he talked that is.

Actually, the kid called him Mama.

Ichimatsu knew he wasn’t a judgmental person, even less when it was about a topic like that, it wasn’t his job to tell his kids how to call him, or which one was the right way to do it. If Todomatsu wanted to be called Mom, he was not going to start a nuclear war with him for nothing. Besides, it did have a nice ring to it.

Osomatsu niisan
Choromatsu niisan

I don’t see how that’s funny!

Shittymatsu niisan

What a beautiful way of being . . .

He closed the group chat as soon as his sight caught those three dots next to his stupid name. Already exasperated he closed his eyes in a familiar pain.

— So painful, Muffin…

The grey cat yawned and curled up right where he was, ready to take another nap. Ichimatsu stared at the feline, looking for a way to move him without disturbing his peaceful slumber. He thought he had a pretty solid plan, until the other two decided to join him.

With Tart snuggled up to his neck, and Cookie on his legs, he had no hope to escape their paws for a snack; might as well join them, right? After all he did have a tiring day.

As his consciousness meddled his way into a well-deserved rest, the day kept on going. The passing hours turned the skies a subtle mix of oranges and pink hues, that prepared the living to their joyous sleep. Some of them preferred to rebel against their primal nurturing out of pure ecstasy of the falling darkness brightened up by infinite lights. And it was at that spec of time that the second brother liked to close his little shop.

His week has been rather slow. His finances weren’t really increasing as they should’ve for the last month, showing clear repercussions with his decreasing stock. However, he was the kind of hard worker that focused on the bright side of things. For example, he sold more floral arrangements than he had done since last year. He might have to cut some personal expenses to keep it all up and running, but he was a solitary man. A lonely wolf with the noble duty of caring for the delicate flowers that would enhance some poor gal or lad’s life.

Pushing all that ‘flowery’ aside, Karamatsu doubled checked the lock of his shop before he turned around and started his stroll to the fishing spots. It’s been his private routine since he was in his mid-twenties, he would spend quality time with his brothers for hours; him and some of them. Now, he didn’t possess the blessing of their neet days anymore, nor the company of his usual partner; so, instead of losing himself between the tempting tendrils of comfortable stability for the whole day, he visited them a few hours prior to closing its doors. The only customers at that hour were him and another old soul.

Humming a lighthearted tune, he paid for his bait with a smile and took a seat where he had always done it. Luckily, he won’t be using any love letters for his catch. What an embarrassing thing to do to the poor fish, they deserved so much more than that.

Although he wished to feel this strongly over his daily life, Karamatsu wasn’t exactly a lively person per se. The news Choromatsu spilled into their group chat, fueled his feelings in a way he didn’t
expect. He was eager, itching to know more, to understand better. Perhaps, if he would’ve been a better older brother to him, everything would have stayed as it should. Close and together. Todomatsu would have reached for him, like he was supposed to do in any situation that might frighten him.

He remembered their last conversation as it happened yesterday, or in a recurring lucid dream. His baby brother trusted him enough to open up and answer his questions, along with a high dose of long lasting insecurities, he had no idea the youngest had been developing.

All five of them, living under the same roof for years, and not a single one noticed his growing dilemma.

What good older brothers they turned out to be.

Not only that, he also ended up making him feel betrayed in the same day. Having to experience years of longing, he learnt that doing something with the best intentions didn't always mean he was doing the right thing; according to his youngest and with his following actions, he might as well done it on purpose.

He did, in fact do that.

Karamatsu wanted to try and find a middle ground between Todomatsu and Osomatsu, he simply didn't know Todomatsu was going to react so frightened of the oldest, when the other did nothing but hold him so he wouldn't run away.

All that unfolded in a matter of seconds.

He recalled their mother yelling at them, Todomatsu desperately fighting to get away and his poor older brother wanting to understand why everything was crumbling down.

How he wished he could have given him a reasonable answer when they were younger.

— I have to stop thinking like that.

There was no use in letting the past obstruct their brilliant future. Besides, he was back! Choromatsu saw him first and Ichimatsu confirmed it later within the same week. What were the odds of that happening so close!

Exactly!

None!

This was pure fate pulling their strings together once again. A puppeteer master of life, craving for some good old times. Or what if it was the disturbingly staggering breaths of their ageing bodies uniting their souls one last time, all for a willing farewell from this existence.

He should write that down as soon as he gets back to his home.

It was getting quite chilly for him and as a man with a good style, he would never leave his place without a nice leather jacket on; which was one of his very first inversions since he started to see income fluctuating from his shop.

All that mindless thinking about his precious jacket might have jinxed it, because he was having no luck with the fish whatsoever. Sighing, he took his phone out of his front pocket. Staring at the screen, he frowned.
Wasn't it weird that no one was actually mentioning anything to go and find him? It was clear that now, they could at least have a chance of success. Regardless of how it could turn out, they could still try, right?

…

Actually, none have brought up the idea of going after Totty together, as brothers.

Well, if no one was going to do it yet, he would gladly act like the knight in shining armor to clean the path of their fate, and light up the rocky road for the eldest to lead the way into the foggy tomorrow.

This was his duty then.

With a gallant smile, Karamatsu started to compose a text filled with his most purest of intentions.

My brothers.

I think it has come the time we unite as one to bring our kin back to our strong brotherly bond.

That seemed about right. It was sturdy and straight as an arrow.

Ichimatsu has left the group.

What? Why?

Aniki

HAHAHhahahHAHAHAH
WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT!?
I WAS TRYING TO EAT

Jyushimatsu

Karamatsu niisan is being painful again!!

Jyushimatsu added Ichimatsu to the group.

He was starting to type when he saw the notification of Ichimatsu leaving their group, again. He did not understand his insistence, but he'll shown patience towards his weird little brother as he
continued with that stunt. Every second counted for him, and he didn’t desire to keep on losing them.

I was saying that we should meet him. Since none had brought it up. Which had been worrying me.

Osomatsu and Choromatsu were typing; meaning, they were at least showing some kind of interest in the subject.

**Choromatsu**

It's not that we don't care Karamatsu niisan
We do have our own lives too
I can't just stop everything to go look for toty

**Aniki**

stop rising already
chorofappisky

**Choromatsu**

I can't believe you are calling me that right in front of my kids

**Aniki**

what? me?
i said nothing
i texted it which is different

**Jyushimatsu**

Ah!?
Is Niisan at Choromatsu niisan's house again?

*Ichimatsu joined the group*
Ichimatsu

He lost his paycheck, again.

That wasn't a big surprise to anyone. Osomatsu has been losing his money way more often than he was winning something. The mysteries of the pachinko system, wrapped its greedy tendrils around him, slaving his older brother with its unfair games.

Jyushimatsu

HAHA!
Where?

Aniki

pachinko
it betrayed me

Choromatsu

I still can't believe you kept playing when you were clearly having a streak of bad luck.
You should have stopped.
Like I told you.

Aniki

i thought I had it with the last one!

Choromatsu

IF YOU ALWAYS THINK THAT AND YOU STILL LOSE THEN YOU SHOULD STOP.

Aniki

i did exactly the same and I won big
remember that?
because I do and your wife does too
i'm sure

Choromatsu

DON'T involve my wife in this.

As much as Karamatsu enjoyed to witness their lovely connection to refresh his lost one, they might have sidetracked a bit from what he originally wanted to achieve by summoning all of them so late. And he was not going to let that happen any longer.

Brothers
Can we center ourselves?

For a good while, he thought his brothers were finally going to stop their jabbering and give the attention this unique situation asked for.

Jyushimatsu

Right! Right!
We were talking about kidnapping totty!

Ichimatsu

Should I bring the rope?

He was wrong to assume that.

Inhaling and then exhaling, Karamatsu got rid of the unusual tension he was silently accumulating, as their silly chat stole the importance from the topic he wanted to approach.

Brothers, please.
Todomatsu has come back to us.
We should do our best to invite him for Christmas since is around the corner.

Choromatsu

What are you talking about!?
It's not even December yet!

Ichimatsu

...

Jyushimatsu

Yes! I like that too!!
We should kidnap him for Christmas and wrap him up for Mom and Dad!!

Aniki

we are brilliant

Choromatsu

I don't think that's a clever idea.
If we do it too soon someone will have to feed him and such.

How could they be like that? Couldn't they stop playing around and be mature about it? Karamatsu had lost someone important for him; not for days, not for months, but for years. And they couldn't do something as simple as taking his messages seriously or with a minimum of respect. He felt his blood boil.

Enough was enough, and he have had it.

Aren't you ashamed of yourselves?
Can't you read what I wrote?
How can you be this childish?
Our brother came back after years of having no communication with us.
And this is how you all intend to deal with it?
By ignoring it?
I thought you were worried
I thought you cared for him
It seems I've been wrong about that since he left us.
But then again...
You just keep showing me why he left.

Mad.
He was so mad.

They had managed to brew this nastiness within him so carelessly, so easily. It disgusted him how disrespectful they were, leaving his mouth with the fresh taste of copper, for how hard he bit the inside of his cheek. Karamatsu wanted to have them by his side, all working together to make their family whole again.

Didn't they want the same? Or was it just him living a delirious fantasy?

Roughly shoving his phone back in his front pocket, he let it vibrate, senseless ignoring the overabundance of texts that made him hyperaware of his justifiable lashing. It felt like they were disregarding the weight of his feelings by treating this one opportunity like something that could happen any given day.

Standing up, he prepared to make his leave.

He couldn't believe them. He just couldn't.

What was wrong with them?

He wondered; kicking a few empty cans, pebbles, sticks and everything that had the bad luck of getting in a close range for him to abuse. Resentful, he arrived to his own place. Not giving a damn about good manners, he marched straight to his bed with his boots still on, leaving a track of dirt he was going to hate cleaning later on.

Great.

Blatantly ignoring the cries of his phone, the tunes that he had especially chosen for each of his brothers. How exasperating. Staring at nothing, he got irritated with every second its unrelenting chimes blasted through the cheap speakers.

— ...Black coffee sounds highly appealing - he grumbled with an empty stomach. Sitting up, he took his shoes off, throwing them somewhere close to his closet before he stood up.

Passing the common room on his way to the kitchen, he left his leather jacket on the side of the cold love couch that was against the wall. Turning the dim lights on, he moved around to get a mug and the leftover brewed coffee from that morning. To his surprise, the coffee maker was indeed, empty.

If that didn't add more fuel to his shitty mood, he swore he could see himself throwing his favorite mug to a wall.

Taking a deep breath, he decided to brew more coffee.

As on cue, his damn phone ringed again, breaking the serene silence he desperately craved.

Livid, Karamatsu stomped in long strides back to the common room, ripping the phone out of the jacket, before he flung the garment away from his sight to bang the touch screen, answering that call without looking with whom he was going to talk to.

— What!?

They should have left him alone. He knew he would eventually feel better if they had the decency of letting him cool down first.
— Shit, Karamatsu... this is not a good time, uh?

Of course, it had to be him.

— What do you want Osomatsu?

He would never have the guts to down right disrespect him and call him by his given name with such much disdain. Osomatsu simply caught him in one of the many frenetics states, Karamatsu could not; for the love of anything, control it near as good as he once did. This was definitely worst, because they touched what he dearly held close to his heart, and they knew it. They had done it before too, and every single time his mood worsened over the passing years.

Things changed for all of them. And so did he.

— Just checking on you. I'm not going to ask if we made you mad, you clearly are.

Karamatsu could hear the soft murmurs Choromatsu and the oldest brother exchanged through the line. Still, he couldn't quite understand what they were saying.

How annoying. Rubbing how chummy they were, how they have each others back.

— What do you want? - he repeated, urging him to finish already.

— You don't have to be so cold.

Oh, fuck him. As if he could understand how he felt. How he perpetually feels.

— Actually, I don't have to put up with this shit - he spew, gripping the fragile phone in his hand, strongly contemplating if he wanted to turn it off or break it.

— Wait, wait, wait!! Don't hung up! We didn't mean to – Osomatsu started, wanting to keep him in the call.

Did he sound like he wanted that in the slightest? No.

— To what!? Be a piece of shit?!

A dreadful silence attempted to wash down his wrathful sight, only to be murdered by his voice.

— Karamatsu, you know we didn't really mean it. We were trying to... lighten up the mood, that's all.

— No, you all changed the subject like it was nothing - plopping back down on the couch, he harshly brushed his short hair back. - That is not a thing you do to a brother... - with his voice cracking up, he felt his eyes burning up in frustration.

— We got a little sidetracked. Believe me.

— Believe you? - his voice gave him more than he intended to shown.

— … I know that Todomatsu running away, took a lot from you. We have all seen it, Karamatsu. You changed so much, and I'm not saying that as something bad. We know you missed him more than any of us ever does. - Osomatsu finally said, putting a careful stop sign to his flowing emotions, with an understanding warm voice.

— Then why? - Karamatsu barely whispered.
— I was not ready to be serious about this - he chuckled. - I doubt I will ever be ready. Haven't you thought what would you do if he doesn't want to see you? Or if he is over it and doesn't want us to bring all that shit out again? What then?

He had been thinking about all that, alone? Since when? Then, that meant he was being too harsh with him.

— Aniki...

Karamatsu tried to apologize, or dive into a deep explanation behind the reasons of his anger, when he heard him laugh. That was such an Osomatsu thing to do.

— It's okay. I would go to stupid lengths if Choromatsu suddenly left like Totty did.

He could see that, they all already tasted a bit of that. Still, it didn't feel right. This wasn't the person he wanted to be.

— I apologize... I shouldn't have...

— No, no. It's fine. We are not mad at you or anything like that. We only worry.

He kept on cleverly interrupting him, mastering the art of deceiving him from his own negativity. Driving him straight to a blank point.

— Still... Aniki.

— Karamatsu, what do you want to do?

Wasn't that obvious? What he wanted the most in his life was to have him by his side again, to have his other half right where he could see him. Gulping, he straighten his posture, cementing his feet on the rough carpet.

— I ... I really want to see him again.

— Okay, then. I'll nag the others until they have no other option but to do as I say - he could heard Choromatsu starting to scold him, and without a care in the world, Osomatsu chuckled. - Like old times, right?

He swore he could see him smile through the phone, inadvertently drawing one on his face too.

— Yeah, like old times.

That single call, helped him dissipate all that mindless anger that took over his body. It cooled his hot head down, forcing him to take a break from those negative thoughts that kept feeding it, so he could finally see the bigger picture of his rushed conclusion.

He successfully delivered what his helpless feelings wanted, and Osomatsu understood.

He wanted to see him.

He wanted to see his face, to hear his voice, to read him through his eyes, to hear from his mouth how he was truly doing. Karamatsu blindly hoped that he would get his chance to express all that and more in private.

His body couldn't properly hold the excitement and thrill that ran up and down his spine, making his
heart jump in a juvenile anticipation; all because he missed his partner in crime more than he could have ever imagine.
NGGGGGGGGGGG It took me so looong!
But the chapters are getting longer and i'm working in two things now!
Still, hope you like it!
:3c

Don't be afraid to tell me if i messed up somewhere!
Have fun and comment if you liked it~!

All rights reserved to the creators of Osomatsu-San. This is a fanfiction.

_I just never thought you were going to end like a fucking faggot!_

_You are dead to me, Osomatsu._

No

_He took care of me, unlike you._

_It's not normal! It's not normal!_

NO

_Don't worry, I'll do my best..._

_I'll do my best._

NO
L-let me go!! Let me go!!

Totty, calm down!

STOP

You'll come back home, right Totty?

W A K E U P

The pills were definitely not working. He would have to talk to his doctor to change his prescription, again.

The resilient guilt never ceased to eat him out, it was tiring, beyond annoying, but he could not stop himself for thinking that it was, indeed his fault.

Todomatsu left and that was his fault.

Everyone around him denied what he could no longer unseen, what he could not; for his undying love for pachinko, stop thinking about. Whose fault was that Todomatsu stopped sleeping with them? His, obviously. Whose fault was that he couldn't eat without being nervous? Once again, his. And whose fault was that everyone around him started to have a new life? Want to guess?

There wasn't exactly much to focus on, in fact. Osomatsu was sure everything from that point on was his fault. Someone feeling like that shouldn't have the right to allow himself to have a dreamy good life. Like the one Choromatsu was living, or Jyushimatsu. Karamatsu and Ichimatsu were doing their best to achieve that, but Osomatsu didn't want to try, not for one bit. In his eyes, he didn't deserve it.

Funny enough, his little brother never left his side.

They all new at a certain range how bad Osomatsu was truly doing. Sometimes they tried to knock some sense into him, others time they opted to change their focus, which did help, by the way.

Money was not really a problem for him, it was more of an escape. A little something to keep his mind away from all the shit he was always thinking. When Osomatsu concentrated in the machine in front of him, his brain numbed itself along with the loud chirping, as his hands moved out of pure reflex. He was no longer burdened by anything. His sole goal was to play and win, even if it ended with an endless play, where he would eventually waste most of his life.

Taking a deep breath, he sat up on the bed that Choromatsu so kindly let him take day after day, since his life came to a brutal stop. How embarrassing it was to be this old and make all that ruckus to his younger brothers. That wasn't what a good older brother was supposed to do. Not cool. Aside from that, Osomatsu had the audacity to keep bugging Choromatsu and his family. He knew he was always welcomed there, he knew he really wasn't bothering them that much. Osomatsu just couldn't help but feel utterly worthless as the oldest, with every unannounced visit he made to the
third brother.

Deep inside his stupid head, he was one hundred percent sure that he should stop doing it. He should stop running back to Choromatsu when things went wrong, when his world kept on shattering.

What can you truly do when it was always wrong with him?

Reach for that one blessing, right?

His little piece of heaven was unfailingly by his side. Without him, Osomatsu would have done something really bad years ago. Without him, he wouldn't have tried to get a job. Without him, he wouldn't have tried to live again. Without him... he would be nothing.

Thinking all that garbage and more, he chuckled. It was immensely amazing the inability he possessed to stop tormenting himself. To promote a single nice thought about his situation, was such a heavy death weight and how strongly it affected him in particular.

Ridiculous.

— Next time I win big, I'll share it with you.

That's the least he could do to show how much he appreciated Choromatsu help.

Sitting up on the askew sea of sheets, he heard the door opening.

— Oh, you are awake - said Choromatsu a tad bit surprised. He walked to the bed and sat down close to him. – Did you have another nightmare?

He couldn't lie to someone who knew him that well.

— Yeah...

— Maybe, you should take another pill tonight. Changing them again is not going to help you, you know.

— Well… If I just so happen to die in my sleep, then we wouldn't have to worry about it, right? - Osomatsu said with a wide smile.

— Don’t say that, idiot.

Osomatsu knew he was letting his mouth run wild, that he should cease his useless gibberish about that specific topic, especially with Choromatsu present.

— Ah... Sorry - scratching the back of his head, Osomatsu sighed. – So... We are really going to do it.

— Well, you told Karamatsu that you were going to think of something – crossing his arms, he shot him a harsh look. – How calm should I be with you actually thinking?

— What? I always come with the best of plans! - Osomatsu defended himself with a spurious act of familiarity.

— And I have to casually come up with an extra one out of my ass – Choromatsu pointed out, only to stare at the eldest like he was about to lecture him. – So, should I?
— Calm down Choromachu. I have everything under control - he openly expressed, expecting the wrathful words he was used to get from his little brother.

— That's far more worrisome than you actually thinking – condensing his lecture into a single phrase, Choromatsu stayed strong. But Osomatsu knew a way to soften him up.

— Ahh... You are hurting Oniichan – he placed his right hand over his heart, as if that, somehow severely hurt him.

— Good.

No mercy, uh?

For a solid minute they stared at each other. One with a hard look and the other with a pleading one. Chuckling at their own antics, they had an easy travel back to better times. Nicer times.

The way Choromatsu looked at him after their childish fit; with a warm mix of emotions that would subtlety try to soothe his anxious thoughts. Even though it wasn't a good thing per se, it still managed to fill him with an essence of home, something that Osomatsu have been craving from him, since he was nothing but a child.

— So, what's your plan then? – Choromatsu asked, way more relaxed than he was before.

— Well. First, we have to get everyone together.

— That's going to be difficult – Osomatsu could already feel the dread from his little brother.

— Not really – he said, not giving much of a deep thought about how they were going to achieve that, just yet.

And it seemed he was showing it, with the way Choromatsu squinted his eyes at him behind those glasses.

— I don't like where this is going...

Clearly.

— Sleepover sounds innocent enough for your sensitive heart, right? – Osomatsu beamed with that one. He did come out with that idea out of his ass. His ass was still great then.

— … We should go get some beers – added Choromatsu, probably thinking of the ruckus they'll surely make.

— Don't forget the snacks! – Osomatsu was dying to get some snacks; it wasn't like he couldn't get some any other day though.

— You are not allowed to ask for anything – Choromatsu pointed an accusing finger at his innocent self, destroying his dreams, of salty chips and sweet candies. – You lost all your money at your workplace the same day you got your paycheck! Who does that!?

— Me, of course! I mean, I had a feeling I was going to be lucky – the look he was receiving was
— There is not much space, but you could try to fit in here.

Wait...

— What? You are not going to stay? You do know what a sleepover is, right? – Osomatsu couldn't let Choromatsu pass on so much fun! He was a perfect candidate for a good night full of fun!

— I know what that is. However, I'm not going to stay here when I have a nice bed and a wife right at the end of the hall! – He explained rather forcefully. Was he trying to convince himself?

— Why not? We've been having plenty of those when we were younger! Come on!

— Those were not sleepovers! We didn't have more space to have our own rooms at home!

— But, we all slept together! That is a sleepover.

He knew exactly how much he had to push and where, to get somewhat of a positive answer from him.

Choromatsu would voice his discomfort as much as he wanted to, working with nothing but a vulgar attempt of a justification, to end up choosing the one he called to be the immature choice. Nonetheless, Osomatsu and everyone who knew him, would know which one would excite him more.

— Fine. I will ask her first, so don't text anyone yet.

With that said, Osomatsu followed his frame with his sight, watching him get up from the old bed and walk out of his bedroom; the guest room, actually.

Osomatsu had been slowly moving his belongings into that cramped guest room. Every box he brought, garment or shoes he stuffed into an unfortunate corner, reminded him of his disrespectful ways towards this new family; that easily accepted him, that invited him to join them as if he was part of it; when in reality, he was formally intruding thanks to an uncalled act of kindness and charity; since he'd been eating their food too.

Reaching for his phone; Todomatsu old phone, he stood up, not letting his bad thoughts condemn his body.

Not today, right? Like a hero in a movie. With a silly smile on his face, he looked around for something decent to wear. Having no one to truly impress them with his greatness, he settled for a red short sleeved shirt, denim jeans and a pair of clean white socks. Then, he tidied up his bed to make his way to the kitchen.

— Oh. You are up already – Choromatsu briefly looked over his shoulder, busy with the dirty dishes from the night before.

— I mean I have to. I promised the girls that I would make them pancakes - taking one pan from the cabinet, he flashed him a smile. - I'm the best uncle there is!

— I know you are.

— So? - He didn't need to ask, still he did it, more out of respect than anything.

— She said yes... To both.
He knew that behind that annoying sigh, Choromatsu was as excited as he was. He knew him far too well, didn’t he?

Just as uncle Osomatsu promised. He prepared a good amount of pancakes for everyone in the house, while Choromatsu helped him brewing tea and warming up the milk. Deeply grateful of experiencing those kind of mornings, he rejoiced in the fact that he was living with someone; because, god knew that he was not made to be alone. The lurking idea of being completely alone, terrified him.

In a week day, the morning passed in a blink of an eye. Aside from that, it was his lucky day off, which meant that he had to; either, go out to not break something, or nap the day away to avoid breaking anything in the house. After that little accident Choromatsu didn't want to forget; the one with the rock and Choromatsu's front window. He wasn't allowed to show his nieces any other 'endangering games' that in his opinion, were simple and harmless. By the other hand, his sister in law could not stop laughing at the memory.

Nevertheless, he decided to stretch his legs.

Osomatsu walked through the busy streets and rode the train, he visited Chibita's cart to chat a little. Once he got kicked out, he went to see Totoko at her parent’s store; who punched the breath away from him for saying the wrong thing. Stopping at the closest park in sight, he strolled to the swings to take a seat on the right one and slowly started to move.

— … Choromatsu should swing with me.

Saying it wouldn't make it real. After all, he knew that would never happen. He could feel that innocent part of him gone, Choromatsu grew up as he intended to do, just like the other five did. If he asked Choromatsu to keep him company, he had no doubts he would. But, he wouldn't run to the swings with him, nor even fast walk there, not under the scrutinizing eyes of a society that would certainly laid their sight on them. Although Choromatsu would die out of anxiety, Osomatsu wouldn't give a shit, he never did, and he'd never will.

Visiting a park alone wasn't ideal to his 'mental stability', and yet he couldn't help it.

Feeling the hit of the wind on his face when he ascended, trying to reach the peak of the swings without ending in the hospital for a foolish dream of swinging all the way; like any kid would attempt to do at least once in their lives. His feet never touched the dirt, doing a hard job to keep them up, as if the floor never existed. Closing his eyes, he remained like that. Mindlessly swinging forward and backwards, he listened to the creak of the neglected metal, like a calming lullaby.

Not realizing for how long he stayed in that park, he got out of his head to focus on the new view of the musk skies, making it clear that it had been for far too long. He let the comfortable sway of the swing die down before he stood up, to slowly start walking back to Choromatsu’s home.

Now that he was, once again, alone with his dangerous thoughts. He couldn't help himself, when he let his consciousness wonder far beyond his safe lines.

Wondering how their little meet up would go. Would they want to straight up address the situation, or should he come up with his plan first and then wait for their reaction to it?
He certainly didn't want to commit the same silly mistake and strike another nerve. Thinking of that, he still felt bad about Karamatsu. He understood the reason behind his emotional break, and just like he told him, he would've done the same. However, that doesn't freed him of his impending guilt. In his sick mind that was, somehow his fault too.

He should apologize to Karamatsu, in private.

When he finally arrived 'home', he noticed that no one was home yet. His sister in law must be on her way back with the kids and some groceries to start preparing a wonderful dinner, while Choromatsu, in the other hand, tried finish his paperwork in record time to get out of there, before someone else asked him to do some extra work. Which was fine in his opinion. Maybe not all the time, and not to an extremely anxious office worker. Nonetheless, he knew Choromatsu pushed himself to stupid extremes just to fit in that environment. Osomatsu was pretty fucking proud of him for that.

Dinner in that house, was as lively as it used to be in their childhood one. Filled with laughter, silly comments, long talks about their day with an endless spice of that Matsuno feel, that was strong enough to pass onto his nieces. Those genes sure were strong.

After such a lovely dinner, Choromatsu put his two girls to sleep, properly tucking them in bed and wishing his girls good dreams with a sweet kiss on their forehead. Right away, he went to Osomatsu's self-proclaimed room.

It would be weird if they didn't do that every night, whether it would be talking or simply joking around, neither of them would exchange that time together for anything in the world.

Sit on the same spot he did that morning, Choromatsu sighed, trying to rid himself of the stress usually generated from a working day.

— Want me to give you a massage? – Osomatsu offered with a cheeky grin, while he changed into his pajama pants.

— Oh. That face you made right now. Disgusting – he pointed out with a deadpan look.

Chuckling, Osomatsu plopped onto the bed, making the other bounce a little.

— I suggest you tell them, since you so graciously offered it to Karamatsu – Choromatsu started, slowly moving his tired shoulders in little circles.

— Sure. I was going to anyways – sitting up, Osomatsu reached for his phone. Since he didn't want to spoil his plan to anyone, he simply asked the rest for their schedules. – Oi, you sure you don't want me to...

— Osomatsu.

Ah, he knew that tone. Did he do something wrong again?

— Are you sure you are okay with this?

He wasn't expecting that.
— Of course! Why wouldn't I? - He quickly answered.

— Osomatsu, you can't... – not wanting to get exasperated, he took a couple of seconds to order his thoughts, before he continued talking. – We both know that Karamatsu niisan was right – pinching the bridge of his nose, he sighed again. – You didn't brought up that idea because you are not okay with it, not yet.

He realized it...

— And that is fine – Choromatsu finished, relaxing his body.

What?

Wait... How could it be fine?

He was deliberately ignoring Todomatsu's arrival and everything that came with it.

— You don't have to force it. In fact, I'll tell them to back off if you want me to.

— No, you can't do that – as sweet as that was, he shouldn't do it. Not even for his own good.


— Well, Karamatsu and Jyushimatsu seemed so happy about it. We can't just take that away from them – he smiled back at him.

— But we can stomp all over your feelings!? – exhaling, he took his glasses off. – Seriously Osomatsu. You should care for yourself the same way you do for the others.

He would have loved to say 'It's not that', but it was, it really was.

— Then what should I do? Tell them to calm down because I'm not ready to see him? – Without his sincere smile, he hunched over, looking at his feet. – Choromatsu, they have been waiting for so long, and now that he is actually here, that we can at least try to contact him... It's not fair – he mumbled. Unsure if it was for Todomatsu or himself.

— I'll give you that. However, I'm sure you already overworked the idea of Todomatsu not wanting to see us at all, right?

Osomatsu nodded.

It was nearly impossible not to end up thinking like that, fearing the worst and obtaining it with no doubt; like it happened years ago.

— There's nothing wrong with that – he defended himself. – Besides, how can I not? I ... I hurt him, when I specifically told myself to control it, and I just couldn't. I was too out of control and I ...

Warm, he was warm.

He could feel his heartbeat starting to calm down in his tight embrace. The scent of that cheap soap Choromatsu couldn’t change since he turned twenty, inebriated his senses. Relaxing his muscles to aid him breathe anew.

— I know, I know. You didn't hit him, and you didn't want to either, you were just... confused.

He was extremely confused, not because it was such a hard thing to accept. In fact, he was happy that Todomatsu could actually feel something as precious as love. Osomatsu wanted to meet that
person, he really wanted to be the older brother he needed. But, when he actually was confronted by the situation, he didn't know what to do. He was so worried about Totty and for how much he was crying. At that time, at that exact moment, he did the opposite of what he was trying to do. Once he saw him leave... It was that horrid day all over again, and it made it worse, when he locked eyes with a man he didn't know.

What if questions rushed through his head like acid tearing skin?

What if he hurt him?

What if that love was not real?

What if Todomatsu left them?

What if something bad happened to him?

What if he forgets about them?

More importantly...

Was he ready to live like an adult?

Osomatsu didn't want him to leave, he didn't have any kind of answer to whatever possible questions Todomatsu might have with that new life; that new romantic twist. Jyushimatsu could have lent a helping hand, give a good advice. Still, he was another of his little brothers. He didn't want to... to be left out. To not being capable of helping him at all.

Growing was bullshit and up to this day, he hated it.

— That doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what I felt, or how I felt. He did nothing and I lashed at him like the stupid older brother I am – gritting his teeth, Osomatsu covered his face with one hand, letting the other tightly grip the front of Choromatsu's shirt.

He was ashamed of his past actions, his actual reaction, and his overall position in the situation. Forcing all that pent up frustration to remain where it seethed, but it was dangerously pushing him to just let all that poison out on a whim.

Choromatsu reserved himself to solemnly hold him in his arms, to let him tone it down on his own. And, as much as he wanted to help him, he knew Osomatsu had to do it. That vicious cycle of thoughts had to stop. Even if they didn't know how.

Carefully, at his proper time, he got a hold of himself. Straightening his posture, he left his sacred peace with a numb mind and lax muscles. He could see what he was bringing to table and he did not liked it, not at all.

— Choromatsu... I – he sure was acting like an idiot.

— Are you better? – those words didn't make much sense in his head at first, not because it was a hard thing to get, but he never really correctly processed how much he was feeling. It was always him, who realized his penances.

But was he better?

No... And yet, he felt calmer.

— Sorry... – he mumbled.
— It's fine. This is...This is weird – he sighed, finally letting him go. – You know how freaked out I was when I saw him that day. I still can't believe it. I mean, it's not that I was denying the possibility of seeing him again. But... all these years passed by, and I'm not Karamatsu niisan or Jyushimatsu to keep on living like that. Besides, you know that I was starting to think that he would never come back.

— Yeah. I know that.

It seemed like it was his turn to comfort him, even if it was for a tiny bit. Choromatsu was being nice enough to share with him countless of late deep discussions. So, it was only fair, that he did the same as well.

— You know Choromatsu, I'm... – running his fingers through his hair, Osomatsu exhaled. – I'm just afraid that he is still hurt about it – it wasn't the first time he had expressed that to him. Although, the situation called for Osomatsu to be sincere to him and with himself. – T-that maybe he didn't... turn to the other page. That perhaps, he ripped it off so he wouldn't have to go back to it.

— You are worried about him too? – shooting him a quick glance, he accommodated his slipping glasses back in place. – You do realize he left with someone, and he came back with the same person, right?

— That doesn't mean he didn't had an awful time out there – he calmly kept on explaining, fixating his sight to the wall.

— Yeah, but.

How come he didn't get it?

— There is not but in there Choromatsu! – snapping, he glared at him. – He was all alone! What if they fought and... And... – The scary scenarios in his head murdered his strong emotions, weakening his words at the end.

— I didn't see anything weird when I had the chance to – he tried to reach for him before everything crumbled.

— What if that's only a farce? – His trembling hands made their way up to his face.

— That's enough, Osomatsu. What I saw was not a farce.

— How can you be so sure that he is not being... – he couldn't even finish that sentence, afraid of jinxing it.

— He is not. Todomatsu is not... – if he wasn't certain then what was the point of making him think otherwise? Choromatsu knew the other was not going to buy that. – You should know that he would never fall for something like that – he affirmed with a doubtful confidence.

— What if he did... What do we do if he did? – He had no idea that his words would come out that broken.

— Osomatsu.

Whatever positive answer to that, was shot down with that broken sob.

Like a helpless child, Osomatsu kept his face hidden behind his hand, while his wavering heart made his body shake with every intake of air. Lost and troubled, he didn't have a single clue of what to do
There was nothing scarier than not being able to control himself, and Choromatsu could only do so much for him in that blind state.

As soon as those fears and insecurities worked their way in him, the waterworks began to stream down like an unwanted downpour, relieving some of the burden he forced into his tired core. With a feathery touch, he felt Choromatsu cradle him; just like he would do to his own kids, until the worst ceased. Only then he would manhandled his wrecked body to get him to bed, in the middle of that tumultuous inner storm.

The last face Osomatsu saw that day, was the worried semblance of his little brother, strongly reassuring him that he was going to be there the next day and the one after that.

He wasn't alone.

He wasn't.

The sleeping pills Choromatsu made him take, worked like a charm, making him sleep in late. No noise, nor sound ended up stirring him. By the time he raised from the death, it was already noon. So, he better start getting ready for a great working shift at the Casino.

The loud place did his part of the deed, successfully immersing him into the cacophony of machines, desperate cries of a bad hand and the cackling of roaring earnings. Dragging him down to a moot point, where he could be, without worrying of his actual reality. Nights for him, were his second leverage in the world.

One for each hand.

He was quite the winner in that sense, wasn't he?

The week continued on. Karamatsu's insistent texts barricaded his inbox like the fluttering of a butterfly wings; lucky for him, he saw that coming. It wasn't until the end of the week that perfectly aligned with his night off, that he sent a text to the group chat.

---

listen here
I'm throwing the best party
come to my place
tomorrow night

— I'm so fucking great.

Choromachu <3

You meant
My place

Ichimachu

You could have told me first
Now I have to get someone to look after my friends.

Ouch. He could've, but that would have spoiled the surprise.

Karamachu

I would gladly bake some cookies.
My brothers deserve the best nutrients mother nature could offer.

Jyushimachu

I'll ask Homura-chan!
...
She said HI!

Osomatsu chuckled, a tad confused of that text, but nonetheless, content of having such an amazing plan for a gathering.

When the day came and the sun started to set, Choromatsu made him move some of the furniture so they could have enough space to fit in their old futon; they went as far as to borrow it from their parents’ house. That was notably easier, than getting five different ones in line.
Close to nine, Choromatsu's wife and his nieces retired, saying their goodnights and leaving them the common room at their disposition.
It was nice to know that she could somehow understand part of what was happening. They weren't been secretive about it, but wanting to include her, or Homura; didn't set right. That was something only the five of them and their parents were part of; a family thing. And in Osomatsu eyes, anyone else was nothing but a mere observer. They had no business to do there.

As they would expect, Jyushimatsu and Ichimatsu arrived together, with a separation of five minutes from Karamatsu, who was gloriously late.
Moving with great accuracy, they served the snacks, opened cold beers and got comfortable on their chosen spots; two on the floor and three sitting on the couch.

When the initial small talk ended, Osomatsu cleared his throat; glad that they were waiting for him to break it down.

— So. I've reunited all of you here to talk about Totty.

— About that... How are we going to kidnap him? – asked Jyushimatsu, mockingly saluting him
with his free arm.

— That! I don't know yet – he answered pointing his index finger at him.

— Figures... – silently added Ichimatsu, taking another sip from his beer.

— But, before we could move to the fun part. I suggest we investigate first.

— Yes. We were thinking of getting as much information about him. Like, where he works, his actual phone number, maybe where he lives now – explained Choromatsu, with a faint nod of his head at every point he was giving.

— If we get at least one, it would be easier to reach him – concluded the fourth brother.

— Yeah – the four of them agreed in unison, definitely shortening what the first born though to be a heavy topic to discuss.

Ah, fuck.

— I didn't think this through... – mumbled Osomatsu, furrowing his eyebrows and putting his beer down.

— What do you mean? – wondered curiously the second brother.

— I thought this was going to be longer.

— So... that was all you wanted to tell us? – Karamatsu's words made all his little brothers stare at him with a deadpan look on their faces.

This had to be a punishment for what he did to Karamatsu. What a fucking joke.

— Why I am not surprised? – rolling his eyes, Ichimatsu smiled behind the half empty can.

— Osomatsu niisan just wanted to have a sleepover with us! – yelled Jyushimatsu with his infectious joy.

— Well, if that was the case, we should start now brothers.

— I can't believe you convinced me to do this – sighed Choromatsu before he chugged down the rest of his beer.

— What can I say? It's one of many special talents.

Regardless of how short lived that serious moment was, they still spend most of the night together, enveloping it in a snuggly ribbon, when the futon reclaimed sweet memories from the yesterday they would never forget. Seriously, Osomatsu felt like some of them gained a bit more muscle with how close together they had to sleep.

— We are getting old, guys...

For a few, good, three whole minutes, they all found themselves pleasantly starting to get some rest, when a loud smack, abruptly awoke him. With a hand on his face and a nice sting surrounding it, he looked at his left, seeing a mildly annoyed Choromatsu; who was being smothered by Jyushimatsu's arm.

— … This time... Only this time I blame you.
And he would happily accept it.

Among his older brothers, Jyushimatsu was the only one that woke up inhumanly early in the morning, feeling better than ever. He did try not to wake them up when his phone showed him, in digital numbers; 4:30 am, but he had to take in consideration that it was Saturday. Sooner than later, and thanks to the time consuming games in his phone, he stayed awake until six o'clock. Now, he had a fervent hunch that he should wake them all up. So he did. Loudly.

Jyushimatsu wasn't a child back then, and he wasn't a child now. That never meant he was blissfully unconscious of every decision he decided to take in life. This one, was not one of those either. With a smile ear to ear, he took a deep breath and made a trust fall all over his older brothers, roughly waking them up.

— Trust fall!! – He exclaimed, once he already landed on them.

— Jyushimatsu!? That was not necessary!! – cried Choromatsu, desperately reaching for the glasses he left on a close range over his head.

— What? – He feigned ignorance, having no intention of moving, if not more of squirming.

— M-my l-little Jyushimatsu...

The fifth brother looked up, to check on the only brother that was not moving. He could see a struggling Ichimatsu, trying to continue with his slumber.

— Rest in peace Ichimatsu niisan – He said, praying for his soul.

Since most of them were awake, he rolled over and stood up. Raising both his arms over his head, he stretched them as far as they could go. Cracking his neck on both sides, he smiled at his brothers, who in exchange, looked back at him with a funny mix of slight worry and fear written all over their faces.

Jyushimatsu would have loved to make them accompany him in his morning routine; which consisted in running, doing some stretches and the random stop for food he shouldn't have, but he would never deny. There was something in the fresh morning street food that incited him to eat.

After getting a healthy dose of exercise done, he jogged all the way back to Choromatsu's home.

— Woah! You are all awake now! – He exclaimed, glad to see the common room put back together.

— How was your morning brother? – asked Karamatsu from the kitchen, definitely working his hands on some tasty waffles.

— I petted a dog! And I saw a weird looking cloud when I ate crepes – sitting down on the couch, he reached for his bag to fetch a clean towel, very aware of how profusely he was sweating.

— How weird? – mumbled Ichimatsu, sitting cross legged on the floor and with his sketchbook in hand.

— It looked like a dick but with tentacle arms – Ichimatsu snorted at his explication, making him smile widen a bit more.

— I heard dick! Who said that?
Osomatsu niisan had the best timing when weirdness ensued. Not surprised at all when he saw him walking half dressed, hurrying to pull his shirt down, just to join their short chat.

— I saw a weird dick cloud! – indulging him, the fifth brother loudly laughed. – It was so weird niisan!!

— Can we stop talking about it? I don't want my daughters hearing that kind of stuff.

And just as he thought, Choromatsu was coming right behind Osomatsu, slightly flustered or plainly annoyed at the not so subtle mention of the dick cloud. Whichever it was, it made him laugh more.

— Come on Choro chan, don't be so uptight – Osomatsu nagged at him, smiling cheekily.

— I'm being serious guys! I'm going to ban all of you from coming here if you keep that up!

Like a well-practiced play, Karamatsu appeared with a girly apron, carrying two stocks of waffles.

— My brothers, I have created a breakfast paradise for us to dig in.

He was going to be nice and not laugh… that much.

That waffle fiasco ended sooner than they all thought. With his backpack secured, he put his headphones on and rode the train back home.

He was instantly received by the strong aroma of fresh vegetables and the warm steam of a boiling pot. Needless to say, he went straight to the kitchen, knowing his wife was going to be there, cooking along his mother.

— Ah! You are back Jyushimatsu – his mother said, turning around for a bit to greet him. – How was your little sleepover?

— It was fun! Osomatsu niisan wanted to tell us a secret! But it was a short one, so we went to sleep earlier than we thought!

— It's nice to know you all have fun – she gave him her back to continue cooking. – Did you eat well?

— Karamatsu niisan brought some sweets!

Those counted as something healthy to eat, right? Karamatsu was very fond of following a healthy diet. Ever since he decided to focus on something else, he had been bouncing from one thing to another, trying to find a place to belong to, somewhere to turn to when things were not so clear anymore.

Jyushimatsu knew what was going on with Osomatsu and Karamatsu, he had a good idea of what shaped them into what they were today, barely holding the pieces up, but doing their best to keep them from falling all over the place.

— That's good to know. Next time, you should tell me before, so I could prepare you all something nice for dinner.

— Okay, mom!!

Homura was oddly quiet today. He saw her flawlessly move around in the kitchen, chopping carrots in the silence of her troubled mind.
— Homura-chan!! After lunch we have to get this thing I saw!

With a gentle smile, she turned around to face him, eyes clouded with a sadness he would never comprehend.

— Okay! For now, you should go take a shower.

— Yes, Ma'am! – He saluted her, puckering his lips to make her smile. Marching to the bathroom, he let the girls continue with lunch.

Once he was presentable again, he rushed back to the kitchen, expecting to be of help; if he wasn't too late to offer some!

As he expected, his mother asked him to set the table.

Normally, there would be four bowls on the round table, however, his father was called in to work due to one missing colleague.

After that delicious lunch, Jyushimatsu carried Homura all the way up to their bedroom on the second floor, simply because he wanted her to get ready instead of helping his mother. He was a big boy; a bigger boy actually, he was sure he could manage a couple of dirty dishes.

If there was something he loved to do, was spend his time with his wife; and his second, was making her smile, he did have to be careful with that though. There were too many scares with her dropping dead out of laughter, it was meant for him to tone it down just a little, right?

Tightly holding her hand, he led the way to her weekly appointment, promising her the relishing of ice cream later.

Her face blatantly showed a mix of emotions that were religiously mushing together. Her body screamed not to keep walking, but she still pushed it; moving one leg after the other, until they found themselves crossing the front door of her therapist and taking a seat on the cushioned chairs, waiting for the receptionist to call for her name. One patient came out and another walked in at the call of their name. Jyushimatsu could feel her tense up, knowing that she would be the next one to be called, as it should be.

— Matsuno-san.

Right on time.

He saw her stood up on trembling legs, to get in the office.

Jyushimatsu never thought he would be following this kind of life, this kind of routine. It's been years, it's been tiring and sometimes plain unbearable years, that he would never change. He was married to the woman he loved, he had a really fun job and he could still live with his parents! He wished Osomatsu niisan could visit them more often. Nevertheless, he was pretty happy with his life. He was helping his wife get better, even if it was walking her at every appointment she had, even if it didn't feel like he was doing enough for her. Yeah, he wouldn't change a single thing from his life.

For a full hour, he played the same silly game from the morning on his phone.

He was finishing up his tiny farm, when Ichimatsu texted him.

**How is she doing?**
He have been waiting for his texts.

She didn't want to come again
But she put on a cute dress today!
She looks really pretty!!

That, for him, meant she was putting her own efforts to feel better, to not drag herself down even though she didn't feel like she should dress up that much or at all.

Really?
That's good
I'll send you new pics of my friends
Muffin did something cute today

That would definitely help her!
Homura really liked Ichimatsu's friends, and they were mostly friendly with her. Which she deeply appreciated.

Thanks Ichimatsu niisan!!
She will love it!!

Smiling, he was already planning to surprise his older brother with an impromptu visit. His friends were the perfect excuse for the day too!

Jyushimatsu was going to put his phone back in his backpack, when it vibrated again. Curious, he checked it.

... Could you buy something for me?

Of course he could! That also meant that his brother was busy!
Ichimatsu was always busy doing well... art.

Sure!
What is it?

Was it some kind of paint? Or maybe, he was hungry and needed groceries again! He was going to tell mom, just so she could cook him enough food for a week.

I need a paint roller
Tart killed another one
... And a box of snickers...

Tart sure was conquering every little thing Ichimatsu owned. And a box of snickers? That was highly suspicious!

Sure!
I'll see you later!!

He was so going to tell mom. He couldn't let him live out of snickers. Yet.

By the time he put his phone away, Homura was already done with her appointment.
They ended up touring with a cone of ice cream each, like many of the new faces visiting the city they knew from heart. Stopping every once in a while to partake in whatever fun was going on. They ate some candies, petted a few strays, danced with the crazy foreigners that were playing music on the streets. They had lots of fun, and she was smiling so brightly too.

It was worth it.

Their last stop was getting Ichimatsu things. Entertaining themselves with the tools and trinkets that seemed to have fun shapes and various sizes, bringing involuntary giggles out of them. That box of snickers turned into two when he saw her take a promising glance at the chocolate bar. Getting in the only line that was somewhat short enough to pay. They slowly, but surely got closer to the cashier, it was then, when he overheard a familiar name spilling through someone else's lips.

— What? As if that was my fault? You and I both know that it would inevitably happen.

That tall man turned around, carrying himself with an elitist confidence that made him stand out among the rest.

— I know, I know darling. We've been looking everywhere for someone that could try to imitate or work with similar products. In short words, I think he is the right guy to touch up our roots, Todo.

Roots?

What was he talking about? Trees?

Wait a minute...

— You should really stop worrying. We've seen his whole catalog, the products he uses are the best there are; non-toxic... what?

For a long while, the man stayed in a patient silence, listening to every word coming from the other side of the phone. He managed to pay for his things flashing a flattering smile at the worker, without losing his focus on the call. Grabbing his single purchase, he walked out.

Jyushimatsu could feel his whole body vibrate out of excitement. He had to go after him! But...

A gentle hand reached for his twitching one, making him look at the owner of it.

— I'll pay for this, okay? Go.

KING Sized HOME-FUCKING-RUN

— Take it Homura-chan!! – He quickly said, shoving his wallet into her hands before he rushed after the fancy man.

Desperately looking around the parking lot, he searched for that guy, until his eyes spotted him opening the door of a... Woah. That was a shiny car... No! Focus, Jyushimatsu.

A few seconds prior the other attempted to take a sit on his stupidly fancy car, the fifth brother reached for the driver's door and held it open in place, forcing the other man to look at him by default.

For a long plausible minute, they stared at each other.
— I understand darling. I'll be going now – smiling, he got out of the car. – See you at home.

Finishing the call, he turned around, giving him his back to properly close the door. Slipping his phone in his front pocket, he looked back at him once again. Unblinking, direct, cold. Jyushimatsu felt like he should've said something already; despite that, no words came from his mouth. Maybe it was the presence of that stranger that made him stop and think of what he wanted to say; besides the usual 'stop'.

Crossing his arms over his chest, the man in front of him raised an eyebrow, expecting him to say something first; since he was the one who stopped him from leaving. Right before Jyushimatsu could open his mouth again, that guy decided to talk first.

— I knew this was going to happen. Perhaps not this soon – slowly, but precisely, he approached him; and Jyushimatsu had one thing in mind at the moment.

Asshole.

— So, you just arrived, right? That makes more sense! – He could notice him growing annoyed at his words. How satisfactory it was to have some form of an upper hand against people like him.

Raising both eyebrows, that tight loop sided smile drew itself back on his face.

— It sure does, doesn't it? Matsuno-san.

He had a feeling that Karamatsu niisan was going to hate this guy for sure.

— Jyushimatsu. You should…

— No – interrupted the other.

— Eh? – tilting his head a little, he looked at him.

— There is no need for me to address you, or any of your brothers separately – relaxing his face, he closed both eyes while he grabbed his keys, undeniably wanting to get going. For someone like him, being stopped at the parking lot by his kind of person, seemed to be nothing but a huge waste of time. – After all, this didn't happen.

Jyushimatsu could not let him leave.

— … Todomatsu is our brother – putting quite the emphasis in the third word, he continued on. – There is nothing you can do to not let us meet him.

— That's exactly where you are wrong – relaxing his sight, he smirked at him. – You have no idea how far I'm willing to go to avoid that.

— … One meeting – offered Jyushimatsu.

— That's not going to happen.

— I wasn't talking about Totty.

That seemed to spike his curiosity.

— Meet with us, and then decide if this has to happen peacefully or not.

There was no way he would allow such a thing to happen.
— You are just going to make me lose my time – he sighed. – However, I can't say I haven't been wondering how my darling's brothers turned out to be – sitting on the driver seat, he put a hand free device on his ear, and connected his phone. – Next weekend, eight o'clock at Tofuya Ukai. Dress accordingly.

Closing the door, Jyushimatsu saw him drive off to the streets.

As unpleasant as that short encounter was, he got a good deal out of it; highly proud of himself for not losing that business spark he loved to use once in a while. Nevertheless, thanks to that, they'll have somewhere to start from.
And if that meeting didn't work out as he wanted to, he was going to find another, more rocky way to see their little brother. That man was not going to keep them away from him. He has no right to do it. None.

With a tight fist whitening his knuckles, he smiled again.

GOOD NEWS!!
KING SIZED NEWS NIISANS!!
Dressed with the finest clothes they owned, the quintuplets arrived at the Tokyo Tower, twenty minutes before the established date at that four start restaurant located at the foot of said tower. Just by looking at the entrance, it was obvious the reason behind the choice of wardrobe they were asked to wear; when the only customers that were leaving and entering the place, were extremely well dressed.

They inevitably stood up because they clearly didn't belong among those people, but having that set of mind, was not going to help them find the tiniest bit of confidence they might have to fake for the occasion.

The meeting they were going to assist to, was not a confrontation. Although, the way Jyushimatsu described the guy they were encountering with, wasn't ideal, nor expected. They still didn't have any real clue of who he was; three brothers sporadically exchanging words with him didn’t gather that much information to start with anyways.

For now, that man had the upper hand in the situation.

How frustrating.

Approaching the restaurant, the brothers saw him there, waiting at the entrance, cladded in dark grey.

Proper introductions were purely done out of manners. However, the false animosity they were receiving from 'Nishimura-san', was a hard pill to swallow. And if that wasn't off putting, knowing that he was part of that niche group that could get the last order within days and reserve a private room in a short amount of time, just for who they were. That, left them with a bad taste in their mouth.

He was too high tier. He was the kind of person Todomatsu wanted to be.
A waitress welcomed in before she lead them through the halls to their reserved room. Passing a few others, she stopped in front of one of them and slid the door open, to allow their guests to walk in. And what a room it was.

The view they had from there was breathtaking, relaxing even. The pine trees heavenly mixed with the pond full of swimming Koi carps, and the perfectly placed stepping stones made the waterwheel shine under the warming lights of the garden lanterns, perfectly decorating to pleasing each and every visitor with its great aesthetic.

— It's quite the view isn't it?

The brothers decided to take their seats at both sides of the table, the three oldest on the right and the youngest on the left, leaving the head of the table to him.

— I already ordered something for dinner.

Should they thank him... or?

— Ah! Thank You. I was starving! – Osomatsu took the initiative, surprising the rest of his brothers with his easy going attitude.

— I can imagine.

At a nice peace, the first 'few' dishes filled the table from head to toe. It was a feast they were not going to deny.

— Todomatsu used to say that you would never turn down food, and that with a well-placed 'niisan' you wouldn't even think about it too much – Atsushi mentioned, chuckling.

Hearing that, put a stop to their appetite. Not because it was a mind-blowing comment, but because he wouldn't know that if Todomatsu had not told him. Which meant, Todomatsu talked about them.

— I guess it still applies! Right, guys? – Osomatsu laughed, looking at his little brothers.

— Y-yeah, indeed! – Followed Karamatsu, instantly.

Although, another silence emerged right after that, it didn't last as much as it should.

— How is he?

Placing his chopsticks down, Atsushi looked at the second brother.

— Does it really matter to you how I answer to that? – Not leaving a second to breath, he continued. – If that was enough, I would have answered when I met one of you at the parking lot.

Was this guy always so rude, or was he bluffing because he was talking to Todomatsu's older brothers?

— How is Todomatsu doing? – dropping his nice 'cool guy' façade, Karamatsu glared at him.
— … As of now, his hands are full. But I admit, I do feel bad for leaving him alone.

— You mean with the kids – cleverly added Ichimatsu.

Atsushi simply smiled.

— When you have five children under your care, it is kind of challenging, isn't it?

— F-five? – mumbled the fourth brother.

— Totty... I-is raising five children? – muttered Choromatsu, already feeling his anxiety rise.

— No, no. That can't be, can it? – The second brother could only hold his head.

— Him? Are we talking about the same Todomatsu, here? – asked Osomatsu. – We were thinking that he had at least two kids, a little boy and a baby girl. But holy shit, now you are telling us that we are uncle of five.

— Of course we are talking about the same Todomatsu. Besides, I'm sure we wouldn't have it any other way – smiling, Atsushi sipped a bit of his beverage.

— I really can't see him managing five... – mumbled Choromatsu.

— How are they still alive? – wondered Ichimatsu.


The three youngest at the moment, kept on rambling and whispering to each other and themselves about the prospect of Todomatsu as a parent. Besides of being highly worrisome, it was nearly impossible!

Todomatsu didn't like kids. He wasn't even good with them. At all.

— Aren't you forgetting something? – His unfamiliar voice put an end to their endless questions. – Why do you think I agreed to meet you all?

Did Nishimura san think they were going to need his permission to meet Todomatsu? In what reality he had the right to do any of that?

Certainly, not in this one, nor the other.

— I asked for one meeting... – all eyes went to the fifth son. – Just so you could form your own opinion about us, but ... it starting to look like an excuse to me.

— You just realized that?

This guy...

— What? – Jyushimatsu smiled at him. – You have to be retarded to not notice that from the start!

Woah, scary! Jyushimatsu was scary when he was serious.

— Perhaps – agreed Atsushi. – However, I have no intention in letting any of you see him, not if you will only hurt him more – once again, he reached for his chopsticks to resume eating.

— What are you talking about? We didn't… – Choromatsu's words died on his way out.
— Are you sure you didn't? – raising a single eyebrow, Atsushi glanced at him.

— Why would we look for him if we wanted to hurt him? – asked Osomatsu, a bit confused for his approach. – Do you really think we would go that far to hurt our little brother?

— I don't know, you tell me.

— We would never do such a thing – Karamatsu's anger kept on fueling with his snobbish attitude and arrogant words. They couldn't blame him.

— Those are meaningless words – responded Atsushi.

— And so are yours – barked back Karamatsu.

The second course of dishes arrived, but no one seemed to care. Especially the second brother.

— Oi, you have to calm down Karamatsu – intervened the eldest, before it could be too late.

— No! I didn't come here to meet him, I'm here because I want to see Todomatsu.

— I know, I know! But you have to calm down.

It wasn't working. They could see it not working.

— Shittymatsu... Tone it down a little. You'll get nothing by getting mad at him.

— It's just that... – gritting his teeth, Karamatsu clicked his tongue, doing as his little brother said, much to his demise.

Atsushi had his eyes on them, irrevocably testing them, reading between the lines, figuring his actions; doing everything he knew to triple check they were not going to deliberately hurt Todomatsu. However, he couldn't find a spec of a lie anywhere, which was supposed to be good news. Still, he couldn't blindly trust a group of people he had only heard from one person in his whole life.

He would have to go back to the basics.

— Why do you want to see him?

That simple question floated in the room unanswered. Urging their minds to race for a correct one, when its inexistence logically trapped them into a perfect circle. This wasn't about rational thinking, or who was the bad guy and who wasn't. It was a matter of sides and the different points of view surrounding the same story.

But the question persisted.

Why would they want to see him?

— I miss him... – Karamatsu was the first to answer, changing the sight he solely dedicated to the cold dinner in front of him, to the man whose words irked him. – We miss him, we are worried about him, and we need to talk things out – unwavering and fearless. He let his fist loudly fall over the table. – We are identical sextuplets! – Not losing that fire, Karamatsu glared at him. – Todomatsu had never been good at being alone.
— He still isn't.

Their patience was running low. Talking with Atsushi, was similar to talking to a wall. On the other hand, Choromatsu could not stop rattling his head to come up with something, anything, that could help them get through him.

The whole thing seemed to be nothing but a theater.

— Do you even care for him? – That came out way ruder than Karamatsu wanted to.

— I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't.

He was so quick to answer, it made it the more annoying.

— Don't you want him to be happy? – Choromatsu kept on pushing, gradually witnessing the disappearance of Atsushi's perpetual smug smile. – Then why would you separate him from his own family?

That seemed to make it.

— I don't think you are understanding – Atsushi sighed, closing his eyes for a second before he faced the third brother. – Do you seriously believe I have something against all of you? Well, let me make it easier for you. The first time I told him, that we would have to come back to Japan, he was not happy. Todomatsu doesn't feel comfortable living here. Why do you think is that?

He didn't want to see them.

What would you do if he doesn't want to see us again?

— Ah. So you already knew – fixing his tie, he took his phone out of his pocket, quick to throw whatever tact he had through the window. – He doesn't want to see any of you.

The crude truth sat heavy in the pit of their stomachs, weighting down the little hope they planted as a group, as brothers.

— Although, I was expecting more from you. I'm not entirely disappointed of this meeting with 'the horrific older brothers'. After all, you are my brothers in law, and I won't lie to your faces and say I wasn't curious – Atsushi shrugged it off, like it was nothing. – Also, I can see that you do mean well in his regard. That, I can appreciate.

What was he talking about?

Wait, did he say brother in law?
The Matsuno brothers, cautiously eyed him, since they've had previous bad encounters with him.

— Hold up! Hold up! Time out! – Osomatsu jumped back into action. – Brother in law? As in... You know... like that?

With a petulant look at his choice of words, Atsushi nodded.

— I thought the ring was kind of giving it away though – huffing, Atsushi 'casually' let them have a look at it.

Five pair of eyes flew straight to the opulent wedding band on his ring finger. How on earth could they miss that!? They were getting old.

Laying back on the chair, Osomatsu sighed, taking in all the information they were given in the hour.

— Man... Todomatsu turned into a housewife.

— What? – Choromatsu was the fastest to react to that. At this point in their lives, he was more than used to it.

— You know, he got the kids, the flashy ring, that guy – Osomatsu said, absolutely ignoring that Atsushi was sitting right next to him. – Probably a car or two.

— Actually, we own three.

And they were going to ignore that, too.

— No, no, no. I get that, but why are you..? – pinching the bridge of his nose, Choromatsu exhaled. Taking a couple of seconds to assimilate the stupidly unexpected turn of events.

That was what he thought, but the eldest of the brothers turned on his seat to face Atsushi.

— You see? Those are the kind of things I want to talk about with him. If he wants to show off his ring all up in our faces, I want him to do it – crossing his arms, Osomatsu sincerely smiled at him. – As the oldest, I know that he is still hurting about what happened, and I have a feeling, you do too. So why don't we help each other to make him feel happier?

That was actually a good idea.

— For someone considered stupid by his little brother, you are rather the opposite.

— I surprise myself sometimes – he chuckled, rubbing his nose with his finger, like he always did.

— But, I'll have to decline.

— What? Why?

— Because, I don't see how putting him through the same hurtful memories would do him any good, when we are not planning on staying.

How many more shitty news were they going to get stabbed with in one day?

First, they caught a few glances of him; then, they get a meeting with his husband; and now, they had to get lacerated by the prospect of losing him again? What were the fucking odds of suffering of a freaking heartbreak?
That had to be a joke. A big, idiotic joke.

— We came to Japan for our jobs. So, once we are finish here, it is highly possibly we will transfer back to our home.

Oh.

It was not a joke...

Todomatsu came back because he had to, not because he wanted to. He did it for business, not for sentimentalism, not for them, and not for his family. But again, why would he? When he had a new one, a better one. A family he wanted.

— Since this is probably the only time I will see all you... – he showed them his phone. – Would you like to at least hear him?

Whether be out of pity, or some twisted valid reason, Atsushi tapped twice on the screen of his phone, letting it mark on speaker, until he got an answer. It didn't take a genius to know what he was really doing. Show off.

From the other side of the phone, they could hear several voices of kids, along the candid shine of infant’s songs blending in the background, and a long blabber that was supposed to mean something.

Right then and there, they saw Atsushi drastically change. That unimaginable mix of loud noises showed them a first sincere expression from the man.

— Hello, princess – those two words, earned him a train of high pitched squeals, making his smile widen. – Can you give the phone to Mama? – With another, louder one, they all heard the voice that they’ve been waiting for.

— Who are you talking to, princess? – The little girl talked back at him, forming a full sentence out of gibberish. After a bit of shuffling, Todomatsu took the phone in his hands, but they could still hear her soft hums in the background. – Hmm? You got her all excited Atsu~.

— Did I? – He chuckled, definitely forgetting where and with who he was.

— You should have seen her! She was bouncing! Ooh~ she looked so cute! – They could almost see what kind of expression he was doing, while he gushed on the phone over his daughter. – Anyways, Did something happen?

— Uh? No, I just wanted to know if you were doing alright.

— I'm fine dear, but my bundles decided to hide your shoes – in the way he said that, they were certain that he must be pouting. – I was trying to find them. Now, the real question here is, what did you do to them, Atsu?

— Me?

— … Atsushi.

— Well... I may have told them that I loved you way more than they do.

— … Oh lord, not that again – huffing, he seemed to accommodate or move, with the rustling coming from the phone. – Why do you have to pick on them? – They could hear more clearly the
babbling of the baby.

— I'm merely proving a point, darling.

— Which is?

— That I love you more, of course – he easily answered with a warm smile, looking pretty proud of his explanation.

— You are so embarrassing when you want to be! – although he said it with the intention of being mad at him, Todomatsu giggled, but even those ended up turning into whines. – Sweetie—ow! Ow! Sweetie no! Mama's hair is not for pulling! Oow!

— I wouldn't be so sure about that one – all the honest sweetness that he had shown through a smile, instantly changed into a smirk.

— Atsushi! – He gasped.

Another round of shuffling and whining; that this time came mostly from the baby, taking the front stage.

— I was going to be nice and keep looking for your shoes, now you are on your own with that... Asshole.

Todomatsu cut the call without second thoughts.

— Ah. He hung up – mumbled, their brother in law.

Atsushi looked like he was relishing in the recent memories he just created. Despite that that little stunt of his, they still find his intentions highly suspicious. What he did was a perfect example of how much a piece of shit Nishimura could be. Nonetheless, they got to hear Todomatsu's voice.

Perhaps, they shouldn't try to abruptly get into his life; not when he seemed to be perfectly happy with how things were for them, and their newly formed family.

Yeah.

The least they could do for him at this point was let him keep the happiness he earned. Even if that meant they would have to back off for good; once the time came.

This. The undesirable outcome of the evening, that it shouldn't be as much of a surprise as it was. The brothers filled their mouths with what ifs, in a poor excuse to prepare themselves for what they all didn't want to believe. If only, it could have stayed as an imaginary possibility, another 'what if', then maybe, it wouldn't hurt them this much.

After all, there wasn't an exact amount of preparation, that'd have help them either way.

— … It has to be a joke, right?

Karamatsu's eyes were out of focus, his hands continuously trembling; giving away how emotionally unstable he was, how deeply unsettled he was.
The eldest of the brothers offered all the support he could, but Osomatsu was affected too, just like all the others around him, and thus, his aid was futile.

— I’m afraid is not – Atsushi answered. With his phone in hand, he excused himself, standing up. – Ah. You don’t have to worry about the bill, I already covered that. And you can stay for at least, another hour.

The brothers knew that the second oldest was not going to take it as lightly as any other would have.

— You... – gripping the arms of his chair, to keep his body in place, Karamatsu glared daggers at him. – You make us come here, tell right to our faces that we can’t see him, had the audacity to call him in front of us and you decide to leave first?

Saying all those things, gave them dimension; a good enough reason to fuel his conglomerated emotions, ruthlessly soaring towards a new target. For Karamatsu, when it reached those crude kind of levels, it never mattered who it was, as long as it was directed to someone.

Regardless of his strong displeasure towards his decisions, Atsushi didn’t seem to give it the correct attention it usually received, lacking a reaction would only infuriate the second brother more, being that his real intention or not.

— Yes. As you know, I have a daughter and four sons that I would like to see before bedtime – bowing at a proper angle, he flashed them one last smile. – It was a pleasure meeting you.

The indisputable itch on the palm of their hands could have been easily subsided, with an amicable punch to that smug face of his. Still, they let him leave unharmed.

— ... Aaah! This sucks!

At least, Osomatsu was taking it better than Karamatsu. That had to count as something, right?

Calmly walking to the closest parking lot where he left his car, Atsushi played with his wedding ring, slowly twirling it around. In a similar fashion, he got in the driver seat, started the engine and drove off to the streets. Two consecutive red lights gifted him with a bit of time to think and regroup his thoughts, having the solid knowledge, that he would have to sit Todomatsu down in a good mood, just so they could talk about it.

This time, Atsushi was far more confident than he used to be at communicating with Todomatsu. Now he was sure the other truly listened to him, but that didn't mean his darling was going to actually do it, nor believe him for all he knew. And Atsushi wouldn't have it any other way.

He would have to go slow.

Baby steps.

Every single thing that was occupying his mind, made the trip shorter than it was, founding himself at the entry of his house in a blink of an eye. Carefully parking it next to the other two vehicles, he got off his seat and locked it. As soon as he crossed the front door, he was received by a crushing sea of kid’s songs that they cleverly put on a loop every day; to please their children tastes in music. They did deserve the best, and they both knew it.

— I’m home – he announced, expecting nothing to happen.

Atsushi couldn’t be more wrong.
Two sets of arms wrapped around each leg, clinging to him, gripping the fabric of a well-tailored suit.

— Welcome Daddy! – said at unison two out of four kids. As tooth rotting as that might be, the smile they were giving him was not something he hadn't seen before; overly sweet, but still, terribly adorable.

They might be satisfied with their little prank on his designer shoes.

— Hiro chan, Ryo chan... – Atsushi looked down at his left leg first, then to his right one, with a smile of his own, he said. – Shall we go?

Tightening their hold around him, now with the addition of their own short sets of legs, they clung to him like koalas, so their father could start walking without leaving them behind. Doing such a stunt sounded atrocious for someone that was tired, or that lived in a modest four story building. Who in their right mind would do stairs in a place like that? In that way? No one, really. And no one should. However, they were paying for all the commodities Todomatsu saw fit according to their necessities, and that included an elevator. Most people would question themselves about investing into one, but Atsushi wasn't going to force his darling to carry anything pass the second floor; hell, not even to the first one if he was packed with boxes or shopping bags. He simply deserved the best, and it wasn't because Todomatsu worked or not, it was because he loved him. Aside from that, his job performance at the family business, was only increasing, allowing him to reach its peak in the section he happily managed. His darling worked hard, if not harder than he did; with wanting to squeeze time to spend raising their kids.

He could proudly say that his husband was amazing at his job, which he was daily improving to achieve higher numbers within the company. And at the same time, their four babies were no longer that, they started to grow up. Then their little princess came to join them, suddenly changing their lives from what they were just getting accustomed to.

And lastly, this.

Their first weeks they had settled at their brand new home, they have been rushing everywhere they went, providing them with an obscenely short-lived time to rest, let's not mention the ridiculous idea of wanting to have private time together. Between their demanding jobs and their growing, spoiled children, they couldn't avoid the fall into a torturous routine. Thanks to that weird juggling, they were capable of passing each day with a little bit of ease. Still, that, being awfully normal to them, didn't mean it wasn't taking a lot from both. It was only natural that he was going to worry about Todomatsu's well-being.

How couldn't he?

When the moment he set his foot out of that plane, he had been eerily alert. Not to mention that the numerous possibilities of encountering his family strolling on the streets of Tokyo, made him extremely nervous every time they had to leave the house. Those negative feelings were eating him alive, forging the bizarre fear of something unstoppably bad would happen to him, to their family. All because his darling felt like he owed enough to his past mistakes, to his unsatisfyingly raw conclusion, to let it start rightfully collecting what he treasured the most.

Atsushi, as of now, was almost convinced the whole situation was a misunderstanding, a painful lie of memories his darling would diligently feed, purely of his past strong emotions. In his eyes, Todomatsu's older brothers didn't seem like they were after him, let alone hurt him. It was quite the
contrary. Still, years ago, they did somehow glazed over their own words to end up doing what they tried to avoid.

For him, that little information was sufficient to try and work with.

Once the elevator arrived at the second floor, the doors slid open, chiming the cliché 'ding' his kids found fascinating. Moving one foot after the other, he carefully step out it, to start walking to the living room.

The music was indeed, louder in there.

The gentle laughter of their princess filled the room with her contagious and innocent joy; all thanks to Todomatsu's entertaining skills, humoring her by singing along with the dancing stuffed animals in the TV.

It was a matter of seconds, before his two clingy boys would want to join their 'Mama'.

— I want to sing with Mama! – said Hiro, untangling his limbs from his father's leg, to make a run straight to the living room.

— Ah! I want to go too! – Ryo exclaimed, repeating the same actions his older brother did.

How adorable witnessing their antics were, and yet, inevitable by the pure nature of it. Loosening his tie, Atsushi approached the lively room to see a one of a kind show.

— Daddy is back!! – said the other two; Nao and the youngest of the quadruplets, Yuu.

Their announcement put Todomatsu's performance to an abrupt pause, turning around with their baby girl squirming in his hold. He walked to him while the little one whined, possibly wanting to be held by her father.

— Welcome home – his mellow greeting enchanted him, yearning for his daily dose of sweets. Closing the offending gap between them, Todomatsu got on the tip of his toes, pecking him on the lips and squishing the little girl tight enough between them for her to be comfortable. – How was your meeting?

— … Interesting – he answered, sneaking one arm around his waist to keep him in place.

— Daddy no!! Let go of Mama!! – holding Todomatsu's shirt and hugging his legs, the bundles clung to him, perfectly synced to each other, to battle their father as they usually do.

— Aaah!!

It seems like someone did not want to stay behind.
What her older siblings started on their own; she, as the youngest of them all, finished it with a good quality screech.

— Woah… That was amazing.

— Yeah – leaning close to him, Atsushi rested his head on top of Todomatsu's, shamelessly drowning in the scent of sugary peaches that emerged from his pink hair.

— … Atsu, after I put the kids to sleep, why don't you join me for a bath?

He had to be a complete fool to turn that kind of invitation down.
— That seems to be exactly what I need – kissing the top of his head, he parted ways; or tried to, since their baby girl tightly held the front of his black shirt.

The coquettish look his darling was giving him seconds ago, morphed into an apologetic one. One that Atsushi quickly shrugged off. Tired or not, they both knew they would not be capable of denying their sons and daughters something so crucial to their development, as love was.

— It's fine. I'll take care of her. You go manage your little angels and then we'll take a bath together, okay? – Atsushi carefully took the baby from his arms. Cradling her, he turned around to go to the elevator, letting her cling at her hearts content. – Come on Yua chan, it's time to sleep.

The moment he got in the elevator and raised his sight to press the button to the third floor, he found his breath hitching by the lovely view of his darling with his hands up to his face, hiding that bashful bloom on his cheeks.

Whatever it was that he did to make him put such an expression, Atsushi was glad that he did it.

Escorting their princess to her royal chambers, he opened the door to a fluffy pink paradise, one that would have never come to life without his darling's hard work and effeminate aesthetic.

Yawning, the small lady rubbed her droopy eyes.

— If you are this tired, I can only imagine what your Mama had to do – smiling, Atsushi approached her crib. Lightly rocking her side to side, while Atsushi instantly recurred to that perfect trick they discovered out of desperate, sleepless nights; one that successfully lulled her into a much needed rest. It didn't take long before he noticed Yua's soft and calm breathing. Incapable of letting her go; since he had been out early in the morning, Atsushi cradled her one last time, before he cautiously laid her down.

— Sleep well, princess – leaving her nightlight and baby monitor on, he walked out of her nursery, closing the door behind him.

Taking a wild guess, he followed his instinct and went ahead to prepare the bath. If he wasn't wrong, his poor darling had to be battling his way out of their mischievous boy's bedroom. But, he could understand the feeling. They sincerely wanted him to stay with them, just like he wanted to, every single night.

It took Todomatsu ten minutes, to tuck all of them in bed, including all the hugs and kisses he had to give. Nonetheless, the smile he had on his face told him that he also found immense gratification in nurturing the family they strongly fought to create.

With a tiny piece of each, they formed a whole package of new experiences, that up to this day, they still had no clue how to work with. However, they kept on discovering, learning and growing thanks to the five little angels that shook their lives for the better.

They really were the best decision they could have ever taken. Atsushi was certain that if they were to choose again, they would do the same.

The warm water would have been enough to send both of them to a complacent slumber, right where they were. Despite the coziness, Atsushi felt Todomatsu's body shift and move away from him, leaving his torso dreadfully cold, forcing his lethargic state to take a step back for now.
Observing his reluctant posture, he grew wary of his intentions. Did he do something bad? Did he hurt him? And if he did, when and how? His mind was debating with all sorts of inquiries, searching for a prudent election to avoid potential disaster. That was, until Todomatsu turned fully around to let him dive into his disheartening eyes.

— About that *interesting* meeting... are you going to tell me where you really were this evening, Atsushi?

He got busted. But more importantly, he couldn't find the true meaning behind his pained words. That was not good, not good at all.

— You called to the office – Atsushi said with a slight frown, worried that he might unintentionally worsen the situation, for not getting the picture that got engraved in his pretty head sooner.

— I wanted to know if you were going to make it for dinner – muttering, Todomatsu averted his gaze.

That was never good.

Sitting up straight, Atsushi reached for him, gently cupping his face with both hands, only to caress his blushing cheeks with his thumbs. Trying to lock eyes with him made Todomatsu's face redden even more, and his eyes watered.

Ah.

Now Atsushi had an idea of what could be plaguing his mind.

— Todo, darling. I know what you are thinking, and I can assure you that, that's not the case – he plausibly offered his explanation.

— But... – biting his lower lip, Todomatsu finally decided to look at him. – You've been acting so weird lately, Atsu. It's not just today – unable to contain his tears any longer, they overflown, freely rolling down over his cheeks and Atsushi's fingers. – A-a week ago, you came back so troubled when you went to the supermarket, agitated even. And now you lie to me about a meeting? Do you really think I wouldn't notice those changes? Where did you go? With who d-did you have dinner tonight? – voicing his distressing thoughts with a wavering voice, he let an aching sob emerge through his pouty lips.

Atsushi could feel the crack on his heart. Seeing him so troubled for something that wasn't even there. He shouldn't have been so secretive about it, he could have told him; even if that would have put him more nervous. Either way, in the end it didn't matter, he already sow doubts that were watered with his waxing insecurities.

— Todo, darling... please, don't cry – with shaky hands, he tried to wipe his incessant tears away.

— You are n-not answering! – He cried out.

He was right, he wasn't.

What better timing than hours later, right?

— ...I met with your brothers – Atsushi said, wisely opting for what could help him calm down. That, being the truth.
His cries ceased, cluttering the upcoming sobs midway, wrecking his body while he contained his still present sorrow. Todomatsu stared at him, with wide fearful eyes, unprepared to hear that kind of answer coming from his mouth. When he was obviously expecting something else.


— I promise I will tell you everything, but let's go to bed first, okay?

In a pragmatic silence, Atsushi could see the wheel of his head turning; processing the conglomeration of unrealistic thoughts with the simplicity of the actual one, all while they dried out. Following their usual, internalized skin care routine, they didn't took much time, moving to dress in their sleeping wear and seek comfort under the finest covers of their bed. Instead of love driven cuddles and strawberry midnight kisses, they laid down facing each other, leaving an adequate emptiness between their bodies while Atsushi started giving him a more profound take, on why he had been acting so off lately.

Once he was finished explaining the reason behind his sketchy behavior, Todomatsu's pouty lips began to tremble, threatening him with another round of eternal tears. However, this time, Atsushi was not going to let it happen. His mind was set on making his darling understand what Todomatsu didn't seem to have a grasp on yet; by whatever means possible.

With that sole objective, he positioned himself between Todomatsu's legs. Leaning over him, Atsushi started peppering his face and neck with desperate yet firm kisses, letting one of his hands shamelessly trail up and down his sides, feeling him under his thin nightshirt.

— Atsu...?

The moment his darling muttered his name, he dug in, swallowing his words in a possessive kiss, earning him a wanton moan from his rather rough approach. Todomatsu's arms instantly flew up to him, securely locking them around his neck to pull him down as he pleased, deepening the kiss in the process. Raising his hips in a blinding need, his cutie ground his clothed sex against him, urging him for more.

Breaking their lip lock, Atsushi softly rested his forehead over his.

— Listen to me... I would never look at anyone else in the same way I look at you. I didn't do it before and I wouldn't do it now – moving his wandering hand down into his pants, pass the useless elastic band, he traveled south gracing his fingers tips on his pulsing member with a feathery touch.

— But... it's normal, isn't it? – He inquired with a labored breath. – I-it's what happens after a f-few years of marriage... – Todomatsu squirmed under his restrained pleasure, strongly believing in the preposterous thoughts he was voicing.

Atsushi couldn't have that, now could he?

— The only thing that's normal to me, is that every second I share with you, the more I grow to love you – giving him open mouth kisses all along his neck, he stopped at the crook of it to deeply inhale the mix of his natural scent with the fruity body lotion. – The more I desire you...

Gasping, Todomatsu shut his eyes close. Clinging to him, he tilted his head to the side, offering him more skin where he could venture.

— Let me make it up to you.

Taking his hands out of his pants, Atsushi sat up, inadvertently pushing the covers off them.
Listening to Todomatsu whine for the space he created, brought a throaty chuckle out of his lips. All those years together, and Atsushi could not recognize whether he was doing that on purpose to entice him more, or if it was a legitimate reaction. Whichever it was, he was not going to make him wait any longer. Pulling his pants down, he smirked, seeing his darling so diligently lifting his bottom up, to help him get rid of the useless garment. With that out of the way, Atsushi eyed him from head to toe, turning him into a flustering mess just by letting him know his palpable hunger.

Kneeling in front of him and with zero intention of taking it slow, he grabbed his already slightly bent legs and spread them wide apart, shamelessly permitting him to be displayed just for his entertaining. Locking eyes with his alluring arousal, he leant forward to give one tediously long lick to his flushed dick, from the base to the tip. Atsushi could feel his delicious body shiver in anticipation, but before Todomatsu could say anything at all, he welcomed him in his mouth, swallowing him whole.

The suffocating moans that jumped from wall to wall, stayed in the privacy of their bedroom. His name lolled out of his lips, like an unheard prayer to the high heavens, while Todomatsu soft hands found their rightful place on his head, easily acquiring a much wanted control through his hazel locks.

Atsushi willingly let him guide... for now.

Bobbing his head up and down, savoring the leaking bitterness, that he could swear sweetened as soon as it touched his tongue. Atsushi smeared the lascivious mix of pre cum with his own saliva all over his pulsing cock. Each time he did something good, Todomatsu would thrust his hips up far enough to reach the back of his throat, unconsciously making him groan for the electrifying thrill of being used by him, of having him under the wrong idea that he was in control.

Putting his hands to work, Atsushi started to massage his balls. Heavy and full, he toyed with them as he saw fit, casually swapping to grope and press the space that separated his pink entry from them.

Todomatsu’s breathe quickened, instantly picking up his pace.

Being enveloped by the wet warmth of his mouth, made Todomatsu's cock continuously throb, until he couldn't handle a single caress with his tongue anymore, coming undone in thick warm spurts. Whimpering, he kept his iron grip on his hair intact, openly giving Atsushi the opportunity to feast on him, drinking every drop of semen his darling could offer.

Catching a bit of his breath, Atsushi allowed his passion to cease its intrusion. Unmoving, he decided to wait.

— … D-did you... just swa --- AH!

Every muscle of his body tensed up when Atsushi resumed his activities.

Firmly anchoring his quivering hips with both hands onto the mattress, Atsushi hollowed his cheeks, engulfing his already sensitive dick within his mouth, snatching away the control Todomatsu thought he had at the start, in a blink of an eye. Obliging his darling to retire his hands from his scalp, he gave them a whole new purpose, by helping him to keep his loud cries caged.

Oh... How cute he looked.

Seeing him trying escape, wildly bucking his bottom half up, squirming to break free from his saccharine torment, when the only thing Todomatsu could truly do, was gradually burst through the
seams and embrace it.

— ...I already came! ...Ah! Y-you don't have to...Nnn!

He managed to say between gasps, but it was fruitless, since Atsushi just happened to grew fond of the sweet melody he couldn't hold in anymore.

Pleading, begging, Todomatsu arched his back to somewhat flee from his grasp. However, doing that didn't simply entertain him, it fueled him to do more.

— S-stop!? …Please A-atsushi stop!?

Hearing his broken sobs and whimpers, sent jolts straight to his still confined cock. If he wasn't so focused in lavishing him, he was sure he would have cum with that alone.

Incapable of holding himself up, Todomatsu's form viciously trashed as he sunk in the messy sheets. Crying out in ecstasy, his toes curled and his head rolled back onto the pillows due to the second orgasm Atsushi forced out of him. Not yet satisfied with that, he turned it up a notch by squeezing his balls in his hand until he milked him dry.

Sitting up, he licked his lips, relishing in the image he was certainly going to burn into his mind and make a good use of it some other time.

Skipping no part of him, Atsushi devoured him with his eyes, starting from his well spent member and ascending all the way up to his reddened tear stained face.
His cock jumped in excitement observing what he did, for what he could still do.

... 

Fuck it.

He couldn't hold back. Not with how lewd his expressions were.

Smirking, he reached for his still trembling legs, putting them close together, he held them over his right shoulder, securing them in place with one arm.
Taking his fully erect cock out, he aligned it between his thighs, before he eagerly pushed it forward. Groaning, Atsushi closed his eyes in raw bliss while he vehemently began to thrust, caring for little to nothing besides his own load up release.
If the resounding slap of flesh and amazing friction he was getting from his silky thighs, weren't enough to drive him crazy, opening his eyes to see Todomatsu pure embarrassment and hear his soft gasps, did the job. His little imp should be accustomed by now to his... preferences, but it seems this cute side of his would still find it humiliating.

Good.

— Fuck... H-how can you expect me to... Nng! T-to cheat on you, when you are all I want...Damn it! – turning his head to the side to face his hoisted up legs, he kept on waxing his feelings while he kissed, licked and bit his calves. – T-todomatsu... I love you... I-love you, I love you...! – His everlasting words, made Todomatsu whine and cover his face, always leaving enough space to peak through his fingers whenever he wanted to.

Clinging to his legs, hugging them for dear life, Atsushi went even faster, losing himself in the erratic rhythm that without a doubt lead him to his passionate completion.

Grunting, Atsushi tightly closed his eyes, shooting his desire all over his askew night shirt. Greedy as always, he kept on slowly grinding against the creamy crevice, to further his euphoric state as much as he could.
— ... Um... Atsu, dear. Can you let go of my legs?

The slightly hoarse voice of his darling, brought him back to his delectable reality.

— O-of course.

Like the gentleman he knew he was, the first thing he did was clean him up. Wiping off the few dribbling drops of cum that were running down his thighs, with the tissues Todomatsu so kindly reached and handed it to him. After tucking himself in, Atsushi took his black night shirt off, to put it on him, so they could get rid of his soiled one. He could've moved and gotten his darling another set of clean pajamas, however, having him wearing his shirt would always be his cup of tea.

An oversized cuteness.

For the next couple of days, Todomatsu's mood had a major boost. Beaming in everything he did, whether that was taking care of their kids after work or revising the extra papers and projects he received almost daily for the company. Needless to say, his husband was livelier, thriving even, bestowing him with the joy of witnessing him waltz through his days with an ease he hadn't see in a long time. Per contra, it concerned him that he didn't bring up his brothers at all, causing him to assume that he was completely ignoring the situation at hand.

Don't get him wrong, the syrupy smile that warmed up his heart, was enough for him to let it pass for a few days. All the same, Atsushi kept his hopes up, thinking that his husband would bring that delicate situation up anytime soon. But when that didn't happen, Atsushi started to doubt that Todomatsu would ever do.

If he was being sincere with himself, he could leave it like that; forget that whole meeting fiasco happened and put behind them that short trip to the past. Although they could go on with their lives, he couldn't deny nor dismiss the hour he spent with his brothers in law, not when their words suggested the pursuing of Todomatsu's happiness.

Unlike his cutie, he could not ignore that fact.

If there was anything in the whole word, he could offer to make his father sincerely interested in getting to know him and the family he formed, he would jump off a bridge, blindfolded, without thinking it twice. In spite of silly dreams, his family had always been off to a bad start, leaving nothing for him to work with, but sours ashes.

Though as he sees it, the Matsuno family was a pretty tight, humble kind of people. Todomatsu could perfectly get the chance to mend those severed bonds again, if he wanted to that’s it. Atsushi would simply have to do the same thing Todomatsu did for him when they were surprised by his heinous father, back at their very first home.

So he waited one more day for him.

And just as he thought, nothing happened.

Well, he might have to take matters into his own hands, and give Totty a very gentle push.

Flawlessly executing a rushed plan he put together that morning. Atsushi decided to ask for his mother help, by suggesting her that she could take the kids under her care until later that night; in
which she happily accepted. Using an abused excuse, he managed to avoid Todomatsu at their lunch break, using those minutes to quickly drive back home, pick the kids up and safely drop them off at his mother’s place.

As soon as he was done, he cleared his schedule as much as he could to match Todomatsu's, obtaining a good interval of fifteen minutes between the end of his shift at the office and his darling's. Lastly, and more importantly, Atsushi asked him to wait for him, so he wouldn't have to go home alone, or in a cab. The response he got to that, was far too obvious.

He could notice Todomatsu getting slightly uncomfortable in his seat as the ride neared its end, at a highly suspicious quiet home. For a solid second Atsushi thought he was going to start talking once they were inside, and yet, he only got a nervous laugh out of him.

Impassive, he took Todomatsu's briefcase from his fingers and left it right next to his; over the dining table. Walking back to him, he held his hand to lead the way to the couch. Sitting down, facing each other, Atsushi began his approach.

— Todo, you already know that the situation with my family it's something that I will never be able to fix. No matter how much I wanted, things will stay as they are, and for us that is for the best... – as he finished saying that, his darling pouted. Already knowing where everything was coming to. – Now, from what I poorly gathered at that meeting, your family misses you, they really do.

— … But.

— Also, I would have never brought them up to any conversation if it wasn't for that confusion we both had days ago – blushing, Todomatsu averted his gaze. Atsushi, by the other hand, continued. – That, and their genuine wish to see you – Todomatsu kept on avoiding his gaze while Atsushi caressed the knuckles of his soft hand, trying to calm his nerves. – Why are you so afraid?

Wiping his head to meet his sight, he seemed to look for something in his semblance. Deaf to the immaculate truth, he bit his lower lip.

— … I... Y-you... You are not lying right?

Where did he get that idea from?


— ...B-but I... I don't get it. Why would they want to see me? When I, down right ignored them for years... – sighing, Todomatsu looked away, losing himself in that mush of moss he carried with him all that time. – A-all because I was too mad at them, because I was stupid and young and I... I wouldn't blame them if they hated me even more than before – his free hand instantly latched to the hem of his shirt, playing with the fabric. – They lied to me... Ichimatsu niisan lied to me. He said that they didn't hate me for what I did, but I knew he was lying! H-he must have been!

— Hate? – deepening his frown, Atsushi observed him. – That is kind of a strong word, darling.

— Wouldn't you hate me too? – He stared at him with big, brown, watery eyes. – I-if I ran away with someone else, b-because I was mad at you... L-like I did before... W-wouldn't you, Atsushi?

No...No.

Pulling him close to him, he let him bury his rosy face onto his chest, scarcely weeping over his dark shirt.

— It was nothing but a foolish mistake, from both of us. And I did go after you. Just like your
brothers were doing when they first caught a glance of you.

...Ah, crap.

— W-were? – raising his head up to look at him, Todomatsu furrowed his brows in mild curiosity. Probably wondering why they wouldn’t be looking for him now.

— ... I might have told them you did not want to see them.

That pitiful, tear stained face slowly turned into a frowny one; that Atsushi, without a doubt would still consider cute, before he roughly moved away from his embrace.

— Atsushi!?

— What? Was I wrong?

Stubbornly turning his indignant face to the side, he accidentally gave him the answer to that, and to his surprise, a hint of something else that shouldn’t be considered new.

Todomatsu wasn’t really afraid of seeing them, or his family again. No, he was ashamed.

His darling was ashamed of himself, of his human mistakes and wrongdoings.

— Todomatsu... darling, look at me – he softly voiced, not wanting to startled him.

Defiant, he stammered among giving him his full attention or a half assed one, which he was not going to care to remember later.

— Do you want to see your family again?

He seemed to stop breathing. Merely thinking about the notion of being accompanied by each and every one of them, instead of gloomily spending hours on end in front of the mirror, just to see his brothers reflected through the glass. Atsushi didn't want him to seek for any substitutes that could eventually make him fall back into the same misstep that almost tore them apart, not when he could find the missing piece of love and support only his real brothers could fill.

He couldn't not do this.

— ... Atushi, I want to see m-my Nii-san... I want my N-niisan.

Those broken words, were all he needed to hear.
What time was it?

Was it a weekday already? It must be.

Karamatsu had no idea for how long he have been laying on his uncomfortably cramped bed, nor how much coffee he ingested in that eternal cocoon of jumbling time.

The only thing that made sense to him, was the submerging dream that fooled him into his reality.

Right after that god forsaken meeting, Karamatsu went back home, avoiding any unwanted distraction keeping him away from his ticking anger. When he reached his place, he quickly stepped inside, locking the front door behind him with a thundering smash, as his poisonous feelings poured through his every pore; violent, mind numbing and controlling. He found no other way of ridding himself of that calamity, than trashing his own kitchen and smashing his brand new purchased mugs by throwing them against the kitchen wall, letting the broken shards collide on to the tiles. Once the storm subsided, the overwhelming emptiness left inside, turned into catastrophic tears, making that activity the most tiring of them all.

That tornado shook him for hours that night, even thought it went on strong, it still surprised him how out of it he was. It felt surreal. If he had to plead for his innocence, in his defense, who wouldn’t be mad in that situation.

Karamatsu swore that if he would have been alone with Atsushi; that if mister ‘I'm better than you’ would've stayed for a little longer, he would have broken his stupid face with his own fists to shut him up.
If only, right?

After that, all the daily drive he used to fuel his everything with, left his body, taking along the way, the pure intention of attempting to do anything. Even his work got affected, keeping the flower shop untouched since the last evening he closed it. That thought alone, didn't stir up well in him.

Call him overdramatic and immature. Karamatsu knew that what he was doing could be categorized as such, that he should let it die and move on. Maybe he should have taken one or two days off, notifying his customers through a printed paper when he would be back for business, which would have been a far more adult choice.

Despite of internalizing a correct path to follow, he still decided to glamorously throw all that out through the window and kill the dripping steam left by staying glued to his bed, for more than two supposedly responsible days.

Aside from that, there was another insignificant tiny detail. Sharing a bed with him.

What did he mean by that?

Exactly as it sounded like.

— Karamachuu… what are we having for lunch?

It was beyond him as to why he had to be a decent host to Osomatsu, when he scarcely did it for himself. On top of that, Karamatsu couldn’t simply tell him to get something from the kitchen, not when he already used his monthly ration of snacks as comfort food for both of them the last couple of days. Since the idea of cooking was out of the question, it wasn’t much of a surprise to hear the eldest of the two asking for anything to eat. What he did find somewhat odd, was how insistent Osomatsu have been acting towards him, keeping a close eye and inevitably swallowing the fault of the disaster by taking responsibility of his own mess. When he really shouldn’t dwell on it.

Not wanting to be completely rude, Karamatsu showed him mercy by joining his usual one sided conversations.

— I don’t know, coffee? – He answered, keeping his sight up to the boring blank ceiling.

— But coffee doesn’t work! – whined Osomatsu. – And I’m feeling like homemade food would be perfect, don’t you? – Osomatsu finished with a smile.

— Actually, I don’t feel like cooking – Karamatsu sighed, starting to feel the slight exasperation of his good hearted actions. Turning to his side, he faced him. – Seriously Osomatsu, why are you here?

— What do you mean, ‘why I’m here’? – Osomatsu wondered, frowning for a second. – I’m taking care of you, Karamachu. Wasn’t it obvious? – chuckling, he ruffled his already disastrous hair.

— I noticed that the first few days. But, I meant. Here, here – accentuating the last words, Karamatsu made it fairly easy to understand.

— Oh… Well, since you didn’t seem like you wanted to get off the bed, I invited myself in – explaining, with a refreshing smile. – Besides, doesn’t this bring you good memories?

— Like when Totty left and we had to sleep without him between us?

His bitter sarcasm, sickened a proper answer. However, whether that was good or bad, it was the first thing that popped up in his mind.
— Man… You’re really pissed off, aren’t you? – voicing his thoughts, Osomatsu scratched the back of his head, searching for anything to sweeten his shitty mood. – I hope you know, that I’m not going to give in and quit that easily. I promised you that we would see Totty.

— Uh? Weren’t you there too? – A bubbling anger, irritated him, forcing him to stare back at him. – That asshole told us Totty didn’t want to see us. And I don’t want to inconvenience him, that’s not what I want to do. Not when he won’t be staying in the country for long – brushing his disheveled hair back with one hand, Karamatsu tried to push his evident disagreement with that simple action. – There is no point in forcing ourselves back into his life if he doesn’t want to, Aniki.

— Actually, we don’t know that yet – Osomatsu said, earning his full attention.

— What?

— Hear me out. If those words doesn’t come out of his mouth then I’m not doing it. Simple as that. That… did make sense.

In his eyes, Atsushi was essentially like a fox, something that kept on been proved time and time again at the meeting. Aside from that, the only conversation he had with the youngest, was the major founder of labeling his husband as a prime ‘asshole’. Again, he kept scattering proof of it. Having that in mind, it shouldn’t be so hard to put two and two together, questioning Atsushi’s thoughtful facts as nothing but shameful lies.

Karamatsu didn’t want to think that badly of his brother in law, he didn’t want to believe in such an act. But, if there was enough proof to plant drops of doubt, there could certainly be a chance that he down right lied to them for some sick reason. If that was the case, he won’t be holding back next time.

— Don’t you remember what I did the first time everything went to shit?

Among them, there was not one brother that would ever manage to forget that horrid episode.

— When you kicked Jyushimatsu, because he made you drop your sushi?

Osomatsu stared at him for the blunt answer, before he flinched a little.

— Not that, the other thing I did.

— …When you punched Totty and I helped him to hide it from the rest? – Karamatsu was running thin with this one.

— Why do you have to be like that? I meant the other, other thing – Osomatsu waited for Karamatsu to give him the answer he was aiming at, but the only thing he got was a confusing look. Sighing, he gave in. – I went after all of you, regardless of where you were and what you were doing.

Ah. So that was what he meant.

No wonder he wasn’t getting it.

— But, it was for the invitation we got.

— Never mind that – Osomatsu swatted his hand disregarding the following topics. – The thing is, I will do the same and go after Totty. He can’t escape his niichan like that forever, right?

Although his point was a bit off, it did manage to make him question himself, in his own unique
Osomatsu way.

Why did he have to do as the other said? He could still go down, but not without a fight.

— You are sort of right – Once again, Karamatsu turned on his side, facing his brother with a slight frown. – Why did I ever took his words as an absolute, is beyond me – he sighed, feeling notoriously better.

— Just sort of? – chuckling, Osomatsu brought his hand up to his head again. – You lost your shit for a while, but you still have your niichan to keep an eye on you. Since, you know… I will always be the oldest.

A forgettable thing really. Karamatsu considered himself as his own person; as one should. Like someone that wouldn’t bother anyone with his personal and private problems, even if those tried to reach for anyone’s help. Wanting to be that starring figure of an approachable older brother for the rest, never accepting the fall into the pitiful conclusion, that he might be the one that needed it the most.

The older brother shtick never came so effortlessly to him, as it did to Osomatsu. At least that was what he thought.

The grumbling stomach of the eldest, brought him back to the start.

— So… what are we having for lunch?

— Right. How about we order something?

— Awww, not homemade food? Not even your famous cookies? – whined Osomatsu, regressing into the laid back, lazy human being they grew to love. What a man child.

— I might feel better, but I still don’t want to cook.

There he was again.

Ignoring his childish whining, Karamatsu crawled out of his cramped bed, passing over Osomatsu. With his feet grounded on the carpet, he raised both arms to stretch his body, feeling like he hadn’t attempted to move for months. Exhaling, he rummaged his closet, looking for a clean change of clothes to finally put a stop to whatever decided to mess him up so bad.

— I’ll order something then!

He wouldn’t hate to admit that without the help of his older brother, he might as well nailed himself to the bed, drowning in his lonely sea of illusory, unbreakable rules. In addition to that, Osomatsu also cleaned up the hurricane in the kitchen floor, picking up the broken left over of what it used to be a black mug. Osomatsu didn’t have to do that by any means, and yet, he was deeply grateful that he did.

Being a legitimate disaster and a pain in the ass for a couple of days, worked as a charm to stomp down his emotional weight. With his older brother making him company, they ate till their hearts content, and talked about nonsensical matters until there was nothing else to do than part ways. Not before they accorded to regroup to see Totty, of course.
Karamatsu kept the doors of the shop close for the rest of the week, preferring to get back into business at the start of the following Monday; with a more positive attitude and better face to confront his usual customers. When said day arrived, the freshness of his eager soul, could not calm down wanting to spread the urgent love to the neglected buyers he dared to ignore for so long. However, the impossible seemed to work its magic in his life, with the sweet encouraging letters and notes waiting for him at the entry. 

Oh, did they know that the though alone would be enough to sprout a bright joy in his heart? 

The idea of being needed, useful and present in his loyal Karamatsu girls minds, was still a youthful dream, even when they were the finest ladies he knew. Most of them were mature, wiser women, between the tender age of seventy and eighty to be exact. His attractive existence also caught the eye of blooming flowers in the market, too young to date and too young to go out alone; sweet little ladies around three and five years old. Both revitalized his aching body and sorrowful soul in their own special ways, granting him with weekly, if not daily visits. 

— I shan’t disappoint my flowers no more.

Announcing it to the heavens, he made his holy entrance to his shop. 

How did he dare to suffocate his beauties in such a cruel, inhumane way? 

The place was as messy as his own. Deeply hurt for having to witness the pitiful state that hexed his domain, dragging down all his innocents’ inhabitants with it, he felt the gashes in his heart open up. 

— Heh… do not worry my unfledged pigeons. I will take the task to nurture you back to life, to make all of you, bloom with grace – sealing the promise to his abandoned green child, he closed the door behind him and turned the lights on, ready to begin. 

The music of his heart, softly swayed inside the walls of his shop with the inspiring chords that pushed his body into dusting duty first, before he could center in battling the dirty floors with his weapon of choice. A broom. 

When all the gnarly dust seemed to be out of sight, Karamatsu moved to the windows. Highly aware of what he should consider as his priorities, he made the two front windows glow with the secret formula he preferred to buy for a cheap price, overlooking the empty brand names for the sake of his wallet; besides, if the products did the same as the others, he did not see the appeal of purchasing it a better brand. 

Always keeping his lovely flowers in mind, Karamatsu thought of giving them a new order to be properly showed off, leaving one of his favorite’s activities as the last. 

By the time he had to open the shop for business, he was happily submitting his tired self, to rearrange a few eye catching bouquets according to the warm season. 

Receiving no customers for long periods of time, used to be something Karamatsu had to grow accustomed to over the years. Although it did manage to make him feel a bit down at first, he didn’t let it get to him to slack off nor give up. That was when he was a lonely worker, now, he had his beloved Karamatsu girls. Gorgeous memories of meeting them one by one, washed over him, surrounding his life like the fragile petals on a rose, overseeing the natural thorns peeking through a seemingly innocent stem. 

Some of them waltzed into the shop, delighted to have him back, to share their stories and eventually buy one of the many floral arrangements he put together that morning, to be used as a center piece to
their tables or as meaningful gift to a loved one.

— Oh! Those new ones look lovely, Karamatsu san – said the elderly woman, carefully gracing her fingers on the pot she had her eyes on.

— But I must say, they cannot compare to your beauty, Hikari san – he gallantly replied, earning a faint blush on her chubby cheeks.

— Oh, you are such a ladies man! – flustered as always, she laughed at his antics as she approached the front desk. – You should find a nice girl to settle down and have kids – her bold statement, never failed to startle him. – Heaven knows we need more handsome young men like you, Karamatsu san – with a sweet smile she placed her coins and bills on the counter, while Karamatsu went to get her the arrangement she chose.

— Hikari san, you flatter me too much – carefully counting the exact amount of money, he thought he was being clever by giving her a little discount for her good intentions and great personality, but Karamatsu got inevitably caught, receiving a pinch on the back of his hand.

— No, no, no. Don’t do that young man. You have to manage your business wisely if you want it to flourish for a long time – with a loving pat on the same spot she pinched, she reached for her new summer addition. – My husband and I used to own a nice niche shop at the end of this street. We worked together for years, keeping it standing and proud… until he left from my side. After that I could not bring myself to work there anymore, it brought too many memories and I ended up selling it.

Since the moment they first talked, Karamatsu realized that Hikari san had a strong tendency of getting sidetracked in the middle of any conversation, some people would try to offer help, anything to bring her back to the present. Contrary to that, Karamatsu simply let her savor the taste of a nostalgic time by listening; even, if she told him the same story.

Engrossed with her lively charm, he left unattended the new customer that walked in, leisurely welcoming the newcomer without making eye contact.

— Oh my! I must have talked more than I should. I’m so sorry, son – she apologized.

— Never mind that. It was a lovely story! – His words, made her giggle, easing a smile on his face.

— Well, I won’t take more of your time away, then. Take care Karamatsu san and keep the change – saying her last goodbye, she walked out satisfied with the service she received, not only from the clerk, but from the man that ever so kindly, held the door open for her.

The calm and refreshing feel, watered down instantly when he saw that man. Ugh, he didn’t think his day was going to end up being that shitty.

— Karamatsu san.

Atsushi. That asshole had to make a freaking entrance, didn’t he? What was he trying to do anyways?

— What are you, of all people doing here? – squinting his eyes he spouted.

— …Why do people come to this establishment for? – Atsushi answered with a darn question, getting close to the front desk. – Stupid question, right? – He said, chuckling. – More importantly, there has been a change of plans.
Karamatsu was unsure if he wanted to listen to what he was saying, or if he wanted to play deaf and pretend. The mention of the word ‘plans’ helped him to choose the first though.

— Plans? – raising an impatient eyebrow, he waited for Atsushi to start talking before his limited patience ran short.

— What we discussed at the meeting is no longer definitive – staling a second, Atsushi loosened his tie. A gesture that showed Karamatsu more than he needed to know. – Actually, most of what was said, were merely variations of the truth. Since I was not sure if I should, nor could trust in you, I decided to test all of you beforehand.

What?

What did he just say?

— …And after a sharing the news with Todo –

As unprofessional, violent and morally wrong as it was, Karamatsu thoroughly enjoyed the numbing, warm needless that spread over his fist, when he ‘accidentally’ lashed out at him, leaving a bruise that would definitely turn darker the second it began to swell; perfectly claiming the right side of his not so smug face.

Despite, the punch being clean, and from a close range, Atsushi did not fell on his ass, like Karamatsu wished he had. Instead of that, he was forcefully moved at least three or two steps back by the sole force of his attack.

Holding the affected area, Atsushi hissed at his own touch.

Karamatsu wouldn’t be surprised if Atsushi knew how to take one of those, with a shitty attitude like his, anyone would love to have a chance to shut him up for once, right?

Besides, it felt fucking great.

— I did deserve that one – Atsushi contorted his face out of pain while he straightened up. – You have a heavy hand, uh?

The more he talked, the more Atsushi was asking him for another one. Being the charitable soul he was, Karamatsu wouldn’t dare to deny him that, now would he?

— Testing us? For what? – holding his ground, he stayed behind the front desk, already forming another fist with his predominant hand, just in case.

— I thought my darling was afraid of seeing you for what happened, for how he was treated at that time – dusting his suit as if it was actually dirty, he walked up to the desk once again, probably to keep a respectful conversation. – But, Todomatsu was backing off from a confrontation he did not want to deal with. He still doesn’t, really. However, I’m not here to steal his chance to explain it further, the only thing I can be certain of, is that it is not about what you all did to him, it’s about what he did to you.

Why?

Why would he think like that?

Osomatsu might have done something stupid in the past, and yet, their older brother apologized.

Were they not the ones that calmed their father down, when he lashed out of him in a similar fashion?
the first born did?

Then why?

Did Totty get that mad the last time they called him for Christmas? He could understand it if it was for what Osomatsu said; he did kind of fucked it up, but they were talking about Osomatsu, and he was extremely nervous too. Normally, the eldest wouldn’t fuck up anything that badly, the whole situation was just… out of their hands. Exploding right into their faces, including the youngest.

— So, how does that changes your plans?

— Isn’t obvious? He wants to see you.

That phrase was everything he needed to hear, the clean breath of air to soothe his restrained heart, morphing and molding his hurt feelings into an almost childish excitement.

Like a Christmas present, a very early present.

— H—he … Totty does… He – Karamatsu muttered, blowing the ashes of a burnt down hope out. Unclenching his fist, he fidgeted to get his phone out of his back pocket, only to be stopped by Atsushi clearing his throat – What?

— I’m here for one of your best bouquets and five single roses. One with a pink bow please.

— Oh… Well, let me show you the new ones then, unless you would prefer to choose them individually for me to arrange.

As awkward as that should be, he was not going to pass over the chance to sell his beauties, more now, when he was sure it would be gifted to his baby brother.

When Atsushi paid for them, he also handed him his business card, quickly writing his personal number on the other side of it, before he grabbed the two bags and retired from the shop. Binding him a farewell.

And to think Osomatsu was actually right.

They were going to see Todomatsu. Heh, they were going to see him, whether that would be the same weekend or the next one, or the one after that.

Ah… the feel of having the high heavens on their side, was beyond the psychical world.

The Matsuno brothers were all so busy, work kept on piling up with the summer season right around the corner, enabling them to arrange a date for over a month. Meanwhile, the second oldest kept on touch with their brother in law, something they all agreed on doing. It didn’t just help Karamatsu to calm down, it also made them have a close eye on Atsushi.

Obtaining the house number, wasn’t a thing that made a big change, not when they had different opinions on how to proceed with that information. If they called, what would they do if someone else answered? What if Todomatsu answered? What if when he heard him, Karamatsu freaks out and hung up on him like an idiot?

Eventually, the nonexistent chaos in the group chat was brought to life, after setting a date with Atsushi and Todomatsu to meet, that being, the first weekend of summer, which worked for almost all of them.
Osomatsu and Karamatsu were the ones that had to keep on working thoroughly every summer, knowing the income they were going to receive was substantially better if they decided to continue working, like many others do.

Choromatsu and Jyushimatsu took their vacations like the blessing they were and they did not let them go by any means, which was understandable, since both of them had their own families, planned trips to the country side, the beach or outings to the parks.

Ichimatsu, by the other hand, had a complicated schedule, sometimes he had everything to do, or nothing at all. Thanks to his shitty luck, he got a few new jobs that he could attempt to finish within the week. Inaccessible to get a hold off, he devoted himself to that stupid amount of work, only leaving hints that he was, indeed alive.

Both, Jyushimatsu and Osomatsu took over the group, throwing jokes at each other, keeping the ‘let’s kidnap Totty’ plan on the board, diluting the communal ill feeling.

That Friday night was more of a ‘let’s calm Choromatsu down before he dies’ kind of thing, obviously founded by theirs truly, Osomatsu, the self—proclaimed legend. And as the first born said, they all logged in at 10pm to do a last check up, for the next day.

---

**Choromatsu**

So, are you all sure you know in which station to meet?

**Jyushimatsu**

Yes

Yes

YES!

**Ichimatsu**

yeah

**Karamatsu**

Of course, my brother!

**Choromatsu**

You do remember the time, right?

**Jyushimatsu**
After lunch!!
be there after lunch!!

Ichimatsu
we know

Choromatsu

…
This is weird
Why is that stupid not here?

Ichimatsu
doesn’t he live with you?

Choromatsu

Not really
Besides, im in bed now
and im not going to get up and check if he is in his bedroom
…
brb

Ichimatsu
figures

Karamatsu

How lovely their bond had blossomed in.

Choromatsu

Back
He is sleeping
As in dead on his bed
Ichimatsu

it doesn’t matter if he is tagging along with you

Choromatsu

…yeah
You are right
I can’t believe that we are going to do this
TOMORROW

Karamatsu

Indeed
It was a rollercoaster of emotions, but our brotherly bond pulled us back together, nailing the wooden planks of our feelings to reach for the missing one.

Ichimatsu

im leaving

Choromatsu

How do you come up with all that stuff?
And how can you type it so fast?
Really
Anyways, I’ll be going too

Jyushimatsu

WALK—OFF!!

When Saturday came, Karamatsu was the first one to go to their meeting point, at Nakano—Fujimicho lane station, that was settled relatively close to Todomatsu’s house. Seven minutes away by walking, to be exact.

Ichimatsu was the second to arrive.

— You okay?
— Why wouldn’t I? – Karamatsu wavering mask was useless, forcing him to drop it under the sight of his younger brother.

— Should I be worried about you or…? – Ichimatsu said, raising an eyebrow at his obvious act.

— Eh? Non, non, my dear brother. There is nothing to worry your little head about.

— I see…

Letting the conversation die, along with the possibility of getting murdered, they waited for the rest to appear.

Choromatsu and Osomatsu showed up seconds before Jyushimatsu did, completing their group at once.

— Did you shit your pants already? – Osomatsu laughed, seeing how uncomfortable the second born was.

— What? No.

— He was about to, though – Ichimatsu exposed him with a dark chuckle.

— Really? – Osomatsu kept on pushing, locking him in a one arm hug to roughly ruffle his hair – Karamachuu is nervous – he awed, making him blush.

— Leave him alone, we should be going right now if we want to make it today – Choromatsu said, checking his clock. Probably trying to look like he wasn’t actually as nervous as the others were.

— Not you too – setting Karamatsu free, Osomatsu looked up at him. – Come on Fappy, let him have his moment, but meanwhile we better hurry up!

With Osomatsu leading them at the front, they followed the given directions they received from Atsushi, taking in the view they were offered to stare at. Huge houses perfectly sitting next to each other, at both sides, seemed to in some way guide them as if they didn’t knew where they had to go. Despite the common sense, a loud ring took over their heads when a single pink house stood out among the rest in the whole damn street, beautifully accentuated with one dark green European style lantern proudly positioned over the sole wall on the right, leading to what it should be the entry to a parking spot. And that wasn’t the only eye catching thing, the structure itself was adorned with different shades of tiles, making the front gate and the door, contrast with its two little clovers in the middle.

— This is definitely it – Choromatsu muttered, looking up from his phone to corroborate the address. They could be pushing their guts by thinking he resided there just because it was pink, but the plate numbers matched the ones on his phone.

— Yup – mumbled back Osomatsu, staring right up at the security camera pointing down to the front door.

— Should we call or just knock?

Before anyone could peep a word out, Jyushimatsu went ahead to press the doorbell of the intercom. It didn’t take a second for him to hear it being answered by a woman, spiking up everyone’s curiosity as well as going on with what felt right.

— We are here to see Todomatsu, he should be expecting us – Jyushimatsu said to it. That side of him always put his brother slightly off. Hearing the ‘cling’ of the front gate getting unlocked for
them, made him smile, thanking the lady that let them go through. – Come on niisans!

The four stunt brothers, mindlessly stepped in, making the last one close the gate behind them. Right after that, the front door opened. Although it was a fleeting, rare thought, they were sort of expecting Todomatsu asshole husband, or the man itself. Instead of them, they were face to face with a young looking woman; a maid to be specific. Who had maids at that time in the world?

— Welcome – she said, properly bowing. – Please do come in – she insisted.

Exchanging confused looks with each other, they did as she said, walking into the house. While they busied themselves with taking off his shoes, they all did their own mental reviews on the entrance alone. Karamatsu couldn’t help himself for locking eyes with the expensive vase that kept the bouquet he sold safe and vibrant over the pristine counter, where the lovely maid fetched the slippers from them to wear. Ichimatsu was more amused with the high ceiling and how the windows let the right amount of light swarm in. Choromatsu couldn’t wrap his head around the idea of being that loaded, while Osomatsu simply wanted to explore the house and see if he could find any secret rooms or something like that.

— This way, please – she said with a smile. – Nishimura san has been waiting for you – walking to the stairs, she passed them without batting an eye, stopping in front of an elevator. Pressing the button to open the doors, she gestured them to step in with the same expression. – He is waiting in the second floor.

First of all, the stairs were right next to it, and second of all, what?

— We can use the sta – Choromatsu couldn’t even finish his sentence, when he was suddenly pushed inside by Osomatsu, whom in exchange had a stupidly wide grin. He was definitely enjoying it.

— Thanks – he said out of respect for the poor woman that had to work there, before he pushed the button, closing the doors and making it move up.

— An elevator to go to the second floor… – muttered Ichimatsu, after he clicked his tongue at the huge separation of realities they were living in.

When the doors opened, one by one the stepped out of the shortest rides they’ve ever had, into a new floor. On their right, the expected stairs firmly stood, giving them the idea of another flourishing floor, while it showed a not so long hall with a closed door to the left. On the other side, the wide open wooden door barely gave them a taste of how the next room looked like. What made them follow up to that one instead, wasn’t the close proximity it had to the elevator, but the labored, rushed murmurs that came from it.

Doubtless, the five men went into it, chasing the voice they been meaning to find for years.

Their eyes went straight to the pink haired man that sat on one of the cotton and frosty colored three pieces sofas, adding the right amount of charm to the already warm abode. Unmoving, Todomatsu met their eyes, cutting his unnecessary jabbering, leaving him with slightly parted lips and trembling hands.

He didn’t seem ready no more, did he?

With a little push from his husband, Todomatsu gulped down his shame.

— I… um – delicately standing up, staying on his feet as firm as he could, he found himself slightly
overwhelmed for what would come, ending up averting his gaze.

Karamatsu could recognize the pain, the palpable fear behind those poorly said words.

— Totty …

Rolling his nickname out of his tongue, he opened his arms, without a drop of insecurity bleeding through his actions. Waiting, expecting for the youngest to come, in the same fashion a kid would to a parent.

Picking his head up, Todomatsu big brown eyes brimmed with salty tears, slowly rolling down his burning cheeks.

— Niisan.

Having nothing else to lose at that point, he ran to his arms.

Broken sobs cluttered within his chest, rushing and pushing to get out, making him gasp while he desperately clung to Karamatsu. Because this time it was real, it was him, it was his older brother in flesh and bone, not an unimportant fellow that seemed to remind him of Karamatsu, not a fiddle piece of his imagination torturing him with daydreams. No. No one else but him would bath himself with that stupid cologne, an impregnated toxic scent Todomatsu would’ve never thought he could yearn so much.

Not bothering with regaining his breath, a plethora of “I missed you” and “I’m sorry” could be heard while the rest of his body wrecked with the jumbling mess of his uncontrollable cries.

Pulling him as close as he could, hugging him with the same intensity Todomatsu was, Karamatsu had a brief glance at the damage that had been done. Praying for him to not vanish from his hold ever again.

— I missed you too … I missed you so much Totty – their cicatrized wounds prickled, as his words made Todomatsu cry louder, shamelessly and finally. And yet, Karamatsu didn’t care, because that meant it was real. That it was actually happening.

— I d-did something stupid a-and I’m so s-sorry! – sniffling, Todomatsu rubbed his blotchy face against Karamatsu soaked shirt. – I t-tried to… b-but it didn’t work… a-and I was a-alone a-and – hiccupping, he looked up at him, explaining all those years in a mesh of fragmented memories, expecting him; of all people, to understand.

— It’s o-okay… I’m here now. I got you – Karamatsu was meant to talk for the rest too, he was supposed to use ‘we’ instead of ‘I’. It simply poured out without a mask nor a filter. – You won’t be alone anymore. I promise you, you would never be alone anymore – he said, focusing on being heard by him, and him only. When his own share of tears decided they could not hold back, Karamatsu nestled his face on the crook of his neck, breathing that familiar fruity scent Todomatsu had always liked to wear.

Everyone in that room witnessed the scene that was still going, and by the looks of it, it will continue. However, Choromatsu; the third brother, aside for not being that surprised of how things developed, he was far more interested in getting to know their little brother again; not like they actually knew him back in the day, with all those secrets painted behind a cute façade. Sighing, with a satisfied smile, he crossed his arms.

— Come on guys, we are adults now, we should…uh? – The sniffling to his right cut him short, and a little glance got him stunned. – I-ichimatsu? Jyushimatsu?
The fourth brother quickly wiped away his fallen tears, while Jyushimatsu let them freely flow with a warm smile on his face. Daring to look to the other side, Choromatsu found Osomatsu in the same state as the rest, with a smile and all.

They were meant to leave Karamatsu have all the time he needed with their little brother. Nonetheless, the second born might have whispered something to the youngest, that made him turn around to look at the other four. As soon as they meet that pitiful expression, they all decided to join them as well, enveloping everyone in a tight and messy group hug.

Needless to say, they had never been so happy to see Todomatsu bawl his eyes out.

While Atsushi let them have their time, he silently walked to the kitchen to fetch a big glass of water and a few sweets for Todomatsu; delicacies he loved to have color coordinated in jars against the wall of the kitchen; Todomatsu said it gave it life.

Still crying, enveloped by his older brothers, Atsushi gave him a few more minutes, before he started to hear the initial damage he was doing to his throat, one that could get worse if he continued. The sore throat, his inevitable swollen eyes and the predictable headache that would be caused by all that crying, would, without a doubt, upset him. So, risking the fat chance of being a jerk in front of his brothers, he preferred to sacrifice that, than having a grumpy, whiny Todomatsu for the rest of the day.

Not when Atsushi knew how weak he was when his darling played those cards with him.

— Darling, I think that should be enough – he could feel Todomatsu brothers dislike emanating as a dark aura. It was funny how palpable it seemed to be. – Come on sweetie, your eyes are going to swell.

Sniffling, Todomatsu squirmed in their hold until he found a bit of given extra room to wiggle its way out. Clearly noticing Karamatsu hesitate and then releasing him. Unaware of the nasty glare he shoot to Atsushi.

Getting close to his husband, Atsushi handed him the glass of water.

— Thanks – Todomatsu muttered, pouting. At his own peace, he ended emptying the glass, feeling Atsushi’s hand on his back.

Momentarily forgetting that it wasn’t just to the two of them, Atsushi brought his attention up to their guests. It amazed him how they could maintain a subtle glare and not waver to change it when Todomatsu so much glanced at them. Despite how fun it looked, he couldn’t let them stand up for that long.

— I apologize – he started. – But, please take a seat – he said, offering them every empty seat in the close area with a faint smile.

While the brothers got as comfortable as they could; or though they were allowed to, with so many expensive looking furniture, they didn’t want to taste their luck and end up enraging Todomatsu by accident. Splitting into two groups of three and two, they took one sofa and two recliners. At the same time, Todomatsu was being guided back to the other sofa; facing the one his brothers were occupying.

Taking the empty glass from his hand, Atsushi leant over to place it on the coaster over the coffee table. Sitting back up, he silently reached for the handkerchief he got used to carry along, in the
inside pocket of his light jacket. Furrowing his eyebrows, Atsushi gently began to wipe the left over trails of his tears.

— Oh darling… You are a mess.

Staying still, Todomatsu let him pamper him.

Once Atsushi undoubtedly did the best he could to fix him up, and felt him gradually compose himself, he put back the worn out handkerchief and handed him a sweet, bathed in a thick coat of chocolate. Todomatsu eyes sparked a little, immediately accepting the treat.

— Better?

Nodding, he indulged into savoring the only sweet he was allowed to enjoy for the rest of the day.

The loud clearing of a throat made both of them direct their undying attention towards the guests, they were absolutely ignoring; not on purpose.

It was quite an interesting sight for the brothers, whom have never seen their youngest act like that with anyone else. They all knew Todomatsu could be clingy, so used to touch that he wouldn’t hold back around them if he didn’t want to, a social butterfly within the bunch. Still, it was a tad bit bothersome to see him sit next to him, bodies fitting together, like matching pieces, as Todomatsu leant against Atsushi; someone that was the perfect example of a poster child for a spoilt rich boy that had everything and anything he wanted. Someone that had a great potential to be as egoistic as any high tier could be.

So why?

They didn’t really see the appeal in that!

That was, until Todomatsu merely glanced at him, with that obvious pleading look coated in plastic cuteness; one that all of them had to battle more than once at one point in their lives. Atsushi, unlike them, didn’t try to go against it. In fact, he gave in fairly easy, indulging him without stopping to wonder what was wrong with that course of actions.

Ah.

Now they understood.

— Oh shit. You spoil him rotten! – Osomatsu said matter of fact, who could not hold his laugh in anymore.

— Osomatsu! – said Choromatsu, lightly swatting his arm to make him settle down and drop the topic altogether. There were far more important and urgent issues they had to talk about, than how evidently spoiled the youngest of the six was. Seeking for someone to aid him, to move forward into a new topic, he committed the mistake of taking a glimpse at the couple, centering on the pleased smile Atsushi had. – And why are you looking so proud of that? It’s not a good thing you know, especially for him – Choromatsu tried to beat some sense into him, crossing his arms to make sure they noticed how serious he was about it.

— Hey! – interfered Todomatsu, who seemed to overlook the strong and long stare Atsushi was giving him, just to fight back if he could. And for the gleam in his eyes, he definitely could. Turning to his left to face his husband, he made use of the best sets of sparkly eyes and pouty lips he had;
giving himself a well-deserved boost with how it perfectly mixed with his already crimson cheeks. – Atsu …

— Hmm?

— What niisan said… It is a good thing, right? For us, right?

Were his eyes getting bigger? Or his eyes were tricking him with how cute he was? It has to be one of those, believably the second one.

Far more perceptive than his loved husband, Atsushi had a hunch of how things will end for him. No years of preparation were going to prepare him to give Todomatsu the morally correct answer. He couldn’t always let those pretty eyes of his fool him, or that plum bottom lip that asked him for a kiss or two, enchant him. He couldn’t.

— Atsu? – Todomatsu repeated, moving his hand and reaching for the sleeve of his jacket to lightly, yet insistently pull it.

Gulping, Atsushi told himself to either look away or confront him with a collected semblance.

Don’t do it… Just don’t give in, stay strong in front of his older brothers. Although that would be a first, to go against him without any real reason.

Hmm…

If there was not a good reason for him to hold back; besides wanting to somewhat get better acquainted with Todomatsu older brothers, since they were family now, for a long time actually. Then why was he trying in the first place? When he looked so endearingly cute.

— Of course darling – Atsushi finally responded, happily getting lose in his brown eyes.

Four of Todomatsu brothers chuckled at Atsushi’s poor fought battle, with the exception of Choromatsu.

— See? It’s not a bad thing for us, niisan – turning his nose up to his brothers, as if he had won Armageddon itself, Todomatsu faced Choromatsu and stuck his tongue out.

— Really? – raising both arms in the air, Choromatsu squinted his eyes at him, unabashedly digging the little dispute they were having. – What are you? A kid?

— What if I am Fappy? What are you going to do about it? – Todomatsu talked back at him, lighting fast to follow up.

An innocent brawl between brothers was not Atsushi forte. He could deal pretty well with old, rich, stuck up coworkers. But for his own sake, he was going to stay out of it, for as long as he was not dragged in by his husband that is.

— This is our first time actually talking to each other in years, and this is what you want to do? Unbelievable Todomatsu.

— Woah Fappymatsu, you are going to pop a vein – Osomatsu butted in chuckling, not wanting to be out of the fun.

— He is going to pop something else if he keeps it up – sneakily replied Todomatsu, with a confident cat like smile. Making the oldest crack up.
The monster attacks again – said Ichimatsu.

— STRIKE ONE! STRIKE TWO! ONE MORE AND ITS OUT!! – exclaimed Jyushimatsu, swinging an imaginary bat on his seat.

— Ah… The bond we share did strengthen through time and space, sat down and took its sweet time to sip the honeydew brew of destiny, braiding it into what it is now – waxing his painful poetry, Karamatsu received what he deserved for that poorly staged theater. A smack to the face with a cushion. – Heh.

— Don’t push your luck Shittymatsu – grumbled Ichimatsu, clicking his tongue in heavy exasperation.

— Guys stop! – Osomatsu managed to say, with zero intention of regaining his composure. – Y-you are going to kill your niichan!

— FUNERAL!! FUNERAL TIME!!

— Heh, Then I will gladly take the hard task of being the beloved oldest – Karamatsu nodded, perfectly sliding his sunglasses from the top of his head, to the bridge of his nose, with a single action. – Heh – A lighting fast hand roughly snatched his dumb glasses away and snapped it in half.

— What did I tell you – snapped Ichimatsu, gripping the broken glasses in hand, and whose dark aura passed inadvertently to his other four brothers.

— I can’t believe how embarrassing you all are – sighed Choromatsu.

— Says you, niisan.

Through Atsushi eyes, that chaos was enough to intimidate it. He could play the protective, asshole husband card, but he wasn’t that fantastic when he had to actually forge some sort of real connection with family; aside from his own mother. Observing each brother individually, Atsushi found them awfully colorful for their own good. They were bound to get a bystander’s attention just by walking next to each other. Despite their behavior, his mind took him to the only other, similar situation he had actual experience with. That being, his four personal little devils. However, what worried him, was the huge age gap. The ones in front of him were adults, and he didn’t have anything against childish behavior once in a while. Hell, Atsushi got knocked off of his feet by one of them, so he didn’t have much to say about it. Nonetheless, it made him wonder if it was something that happened to siblings; exclusively, or if it was run by genes. Whichever it was the case, he grew curious, itching to being more informed and partially prepared for the future of his four sons. With all the intention of joining, voicing his questions, Atsushi turned to his right.

He was truly lovely.

Atsushi hadn’t seen Todomatsu smile like that in a long time. So relaxed and comfortable in front of them, when days ago he would get extremely nervous by the idea of talking to his brothers again. Bringing them together was a good step forward.

Drawing a fond smile, Atsushi gazed at him, unapologetically drinking up the image of his happiness displayed before his eyes. Hearing his contagious laugh, his harsh remarks and innocuous bickering, sent him back to the first time Atsushi realized how hard he was falling for the youngest of six unemployed men.
Once Osomatsu toned his enthusiasm down a notch, it was nearly impossible for him, not to notice the way his brother in law was staring at his younger brother. Chuckling, he elbowed Choromatsu to join him.

— Hey, you are drooling a little, Atsushi kun – Osomatsu pointed out, while Choromatsu snickered at his side.

— Uh? – Dazed, Atsushi glanced at them.

— He really got you, huh? – started the eldest.

— Niisan!

— What can I say? He really is something else – Atsushi blatantly answered, returning his love struck gaze at Todomatsu long enough to brighten his crimson cheeks more.

— Of course he is! – smiled Osomatsu.

— Just as I previously mentioned, the last time we met. He did talk a lot about you.

— Only good things, right my tater tot? – asked Karamatsu.

— Your view of him is seriously delusional shittymatsu – Ichimatsu added, rolling his eyes at his idiocy.

Atsushi’s smile widened, already brewing a conspicuous way of directing the conversation.

— Regardless of that, I must say I do have some personal favorites among the many stories he shared – closing his eyes for a second, he eyed his husband, before he gave his attention to his brothers – However, I’m slightly suspicious that a few, if not more might have been… altered – hearing Todomatsu dramatically gasp, reassured him that he fulfilled his task.

— And here I was thinking Atsushi kun was stupid enough to let himself get fooled! – said Osomatsu, happy to see them interact without much pretenses.

— Says the one that would give me money every single time – responded a flustered Todomatsu.

— He is not wrong, you know – Choromatsu joined, crossing his arms and tilting his head at one side. – Besides, in general, you are pretty stupid for someone of your age.

— Aww, you are hurting niichan, Choromachuu

Avoiding another golden chance of passing the reins to them, Atsushi focused in one older brother.

— Osomatsu kun, right? – He tested the waters by looking at the one brother wearing a bit of red on his clothes. Atsushi could proudly tell Todomatsu apart from them, but he was not going to blindly trust in his reduced chanced of picking any other brother correctly. Thankfully, he had heard them talk long enough, for him to get a grasp of both their names and faces.

The color coding thing. That was a genius move.

— The one and only – Osomatsu smiled. – I was looking forward to see you mix us up though.

— We are not even wearing anything remotely similar – grumbled Choromatsu.

— Still.
— I wanted to take this opportunity to apologize – Atsushi words were caught with vast interest and slight suspicious. – For taking such a long time to do this, to sit and talk things through – feeling Todomatsu interlace his fingers with his clammy hand, soothed him. – This should have happened years ago, when we were just starting to date.

The following silence wasn’t an easy one to break. The newly created atmosphere mixed the nostalgic repertoire with a never lived memoir that seemed to have bloom eons ago.

— People say, better now than never, right?

— Late than never, Aniki.

— Right, right. The thing is, we are doing it now. To me, that still counts – Osomatsu easily pointed out. – And I would have hunt your ass down if you didn’t come to us by your own accord – tweaking his attitude, he smiled. – I mean. You dated our little brother without our knowledge, lived with him without showing your face to us and married him without our, nor our parents blessing. I say you avoided plenty, Atsushi kun.

And to think, he was just getting to know the same man Todomatsu referred as his useless and stupid older brother. In Atsushi’s eyes if he could throw those speeches with a smile on, Osomatsu was anything but useless and stupid.

And did he just threaten him?

— So, we will keep an eye on you.

Yes, he did.

— As if – Todomatsu mumbled, rolling his eyes. – I don’t need any of you to ‘keep an eye on him’ – he air quoted with his free hand. – We are doing great, so don’t even think about it, you heard me?

Atsushi chuckled at his remark. He was being saved by the cute prince itself, what an honor.

Todomatsu though he had made his point clear, that he had shoot and conquered his brothers. And he did, but they weren’t the ones that smudged his amazing job with a single move. Oh no.

Todomatsu had been utterly betrayed. Atsushi didn’t just let go of his hand, he also brought both hands up to his face and held him, slightly squishing his cheeks.

— What are you doing? – frowning and furiously blushing, due to his stupid husband, Todomatsu didn’t even dare to glance at his brothers. He could hear them laugh and chuckle. – Atsushi, are you alright or…?

 Seriously, what did he have in his head? Sometimes, Todomatsu wondered, if he overlook that part of him in favor of his far better aptitudes, or if he actually liked him that way. In which he would lapidate his own past self for allowing him such acts. In front of others.

— If I knew you acted so cute with them around, I would have looked for your brothers sooner.

— What? – Todomatsu embarrassment chart broke records, he had never thought he could ever reach without the help of his five stupid brothers. He was naïve to think Atsushi would not fail him. The worst was, that he was talking seriously. – I can’t believe this… – he muttered.

— Why were you even trying to hide this guy from us? – Osomatsu chuckled.

— And you are the one to talk? – said Choromatsu.
Before things could escalate, or turn sour, both Atsushi and Todomatsu phone rung. But, none took the liberty of answering.

— So early? — Todomatsu asked him, putting behind him whatever was ensuing minutes ago.

— Something came up then — Atsushi answered, squishing his cheeks a couple of times.

— It is fine. She did say she’ll take them out for lunch — he tried to modulate with his forced puckered lips. — Besides, if they feel like it, they’ll get to meet their uncles.

— Exactly, if they feel like it.

As soon as they finished their short talk, they heard the usual ruckus from downstairs. The elevator started to function again, and when the doors opened to the second floor, tiny feet came dashing through the hall, and through the living room door, stopping when they set their curious eyes on the five men they have never seen before.

— Mama has defective clones — says the one wearing a dark green bowtie snuggly around his white short sleeved shirt.

— Fat and ugly clones — added another twin, with a baby blue tie matching his shorts.

Looking at each other, they smiled.

— You are my favorite clone — the twins said at unison, followed by nonsensical giggling that eventually turned into bouncing.

— I like those kids — said Osomatsu with a smile plastered on his face.

— I know you do — Choromatsu smiled back at him.

The other set that were staring at the ‘fat, ugly clones’, went ahead to approach their parents.

— What is Daddy doing to Mama? — asked the one hiding behind his twin brother, sporting two light violet hair pins on his right side.

— Well, Daddy is being a huge—!! — Before Todomatsu finished his explanation, Atsushi leaned down to stop him with a peck on the lips.

— I’m stealing your kisses, of course — said Atsushi, earning the full attention of the kids, who rushed to Todomatsu rescue.

— No! Stop it!! Daddy stop stealing our kisses! — They cried at unison, trying to pull Atsushi away from Todomatsu; who was still trapped.

— Atsushi — Todomatsu whined, without really doing much to get away from those free kisses. Why would he? Besides the fact that his older brothers were witnessing every single thing. — Stop being mean to them — he quickly said, putting his all into not returning them or smiling… too much.

— Hmm… — Atsushi looked at his four sons, instantly realizing the second mistake of the day. They all had their cheeks lightly puffed out, making their reddened cheeks bigger, and his brows furrowed. He soon had a suspicious that perhaps, his life wasn’t that fair. — They are as cute as you.

— Of course! — Todomatsu agreed in a heartbeat. — Now stop — staring at him, he turned his soft expression into a scowl. Finally freeing him from his villainous hands.
The quadruplets accommodated themselves on Todomatsu lap and between their parents; two and two to be exact. Comfortable and warm, they seemed to sink into the cushions while they tried to keep their eyes open, setting them on the five clones that were in front of them. They observed the men as focused as they could, finding similarities and spotting differences in their heads. Todomatsu let them look all they wanted, he gave them time to adjust at the idea of having more family close to them, than they were used to back in their old home, where only Atsushi’s mother would visit them. He saw that spark in their lethargic eyes, unsure, vivid and curious.

— Do you want to say hi? – Todomatsu cautiously asked them, running one of his hands through the hair of the boy on his left. Sensing that they were not going to last that much.

— Come on, we promise that we are not that bad – said Osomatsu, attempting to help them out as well. – We won’t do anything weird.

That did seem to calm them down a bit. But they did not move away from Todomatsu, in fact, they carefully moved closer to him, cuddling, and ready to close their eyes for their nap.

— How about we left the introductions after nap time? – Todomatsu inquired, receiving sluggish nods and soft whining.

Todomatsu was not the kind of parent that would force a kid to say hi, or to dress them in a certain way. He saw no point in forcing their hands with that sort of things. At most, he would give various options and it would escalate from them on. Aside from that, since they were out all morning, they must be tired. They were still young and their nap time always came an hour after lunch.

— Do you want help? – Immediately asked Atsushi, seeing Todomatsu getting up with one child already fast asleep in his arms.

— Uh? No, I’m fine Atsu - he smiled, waiting for the other three to get off the couch before he extended his free hand to another sleepy child. – Are you all holding hands?

— Yes – they barely mumbled, dragging it out a little at the end.

— Can you check on Yua chan while you are up there? – said Atsushi, relaxing on the sofa, with all the free space he had, for now.

— Of course I can. I mean, who do you think I am? – Todomatsu winked at him. – Okay, then. Now that everyone is ready, let’s go to bed – sweetening his voice, he led the way, walking out with his three sons behind him. Not before he made a stop to spew some more. – I’ll be back in a bit, niisans. Also…Try not to punch Atsushi this time, okay? I know he is a handful but I prefer if he keeps himself out of trouble, right dear? – Todomatsu smiled at his brothers first, then he moved to Atsushi, and finally he left the room.

Ah fuck, straight to the dirt. As always.

— He found you – said Ichimatsu, glancing at a mildly embarrassed Karamatsu.
i had a hard time thinking about their house and how to furnish it and whatnot, but!! I hope you liked this one :3c
By the time Todomatsu went back to the common room, his older brothers were already sharing snacks and chatting among each other. He could clearly hear them snickering and joking, filling him with a shot of sweet nostalgia.

The fully awake baby, seemed to have caught on how her father was feeling, quickly bringing Todomatsu back to the present with a yank of his hair.

— No, princess. Why are you constantly trying to make me bald?

Sighing, Todomatsu’s whining was easily forgotten by the strong want of sitting down. There was little to nothing Totty would not do nor give to be able to have more time to sit down, which was something near impossible with five kids.

— Come on, cutie. Let’s go say hi, okay? – Todomatsu chimed up, sweetening his voice to rile his daughter up with a mild excitement.

Walking into the somewhat joyous chat, made the baby girl extremely curious. Yua looked towards all the people that was making that noise, probably a bit confused of seeing the same face on different men, besides her parent.

Her arrival did cause her uncles to focus on her as hard as the baby did at the start, because once Yua got a glimpse of Atsushi, all her initial curiosity was pushed back while she kicked her legs out in the air.

— Ooh, would you look at that! – Todomatsu kept a firm hold on his squirming daughter, approaching the sofa and taking his seat back. Finally.

— Was she awake? – Atsushi asked, smiling down at her innocent excitement.

— She was sitting up and cooing at her mobile. I bet it was an amazing conversation – Todomatsu chuckled, thinking of how talkative Yua was going to be. Seeing as Atsushi wasn’t helping, Totty pouted while he was being viciously attacked by Yua’s feet. – Are you going to let a girl this pretty waiting? Seriously Atsushi – huffing, Todomatsu bounced Yua a little, who in exchange squealed as
she kept on being riled up.

Humming, and completely agreeing with his husband, Atsushi took their daughter from Todomatsu’s arms, having some minor troubles maneuvering her, as Yua never ceased her kicks, now adding her arms too.

— She slept less than an hour – Todomatsu slumped back onto the cushions, beginning to doze off. – I have no idea what she drank to get that much energy… she is going to be so fussy later – whining, Todomatsu mentally reminded himself that they still had guests. – Sorry guys.

— It’s okay. When my daughters were at that age, I was way too worried to shut my eyes – Choromatsu said, not minding if his little brother would like to doze off for a bit more. – Sleeping is a luxury when they are so tiny – he showed Todomatsu a pitiful smile.

— Waah, Choromatsu niisan is making sense. Scary – Totty smiled back at the third brother, straightening up.

— Oh shut up – Choromatsu snorted as he shook his head.

— Hey Totty. Can we hold her? – Osomatsu asked, eyes glued to the little girl.

— Uh? I mean… You can, but are you sure you are ready to be utterly destroyed? – Todomatsu said, looking at all of his brothers. – She might be the cutest princess, but Yua chan is very picky of whom she lets approach her.

— So like you? I think we can manage – Osomatsu bluntly said.

Todomatsu was doubtful if he wanted to take that as an offence to his personality, or as a compliment.

— Just for that, you are going to be the last one to hold her – Totty declared, squinting his eyes as he kept on wondering about Osomatsu’s last statement.

— Aww, but Totty.

— No buts Niisan. Besides, we have to wait for Yua chan to get her fill – Todomatsu cocked his head to the side, pointing at the happy little girl that was snuggling up to Atsushi, cooing to her father at her hearts content.

— It won’t take that much longer – Atsushi added, caressing her head with the utmost precaution. He was still nervous and worried that as her father, he could hurt Yua.

— Says the womanizer – Totty smirked.

— Jealous? – Atsushi said, smirking back at Todomatsu while he cradling Yua in his arms.

— Me? – Todomatsu huffed with a slight blush on his face. – You wish.

After five straight minutes of Atsushi giving Yua his full attention, the baby girl was calmer than before, which made it easy to deal with her usual moodiness towards strangers. Todomatsu received their daughter in his arms, happy to have her warmth body close. Yua; in Totty’s words, could be considered as the best heater in the house.

Standing up, Todomatsu walked up to his older brothers, carrying Yua in a way that would let her
— How old is she? — asked Ichimatsu, beating Choromatsu at it.

— Seven months old. — answered Todomatsu, as he followed Yua’s sight, ending up overlooking everyone and going straight to Karamatsu. — Yua chan is starting to move a lot and she is starting to walk on her own now — Todomatsu proudly said.

— But she is so tiny! Look at her Choromachuu — gushed Osomatsu finding everything the baby did endearing.

— I am looking at her — the third brother smiled at how genuinely content Osomatsu was. — If I correctly recall, you acted the same way when Hinako chan was born.

— Man, I love kids.

— Oooh, the way you said that — Todomatsu made a disgusted face at Osomatsu. — I’m not leaving any of my kids go near you.

Ichimatsu snorted while Osomatsu tried to look offended, but the first born couldn’t help himself, chuckling at the expression Todomatsu was making.

Lost in her own little world, Yua paid them no mind, strongly focusing on the man in front of her. Karamatsu looked back at her, unaware if he had something on his face that made Yua stare with such passion, or if it was his cool guy essence that called for her young baby needs. Regardless of which one was, Karamatsu flashed his best smile, hoping for the best.

And good lord almighty, did he get it.

Yua screamed, smiling widely as she kicked and moved her arms up and down at a rapid pace, dusting her cheeks with a vibrant pink for how much she reacted to Karamatsu. Her excitement interrupted and put on hold any other conversation happening within the room.

All eyes were on the princess, and by default on Karamatsu.

— Oh my god — Todomatsu smiled, not even wanting to think about why Yua found Karamatsu so entertaining. But, guilty as ever, Todomatsu did find his dramatic brother fun to be with. — Niisan, are you ready? — He asked to a nervous looking Karamatsu.

— O-of course my Tater Tot! — The second born exclaimed, definitely feeling the shivers run up and down his spine.

Todomatsu didn’t trust in the words of his older brother, but he still passed Yua to Karamatsu’s arms.

It wasn’t Karamatsu’s first time holding a kid of that size, however, it was a baby. A tiny baby. What if he accidentally dropped Yua? Todomatsu would kill him if that happened.

With the utmost care, Karamatsu held his delicate niece close to his chest, to avoid any of the unfortunate accidents popping at the top of his head. Karamatsu really didn’t want to fuck that up. Despite his nerves and worries, Yua clung to him with an iron grip, cutely resting the side of her head against Karamatsu’s chest. The baby girl looked up at the twinkling necklace with big curious
eyes. Screeching, Yua raised her arm up and grabbed it, slowly trying to bring the gold necklace in her mouth; which Yua could not do, but she never stopped trying, occupying herself with that tasking activity.

— Atsushi, A-atsushi! Did you get that? — Stammered Todomatsu maintaining his eyes on Yua, in case he needed to get the baby away from that … necklace.

— Absolutely – answered Atsushi with his phone in his hand. — I’ve got it all darling.

The rest of the Matsunos were secretly aggravated for not being chosen by the youngest of their nieces. Osomatsu needed to be the best uncle there was, it gave so much meaning to his life, and Choromatsu have never had any nieces he could dote on and give in to their childish whims. It was not fair!

Ichimatsu and Jyushimatsu were having mixed emotions, ranging from ‘die stupid shittymatsu’ to, ‘he thinks Yua likes him’. None were that gentle, were they?

Despite of what they all thought, Karamatsu was elated. He had been accepted by the youngest of his nieces, not only that. Yua seemed to share his good taste too!

— Karamatsu niisan… a-are you crying? — Todomatsu asked covering his smile with his hand.

— That’s not fair! — refuted Osomatsu, who was still waiting for his turn to hold Yua.

— I’ve been chosen – Karamatsu said, ignoring everyone as his tears of happiness flowed.

— She’ll get bored – Ichimatsu muttered, keeping his hand on the side.

— Yeah yeah!! — Jyushimatsu exclaimed, agreeing with Ichimatsu.

Todomatsu was glad that Karamatsu haven’t been rejected by Yua in their first encounter. Yua tended to react violently, crying and screaming when she didn’t like someone for whatever reason.

— Hey Atsu – turning around, Todomatsu saw Atsushi checking on his phone before his husband brought it up to his ear.

— Yes. No, no. I’ll read them immediately.

Ah, work. Again.

Ending the short call, Atsushi sighed and stood up, noticing Todomatsu looking at him.

— They sent me some new reports. It won’t take that long, okay? — Atsushi smiled at his husband. — I’ll be upstairs. Have fun with your brothers for me – walking up to Todomatsu, Atsushi caressed his
cheek and patted Yua’s head, before he excused himself, leaving the common room.

White lies were lies, regardless of the intentions, but somethings weren’t that easy to change, not when Atsushi wanted to decrease the amount of work Todomatsu was supposed to have that summer. He wanted Totty to have the time they barely had. So, a little sacrifice was not going to hurt.

— Is it always like this? – asked Choromatsu.

Todomatsu was no longer smiling. However, as soon as Totty turned around to face his older brothers, he painted one on his face.

— What? – Tilting his head to the side, Todomatsu made sure to brighten up his eyes. He really didn’t want to talk about his marriage when Totty invited them to discuss something else. Sighing, Todomatsu tucked a few strands of hair behind his ear, dropping his forced joy. – What are you all looking so worried about? Besides, you cannot tell me you came here just to hear me talking about my marriage – Todomatsu eyed Yua, mentally deciding that she was going to be fine in Karamatsu’s arms, before he went back to his spot on the sofa. – Ah. Karamatsu niisan if you get tired, you can hand her back to me, okay.

— How could I ever get tired of this young lady! – Karamatsu loudly said, cradling Yua closer; as if that was possible.

— If you say so, Niisan, just be careful not to let her put your necklace in her mouth – Todomatsu sighed again, feeling his eyes heavy.

— That I can do. So worry not, my baby brother! – Karamatsu smiled at Todomatsu. – Oh… Are you tired? – His tone changed, seeing Totty like that.

— Of course he is, shittymatsu – Ichimatsu huffed, annoyed by the obvious.

— Actually, I get stupid tired every time I have some ‘me’ time – Todomatsu explained, inadvertently saving Karamatsu from the fourth brother’s rage.

— I understand – Choromatsu said.

Another silence broke in, leaving Yua as the only one making any noise in the room, with her aggravated huffs as she eagerly yanked Karamatsu’s necklace.

— Come on, pull harder – incited Ichimatsu with an unsettling smile.

— Heh, how kind of you brother. Encouraging this pretty young lady to work on her motor skills – Karamatsu said, showing Ichimatsu one of his many cool expressions.

Osomatsu chuckled at his terribly flowery phrases, holding his side to emphasize the pain of having to hear and see that. Choromatsu could not believe how easily Karamatsu could ruin a perfectly normal moment by opening his darn mouth.

Ichimatsu’s internal hate poured through his pores in a grimy dark aura as Jyushimatsu laughed. Karamatsu was a lucky bastard. If he hadn’t been carrying little Yua, Ichimatsu would have pounced
and murdered him with no mercy.
Karamatsu’s life had been spared thanks to one cute baby.

Todomatsu smiled at the scene in front of his eyes.

He had to admit that it did feel weird, seeing all of his older brothers at once after all those years.
Todomatsu had so much he would like to share, experiences and pictures, silly commentary about everything that had happened in his life. But, he had so many questions, about their lives, their stories, their parents and friends. Despite of feeling that nervous rush, Todomatsu didn’t believe that he could just ask them, even if he gives the first step to earn their trust, Todomatsu thoroughly thought he didn’t deserve that.

He brought shame in the family and he was flaunting it.

Todomatsu wasn’t expecting them to want to reconnect with him.

They were already meeting his kids, they were at his house, the most Todomatsu could hope for was to be forgiven. If he, somehow got to have that, Todomatsu was sure that it would relieve him from his heavy guilt.

But, for that, Todomatsu would have to be the adult he thought he was and start walking again.

Straightening up, Todomatsu reunited all of his courage, to say the words he should have said years ago.

— I’m Sorry.

Upon hearing his apology, the older brothers, turned their attention to the youngest.

— Uh? What? – Wondered Osomatsu, having no idea why Todomatsu was apologizing for.

Feeling his face blaze up in embarrassment, Todomatsu decided continue.

— I’m sorry for running away – Totty said as he quickly strolled through the past. – For never calling home… I should have, at least told you that I was doing fine, that I was safe – he lowered his sight in shame.

— Todomatsu, that wasn’t your fault – Osomatsu said, still confused. He was the one that wanted to apologize to Todomatsu, not the other way around. – It was our fault. My fault.

— What are you talking about niisan? – furrowing his brows, Todomatsu looked at his older brother in confusion. – I left on my own accord because I got stupidly mad. I thought that if I left, everything would stop – he began to fidget with his fingers. – That I wouldn’t feel so bad anymore, that maybe if I wasn’t there anymore, you wouldn’t… – Todomatsu averted his gaze. – You wouldn’t have to be ashamed of me – although he wanted to say ‘hate’, that was what came out of his mouth, making him embodied its meaning.

Todomatsu couldn’t raise his head after that. He could not look at them in the eyes, therefore, the
youngest didn’t witness the utter confusion his older brothers showed.

Hearing nothing in exchange, sent Totty’s heart down to his stomach, but he had to say it, he had to make them understand that he meant what he said.

— There were several times when I looked back and wished I had done things differently – biting his lower lip, Todomatsu focused on his slippers. – If I would have calmed down, sit down and talked to you, like Choromatsu niisan told me to, I wouldn’t have brought so many problems. I wouldn’t have worried Mom and Dad too, but – ’I know you hate me’ Todomatsu thought as he tightly shut his eyes. – It was a mistake leaving like that…

— Don’t say that. Don’t you dare say something like that – Osomatsu’s voice felt so close, Todomatsu wondered when did his brother move, and how come he did not notice that.

Lifting his head up out of reflection, the youngest met Osomatsu’s brown eyes, twisted in a stern expression that brought him back to the past, instantly shutting him up.

— It wasn’t a mistake Todomatsu – the eldest brother who had approached Todomatsu seconds ago, now took a seat right by his side. – It was not your fault – Osomatsu continued on, even if the youngest seemed to stay in a confused swirl. – More importantly, we are not ashamed of you – smiling at the youngest, Osomatsu ruffled his hair, messing with it. – We have never been ashamed of you, Totty.

At first, Todomatsu was unsure that he was awake. What if he wasn’t and his darn mind was playing games with him again? What if he wasn’t in Japan either?

No, no. Todomatsu clearly remembers pinching himself when he went to check on Yua; just in case. However, listening to Osomatsu’s words made him feel so light, releasing the entire burden; unnecessary burden, he had been carrying on all those years.

It felt like Todomatsu had paid the price for each mindless lie he had said in his life.

— Y-you are ruining my hair. Stop it – Todomatsu said with a slight frown as he pried Osomatsu’s hand of his head, making the eldest snort as the tension dissipated.

— Fine, fine. But you beat me! I wanted to apologize and beg for mercy, you know? – Osomatsu chuckled, trying to embark into another touchy topic for him, regarding the same situation.

— Why? – Todomatsu asked, pouting while he fixed his hair back in place.

— Uh, well, for being an idiot? – It didn’t sound that great anymore, taking in consideration the expression the youngest was making. – I uh – this was going flawlessly.

— I don’t understand niisan – Todomatsu tilted his head to the side. – You already apologized for that – he could still remember the taste of the macarons and how mean he was to his older brother, even when he bowed.

— Yeah but then you left – Osomatsu refuted, doing his best not to vomit his words to the youngest.

— That was me being childish and immature. I didn’t know how to deal with the situation… You are not at fault here – Todomatsu gave Osomatsu a smile of his own, before he raised one eyebrow, to smugly look at the eldest. – Besides, I’ve always known you were an idiot, niisan.
If Osomatsu was worried before, his humor was far beyond that shitty corner. Todomatsu forgave him! That was a first or perhaps a second. The big news in his head was that he apologized and nothing went horribly wrong. Choromatsu was right! He’ll have to buy him some booze one of these days.

— I told you we didn’t hate you – Ichimatsu interrupted the close conversation. – You just didn’t want to listen, you dry monster.

— Who are you calling a monster? You furry sociopath – Todomatsu talked back with a pout.

Both, Karamatsu and Choromatsu though that the youngest wasn’t going to react that positively towards Ichimatsu’s remark, at least they didn’t have to deal with setting them apart.

— Good to know you didn’t go soft – Ichimatsu said with a smile.

— As if I could. My job doesn’t let me, anyways – Todomatsu added, glancing at Yua since he was accustomed to multitasking; that never meant it was easy. – If I’d have gone soft, I would have fired myself years ago – he said, noticing that Yua was not longer interested in being held anymore. Standing up, Todomatsu walked towards the white cedar chest to retrieve a soft blanket and few baby toys, just in time for Yua to start getting impatient.

— What do you do for a living? – Choromatsu asked, seeing the youngest set the blanket on the floor.

— Oh, not much – Todomatsu replied, leaving the toys scattered as he went to retrieve Yua from Karamatsu. – I’m the head of marketing… Hey, sweetie! Do you want to sit down? Hmm? – He answered as if it was nothing. Sitting down on the blanket, he put Yua on her tummy, letting her have her fun, before he glanced at his brothers. – I work with Atsushi, but he is the CEO, so...for him too – Agh. Still a bad taste in his mouth. Todomatsu might love him very much, however, he was as competitive as his husband was, and in Todomatsu’s eyes, he was still losing to Atsushi.

What a bummer.

Ichimatsu snorted.

— Why do I feel like you are planning to become a widowed man by mysterious circumstances, hm? – The fourth brother snickered.

— I would never do that! – Glaring at Ichimatsu, Todomatsu continued playing with his daughter. – Not without making sure I have a backup plan, in case something goes wrong.

— TOTTY!! – Jyushimatsu yelled, startling little Yua, who raised her head up to look at her uncle.

— I knew it – Ichimatsu nodded. – You are as heartless and dry as ever – those might not be great traits for anyone to have, but Ichimatsu found them quite endearing in his youngest brother.

— I didn’t change that much – Todomatsu pouted, glancing at Ichimatsu for a second – What about you Niisans? What do you do now? – It felt so foreigner asking, almost like an out of body experience.
— Well my dear baby brother, I!

— I work an office job – Choromatsu interrupted, crossing his arms.

— Oh! That suits you – Todomatsu said.

— And i!

— I paint and stuff – answered Ichimatsu, cutting Karamatsu off.

— I own a marvelous!

— Me next! Me next! – Jyushimatsu excitedly chanted as he went from sitting down to gliding and laying on the baby blanket with a wide eyed Yua. Her baby mind could not believe nor process why that happened, but Yua rolled onto her side, before she struggled to sit up and yell at Jyushimatsu. – I’m a teacher at our old school! I help kids to hustle and muscle!

— That’s cool Niisan! – Todomatsu smiled at him, seeing his daughter happily trying to imitate Jyushimatsu, or laugh at him. – Aaand I see a ring – he sing sang, keeping his vast curiosity and excitement to know on hold. – But don’t tell me! I want to know where you all work at or do first!

— Okay! – The fifth brother nodded, and he did it so fast, that Yua screamed out of a nervous fit of joy. – I think she likes me too Totty! – Jyushimatsu smiled brightly.

— She does! – Todomatsu cooed at her baby girl. – And if you tired her up she’ll sleep early tonight, and I could actually have some me time – he added in the same cutesy tone.

— How can you say that in front of your child? So heartless Totty – Choromatsu furrowed his brows, not really surprised by his words.

— What? She doesn’t understand yet. So its fine – Todomatsu muttered. Making sure Yua was looked over by Jyushimatsu; he turned to face Osomatsu. – What about you niisan? – He asked, completely ignoring Karamatsu’s fourth attempt of talking. Ichimatsu snickered.

— I have the best job in the entire world – Osomatsu answered, smirking at Todomatsu with confidence.

— The best…? Wait a minute – Totty gasped – No way! Do you work at a porn industry?

— Oh, Totty you have so much faith in your Oniichan – Osomatsu said, gripping the front of his shirt for how moved he was.

— That’s the best job you have in mind!? – Choromatsu jumped into the conversation. How wouldn’t he? Hearing such a baffling answer from their youngest.

— Of course! – Todomatsu defended himself. – Did I get it wrong?

— Sadly, your favorite Oniichan could not make it in the industry.

— Ahh, what a letdown – Totty muttered, dropping his excitement in a second.

— But, I’m a dealer at the Casino – Osomatsu finally replied, showing off a proud smile.

— … I see.

— Uh? T-that’s all you are going to say? – Osomatsu leant forward. – Am I not a great Oniichan? –
If he could only notice how all of his younger brothers were avoiding to look at him.

— What about you Karamatsu niisan? – Todomatsu asked, shifting his attention to a beaming older brother.

— Totty… – The eldest whined, sliding his body over the sofa and face planting there in defeat. Todomatsu didn’t ‘heart’ him anymore.

— Aha! Well I, your number one brother, have chosen a different path in life, a dangerous one full of uncertainties and self-discovery – Karamatsu recited, standing up and pointing up to the ceiling. – The noble job of a knight in the rough war of!

— Shittymatsu owns a flower shop – grumbled Ichimatsu, more than done with his idiocy.

— Ah! B-but brother – Karamatsu cool stance vanished as his answer was delivered by Ichimatsu.

— Oh! That explains why the card was so painful. Now it makes sense – Todomatsu chuckled. – But, It was a beautiful arrangement Niisan.

— Heh, only the best for my baby brother – Karamatsu replied, deepening his voice and posing again.

Ichimatsu seemed ready to explode, while Choromatsu sneered at him.

— Anyways! – Todomatsu clapped his hands as he looked at all of them with a gleam of curiosity. – I see two rings and I need to know who my sisters in law are – saying the he was excited for having sisters was putting it bluntly. Todomatsu loved his brothers but it wouldn’t hurt to have sisters.

— Homura chan! She came back and we hit it off so fast! – Jyushimatsu said, while he kept doing pushups to make Yua react at him again. – She is so great Totty!

— Ohh! You are so lucky niisan, I’m so happy for you! – Todomatsu said. His tone might have been too sweet and partially high pitched, but it managed to get the attention of little Yua, who was more interested in trying to reach for Todomatsu than any of her toys. – Do you have any kids?

— Ah. No, not yet. We are not ready – Jyushimatsu sat up, calming himself down – But, you have to meet her, Totty! – The fifth brother smiled at him.

— Oh, I’ll definitely will – Todomatsu reached for Yua and accommodated himself so she could lean back on him if she wanted to. – What about you, Choromatsu niisan?

— Well, I am married and I have two daughters. One of them is just about to hit puberty too – as Choromatsu replied, his mind wondered, worried as always and digging deeper than he should about his older daughter. Boys, being the first one on his list.

— Aww, you heard that princess? You have cousins! – Todomatsu repeated to Yua, and she cooed back as a response.

— The girls are going to freak out with Yua chan – Osomatsu chuckled, while he decided to get up and join the fun tummy time on the blanket. That, and he really wanted to play with Yua.

— As long as they don’t make her uncomfortable – Choromatsu added, wanting to join them too, but
decided not to. – They can get really rowdy. So once they meet Yua, and if you let them hold her, supervision would be the best – the third brother said, looking at Todomatsu.

— Highly noted – Todomatsu nodded at him. Not to be rude, but Totty was still a bit uneasy with letting too many people get close to Yua, which was far worst when the quadruplets were at her age. – Oh, right. What about all of you? Any girlfriends or perhaps… boyfriends?

— No one in this family will ever be as gay as you – said Ichimatsu while he stared at Todomatsu, probably straight to his soul; the one he didn’t have.

— So mean… – Todomatsu pouted.

— Ichimatsu niisan dated a guy!! – Jyushimatsu exclaimed, pupils dilated as he stared back at his older brother, his embarrassed older brother.

— J-jyushimatsu! Why y-you? – Ichimatsu tried to soften up his inevitable fall with an annoying stammer.

— Ah yes! I remember that! – Osomatsu loudly laughed. – Oohh, the face he made when we caught him! – He wiped an imaginary tear away.

— Aahh, yes. What a terribly twist of fate for our kin! – Karamatsu smirked, in another painful attempt to look cool.

— He tried so hard to deny it, too – Choromatsu chuckled.

— T-that thing only lasted for a week! – Ichimatsu stammered as his face burnt.

Todomatsu’s sly expression came back in a flash with that new information, looking straight at the fourth brother.

— Hmm? A week still counts, niisan – Totty hummed, tilting his head.

Clicking his tongue, Ichimatsu glared at the side, obviously unhappy with how things turned out for him.

— But don’t worry Totty, you still hold the first place for the least straight of us – Osomatsu said, giving the youngest a confident smile with a thumbs up.

— What an honor – Todomatsu stared at his oldest brother with a deadpan look. Sighing, he shook his head. At the same time, Yua had the brilliant idea of trying to put Totty’s fingers in her mouth, as she would usually do to relieve the annoying pain from her growing teeth. Todomatsu noticed that and simply reached for one of her colorful, fruit shaped teething toys. – There you have princess – Todomatsu smiled at her, handing Yua the toy she eagerly brought up to her mouth.

— I don’t think I’m going to get used to seeing you like this, Totty – said Osomatsu, voicing everyone’s thoughts, silently agreeing. However, Osomatsu did say that about every mayor change his younger brothers did. Acclimating to a more mature world should be expected, but it never
ceased to amaze him.

— Our dear baby brother has truly eloped – Karamatsu butted in.

— E-eloped? Haah!? – Blushing, Todomatsu frowned at Karamatsu and his silly comment. Regardless of that awful phrase that it did submit his life, Totty changed the target; since he couldn’t change the topic with some of his brothers snickering. – What about you? Have you ‘eloped’, niisan?

— I certainly have! – Karamatsu’s confidence shone less than his dramatic posing. – Years ago I ran away with my dearest, following my hearts desires driven by banal pleasures and the promise of a lovely life!

Todomatsu was seriously doing his best to pay attention to what he was saying. Despite his good intentions, he grew impatient, ticked off with all the flowery Karamatsu was waxing. Was he seeing someone or was he not? That was all Todomatsu was asking! What did he get? A freaking monologue of his love life. Gladly, he wasn’t the only one tired by it, but Osomatsu seemed more entertained with the posing than anything else.

— That was not the end! Because love between us was not meant to be – Karamatsu tightly gripped the front of his shirt, as if the pain of his words were not enough. – But then, right when I found the abyss, there she was! My salvation! – He opened his arms wide and smiled at the ceiling, again. – Short lived as it was. Intense as it might have been. The throttles of love was a flaming red, and yet it deteriorated so suddenly.

Were those tears?

Yua was busy focusing on relieving her gums, but all that ruckus was too much for her. Heavily breathing, she began to whimper and get agitated. Todomatsu picked her up, mentally muting his older brother to try and calm Yua down. Regardless of him rocking her, Todomatsu’s princess broke down in tears.

— Oi, Shittymatsu, cut it out – said Ichimatsu, frowning at him for making Yua cry.

— It’s okay princess, It’s okay – Todomatsu cradled Yua in his arms, rocking her to soothe her.

— Oooh, you made a baby cry with your flash marriage, Karamatsu – Osomatsu chuckled, knowing the second oldest had no intention of distressing their niece. It was just fun to poke and bug him though.

— I didn’t mean to-! Ah! Todomatsu I’m sorry for – Karamatsu tried to apologize, embarrassed beyond return.

— I know, I know. You don’t have to apologize. Babies cry a lot – Todomatsu muttered, giving it his all to the crying child. After a few soft pats on her bottom and a bit of humming, Yua’s tears reduced to whines and occasional whimpers of discomfort.

— Look at you not hating on a child – Osomatsu commented, observing Todomatsu with a silly smile.
— Why would I hate my own child? – Ah. Right. He hadn’t explained anything about their children. If it wasn’t obvious, Yua wasn’t his, per se. – I mean, she is not mine, mine, but she still is my princess – Todomatsu said, delicately wiping Yua’s left over tears away, to tighten his hold on her.

— Come to think of it. She does look more like your asshole boyfriend – Ichimatsu valiantly reincorporated to the conversation, pointing out what some of the brothers didn’t want, in case it was a touchy subject or something bad happened.

— Husband – Todomatsu corrected Ichimatsu. – And yes, Yua chan is biologically his daughter.

His older brothers stared at him, waiting for the youngest to continue, favoring not to fuck it up with any other question. They didn’t know the situation he was in. There could be numerous ways for them to have children and for various reasons as well. It could have been an accident.

They didn’t know how Todomatsu would react to their questions, so they didn’t ask.

— Hiro, Nao, Ryo and Yuu are biologically mine – hearing their names, Yua smiled up at her father. – … Aww, you are so cute princess – Todomatsu cooed at her, gushing for how cute her smile was. Yua was just beginning to smile and laugh more, so it always melted Totty’s heart. Besides, it encouraged her to think positively of her own little self!

— What about their mothers? Is that something you have to worry about? – Choromatsu asked, noticing on how Osomatsu seemed nervous. The third brother was going to lecture him on the way back for all the unnecessary negative thoughts that were certainly messing up with his head.

— Oh. No, not at all. We have full and permanent parenthood. Their biological mothers have no legal status nor responsibilities with our bundles – Todomatsu explained as strands of his hair got roughly yanked by Yua’s death grip. – Thankfully, they were never interested in any of that and we paid their surrogated mothers quite a lot too, including whatever they needed at the time to ensure the good health of our kids, like the visits to the doctor, hospital and everything really. We paid for all their expenses and a bit more.

Hissing and some snickering, they tried not to laugh that much, while Todomatsu leaned his head to Yua, as she had her fun with pulling his hair. It was pink and right there, it made sense to her to play with it.

What they found amusing, was how Todomatsu had little stamina to fight back.

— It’s good to know you don’t have to worry about that. You worried your oniichan for a second there – Osomatsu nervously laughed, feeling that imminent wave of ‘this is your fault’, retrieve back to that dark place. – Also, that looks like it hurts.

— You don’t have to worry about me, niisan – Todomatsu said, while Yua’s target changed to pat her father’s face. – Also… You haven’t talked about your life that much – glancing at him, Todomatsu got harshly slapped by both of her tiny and chubby hands. – Are you doing okay?

Osomatsu’s smile dropped.

— I am! I have my own place – he started.
— Had – Ichimatsu grunted, making Todomatsu frown.

— And a job! – Osomatsu tried to fix it by adding that, which was a piece of info Todomatsu was already aware of. – I could be doing far worse, right? Besides, I like how my life is now! – Osomatsu finished with a smile, unfazed for the major lies he was voicing.

— You had your own place? – Todomatsu repeated in a whisper. – Niisan do you need a place to stay? – Todomatsu asked him, worried for any possible situation his stupid older brother might want to keep hidden from him.

— Eh? – Osomatsu stared at Todomatsu with a faint blush. – No, no, Totty. I’m fine. I am your older brother; you don’t have to worry about me!

— He is living with me now – said Choromatsu as he crossed his arms.

— Ah, that makes sense – Todomatsu muttered. Yua changed from his reddened cheeks to his chin. The baby girl grunted as she opened her mouth and tilted her head back, sucking on his chin. – But if you need a place to crash, another place, that it is. You could stay here too… – the youngest offered, vaguely attempting not to look too desperate or eager to the idea of having a brother spending the night or a couple of days.

The thought alone should be disgusting by his standards.

Osomatsu could not stop staring at Todomatsu for the offer he made. The eldest was not going to lie, it wouldn’t feel correct of him to burst in with his stuff at Totty’s house. However, having done the same to Choromatsu felt less troublesome for some reason and he have been staying with them for a long time now. Osomatsu couldn’t just leave, perhaps he should try to get his own place, again. It wouldn’t hurt to try.

— Yua chan is eating Totty!! – Jyushimatsu exclaimed, minding his tone so he wouldn’t make Yua cry like Karamatsu weirdness did.

— She must be hungry – Choromatsu smiled at the baby.

— She is. Yua chan is like a clock when it’s about her food – Todomatsu chuckled. – Come on princess, stop slobbering all over Mama – he talked to Yua, trying to pry her off and failing when she whined. Sighing, Todomatsu stood up, keeping his head slightly tilted back. – Can I trust you not to break anything here? I’ll go get her formula – he said as he walked out of the common room. But, before he did, Todomatsu turned around to face them. – Oh! Before I forget. If my bundles wake up, could you tell them that I’ll bring their snacks?

His older brothers nodded.

— Do you need help, Totty? – Choromatsu asked, already standing up.

— You are my guest, you don’t need to, Fappy – Todomatsu replied to his offering with a smirk that wasn’t working as it should with Yua still trying to get milk from his chin.

— You only have two hands, idiot – Choromatsu stared at him.

Once Choromatsu followed Todomatsu out of the common room and towards the kitchen, Ichimatsu
turned to face Karamatsu.

— You should just tell him – Ichimatsu said.

— Our dear Totty, does not need to worry with my past endeavors, my brother – Karamatsu crossed his legs. – He has his hands full with his lovely life.

— Ugh – grunting, the fourth brother didn’t push further.

While Osomatsu and Jyushimatsu looked around, picking up some of the scattered toys, the whole room took a strong woody aroma, punching the four brothers on the nose. Turning around, towards the door, they saw the quadruplets walk in. Clothes askew for their napping time, but otherwise, their hair wasn’t that bad, if they ignore the overuse of perfume.

— Hey! Did you sleep well? – Osomatsu asked them as they sat side by side on the couch, wearing the same expression.

— I would have slept better with Mama – one of them responded, while the other three nodded.

— Ah, right – mentally preparing himself to win them over, Osomatsu went full older brother on the boys, smiling. – Name’s Osomatsu and I’m yours Mama’s eldest brother – he introduced himself, otherwise, he was not going to address them correctly nor they were going to like him very much, and Osomatsu couldn’t have that.

The four kids looked at him and they all nodded in silence. Then, they stared at Jyushimatsu, expecting him to do the same.

— I’m Jyushimatsu!! And I’m the fifth oldest! Your Mama is my only little brother! – He easily explained by showing them five fingers, just in case they did not know what fifth meant.

— Ichimatsu. I’m the fourth – Ichimatsu introduced himself without overthinking it, although it was taxing having those four pair of eyes on him.

— And lastly – smirking, Karamatsu looked at them. – I! I am Karamatsu, the second born and yours sweet Mama’s rock, partner and number one brother – he walked up to them, went down on one knee and raised his hand while the other stayed put on his heart. – It is my pleasure to meet you.

The four little kids stared at Karamatsu for so long that the second brother began to sweat under their sight. Nonetheless, they nodded at him. Acknowledging his presence.

— You are very funny mister – said the one with tangerine shorts as he swung his legs. – I’m Hiro and I’m the oldest.

— My name is Nao and I’m the second – said the one of Hiro’s left, sporting the baby blue shorts and what it looks like a poorly fixed tie.

— I’m Ryo and I’m the third! – said the kid with a dark green bowtie, in the same poor state as the tie, but Ryo still pointed at himself with an air of confidence.

— I’m Yuu and I’m the four! – Yuu exclaimed, but as soon as he realized he said it wrong, he blushed, pouted and looked down. Ryo who was on his side leant over him and whispered to his ear, after that, Yuu looked up again – I-I’m the fourth!
Well, it was an interesting experience. It also was a really weird mix of being noted that they were old and that they must have been somewhat similar to the kids sitting on the sofa.

— Why are you sitting on Yua’s blanket? – Hiro asked, although sounding a little demanding to Osomatsu and Jyushimatsu.

— Oh. Yua chan was

— You can’t call her that! – Ryo frowned, pointing an accusatory finger at Osomatsu, who couldn’t finish his sentence with how abruptly interrupted he was.

— You have to show her respect, because she is a princess! You have to do it like… Uh – looking around, Nao stopped at Karamatsu and pointed at him. – Like him!

— And she is soft and cute and smells nice – added Yuu, clinging to Ryo, sporting the same frown.

— As the oldest, I can’t let anyone sit on her blanket – Hiro finished saying, crossing his arms. More like trying to. But it did get the point through.

— As the oldest, I say you are doing a great job so far, buddy! – Osomatsu said with the biggest smile, while he got off and back to the sofa where Ichimatsu was still sitting on. It was pretty comfortable.

Jyushimatsu did the same, but he chose to stay on the floor.

Karamatsu who was still kneeling down, torturing his knee, got an amicable invitation when the kids split up onto two and let enough space for their uncle to sit down and join them in the middle. Karamatsu was not at an age where he could deny seats, so he thanked them and took his seat, between them.

— Mama is the last one? – muttered Yuu, bringing his index finger to his pouty lips.

— Heh, Yes. He is – Karamatsu answered looking at the child on his left.

For five solid seconds, the Matsuno’s could hear the gears turning in their little heads, until one of them gasped in realization.

— Wait! Then doesn’t that mean – said Ryo, beaming at Yuu.

— That Mama is the princess? – finished Yuu, with the same joyful expression.

Ichimatsu snorted, but he got kicked by Jyushimatsu, making him shut up.

— Mama is a princess! – repeated Hiro and Nao with enthusiasm.
Why ruin a perfect moment?
Why not, make it better.

— Your Mama was our little brother first, you know – Osomatsu started. Without Choromatsu around, there were not going to be any interruptions.

That alone, got the full attention of the quadruplets.

— Yes, but he is our Mama first – refuted Hiro.
— Yeah, but we knew him before you – Ichimatsu joined with a bit of a smirk.
— Our Mama loves us more – said Yuu furrowing his brows and pouting.
— Your Mama told me he loved me waaaay before you were born – Osomatsu threw them a bomb.
— Aniki… brother, I don’t think this is a good idea – Karamatsu wanted to join, he really did, but the second oldest could feel how it was going to end, and he just made a baby cry.
— Mama loves us sooooo much he gave us goodnight kisses – Nao fought back, glaring at Osomatsu. – All the goodnight kisses.
— He still is our little brother first – Osomatsu went back, seeing that Matsuno spark in their eyes.
— Our Mama first! – barked back all four.
— Little brother first.
— Our Mama first!!

That exchange went back and forth, until Choromatsu walked in with a tray of snacks and beverages for the quadruplets, followed by Todomatsu and Yua, who was happily drinking her formula in his arms.

— Oh, what’s that smell? – asked Choromatsu, scrunching up his nose.
— That’s a shower of Chanel – approaching the rest, Todomatsu looked at his four little sons. – Did you put Daddy’s Chanel back where it was?

Those four cute eyes, went straight to Todomatsu, all of them sporting their own version of his cute pout. Instantly, Totty knew his older brothers had done something.

— Niisan –Todomatsu grumbled.
— Totty! We were having so much fun! Getting acquainted and all that – Osomatsu smiled at Todomatsu.
— He said Mama was a brother first! But Mama is ours and he can’t have you! – The four kids
jumped off their seats and rushed to Todomatsu with crocodile tears pouring down their faces. Clinging to his legs, they wept and sobbed, therefore their youngest sibling found it only fair that she had to help too. Pushing the half empty bottle off her mouth, Yua joined her older brothers with her own version of a pitiful cry; dry and tearless.

Osomatsu began to backtrack his course of actions as to what lead him to fight with four year olds. He had been tempted; also, Choromatsu looked like he was going to give him the biggest if not the best lecture of the entire month.

Todomatsu by the other hand, took a deep breath before he tried to coerce his kids to calm down and take revenge. As a parent, he had to set a good example, and Todomatsu had never been the kind of person to call for a truce without trying to fight back in his own way. It was only his duty as a parent to raise them as he saw fit. Moreover, that meant, for them to be ready for the world. Todomatsu just had to show them.

— Now, now. Why don’t we sit down? – Todomatsu said, with a toxic saccharine voice.

The four little boys followed him, never leaving their grip on his pants. Once they were all sitting down, their tears disappeared and so did Yua’s. Karamatsu moved to the right end of the couch, making it a tight fit.

— I leave you alone for a few minutes and you fight with kids? – Choromatsu muttered, side glancing at Osomatsu. Placing the tray closer to Todomatsu and his kids, Choromatsu gave him an apologetic look, then he sat down right next to Osomatsu and jabbed him hard on the stomach with his elbow. – Idiot.

— We weren’t fighting. It was more of a… a little chat – Osomasu explained, holding his middle.

The four kids reached for their snacks, while they began telling a new tale of what happened and how it happened to Todomatsu. It was so incredible how those kids twisted everything to make it look like they had no part in it, as if they were not the ones at fault. The brothers didn’t even attempt to interrupt their story, amazed at the horror other kids would suffer from those four little monsters, if they crossed paths.

What did Todomatsu do?

He lets them.

— Mama, they were so mean and rude – whined Yuu, nibbling on his oatmeal cookie.

— The meanest – Todomatsu hummed, helping Yua finish her bottle.

— But it doesn’t matter, because Mama is ours – Ryo added, eating like the world would end.

— Slow down, Ryo – Todomatsu said, caressing the back of his head. Then he helped Yua by giving her soft pats on her back, making her burp to soothe her tummy.

— And we protected Yua’s territory – said Hiro, smiling up at Todomatsu with a face full of crumbles.

Todomatsu tightly held Yua with one arm as he leant forward, reaching for a napkin. Then, he gently
wiped Hiro’s mouth and cheeks, before leaving it on the coffee table.

— I love you more than cookies Mama – Nao said, swinging his legs, extremely happy of his phrase.

— Aww, thank you sweetie – Todomatsu cooed at him. – And I love you too.

After that, the kids kept on telling Todomatsu that they loved him more than this or that, leaving their parent to nod and thank them every single time. Once they finished their snacks, they all rushed to hug Todomatsu as tight as they could, before they could excuse themselves. Yua began squirming to go and play with her brothers, but soon enough they ran out to the elevator, yelling about a war, alliances and knights, all to protect the princess.

When they left, Yua started to cry, yelling to make them come back. She was getting really sad and angry for not being capable of going and play with them, just yet.

— I’m sorry princess, you are too young to go and play alone with your brothers – Todomatsu explained to her, while Yua kept on crying, not liking the tone. – Unless all of your uncles would like to come along to the playroom – he added, looking straight to Choromatsu, since he was the brother sitting right in front of him.

None actually opposed. In fact, most of them wanted to go.

With the help of his older brothers, the common room was as clean as it could be.

— Just, so you know, Osomatsu niisan, Jyushimatsu niisan. Don’t get that sad if they don’t share their toys with you, okay? – Todomatsu said, with a calmer Yua in his arms. His little girl must know where they were going.

— For what we had seen in your house, I’m actually excited to see what kind of toys they have – Osomatsu said, as they waited for the elevator to come up.

— They have plenty, believe me – Todomatsu stepped in the elevator once it arrived and opened its doors. Followed by his older brothers – Oh, and with Atsu, we were thinking of getting them some cars for Christmas and a train for the princess – he wiped her tears away with his thumb and smiled at Yua, making her smile back.

For a few seconds his older brothers simply stared at him, not sure, if they wanted to take that seriously or not. Regardless of what they were imagining, Choromatsu huffed and crossed his arms.

— Totty, you really shouldn’t spoil them that much.

— I know, I just can’t help it. Since we don’t get to spend that much time together – Todomatsu hummed, while their short trip of two floors down reached an end. – Besides, I would love to snap some cute pictures of Yua on that cute train. Oh, I should buy you some nice clothes to go along too! – Todomatsu smiled at her, bringing her good mood back.

His older brothers chuckled at him.
That was Todomatsu for them, never losing a chance to get some cute pictures.

Now, they were not expecting to see that kid’s paradise when the doors opened. Osomatsu and Jyushimatsu did not think before they looked at each other and rushed in. The four children stopped their games and stared at their uncles, the first though that ran through their minds was to gang up on their uncles, because they were dragons and the new enemies.

Todomatsu chuckled and lead the rest of his brothers to a niche corner on the playroom, where there were kid sized chairs and cushions.

— Those two I swear – Choromatsu sighed, hearing all the noise they were doing by playing together. In his house, two girls screaming was enough, this, was a full on nightmare and a potential headache.

— I join sometimes, but it is much funnier when Atsu gets dragged in – Todomatsu giggled. – Since he never had any siblings, he doesn’t knows how to play with them.

Hiro ran back to Todomatsu as fast he could, cheeks flushed and with a wide smile.

— Mama, we need Yua, she is the healer princess! And the dragon is going to kill us! – Hiro quickly explained, bouncing and moving his arms up and down.

— Oh, we can’t have that. Be a sweetheart and go get me her headband – Todomatsu said to the kid, that rushed to another corner of the room to get Yua’s headband. – Are you excited? You are going to play too!

Yua was more than excited to join, she was ready to yell and throw stuff around with her brothers.

— Isn’t she too tiny to play with them? – Asked Ichimatsu, seeing Jyushimatsu carry two kids on each arm. Definitely not safe for a seven month old baby.

— She is the healer princess, niisan – Todomatsu answered. – She is going to be fine. The only time they don’t get to play that much with her, is when neither of us is checking on them. She is getting a good hold of walking and she really wants to join. Besides, I don’t have the heart to tell her no, Yua doesn’t want to be left behind and I’m happy they want her to join them.

Karamatsu knew well, were that way of thinking came from, but he was not going to deepen on that, nor share that piece of information.

— Mama! Mama! Here! – Hiro exclaimed handing Todomatsu a white lace headband with two big flowers, one in soft pink and the other cream white, and a lovely gathering of jewels between those two flowers.

Todomatsu carefully put her headband on place, fixing it up so the giant flowers would be at one side of her head. When she was ready, Yua smiled at her older brother, whom helped her stay up once Todomatsu let her feet touch the floor.
— Be careful sweetie, okay? – Todomatsu waved his baby girl goodbye with a smile.

— Yes Mama! Come on Yua! We need your help – Hiro slowly advanced with Yua, while she took her time, stopping every two steps with bouncing and getting her balance back. Sometimes, she screamed mimicking her older brothers.

— It’s good seeing you be this happy – Karamatsu said, looking at Todomatsu. – Living like this, having kids, a job…

— What kind of life did you think I was living? – Todomatsu chuckled at him, trying to avoid getting too emotional again.

— It’s better if you don’t know – Ichimatsu said. – The things shittymatsu would blabber about when he got too drunk.

— I agree – Choromatsu nodded as he saw Osomatsu ‘dying’ when Yua threw him a ‘magic bag’.

— Fine, fine. I won’t ask, but I’ll say this. I almost gave the opportunity up of having all of this, for someone else – the faces his older brothers were doing, were somewhat funny. – Mister “I brag about everything I own”, played his cards right and look at me now. Bastard gets everything he wants. So unfair – Todomatsu smiled remembering those years. It seemed so long ago.

— I wasn’t really expecting that – Ichimatsu muttered.

— Neither was I – Choromatsu nodded, agreeing with his younger sibling. Karamatsu stayed quiet, while Todomatsu simply laughed it off.

— Never mind that – checking his clock, Todomatsu hummed. – He is taking too long…

— You can go check on him if you want – Karamatsu said.

— Uh? No, no. It’s fine. He must be busy anyways – Todomatsu sighed and went back to keep his eyes on his daughter and sons.

— Todomatsu, is it always like this? – Karamatsu asked, taking more of a serious tone.

He understood why they wanted to know so much. They haven’t seen each other, nor talked with the other for so long that it was obvious the reason why. However, hearing that same question, or hinting towards what could be wrong in his life, was not something Todomatsu wanted to have to tolerate. It was not and interrogation, he didn’t have to answer everything. Actually, he didn’t. But the way they all unconsciously pointed at the same thing was bugging Todomatsu.

— Okay. I know you all meant well, but why are you so fixated on that? – Todomatsu frowned a little. – And don’t tell me it is because you are worried.

When they did not answer, he took it upon himself to stop them from asking the same annoying question.

— Look. Niisan. It is not always like this, but we are busy people – Todomatsu glanced at Karamatsu, since he was the one who asked. – Also, don’t you think is a bit too much asking that in the same day we met? It is annoying, you know? I’m not prying in anyone’s relationship – just yet,
Todomatsu wanted to add, but that would take away the impact of his words.

— Ah… Sorry Todomatsu – Karamatsu sighed, feeling the guilt creep on him for being too pushy. That and he still didn’t trust on Atsushi.

— We don’t know much about you now, and we didn’t know about you back then either – Ichimatsu said.

— It is pretty much the same as we were young – Choromatsu shook his head, before he looked at the youngest. – We’ll drop the subject, but promise us you’ll talk with us from now on.

— Anything you want to share will do, really – Ichimatsu muttered, trying not to seem as pushy as Karamatsu.

— Only if you promise to stop nagging at me. You do realize I am an adult, right? That we have the same age? – Todomatsu huffed and blushed for being treated like a baby.

— You are always going to be my Tater Tot – Karamatsu patted his head.

With a deadpan look and a mechanical cat like smile, Todomatsu stared right into Karamatsu’s soul.

— Stop.

Once he heard nothing and saw the uncomfortable look rose up to his brother’s face, Todomatsu turned his attention back to the kids.

Ichimatsu snorted and Choromatsu smiled.

Todomatsu was always going to be the baby of the house, whether he liked it or not.

Utilizing his time as much as he was used to, Todomatsu exchanged numbers with his brothers, and they were happy to, instantly adding him to their group chat. However, there was one more thing that kept martyrizing Todomatsu.

Their parents.

How were they going to take it?

Would they approve of how he was living his life?

More importantly, would they reject their grandchildren?

Those were only a few of the many questions Todomatsu had in mind. He knew they were not bad people.

Perhaps the news in the past hit them too soon, and didn’t help that on top of all he was a jobless neet at that time.

Either way, Todomatsu couldn’t help it but to think in two rash possibilities; they accepted everything or they didn’t.
Whether his brothers knew or not what it was bothering him, the youngest had its questions grasped at the tip of his tongue, never leaving but not wanting to stay. In addition to all of that, Todomatsu did not hear any of his brothers mention their parents, not once.

Did something happen to them?
Should he downright ask about it?

While Osomatsu and Jyushimatsu spend a fun time playing with his kids, Todomatsu kept on putting a front as he wondered, going deeper and deeper through dark and bad possible situations involving his parents. Thoughts that seemed to catch the eye of one of them.

Reaching for his shoulder, Karamatsu gave him a knowing look, before he stood up and waited for Todomatsu to do the same. Sighing, the youngest followed him to the elevator, getting a little bit of privacy.

— What is it, Totty? You know you can tell me, right?
— Stop treating me like this, niisan. It is weird, you know – Todomatsu pouted. But, Karamatsu was not wrong, even though he was too pushy. Maybe leaving his older brother on his own made him like this.
— I’m afraid I can’t change that, my brother – Karamatsu smiled at him, placing a hand on his shoulder.

Todomatsu visibly relaxed his posture and dropped the cutesy act, seeing it to be of no use anymore.
— It’s about mom… mom and dad – Todomatsu barely looked up at him. – I wanted to ask before, but…
— They are fine. Dad hurt his back years ago, but it wasn’t that serious, and Mommy is as she has always been – Karamatsu rubbed both his arms, warming Todomatsu up a little.
— I got worried when you guys, didn’t mention them – blushing, Todomatsu felt slightly moronic for thinking quite scrappily of the situation. He wasn’t going to leave in a week, Todomatsu had time to think and approach their parents within the rest of the year. He didn’t have to rush. – Niisan, stay for dinner.
— Definitely – Karamatsu answered almost immediately. – You’ll just have to ask the rest.

Todomatsu did miss that. He really did.

— Mama!! Yua is making that funny face again!! – Ryo yelled as Yua gripped one of the cushions and, stayed still, face red from straining.
— … Well, Atsushi might have to take a break now, right?
Todomatsu loved all of them, but he was not going to change that diaper, it wasn’t his turn anyways, and it wouldn’t hurt him to take an actual break and enjoy dinner with all of them.

Close to seven, Todomatsu decided to extend his invitation to the rest of his brothers, trying hard not to seem too desperate, casually offering them to pay for a cab if it needed. Both, Choromatsu and Jyushimatsu called to their respective houses to inform of the change of plans, giving in Todomatsu’s invitation.

Todomatsu’s table had always been full. Since the very first time the quadruplets arrived to his life, every meal has been hectic and over all a huge happy mess. A mess, he missed from home. So now, Todomatsu could not be happier having all of his brothers at his table along with his family.

One milestone in a day was beyond of his initial expectations, now there was one more thing to do and Todomatsu already used all the luck he had with this one meeting.

Hopefully, nothing would come out of his hands again.

Chapter End Notes

This is the headband Yua was wearing.

https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/c3/98/07/c3980729ae11f7cef45656f052cbb438--newborn-props-newborn-photos.jpg

I know most of you don’t even care, but i just have to.

XD

Also, i'll we going back to fix a few things, i won't be changing anything in the plot, so don't worry about it.
Although Todomatsu didn’t want his brothers to leave that night, it was undoubtedly late and they all took their sweet time with dessert just to stay for a little longer. Their little boys were elated for the afternoon they had, happily chattering among themselves when they could repeat the fun some other occasion, preferably soon. With all that activity, the quadruplets fell asleep as soon as their heads touched their pillows, leaving Todomatsu free from a long, usual good night.

Moving to Yua’s nursery, Todomatsu tucked a fast asleep baby in her crib, checked that everything was in place and working, before he went straight to their office.

— That’s a big stack of papers – Todomatsu said, eyeing the pile of folders at one side of Atsushi’s desk.

— Oh. No, it’s nothing – Atsushi muttered, keeping his eyes glued to the open folder in front of him. – You had a very busy day, darling. You should go to bed first and rest.

— Are you thinking of finishing all that tonight? – Todomatsu asked, ignoring his previous advice.

— It’s not going to take too long – looking up at him, Atsushi smiled. – I’ll be there in about an hour or two, okay?

Unfazed by his charming nature, Todomatsu followed his hunch and went for his glasses on his desk, before he grabbed his chair and placed it right next to a nervous Atsushi.

— Sweetie. I’m fine, you don’t have to strain yourself – Atsushi tried again, closing the folder he was working on.

— I know you are fine – Todomatsu tucked one side of his hair behind his ear and put his glasses on. – And I know that I never have this much free time in a day – reaching for another folder on that stack, Todomatsu opened it and he saw his name on it. If that one was addressed to him, then so was the rest. – Atsushi – he groaned.

— You were not supposed to know – Atsushi sighed, feeling his cheeks begin to burn up.
Instead of lecturing Atsushi for hiding stuff from him, Todomatsu leant close to his husband and gave him a chaste kiss on the lips.

— What? – A little lost, Atsushi stared at Todomatsu.

— I had a great day, you know – Todomatsu smiled at him. – If you let me help, I could thank you properly – winking at him, Todomatsu opened the folder he choose and began to read it. – But just so you know, I am still mad at you for not telling me.

— Which one are you going to do, then? – Atsushi asked him with a grin. – Thank me or punish me? You have to make up your mind, sweetie.

— Oh, don’t worry your overworked head about it. Once we finish, you’ll see for yourself… or not – smirking, Todomatsu started to pay attention to the numbers on the papers.

With a bigger smile and a newfound motivation, Atsushi went back to work, aimlessly wondering, what Todomatsu had in mind for him.

Finishing earlier than expected. They moved to the bedroom and for the insistence of Atsushi, he decided to take a quick shower, but when Todomatsu walked out of the bathroom, his cute husband was nowhere to be found and the cries of their little daughter gave him a clear hint of why. Sighing, Atsushi toweled himself dry, grabbed clean pajamas and sat on the bed.

After a few minutes, Todomatsu came back.

— Sorry, Yua needed a change.

— It’s okay – Atsushi smiled at him, seeing Todomatsu walk to the bathroom to freshen up a little.

Atsushi laid back on the bed and closed his eyes, relaxing and drifting into a nice sleep. Until he felt the bed sink on his sides and the weight of Todomatsu’s body straddling his lap. Humming, Atsushi opened his eyes, gladly surprised by his naked husband.

— I already like this – Atsushi said, caressing his hips at a slow pace while he eyed Todomatsu.

— Are you enjoying the view? – Todomatsu asked, grinding against him.

— Definitely.

Atsushi thought that having his husband riding him was the best there was, but when Todomatsu got off him and crawled to the other end of the bed, Atsushi whined.

— Where are you going? I was having a great time feeling you up.
— I’ll show you something better if you come closer – Todomatsu said, looking at him over his shoulder.

— Are you going to do this every time I do your job? Because I can find a way to do it – Atsushi moved to the center of the bed, accommodating his pillow to lay back down again.

— But that would mean no more fun times on your desk – pouting, Todomatsu turned around with Atsushi’s blindfold mask and hand cuffs in one hand, and lube on the other.

— Ah, that’s true – Atsushi moved his hands up over his head and kept them together, starting to feel excited for what will come.

— Look at you so obedient – chuckling, Todomatsu climbed upon him, until he knelt right over his face. Kissing both his wrist, he cuffed Atsushi’s hands close together and hooked them, through the space in the middle of the headboard.

— You should sit on me or let me suck you – Atsushi hummed, delighted by the soft inner lining of the cuffs.

— You and I know that’s not going to happen. That would make you far too happy – getting off him, Todomatsu accommodated to his side and reached for the blindfold. – Besides, I want to play with you this time, isn’t it fair that I get my turn too? – pouting, Todomatsu snuggly tied the blindfold up.

Slowly, Todomatsu began to unbutton his nightshirt, one button at a time. Exposing Atsushi’s chest to him. Leaving lingering kisses over his torso, he grazed the tip of his fingers down, stopping to the elastic band of his bottoms. Atsushi grunted while Todomatsu smiled against his skin. However, Todomatsu put a sudden stop to that recent bubbling sensation when he ceased his touch all together. Reaching for the lube, Todomatsu loudly uncapped it and squirted a good amount on his fingers. Humming, he positioned himself, straddling Atsushi’s hips while Todomatsu firmly placed his free hand on his chest. Leaning flush against him, Todomatsu carefully pushed two of his fingers inside, letting a satisfied moan pass through his lips. Feeling Atsushi tense up, Todomatsu started to loosen himself up as he groaned and moaned next to his ear.

Rubbing his half-hard dick against Atsushi’s abdomen, Todomatsu gave a long lick to his neck, earning a breathy groan from his husband.

— You can’t see, you can’t touch – chuckling, Todomatsu added a third finger, gasping for the intrusion. – Do you really think y-you deserve anything else from me? – mouthing his neck, he ground his hips down.

Yanking his hands, Atsushi balled up his fist, realizing that Todomatsu did not grant him mercy to free his wrist from the headboard.

— You didn’t even notice, did you? – Pulling his fingers out, Todomatsu squirted more lube on his fingers and shoved them back in, with a loud squelch.

— Todomatsu – his cock sat uncomfortable trapped in his bottom. The wet noises, his feverish skin, the indecent moans, the overall stimulation made his whole body react to Todomatsu, and Atsushi could only picture him fucking himself.

It wasn’t enough.

— If y-you add a little please, I might consider taking care of you.
Atsushi yanked his wrist again, in case he would get lucky; but alas, nothing changed, except for hearing Todomatsu giggle.

— I-if I cum before you say please, I will leave you tied up for the rest of the night, dear – approaching his earlobe, Todomatsu caught it with his teeth before he sucked on his skin. – Time is ticking.

Knowing Todomatsu, Atsushi was sure his imp was going to fulfill his predicament if he didn’t follow his little game. Although, sleeping like that, in his head could meant, having Todomatsu over him when he least expected him.

Biting his lower lip, Atsushi squirmed underneath Todomatsu, trying to get any friction from him.

— I … Todomatsu… c-come on, wasn’t t-this my thank you p-prize? – Atsushi huffed, tilting his head to the opposite side, luring Todomatsu to do more.

— You told me I could choose – grazing the tight skin of his neck with his teeth, Todomatsu stopped at the crook of it. – Thank you or punish you… which one d-do you think I chose? – Todomatsu asked as he finished loosening up.

Which one indeed.

Taking his fingers off his entry, Todomatsu sat up on his hard on, forcing a groan from Atsushi. Moving his lubed hand up to his husband chest, Todomatsu scratched him all the way down to his navel.

Atsushi shuddered with the racking of his nails against his skin.

Stopping at his belly button, Todomatsu licked his lips sinking his fingers into it, enjoying every little fold for his own entertainment, and at the same time, he slowly rotated his hips over Atsushi’s clothed member.

— T-todomatsu ple… ngg!! – whimpering, Atsushi held back his plead for the sudden rush of vague pleasure, that mix gave him.

— You can do better than that.

Todomatsu would have loved fancying his belly button a bit more, but he had to make it quick or else.
With that in mind, he left a mental note to jump his husband into another of his fun times while Todomatsu reluctantly move his hand away.

Raising his hips ups, elicited a whine from Atsushi, however Todomatsu grabbed his clothed cock with his lubed hand and brought his bottom down until the tip of it aligned with his entry. Holding him there, Todomatsu rotated his hips, circling his hole with the head of his cock.
— Ack! Damn it! – Keeping his hips as still as he could, Atsushi let a frustrated whimper out, knowing that even if he moved, nothing will really happen. Todomatsu was playing dirty, but that was exactly why he loved it. – T-this is…! – The wet stickiness seeping through his bottoms was not helping at all. His hand, his loosened hole, the stupid fabric between them.

— Are you going to say it, or should I keep going? – Todomatsu chuckled, speeding things up by using his other hand to fondle with his own balls.

Keep going?

Like that?

Atsushi had no patience for that, he never had!

— C-come on. D-don’t be like that Todomatsu! – choking back another groan, Atsushi threw his head back onto the pillows. Cursing his imp for taunting him like this. – F-fuck!

— Hmm? What w-was that dear? I-it didn’t sound like a please to me – Todomatsu brought his hand up to his flushed dick and began teasing his head, as he delighted with the first class view of Atsushi tied up, under him.

— I… I want you to touch me m-more, Todomatsu c-come on… d-don’t be like this! – Hissing, Atsushi gulped down, ignorant to the repercussions of his words.

— J-just to touch you?

Atsushi eagerly nodded, panting, out of the pent up frustration Todomatsu was working him on.

— Oh you, always so impatient.

Atsushi’s breath hitched, when he felt Todomatsu move away from him.

Giggling, Todomatsu knelt to his side and did absolutely nothing, seeing Atsushi desperately try to get anything from his position.

Ever so careful, Todomatsu smirked, finally taking Atsushi’s cock out.

— Y-yes… Yes! – The hit of the change of temperatures and the invigorating wave of freedom, made Atsushi annoyingly happy.

— But you haven’t said it yet.
Todomatsu was about to tease his throbbing cock, when a scream, followed by other three different ones, reached both their ears.

— The monster is going to eat us!!

Trying not to break into a blooming laugh, Todomatsu rushed out of the bed, pulled his pajama pants on, secured his sleeping robe in place, picked his underwear and went back to the bed. Leaning close to him, Todomatsu pinched one of his nipples; when Atsushi parted his lips, he shoved his underwear deep into his mouth.

— Now, now. If your dick is not up by the time I come back, I’m afraid I might have to suspend our activities – pecking his cheek, Todomatsu straightened up and flew to quickly wash his hands, but before he could leave the room, he looked at Atsushi one more time. – Oh! In case, you were wondering. Yes. I wore those today.

Atsushi whimpered, curling his toes as he drown in Todomatsu’s musk.

How he was NOT going to get even more riled up with the token Todomatsu left him? Seriously, Atsushi was definitely going to do more nice things for his husband to earn this treatment more often.

Todomatsu had to look under two bunk beds, inside their wardrobe and behind the curtains. When he didn’t find the monster; which was great, because Todomatsu didn’t want to have a weird encounter with a monster, at all. Todomatsu reassured them that the nightlight was going to keep the monster away from them, and another goodnight kiss would protect their brains from its weird eating habits.

Settling that up, he went to check on Yua, in case she woke up with the screams of her older brothers. His suspicions turned out to be correct, opening the door to a sleepy looking Yua sitting up in her crib.

— Aww, I’m so sorry princess – Todomatsu approached her, as Yua rubbed her eyes and began whining. – The monster was bugging your brothers again, and I left your daddy alone in bed – he explained to her while Todomatsu picked Yua in his arms.

Babbling back at him, Yua clung to his robes.

Todomatsu did not part ways with her, until she was sleeping again. Only then, he returned to their bedroom.

— I’m back – he sing sang with a cutesy tone.

Atsushi answered back, rather muffled but it worked.
— Would you look at yourself! Aren’t you proud? – Todomatsu clapped his hands, approaching his husband. – But… It looks like you are having plenty of fun on your own – pouting; he ran one finger over his erect cock, starting from base and stopping at the tip. Scooping a bit of pre, he brought it up to his lips, to taste it. – Did you make up your mind already? Are you going to do what I told you to do? – He flicked his finger against his member, making Atsushi groan and fight against his restrained hands. – Well, you did stay hard all this time, maybe I should reward you – Todomatsu talked to himself, searching through his options, without telling Atsushi anything in concrete.

Undressing for a second time, Todomatsu chuckled as he climbed over Atsushi, far too close to his head than to his painfully looking dick. Reaching for his messy hair, Todomatsu roughly lifted Atsushi’s head up. Taking the impromptu gag out, he threw it away, letting it fall anywhere in the room.

— Say it, Atsushi – keeping his head at a good angle for him, Todomatsu caressed his cheek.

Gasping, Atsushi took deep breaths, leaning closer to the soft hand of his husband. However, when he started to say ‘please’, Todomatsu thrusted his hips forward, forcing his dick down Atsushi’s throat. His barely touched cock leaked in excitement.

Hearing Atsushi gag made Todomatsu bit his lower lip as he held his moans back. When the magnificent pooling warmth came back to him, Todomatsu picked his peace up, gripping Atsushi’s head tight, as he went faster.

— K-keep sucking me l-like this and I will b-burst! –Todomatsu finally allowed Atsushi to listen to his pleasure. – S-say please! Say please! B-beg for this…Ah! – Gasping, Todomatsu buried his shaft in his mouth, knowing that Atsushi would love to have his cum coating his throat. Despite that, Todomatsu smirked, stilling his hips, as he felt his husband swallow nothing. Pulling out, Todomatsu moved away, sitting on his lap and letting Atsushi’s dick poke him. – I-is something wrong?

— W-what – gulping, Atsushi trembled, being denied again. – T-todomatsu…

— Did you say please? Because I didn’t listen. You were a little busy too – chuckling, Todomatsu grabbed the left over lube and played with the cap.

Atsushi twitched and moved his lower half up to try and get anything from him.

— Are you sure you want to chose this? – Todomatsu hummed, receiving another desperate thrust from Atsushi. – Fine by me.

Lifting himself up, Todomatsu got off him.
— Where are you... going?

Humming a lighthearted pop song that has been stuck to Todomatsu for a week straight, he looked for the box of condoms on his side of the bed. Taking two out with him, he went back to Atsushi. Ripping both packages off, Todomatsu slid on of the rubbers down Atsushi’s messy cock and poured the rest of the lube over it. Spreading it a bit, he accommodated over Atsushi.

— I want you to remember, that you were the one choosing this, not me.
— Y-yes... Yes! C-come on, Todomatsu, d-don’t leave me like this – yanking the handcuffs again, Atsushi groaned.
— Suit yourself, then.

Todomatsu slid the second rubber on himself, before he took Atsushi in with one swift thrust.

— Do you have any idea how good you feel? – Breathily moaning, Todomatsu anchored himself placing both his hands against Atsushi’s torso. Swaying his hips side to side, he groaned in delight. – Aren’t you excited?
— V-very – Atsushi chuckled. Mildly satisfied for the turn of events, he tried to take the reins back by thrusting his hips ups.
— Mmh! D-do you want me to tie your legs too?

Gritting his teeth, Atsushi decided to hold back, body twitching for how badly he wanted to cum.

— That’s better, dear – Todomatsu cooed at him. – Now, I recommend you to breath – as he said that, Todomatsu slowly raised his hips, only leaving the tip inside. – Ready?
— Yes! Yes! I n-need it! T-todomatsu please! I need you, I n-need this!

Smiling, Todomatsu answered to his pleads by peacefully lowering himself down.

— I-I’m sorry Atsushi kun b-but you t-talked far too late.

Atsushi’s breathe faltered as he groaned, mentally swearing for not talking when Todomatsu told him to.
He could do nothing to change that. Todomatsu warned him and he did not listen.

— Do you want to know what did you miss? — Arching his back, Todomatsu closed his eyes, enjoying the power he had over Atsushi. — I’ll give you a hint if you want — his mouth watered, thinking of how desperate Atsushi was going to get when he realize what Todomatsu took away from him.

— N-no… I… Please don’t — Atsushi whimpered, mind going straight to his wanted release. — P-please… I want to do it inside you… Please, please! — Roughly moving his wrist, Atsushi did what he could to try to gain some mercy from Todomatsu.

— Don’t beat yourself over it, okay? — Offering Atsushi a graze of a sweet touch on his hip, Todomatsu let him calm down for a couple of seconds. After all, he didn’t want him to hurt his wrist, that much.

Despite of showing him a bit of mercy, Todomatsu reconsidered his course of action and began to ride Atsushi as fast as he could.

Minding their voices, they shared each other’s pleasure through wanton groans and breathy moans, pleas for a needed release were answered by their rhythmic rocking as they searched for the same end within different ranges.

Once Todomatsu felt his orgasm close, he solely focused on letting Atsushi know.

— I’m s-so close! — Shutting his eyes, Todomatsu heaved. — T-this is your fault. This happens to m-me because of you! — Whimpering, he dropped on his cock three more times before he stilled his whole body, letting the waves of culmination wash over him. Reaching for his own dick, Todomatsu pumped himself, filling the condom up with his cum. — S-so good …!

The tightness surrounding Atsushi, tipped him over the edge, but as soon as he thought Todomatsu would let him do this one thing, he snatched it away from him when Atsushi was just about to cum, finishing in the condom but outside of Todomatsu, making him grunt. The least Todomatsu did for Atsushi, was aid him with one of his hands.

— Where? — Gasping, Atsushi asked.

— Where what? — Todomatsu giggled, slipping his used condom and securing it with a knot.

— You came… where did

Before Atsushi could keep asking, Todomatsu leant over his feverish chest and moved the used condom closer to his face.

— It’s all in here, dear — smiling, he blew Atsushi a kiss and got off him. Witnessing him go lax on
the bed, Todomatsu happily hummed while he reached for tissues to get rid of their somewhat controlled mess.

There was nothing, Atsushi could do.

Todomatsu disposed of Atsushi’s rubber too, and occupied himself with the cleaning.

Pulling his bottoms up, Todomatsu tucked Atsushi in. Then, he crawled to the headboard to take the handcuffs off his wrists and untie the blindfold.

— Hi there – Todomatsu softly said.

Atsushi blinked a few times, focusing his sight.

— Let me put these back and I’ll pamper you, okay? – He waited for Atsushi’s reply to finish cleaning everything up.

Once he was done with all that, Todomatsu helped Atsushi to get in bed before he went under the covers to cuddle him.
Nestling his head over Atsushi’s chest, Todomatsu placed one arm over his middle to keep him close.

— That was fun, darling.

— I did good? I was a little worried that I was being meaner than other times – whispering, Todomatsu looked up at him.

— You did – tilting his head a little, Atsushi smiled at him. – And you were not that mean. You never are, cutie – he chuckled.

— That’s a lie, you know – Todomatsu smiled as well. – You did great too. You refrained from begging for a longer time.

— That I did. And between us, I have no idea how I managed to do that – Atsushi chuckled, pulling him closer. – Is this a consolation prize? – He asked as he moved one hand up to Todomatsu’s naked back.

— I was going to steal your shirt, but I think I’m going to sleep like this – snuggling closer to him, Todomatsu slid one of his legs between Atsushi’s. – Besides, you were really enjoying having me naked over you. I think this is only fair.

Atsushi’s hand glazed over Todomatsu’s back with care. However, soon, he began tracing his form, adding more intention and making Todomatsu shudder.
Even after that, Atsushi drove him straight into another round. Luring Todomatsu in with slow warm
kisses and feathery touches that turned into a mix of giggles and chuckles, as they drowned in their own little world.

Next morning was a ruckus. They woke up with the loud cries of their baby girl, and the stomps of the quadruplet’s feet as they ran around doing god knows what. Todomatsu was the first to attempt moving, but he only sat up before he let himself fall back on the bed for a few seconds. He needed his beauty sleep, now more than ever. He was not going to get younger, but Todomatsu didn’t want to open the door and find another of their inevitable disasters. That had to be karma.

Working as a team, they managed to calm the four tornados and the wailing baby down, just so they could start the day with breakfast.

Atsushi had to leave in the middle of their brunch, thanks to a last minute call he received from his mother. With a faint promise to be back earlier, Atsushi kissed everyone and dashed off the house.

Todomatsu knew; it was going to be unavoidable. Regardless of that, he came up with a great idea.

— Okay! Listen up everyone! – Clapping his hands once, Todomatsu got the attention of his kids. – It’s been a while since we went out. So, Mama is going to take you all to a nice park.

Yua didn’t understand much, but she heard ‘Mama’ and that made her smile. Her older brothers on the contrary, broke down into loud cheering and eager bouncing.

Preparing to go out with all of them at the same time was not an easy task. The very first thing he did was cook something quick and easy for lunch; and by cook, Todomatsu meant order food. Leaving that little mess to the house cleaner, he started by helping his bundles to dress appropriately for the occasion. No dress shorts, no ties, bowties or sashes.

Giving them three different options, they all settled for the light denim shorts and t-shirts combos, finishing up with hats and caps of their choice. Then, Todomatsu put together something simple not to lose much time, going with a similar vibe his sons were; jeans, an oversized soft pink shirt, sunglasses and a summer hat. Fixing his hair a little, he rushed to start with Yua. Dressing her up in a white summer dress, sandals, sunglasses and, obviously, a summer hat.

Maintaining the mental note of putting sunscreen on everyone before leaving the house, Todomatsu packed one of his big bags with everything Yua would need. After that, as if that was not enough, he packed a few water bottles and snacks along with Yua’s bottle.

Going back to everything he did, Todomatsu checked twice that he had all.

Ready to go for the van, he put sunscreen on their faces, arms and legs, before he allowed them to get in the van, one by one. Lastly, he secured the baby chair, sat her down and put her seatbelt on.

Closing the door, he walked to the driver seat.
— Is everyone wearing their seatbelts?
— Yeeees! – They said.
— Okay, then. Time to go – he smiled and started the car. Instantly, bubbly music from their favorite shows blasted within the van. Adjusting the volume, Todomatsu checked on them one last time through the mirror, before he drove to the streets.

Although it took Todomatsu, a long time to find a close place to park, the kids behaved really well, for how impatient they could have gotten with all the annoying traffic and stolen spots. Getting them to watch their favorite’s shows in the car and listen to their songs helped a lot to keep their minds away from the road.

In one way or another, Todomatsu found a solitary spot where to park.

Lucky!

Turning the engine off, Todomatsu got off the car, walked to the door and let the boys climb of the van. After he changed Yua’s diaper, he put on the baby carrier on his front and secured Yua in place. With his packed bag over his shoulder; which wasn’t as heavy as he thought it would be, Todomatsu held hands with two of his sons, while the other two latched to one of their brothers. Once everyone seemed ready, Todomatsu lead the way.

Despite having to walk for a bit. Todomatsu took in the view of where he used to go on for a walk. As different as it was the same, it felt odd to be strolling down that path, even more to be doing it with his kids now. Everything was new to them, and Todomatsu was happy to be able to share something like this with his four kids. However, he did not tell them; Todomatsu did not want to interrupt while they were busy enough choosing their favorite rock or their favorite cloud.

Taking a deep breath, he could see they were getting closer to the park.

For the looks of it, the kids that were there were running back to their houses, which was understandable, with the sun mercilessly hitting them. Nonetheless, Todomatsu pushed pass that and walked to their chosen destination.

— This is it – he said, huffing for that long walk.
— … Is that a swan? – Hiro asked, pointing at the slide.
— Yes. It leads to the sandbox – Todomatsu answered with a smile. – Come on. It’s going to be fun and the swings are free too!
— I want to go to the swings! – Nao said, bouncing a little.

Todomatsu giggled and went up the stairs, wishing to find an empty bench. Carrying a baby and a full bag was great as exercise; if he wasn’t already sore. Putting aside the extra activities, Todomatsu
walked until he sat right in front of the sandbox, sighing in delight. When he was about to leave the bag at his feet, to rest; Yua whined, wanting out of her ‘trap’.

— Where do you want to go princess? – Todomatsu asked her as he took Yua out of the carrier. Holding her in one arm, he took the thing off. – That was making me sweat… ew – grimacing, Todomatsu hooked it to the bag, before he took a deep breath and stood up again. – Where to?

While Yua tried to reach for her brothers, Hiro and Ryo were sitting on the sandbox, playing with the sticks they found on their way to the park. Nao and Yuu were taking turns to push the other on the swings.

Todomatsu spend half an hour crouched down to help Yua in the sandbox and the other half sitting with her on the swings.

As they had a blast, Todomatsu could not rest, not even for a minute. Out of every person that passed through, a good amount would stare at him or his kids. He could not blame them. His kids tended to talk in English when they were immersed in their little world, and more often than not, they would talk to him in the same language. Sometimes they would miss a word or two in Japanese and to make it understandable between them and their family, they would say it in English.

Besides of that, they did look the same to outsiders.

— Mama! I want my snack! – Ryo threw his hands up as he stood up and dashed to the swing set.

— Me too! – Hiro followed him.

— Can I have mine too? – asked Yuu, while he stopped pushing Nao on the swing, next to Todomatsu and Yua.

— I want mine! – Nao said as he descended from the swing seat.

— Sure! It is time for snacks anyways – Todomatsu chuckled, barely swaying with the help of his feet. – Hiro, be a sweetheart and open the bag for me, please?

Since he didn’t want to strain his body under the summer heat, Todomatsu opted to leave the bag resting on the side of the swing. He could have moved too, but he had to admit, he was tired and feeling not so well anymore.

— Okay Mama! – Hiro crouched down and opened the bag. Looking inside, he smiled. – I see sweets!

— Yes. Take the plastic containers out; there should be four. Oh! Hand me Yua’s bottle, she must be hungry too.
Hiro nodded and started moving things around, mostly diapers and tiny water bottles. One by one, he unpacked their snacks.

— This one has my name! — exclaimed Ryo, as he sat on the dirt. Grabbing his box, he waited for no one, before he opened it.

— Ryo chan, I brought hand sanitizer — Todomatsu said with a bit of a stern voice. — I want you all using it before eating, okay? — Keeping an eye on all of them the best he could.

After a few years of raising them, Todomatsu did get to spot certain aptitudes between them, aiding him to differentiate them with each other as they developed their own personalities. The only down to that, was that it never got easy.

In fact, Todomatsu could bet it was going to get harder every following year.

Pouting, Ryo cleaned his hands in silence.

— Here Mama — passing the bottle to Todomatsu, Hiro waited for him before he moved to get his snacks.

— Thank you. Could you hand me one more thing, please? — When Hiro nodded, determined to help Todomatsu, he smiled at his child. — I packed her bunny bib too; it should be more to the left.

With another nod, Hiro moved a few things until he found the bib. Handing it to Todomatsu, he closed the bag, sat down next to his little brothers, sanitized his hands and dug in.

Smiling, Todomatsu thanked Hiro one more time.

Yua began squirming in his hold, trying to reach for the bottle.

— I’m doing this as fast as I can princess — Todomatsu told her as he placed the bib, snugly around her neck. Then he tasted a bit of her formula, ensuring that it was good. — Open up, cutie — he cooed at Yua, who made good use of her time, latching to her bottle and downing the sweet formula.

Too busy, helping Yua not to choke with formula, Todomatsu had one of those thoughts that kept nagging at the back of his head and did not tell him what could it be. He was sure, he packed everything for them; Todomatsu charged his phone, brought the sanitizer and some wipes. He locked the door, turned everything off.

Whatever it was, Todomatsu could not wrap his head around it, but that had happened plenty in the past. Lightly shaking his head, he let them enjoy their snacks in peace.
Leaving the empty packages, piled up in his bag, the brothers went back to what they were doing.

Playing.

Yua joined them at the sandbox, once she was all done with hers.

Another hour passed, Todomatsu was still trying to figure out what he was forgetting with no avail. Crouching down to not ruin his pants, Todomatsu barely played with Yua, who was comfortable feeling the sand between her fingers; she even tried to eat it. Either way, too entranced in what he was doing, Todomatsu didn’t notice new people approaching him. However, his sight flew to the girl that went straight to his boys.

She was obviously older. Maybe ten? More than that would be weird.

Well, it could be good for his bundles that they started to make friends. Although Todomatsu understood how difficult it was, letting people in a close circle such as the one they formed. They already had each other to play and trust; there was no real need to meet anyone new.

— You look like my dad! And like uncle! Why is that? – She said, staring at Yuu very close.

The youngest did not pipe a word; looking rather uneasy.

— I… Um – averting his gaze to the side, Yuu knitted his brows together and blushed.

— Leave him alone! – The other three, glared at her as they moved between them.

That was enough.

Right before Todomatsu would put a stop to that, Choromatsu walked up to them.

— Ayaka, leave them alone.

— I was just pointing that out! – Ayaka explained to Choromatsu.

— I know – Choromatsu sighed. – Go on and play, okay?

Once the little girl followed Choromatsu’s suggestion, his four little boys stared at Ayaka, with less animosity than they should have.

That was not good.
— Sorry, Totty. She is always like that. It’s like she has no filter – Choromatsu said, seeing his
daughter ran to the climbing set.

— Eh? No, it’s fine – handing Yua another stick to move the sand around, Todomatsu smiled at him.
– You live near?

— Ah, yeah – crouching next to Todomatsu, Choromatsu continued. – I used to come with both of
my daughters, but now the oldest, spends most of her time with her phone – sighing, again, he softly
touched the top of Yua’s hat. – Cute – Choromatsu chuckled.

— Right? – Todomatsu agreed.

— For how long have you been here?

— Uh… I don’t know, maybe two hours – he answered, uncertain of how much time it has passed
since they arrived to the park. – I didn’t want them to be all coped up in the house. Besides, they
don’t get to go out and talk with other kids.

— Oh. I thought you guys made them have playdates or something like that. Since I saw them
playing with Osomatsu and Jyushimatsu.

— They can handle playing with other adults, but they don’t like to play or share with other kids –
grabbing Yua’s hands, Todomatsu moved them up and down, earning and happy laugh. – This time,
was their best attempt so far.

— … Oh

— You just keep saying the same thing, niisan – Todomatsu snorted at Choromatsu.

— I don’t know what else to say about that; and I don’t want to intrude.

— You are not intruding if you ask me about them – shrugging it off, Todomatsu set his heart and
mind to tire his baby girl out.

Yawning, Yua marked the awaited rest for Todomatsu. Rushing to get some wipes out of his bag, he
cleaned her hands and her face, ridding of the dirt.
Securing the bag on his shoulder, Todomatsu picked her up. Groaning over his almost numb legs
and his tired knees, he stood up.

— Are you okay? – Choromatsu asked him, raisin a concerned eyebrow.

— Yeah – sighing, Todomatsu walked to the blessed bench. Happily taking a seat, he
accommodated a sleepy Yua in his sore arms. – Yeeees, I am sitting down – he celebrated, exhaling
as Todomatsu comforted himself, sinking on the bench.

Choromatsu followed his little brother, taking a seat next to him.

— You look tired – Choromatsu voiced his concern.
— I am tired.

— Well, you are alone with five kids in the park. That is tiring by default.

— Where is Osomatsu niisan anyways? I thought you two lived together – Todomatsu asked, wanting to keep their recent chat alive.

— He is at the store. He wanted to get something to eat – shaking his head, Choromatsu crossed his arms. – He is probably going to get more than he should.

— Something to eat – Todomatsu hummed.

Ah!

That was it.

He chuckled, not finding it in his heart to be mad about it.

— What is it?

— I just remembered what I forgot – Todomatsu looked at Choromatsu. – I did not pack my snacks.

— You haven’t eaten, yet? It’s six in the afternoon, Totty – stating the obvious, Choromatsu frowned.

— So? At least, now I know what bugged me this whole time – closing his eyes, for what Todomatsu thought it would be a minute, he let himself drift just a little.

Abruptly shaken up with girlish yelling, Todomatsu’s eyes flew open. Turning his head towards the boisterous joy, that was Choromatsu’s daughter, Ayaka. Whom was impossibly happy, receiving Osomatsu.

— Hey kiddo! You missed your favorite uncle? – Osomatsu smiled at her, picking Ayaka up with one arm to hug her.

— Yes! I saw weird kids that looked like you and dad. It was super weird and they were super weird – she explained, while Osomatsu put her down.

— Uh? – Looking up at the park in general, Osomatsu quickly spotted the quadruplets playing on their own at the swing set. – Oh! Those are your cousins.

— They are? But they were not nice! I thought Nee san was wrong when she said boys were stupid – Ayaka explained, scrunching up her face.

— They are not stupid; you have to give them time, okay? – Osomatsu patted her head. – Now, go nuts – handing her a bag of chips, Ayaka ran towards the kids slide, screaming for who knows what.
Chuckling, Osomatsu walked to his little brothers.

— What did you tell her? – Choromatsu grumbled, wondering why his little girls were not, calmer. Choromatsu blindly believed that he was kind of a chill guy, even when they were younger; so, it has to be Osomatsu’s influence rubbing off on her. He just knew it.

— I told her to go nuts – snorting, Osomatsu sat next to Choromatsu.

— Why would you say that to her? She does everything you say – rolling his eyes, Choromatsu rummaged through the bag, until he got one of the chocolate bars out. Ripping the package open, he handed it to Todomatsu.

— Niisan – dragging it out, Todomatsu mentally thanked him, far too busy enjoying something to snack on, than to actually saying it. – I thought I was going to die.

— Are you trying to lose weight or something? – Opening the party size chips, Osomatsu grabbed a handful of them to put in his mouth.

— What? No. I’m already irresistible, I don’t need to do that – Todomatsu flaunted, happily biting into the chocolatey oasis of life.

— I can see that – Osomatsu added with a grin, after swallowing. – It is written all over your face, Totty – snickering, he reached for more chips.

Todomatsu kept quiet with a blush creeping onto his face.

Damn him and his weird senses.

— What am I missing here? – Choromatsu said, eyeing one after the other.

— Totty got laid – Osomatsu idly said.

Choromatsu almost choked.

— What? How could you possibly know that?

— Just look at him – pointing at the youngest, Osomatsu let Choromatsu catch on.

And Choromatsu did, for a while. He couldn’t find any hints of what Osomatsu said. Maybe, he was tired too, or Osomatsu weird abilities were beyond his comprehension.

Choromatsu was going to settle for the second one.
— Well, he is married. It would be somewhat weird if he didn’t – Choromatsu tried to save a bit of Todomatsu’s … sex life? – And you, absolutely, do not have to point that out. Idiot – glaring at Osomatsu, Choromatsu shook his head and sighed.

— It’s not my fault, he looks like he got laid! – Osomatsu chuckled, entertaining himself with Choromatsu’s aggravation.

— Stop it! we are at the park. A children’s park – gritting his teeth, Choromatsu shot a nasty glare at him.

While both his older brothers bickered, Todomatsu finished the snack that saved his life. Keeping an eye on his boys, Todomatsu observed them as they took turns to push the other on the swings. It seemed like they needn’t anyone else in their niche group, besides Yua.

Todomatsu was not going to deny and lie to himself the worries that rose up with the idea of future outings. Too many what ifs, for his comfort, he might add. However, it was a certain grade of understanding, which gave Todomatsu as a parent a bit of relief about the topic.

His little boys preferred to look unapproachable to other kids than work for a possible friendship. That was not good.

Perhaps, it was his fault.

Their fault.

— Yeah, maybe…

— Uh? Maybe what? – Osomatsu asked, leaning forward enough for him to look at a heavily focused Todomatsu.

— Oh. No, It’s nothing – mechanically answering, Todomatsu kept looking over his little boys.

Did they not feel alone?

Todomatsu knew he wasn’t the best dad he could be, but he did try. He was still trying.

— No, no. Come on Totty. You can tell us. It’s not like we are going to tell anyone – Osomatsu said, incentivizing Todomatsu to confide in them. Although, he was sure, Totty would easily open up to Karamatsu, Osomatsu wanted to help as much as Todomatsu allowed him to.

Todomatsu sighed.
— I told you is nothing.

Both, Choromatsu and Osomatsu looked at each other.

— Oh, right. Totoko chan called today – Choromatsu started another conversation, hoping for the best. – She was mad, you know.

— Define mad – said Osomatsu, already disliking the chosen topic.

— You guys are still in touch with her? – Todomatsu asked, deciding to join in again.

— Still in touch – muttering, Choromatsu faced Todomatsu and pointed to Osomatsu. – That idiot, sitting next to me, dated Totoko for a few years, she kicked him out for some reason that I still don’t know. They stopped talking to each other and about two months ago, Totoko chan called, but idiot here doesn’t want to talk to her like an adult.

— Wah! So cool Niisan! You dated Totoko chan! – Todomatsu beamed at that, not as cute nor bright as he could due to how tired he was, but it was the sentiment that counted.

— Right? Your onii-chan is the best! – Osomatsu rubbed his nose with a grin on his face.

— But you must have done something stupid if she kicked you out – overruling his first reaction completely, Todomatsu shook his head. – And to top it all off, you are running away.

— Well, I kind of want to talk things out with her, but I don’t know – scratching the back of his head, Osomatsu slumped over. – I don’t feel like I’m ready for a confrontation – he vaguely explained.

— Maybe you won’t be ready for a while; regardless of that, Totoko chan said that she was going to keep calling until you answered – Choromatsu added. – Be thankful she is not hunting your ass down.

— Don’t even remind me that – Osomatsu sighed. – Aaaaagh! Women are just complicated!

Choromatsu snorted at Osomatsu’s complaint.

— You, just fucked up, you should accept it.

— But, what did you do niisan? – Wondered Todomatsu. – What I most remember of her is that she was somewhat violent.

That was putting it lightly.

— Oh. No, nothing like that – refuted Osomatsu. Chalking up the idea.
— Nothing like that? – lifting an accusatory eyebrow, Choromatsu huffed. – Totoko kicked him out by throwing stuff at him. When he arrived at my house, it was around three in the morning and he had this huge bump on the back of his head.


— It was huge. Don’t believe in anything he tells you.

— Choromachuu no – Osomatsu whined, for outing his messed up and poorly managed relationship to the youngest.

— Now, I really want to know what you did to summon her wrath – Todomatsu said, as he maneuvered his way with one hand, to get the carrier in place while his brothers stared at him.

They were going to offer their help, but it was amusing seeing Todomatsu put that on, all by himself.

He slid his free arm through one of the biggest straps, then passed Yua to his other arm and slid the other strap on. Then, as he kept a tight hold on her, pressed his elbow against himself and the carrier, as he brought closer the opposite end and locked it in place. Fastening his free side first, he moved Yua one last time to fasten the other; finally Todomatsu carefully slid her right leg into the space of the carrier, locked the opposite side, secured one strap; neither of them realized it even existed, and finished while Yua was still peacefully sleeping against his chest.

— How did you do that? – Choromatsu stared at Todomatsu.

— It’s not that hard niisan – smiling, Todomatsu patted Yua’s bottom. – After a while, you get accustomed to do this kind of thing alone. That and my arms were killing me – he whined.

— That’s what we have been wondering; more like meaning to ask – Choromatsu started, earning Todomatsu’s attention for a full second or two. – Are you mostly alone?

Should Todomatsu tell them the truth or keep it all to himself?

Sighing, he decided to come clean; too tired to deal with an accommodating white lie. Besides, it wasn’t such a big deal for him. Sometimes…

— I’m barely alone. I can count with my hands the times I’ve been alone – Todomatsu replied, accepting that fact oddly late – I spend most of my time at my office, then lunch with Atsu if he is available; sometimes I’m the one busy at lunch and so on. On top of that, he has to travel a lot. If it is a good season we travel together – sighing, he pursed his lips together. – I’m surrounded by people every day, all day. Even at the office, I get someone asking for something every five seconds.

— What about vacations? – asked Osomatsu, beginning to feel that ugly negativity bubbling its way up.

— We do take a week or two every year, and we juggle our way to try to be at home for their birthdays.
Not wanting to intrude anymore, nor say the wrong thing, they stayed in silence.

— It’s sad. I won’t deny that – Todomatsu muttered with a forlorn look, still focusing on the boys, that were now playing with some sticks and rocks on the ground. – When you can’t be with them, no matter how much you want to, you just can’t. The least I can say is that I took care of them by myself up until they turned three.

— You did that alone? – Osomatsu’s mind was in a hazard. Hearing so much from Todomatsu’s life was both great and awful.

— Atsu had to work for the six of us – reminiscing in their hard years, brought a twinge of a faraway memory. – I was studying and taking care of four kids that I had no idea whatsoever how to, even pick up – with a speck of a smile, Todomatsu seemed to relax a little.

— He didn’t help you… – his blood was running cold, Osomatsu did not want to think about that.

— Actually… I was going to give up, I truly wanted out of the whole situation. My kids or not, I couldn’t deal with them anymore, but Atsushi was there for me.

— And here we were thinking you had a perfect life – Choromatsu butted in, noticing Osomatsu’s reaction. That was not a conversation, the eldest would be capable to handle.

— I wish – glancing at his older brothers, Todomatsu forced a mischievous grin. – Now, going back to the start. I did, in fact get laid yesterday night.

Choromatsu grimaced, a furious blush taking over his cheeks. Osomatsu, by the other hand, visibly calmed down and snickered.

— Ha! I told you! – Osomatsu exclaimed, slapping Choromatsu’s back to try to help him come back from the gutter. – Now Totty, as you may not know yet; now that you spilled the beans, you have to tell us more – Osomatsu knew, he wasn’t into gay intercourse, but, Osomatsu had given that treatment to all of his little brothers so far. He had to be a fair older brother, right?

— W-what sort of things are you asking him!? He has Yua right here! – Choromatsu did NOT want to know. Maybe he did, but Choromatsu was not going to fall that low for it.

— We have done plenty – Todomatsu hummed. – I don’t know what you really want to know, niisan.

— Neither does he. Please, ignore him – quickly said Choromatsu.

— Like, are you the girl or is he secretly getting dick? – Osomatsu genuinely asked.

If he had questioned him when they were younger, Todomatsu would have thrown a fit. Now, it only made him snort and wonder what was going through Osomatsu’s mind.
— Osomatsu, I swear; if someone kicked us out of the park for your fault, I will tell Totoko your working hours – Choromatsu threaten Osomatsu. But he could see his words entering one ear and going out of the other.

— I feel like I have to show you a graph and some pictures. However, I feel like I should be nice – smiling, Todomatsu leant against the bench. – Yes, I am ‘the girl’ and he does take dick, just not like that.

— Todomatsu! We didn’t need to know! Didn’t you learn about what was important to tell us and what not!?

Seeing Choromatsu freak out over it, and Osomatsu laugh, made him join the eldest. Todomatsu had forgotten how fun it was bugging the third brother.

— That is important Choromatsu niisan – Todomatsu chuckled.

— Oh, you are doing this on purpose – squinting his eyes at Todomatsu, Choromatsu grumbled. – I’m going to stop hanging out with both of you at the same time.

— Aww, Choromachuu.

While Osomatsu busied himself, mockingly cheering Choromatsu up, Todomatsu saw his boys walking back to him.

— What is it sweetie? – Asked Todomatsu, straightening up, not to look like he was melting on the bench.

Sharing a determined expression, Hiro, Ryo, Nao and Yuu, faced their Mama.

— We talked and decided that we want to go back home – Hiro responded.

Todomatsu knew exactly where that was going. Having encountered that similar exchange a few months ago.


— Yes – Hiro nodded, with an unwavering look. – If we go back, then Mama can rest with Yua.

— Oh… Oh no, sweetie. I’m not tired – smiling at his little boy, Todomatsu brought his hand up to the top of his head, placing it over his soft tangerine cap. – You shouldn’t have to worry about that. I
thought we already talked about this.

Blushing, the four brothers seemed to dive deep into a troublesome grey area, indecisive of their taken decision. Nonetheless, in their heads, it made sense to give their parent more time to rest if Todomatsu needed it.

— We are big kids – started Hiro, cementing the path to his younger siblings.
— Y-yeah – Yuu pipped in, his face fully flushed.
— Super big! – Nao nodded, copying Hiro’s remark in his own way.
— We can watch the house while Mama rest! – pushing his chest out, Ryo pointed at himself.

Todomatsu chuckled at Ryo’s antics, retrieving his hand and laying it on Yua’s bottom.

Although, going back home sounded delightful, Todomatsu didn’t have the heart to deny them another outing. He had done it before, more times than he could count, therefore, their solution to spend plenty of time with their parents, resided in not tiring them out and hog their attention at home.

Closing his eyes for a fleeting second, Todomatsu sighed and put a cat like smile on his face.

— Sweetie, Do you want to stay here for another hour? – Todomatsu cautiously asked them, already knowing the answer to that. He was simply waiting for his bundles to acknowledge it. However, hearing them voicing what they wanted without tweaking it to accommodate it to their parents regards, would have been the epitome of what Todomatsu would had preferred of them as children.

Partially considering the prospect of staying, and keep playing on the swing set, unsettled them. Moreover, seeing them so guilty for wanting to act like kids; clenched Todomatsu’s heart. That was something he must improve and fast.

Despite of their tardiness and clear uneasiness, the four little boys caved in and nodded.

— Then we will stay another hour, okay?

Todomatsu reassured them by maintaining his nice expression in place; thankful for all the prior practice he had working on it.

After a few second of awkwardly staring at their Mama and not seeing him change at all, their joyous smiles bloomed onto their cute faces and they all gave him a tight hug before dashing back to the swing set. This time, they were louder on their games.

Waiting a little for them to immerse into their own world, Todomatsu relaxed his face and slumped
— You sure you are not tired – wondered Choromatsu.

— I feel like I might pass out – Todomatsu took a deep breath and exhaled. – But, thanks to that chocolate bar you gave me, I will make it alive. I’ll just drive so slow, people will start honking at me – he tiredly chuckled.

— This park is far from your house. Maybe you should look for a closer one – Choromatsu grabbed Osomatsu’s bag of chips and moved it close to Todomatsu. – It will save you time and you could go walking.

— Driving all of them is easier; it is less stress of losing one of them when I have them in the car, than when I walk with them alone. If we happen to have Atsu, it is easy for my heart and myself – snatching a handful of chips, Todomatsu looked at his brothers. – However, I am glad that they behave so well when we go out. They hold both my hands and they don’t let go until we arrive to whatever place we want to go. Otherwise, I would be losing my mind.

— Haven’t you thought of leashes? There are one for kids – Osomatsu reached for a handful of chips to shove in his mouth.

— Niisan, they are not dogs – Todomatsu whined. – But I did consider it a couple of times. Turns out, they are not that bad nor hard to control – he shrugged it off.

— Control – Osomatsu snorted. – Totty controls his kids, you heard?

— Drop it. He doesn’t mean it like that – Choromatsu side glanced at Osomatsu with an upturned smile. – You don’t mean it, right? – He couldn’t trust in Todomatsu’s words anymore. Not with how much Choromatsu had been betrayed in one day.

— What do you think I am doing? Raising an army? – Pouting, he stopped rummaging into the bag of chips and stopped to consider his own words. – Oh… Perhaps I am. Who knows?

— Sounds about right – agreed Osomatsu.

— You two are the worst – shaking his head, Choromatsu searched for his daughter, checking that Ayaka wasn’t far from them.

Sharing chips, accompanying it with an idle talk under the bright summer sun, the Matsuno’s let their kids have their fun.
Half an hour before Todomatsu would attempt to stand up and leave; which was a whole ritual on its own; his baby girl, stirred, waking up from her extended nap.

— Hey princess. Did you have a nice sleep? – Todomatsu asked Yua, while she yawned. Smiling at him, with rosy warm cheeks, she babbled, kicking her legs out. – Someone is full of energy – cooing at Yua, he managed his way out of the carrier, not only taking it off, but also freeing his impatient daughter. – Why are you so happy of waking up right now? – Todomatsu giggled, leaving the carrier
on the side and giving into her infectious happiness, snuggling and kissing her cheeks, as she kept on smiling.

— Isn’t she Karamatsu’s number one fan now? – Osomatsu said, chuckling at Yua’s enthusiasm.

— I can’t believe he beat you as a favorite uncle – mercilessly added Choromatsu.

— You are jealous because you weren’t picked as favorite uncle too – Osomatsu bluntly said.

— I’m not – Choromatsu denied, because he was stingy, since that was a golden chance of being a greater uncle than Osomatsu. – You, on the other hand, are delusional, because Totty didn’t let you carry her.

— Yeah? Well, now Totty is going to let me hold Yua, and she will reconsider her choice – Osomatsu nodded, picturing Yua’s face when she finally realize the little mistake she made. Regardless of that, Osomatsu would easily forgive her. She was indeed, too cute to not being forgiven. – Right Totty?

— Uh? If you clean your hands, I’ll pass her to you – Todomatsu pushed his bag to Choromatsu, since he was closer. – There is hand sanitizer in there and some wipes.

— Ha! See that Choromachuu? – leaning forward, so he wouldn’t have to stand up, Osomatsu picked the bag up, foolishly thinking that it would be easy. He was fucking wrong. – What the shit Totty? What do you have in here? – Using both hands and more strength than he should have used, Osomatsu picked it up and placed it on the bench, to look for the things.

— It’s not that heavy Niisan – pouting, Todomatsu sat Yua on his lap, while she got an iron grip of Choromatsu finger. – I packed everything we needed there, but Yua needs more things.

— Um, Totty…

Todomatsu looked at Choromatsu, then down to where Yua was viciously holding one of his fingers.

— Good luck trying to get your finger back, niisan – smiling at him, Todomatsu fixed her hat properly. – Aren’t you a sneaky one? Just like your Daddy, right princess?

Yua babbled back, ending her statement with a high-pitched squeal.

— I’ll go deaf for you any day, cutie – Todomatsu winked at her, even if she was not looking, too entranced by the finger Yua trapped in her hand.

— Awh, Come on – Osomatsu, now with his hands clean, whined seeing Yua put her attention on Choromatsu. That was not on his plans. Putting together, anything that could help him win Yua back, Osomatsu pulled out a normal bag of chips out of his snacks bag, and looked for the biggest chip. – Hey, Yua, look here – Osomatsu called for her while he brought the chip in front of her face, swaying it from one side to the other, he captured her attention.
— Don’t be a cheater! – Choromatsu frowned at Osomatsu. – Yua already decided to paid attention to me.

Todomatsu did not like how Yua opened her mouth to try, and eat that. She was not allowed to eat chips, just yet.
Todomatsu reached for it, and ate it; right before Yua could get a taste of the chip. She whined a little, distraught for the loss of a possible snack. However, when she turned her head to the side, to look at her father. Todomatsu leant forward and down to peck her on the lips.

The problem did not reside there. It actually started when Todomatsu moved away.

Yua licked her lips, tasting the chip. Once she didn’t get more kisses that tasted like chips, she began whining. Accordingly, Todomatsu leant close again and pecked her. This time, she let Choromatsu’s finger go and slapped Todomatsu’s face, holding him in place and puckering her lips.

Over all, it was one of those messy kisses, since Yua was trying to eat more than kiss.

— Totty, you ruined my plan – Osomatsu sighed, losing his gold opportunity again.

— And you ruined mine – Choromatsu refuted. He was happy holding hands with Yua, his only niece.

— Yua – Todomatsu mumbled, failing an escape. – Princess, please – still to not avail. – We are in public.

— At least, we know she likes chips – Osomatsu said, settling back on the bench and eating his chips.

— Yes. Nevertheless, you were taunting her. She would have choked or something if you gave her that chip – Choromatsu huffed, unsatisfied by his stolen win.

— I wasn’t going to let her eat it!

While Todomatsu’s brother bickered over Yua, and bad supposed parenting, Yua got her fill of savoring the remnants of the chips she never got to have, calming down and enjoying the view of the park.

— Niisan, Can you like, not do that again? – With baby slobber all over his mouth, Todomatsu shoot Osomatsu a deadpan look.

The eldest stared at him and broke into a loud laugh. Choromatsu chuckled at his misfortune as well.

Wiping the excess off his face, Todomatsu grimaced a little, highly doubting that he will ever be used to baby slobber.
— She seems like she had fun – commented Osomatsu, once his cackling died down.

— I bet she did – Todomatsu sighed, letting her grab onto his clothes and pull, or clap her hands if she desired to. So far, it didn’t look like she wanted to go play, which was perfectly fine for him. But… – Niisan.

Both of them directed their sight at him.

— Could you get one of her toys out of the bag? – Adding a please would be trying way too hard.

Since Osomatsu was the one with Totty’s bag, he searched for the toy. When he was least expecting it, Todomatsu stood up, walked up to him and sat Yua down on his lap. For a solid second, Osomatsu did not move, keeping the toy a bit away from her grasp, making her tilt towards it.

— Niisan, you have to help her stay up – Todomatsu said, still holding her, since his stupid older brother was a bit out of it.

In a flick of a finger, Osomatsu’s face beamed, handing Yua her toy and actually holding her. Both, Choromatsu and Todomatsu smiled, seeing the eldest so happy about it.

— I’m living my best life right now – Osomatsu said, his sight glued to his youngest niece. – I mean, look at her! She loves me.

Yua was doing absolutely nothing that could exponentially say; that she, in fact, loved him. However, neither younger brothers wanted to break it out to him.

Kneeling in front of Osomatsu, Todomatsu let the eldest have his fun. His attention was stolen by the redundant ‘ting’ of his chiming phone, every second he received a text. A few individuals would clutter his inbox in such an incessant fashion, and only one that would do it until he replied.

Staying where he was, Todomatsu took his phone out and checked it. Short texts, accumulated one after the other; all of them asking where he was, when he was returning, if he needed something and so on.
— Someone is happier – Osomatsu smirked at the youngest while he used his foot to pick on him, lightly pushing Todomatsu.

— Leave him alone – rolling his eyes, Choromatsu flicked Osomatsu’s shoulder. – He is married – in Choromatsu’s eyes, that status took the fun away from actually bugging Todomatsu.

Giggling, Todomatsu did not notice as he got sucked into their silly flirting through texts. His older brothers, snickered, dragged years into the past, with Todomatsu’s reaction.

— He does the same face – Osomatsu pointed out, loud enough for Choromatsu to hear him.

— It’s weird, but he really does – Choromatsu helped Yua with her hat, having a hunch that Todomatsu would not like it if they took her hat off. – It’s like he never grew up – he chuckled.

— Right? I bet Totty would play with me – moving Yua’s hands, made her yell to get her hands back.

— You will never grow up – slightly shaking his head, Choromatsu helped Yua to get her teething toy back in her mouth. – Her gums itch, Osomatsu.

— But you are helping her with that, I am busy, moving her arms – they were so tiny and chubby, Osomatsu did not know if he wanted to squish her or *squish* her. – Look at her – the eldest cooed at Yua who was eagerly chewing her toy.

Todomatsu slid his phone back into his front pocket and happily hummed.

— So?

— Atsu is going to come and pick us up. I told him he didn’t need to, because I brought the van with me, but he said he was still going to come – Todomatsu explained, utterly delighted to being able to relax on their way back, since he was not going to drive.

— Are you going to give him some or get some as thank you? – Osomatsu shoot him a lecherous grin.

Being nice to Osomatsu was always a freaking mistake.

Why couldn’t Todomatsu learn?

— You are so indecent! – Standing up Todomatsu frowned, a furious blush quickly spreading on his face. – You can’t hold Yua anymore! – Todomatsu hit Osomatsu on the back of his head, and Yua laughed witnessing her uncle in pain. Then, Todomatsu picked her up and stuck his tongue out at the eldest.
Osomatsu held his head with both hands and pouted.

— What do I tell you? — Choromatsu wondered where all the home training their mother gave them went, because as of now, Osomatsu had none.
Backtrack

Chapter Notes

AAAAAAAAAAH THIS
Guess who knows how to finish this whole fic!
Guuuy, i am so happy to finally know that x3c
Anyways have fun!!

Don't be afraid to tell me if i messed up somewhere!
Have fun and comment if you liked it~!

All rights reserved to the creators of Osomatsu-San. This is a fanfiction.

Spending most of the day watching movies with his family, the majority of them being kid’s movies bothered Atsushi. Suggesting the same idea his husband did the day before; Atsushi took all of them back to the park.
Todomatsu knew it was just because he missed fun times with the kids; however, having everyone coming along was bound to make their kids happy.

Close by six in the noon, Todomatsu began to text back and forth with all of his brothers. It was not the first time he had stupid line meet ups with some of them. Today was extra especial for him, because everyone logged in. Atsushi would ask him what was going on every ten to fifteen minutes, and Todomatsu would explain and show him the phone, so he could laugh at their silly jokes too.

Overall, it was fun and refreshing.

Between casual exchanges, Todomatsu got Karamatsu’s address. Appalled by his partial lack of knowledge, Todomatsu went from joking with all of his brothers, to privately text Karamatsu. Which he should have thought better, because a complete fucking paragraph clustered his screen at an amazing speed too. Skimming through it, Todomatsu got rid of the flowery and weird phrasing in his head, solely focusing in the important parts.

— What’s happening now? – Asked Atsushi, with Yua dozing off in his arms.

— Karamatsu niisan told me where he lives and it is close from here – Todomatsu said with a smile.

Atsushi knew that smile, far too well, he might add.

— You can stay there if you want to, I can manage one night without you… sort of – Atsushi had to be a realist, but he did want to let Todomatsu have his fun, and his husband looked happy hearing him say that.
— Sort of? – Todomatsu chuckled, leaning against his shoulder, never putting his phone down.

— I might sleep alone. I think that’s going to be life changing, traumatizing even – humming, Atsushi smiled at him.

— Please – rolling his eyes, Todomatsu nuzzled him a little. – But, are you sure? I don’t mind staying for a few hours and then going back home and

— No. It’s going to be okay. You can stay there if you want to. It’s not like I don’t know how to take care of them. I might have problems by bedtime, but I think I can manage – turning his head to the side to face Todomatsu; Atsushi leant forward to peck the top of his head. – You can go, sweetie; and If you get too worried, you can call.

— I will definitely call, right for bedtime – Todomatsu hummed, looking up at Atsushi. – Thank you.

— You don’t have to thank me for it – Atsushi chuckled.

— So, you are saying you don’t want my thank you kiss – pouting, Todomatsu brushed Atsushi’s locks with his free hand.

— I didn’t know I could get one – enamored with the feeling of his hands through his hair, Atsushi closed his eyes.

Giggling, Todomatsu planted a sweet kiss on his lips.

— Your welcome – Atsushi muttered with a big smile on his face.

Todomatsu smiled back at him, cupping his face with both hands.

— Your face is so warm, Atsushi – Todomatsu sang, proud of that little accomplishment.

Once the skies began to darken, and the scenery flourished with another energy and rhythm, they went their separate ways. At least, Todomatsu tried to.

The youngest Matsuno wanted to walk to Karamatsu’s house, since it was somewhat close, while Atsushi wanted to drive him there.

Needless to say. Todomatsu gave in, because even if the lights were bright enough to lighten the streets, he did not want to walk alone and see how everything turned dark. Todomatsu swore that if it wasn’t for that, he would have walked there.

— If you wanted to walk there, why didn’t you tell your brother to come and pick you up? It’s not like he is going to get tired by walking a little – slightly annoyed, Atsushi kept his eyes on the road.

— Karamatsu niisan was working, he is going to arrive to his home, at the same time I get there – Todomatsu refuted, crossing his arms and pouting.

— If he was working, why was he texting you?

— Oh my god. Can you drop it? – glaring at Atsushi, Todomatsu huffed. – I don’t know what comes over you when it’s about Karamatsu niisan – he muttered.

— Excuse me, for wanting you to be safe – Atsushi said before quickly adding, – And there was no way I would have let you stay alone at a park.
— Alone at the – taking a deep breath, Todomatsu began. – Atsushi. Are you perhaps jealous of my older brother?

Furrowing his eyebrows, Atsushi maintained his sight glued to the narrow streets.

— Why would I ever have to? I married you and

Todomatsu snorted, interrupting him, making Atsushi blush and tighten his hold on the wheel.

— Why? It’s not like I’m going to leave you for him – relaxing against his seat, Todomatsu smirked at Atsushi. – He is my brother, Atsushi; he is someone important to me.

— I know that – Atsushi grumbled, his face burning up.

— This is nothing like years ago – Todomatsu softened his voice as he tried to calm his husband down. – This is not some stranger I just met. This is my real brother – knitting his brows together and pouting again, Todomatsu straightened on his seat. – And, I am not that stupid anymore. I would never commit that same stupid mistake again – Todomatsu continued. – I promised it.

Sighing, Atsushi parked the car close to Karamatsu’s house.

— I know, you’ll never do that again. I trust you – finally looking back at him, Atsushi reached for Todomatsu’s hands and held them. – I’m just being stupid – lightly shaking his head, he smiled. – I’m really happy that you can spend some time with your brothers, since you have not talked to them for so long – averting his gaze for a bit, Atsushi felt blood rush up to his face. – I’m just… I’m just used to have you all by myself and now that we do have some time to spare, we are not doing it together – sighing, again, Atsushi rightfully assumed acting like an idiot for being driven by those fleeting emotions. It was not as they would break up and everything was going to rot once Todomatsu started to reconnect with his older brothers.

— Oh – squeezing his hands, Todomatsu brought one up to his face and kissed his knuckles. – It will be just for tonight. Tomorrow I’ll stay with you all day and all night – Todomatsu winked at him. – You can pamper me as much as you want.

Nodding, Atsushi pulled him close and littered Todomatsu’s face with kisses. They could have continued with their display of affection, but the soft tapping on the window, made them look to Atsushi’s side of the car.

— Niisan!

Todomatsu tilted his head to the side as he happily waved at Karamatsu while Atsushi squished his cheeks, not wanting his husband to leave so soon.

Karamatsu raised an eyebrow at their antics, but smiled and went back to the front door, to unlock it, giving them more time to part ways.

— Well! I’ll see you all tomorrow – Todomatsu blew kisses to all their kids, who were confused by his words; then, before he got out of the car Todomatsu gave Atsushi a long and slow good night kiss.

They were not happy to see Todomatsu get out and leave the car.

Sad times and an imminent tantrum should, definitely be expected.

Waving at their already unhappy kids, Todomatsu waited for them to leave. When he could not see
the van any longer, Todomatsu turned around to go and meet his brother.

— Someone did not want you to stay here – Karamatsu said, taking his shoes off as he waited for Totty to get in and close the door.

— More like, someone was low key jealous – chuckling, Todomatsu shut the door close and slipped his shoes off. – That was really cute.

Karamatsu frowned, wondering how in the world that man could be cute.

— Anyways, should we order something? – Todomatsu asked.

— Yes, I might love to cook for you, but alas, I am indeed tired.

Moving to Karamatsu’s common room, Todomatsu shamelessly ordered a large pizza, while Karamatsu decided to make a good use of his monthly snacks and started preparing some drinks, with no alcohol added. Todomatsu was a ‘Mama’ now, and as his older brother, Karamatsu was not going to be the pebble in his path of parenthood.

Putting a few chips in a bowl and some sweets in another one, Karamatsu began placing some snacks on the little coffee table he had, which complemented his couch. Todomatsu was busy looking around; therefore, he did not offer to help his older brother. Although, Karamatsu was not going to force him, nor insinuate it, when Todomatsu was so focused in the wall Karamatsu had worked hard to fill with all kinds of seasonal flower arrangements resting in different sizes and shapes of pots.

— Pretty – Todomatsu muttered.

Karamatsu smiled, seeing his little brother so interested in his work.

Going back to the kitchen, he got their beverages and more snacks; such as his famous healthy cookies, perfectly filling the chosen plate. Taking another tray with what he thought would be his last trip to the kitchen.

By the time, he came back; Todomatsu was already snacking on some cookies.

— Hungry? – Karamatsu voiced, placing the tray directly onto the table.

Todomatsu simply blushed and reached for another cookie.

— These are good – he hummed.

— They had been made with pure love – Karamatsu proudly said as he took his jacket off and threw it to the couch. – Shaped by the mystical hands of harmonious emotions and baked under the warm of the sun in spring.

Hearing all that hurt Todomatsu to the core. However, he kept it to himself.

Why?

Because Todomatsu would never be capable of doing a remotely close imitation of Karamatsu. He did try, several times, but it was not worth the embarrassment.

— I am not surprised that you know how to bake – Todomatsu said, focusing in getting another cookie to eat.
— Ah, did I reach your expectations, my little brother?

Todomatsu did not have any.

— Yeah – he replied with a nervous laugh.

Thanks to the god that was taking care of Todomatsu (god of mixers), the pizza arrived, saving his soul as Todomatsu rushed to get their order, informing Karamatsu that he would take care of the expenses; it was only fair.

With a warm box of pizza sitting on the middle of the coffee table, the brothers found themselves trapped in their separated worlds. Unable to talk, or share too much, unknowing of how much the other cared. A mutual bond that Todomatsu did not know how to start mending.

Should he talk first?

Should he ask first?

Which one was going to be the correct way to start?

— So, you were at the park. – Karamatsu started, as unsurprising as that sounded. – It has changed; actually, it was fixed last year, because one of the swings was not working that well anymore.

Todomatsu stared at him, wondering how to take that flimsy beginning to transit to something else.

— Yes. The kids liked it – smiling, Todomatsu played a bit with the string of his hair. – They do like the swings. Maybe I could try to get a set for them.

— I bet, they’ll love it.

There it was. The tangent Todomatsu knew that it would eventually happen. That annoying intermission that could lead to nothing or anything at all.

Sighing, Todomatsu scratched the back of his head.

— Sorry. I’m a bit rusty – he admitted, as if they were not bad before. When they used to go fishing, even there it was a bit weird.

— It’s fine. I am too.

— Hm? How come? Did not the others talk with you – Todomatsu wondered, knitting his brows together as he pursed his lips tight in worry.

Were they that mean to Karamatsu when Todomatsu was gone?

— Eh? Well, you see. We went separate ways; we did not have that much time to invest into each other, and with our dear Aniki suffering, some of us decided to stick to what normalcy between us was.

As Karamatsu tried to explain those missing years to him, Todomatsu could only understand some key parts, and he did not like any of those.

— What’s wrong with Osomatsu niisan? – Todomatsu quickly asked.

— Ah… Well… You see, my dear Todo
— Is it that serious? — Todomatsu interrupted him. — I know he has problems with Totoko chan, but are there more that I need to know — pouting, Todomatsu looked at the full table.

— I believe it is better if you do not meddle in that yet — Karamatsu calmly advised.

Did Karamatsu want him out of that? Osomatsu was his brother too, and he wasn’t a baby. He could handle some stuff.

Todomatsu was going to ask Osomatsu, he could not just lie right to his face.

— Aside from that, everyone is doing their best — Karamatsu added as a final touch.

Todomatsu only hummed and reached for a slice of pizza, while his older brother grabbed his drink.

— How’s your life being? — Karamatsu tried again. — With living overseas, you must have some interesting stories.

— We had fun, the weather was mostly rainy, we made some friends — Todomatsu resumed, busy covering his mouth while he ate and talked at the same time. It was tricky and tacky, but the pizza was so good.

— You don’t have to answer right away — Karamatsu chuckled, grabbing a slice too.

— Kay — finishing half of it, Todomatsu put his slice down and looked at Karamatsu. — Okay, so. It was fun and all, but I don’t really know where to start or what to tell you, because it feels like I have so much to say, and at the same time, I’m not sure if you want to know.

— Then… Why don’t you tell me about the days you were studying? — Karamatsu suggested. — The only one that studied here was Jyushimatsu; and we ended up knowing more than we bargained for.

How crazy those stories must have been? Todomatsu was going to make the time to sit and exchange some of his with Jyushimatsu.

— Before, I could get in; I had to take intensive courses to understand the language better. I wasn’t that bad at it, but for the classes, I did need to stop getting confused — Todomatsu took a short break to sip his drink. — I wasn’t the only Asian there, but I got stared so much — he said whining.

Karamatsu thought the attention his little brother received was something he was going to like, since Todomatsu worked so hard to get it back then.

— Some of them were nice and all, but others — Todomatsu huffed. — They had the nerve of talking to me as if I was from another planet. They would talk to me so slow, nii-san. I was always this close — Todomatsu brought his fingers together, almost touching as he squinted his eyes. — To beat them up. But, I didn’t want to get into trouble that could tarnish everything within that social circle — Todomatsu harshly bit into the rest of his slice.

If Karamatsu would have been there, if the others would have been there with him too, he had a hunch, they would have done the threatening for him.

— I’m glad, you could overcome that without having to beat them up — Karamatsu nodded, at his adult decision made at the time. — It must have been frustrating too.

— It was the worst, and don’t even let me get started when I began working — Todomatsu rolled his eyes. — So much gossip would go around, like. You have no idea. Right now, there still are rumors and shit, but I don’t care. More importantly, I don’t have time to spare to let those flimsy words affect
me. Unless it is about our family, then I would get involved.

— You still have problems like those here? – Karamatsu wondered.

— If I told all of you about those, you’ll end up worried – Todomatsu shook his head and downed half of his drink before he took another slice of pizza.

— Is it that bad? – Karamatsu asked, already feeling worried by it.

Todomatsu shrugged.

— Some people just don’t like to have me as their boss, and if you add that I’m married to the son of their current CEO, that I have a humble upbringing and that I am an homosexual with kids – Todomatsu sighed. – I am personally offending every single one of them and his ancestors – Todomatsu chuckled, biting into the cheesy corner of the pizza. – If you would only know, all the stupid shit I have to hear.

Although, Todomatsu snorted, Karamatsu couldn’t help but grow worried and a bit sad about what he was hearing. He got lucky enough, to be his own boss, Karamatsu had to work a lot and do everything on his own, but he did not have to worry about that.

At least, his dear baby brother was brave to handle the situation properly.

— Some people would often whisper that I am a gold digger and that I would take over the company – Todomatsu rolled his eyes, and put a delighted expression that Karamatsu was not expecting for the kind of comment Todomatsu made. – The best ones are when everyone says that I got where I was just by fucking others. Can you believe that? Me? Willingly ass touching with some old guy? Ew – sticking his tongue out and scrunching up his nose, Todomatsu’s skin crawled at the horrid idea.

Taken back by, well, everything. Karamatsu was surprised that Todomatsu would openly joke or mock the harassment he would suffer at his work place.

— As I said before, I don’t mind that much anymore. However, when it gets bad and it doesn’t die, Atsu gets so mad that if he doesn’t get to shut them up, he fires them on the spot – Todomatsu’s face warmed up, coloring his cheeks with pink. – Then, they just can’t find another job in any of the affiliated companies, or the ones that we have a good relationship with too. Isn’t he the best?

His brothers would have done the same; if Karamatsu deeply thought about it; with a different method, nonetheless leading to the same result.

If that would have not worked, fists would have come and go.

— Yes… the best – Karamatsu pushed out through his teeth.

The power some people ought to hold, it baffled him. On the other hand, Karamatsu should be proud of punching Atsushi when he did. How many individuals would pay for the opportunity?

— Sometimes, Atsu acts like a spoiled kid – he chuckled. – That’s cute of him too.

While Todomatsu sidetracked, gushing about how cute and nice his husband was, Karamatsu let his mind wander back in time. Todomatsu said to him that his boyfriend at the time was not a nice person; nonetheless, the man seemed to have changed for Todomatsu’s sake. If that were not the reason, maybe Atsushi was always like that with his baby brother; Karamatsu could be thankful for that.
Letting Todomatsu brag about his husband, as he dug in, Karamatsu took two more slices of the pizza, before it got too cold. Occasionally humming and nodding, Karamatsu survived until Todomatsu’s words subsided within themselves and through expected repetition. Right after that, they dwelled towards more of a small talk, consuming time as they went.

Nearing eight at night, Todomatsu excused himself from their fun exchange. Taking his phone out, he promised to his older brother not to take that much time; regardless of making such innocuous promises, Todomatsu was trapped in by dragged good nights, blown up kisses and intense love you’s coming right and left. Forty-five minutes or so, later, his little brother hung up.

— I need more cookies – Todomatsu said matter of fact.

— Is this the first time you have not stayed with them? – Karamatsu asked, curious about their lengthy call; including his brother-in-law.

— No, but it is the first time being in the same city and not staying with them – chuckling, Todomatsu brought the bowl of cookies closer and hogged them. – Usually, it is not this dramatic and not this short, but since I am not in another country or city, I won’t be receiving midnight calls to try and chase the monster away.

Karamatsu smiled.

Who would have thought that Todomatsu would stand his ground against a monster?

— Can’t believe you are chasing monsters away now.

— It still freaks me out, niisan – Todomatsu muttered, nibbling on a cookie. – The older they got, more monsters seem to come – Todomatsu huffed and split another cookie in half. – I told Atsu that we should get them a nightlight, so we did. But things got worse! My bundles would come at me at night and sleep with us because the color of the light was wrong.

A bit lost, Karamatsu attempted to follow him in that crazy story of imaginary monsters.

— It was not chasing the monster away, niisan. They said it was luring it, because it liked orangey tones – as if he could strengthen his point with his actions, he raised both arms up. – Obviously, I did not question that and we began alternating the colors at night. That solved the problem for a few nights. Then, I decided that they might need a plushy that could fight off monsters in case of an emergency. That did the trick – shuddering, Todomatsu looked rather uneasy. – Nonetheless, I prefer to make sure to tune in different colors every week than face a monster in the dark – shaking his head, Todomatsu closed his eyes. – I don’t even want to imagine seeing another one.

Another one?

Karamatsu was not going to question it.

— All this talk of fighting against darkness with magical lights, reminds me of something that I should return to you – nodding, Karamatsu stood up. – Do not cry for me, my brother. I’ll return shortly! – acting his farewell, he went to his bedroom, looking for one item Karamatsu would constantly use as a direct link to talk with, when his baby brother was not close.

Karamatsu took good care of it, mending weakened seams through the years, and religiously changing the stuffing to keep it somewhat eternal.
The only detail, Karamatsu added, was a faint fruity scent.

Walking back to the common room, Karamatsu felt the soft fabric one last time.

Standing in front of him, he showed Todomatsu the white bunny, still rocking the same look with the pink bowtie around its neck.

— Is that… – staring at it, Todomatsu sight travelled back up to his older brother. – I thought I lost it…

— When you left, we thought you would have taken it with you – Karamatsu got closer, sitting down next to him, just as they were before. – Imagine the surprise when we found it – he sighed with a bittersweet smile. – We tried to send it back to you, using the address from the box with your cellphone, but it got sent back to us because no one was living there.

— I wanted to look for it, niisan… I just couldn’t find the time to look for it, and to be frank; it was the last of my worries – Todomatsu stared at the bunny, while his mind keep of forcing him to go back and look at what he had done. – I was mad… I was so mad when I sent you all, my phone. I wanted you guys to feel bad about… everything – Todomatsu admitted. – All because I felt upset and chased; like you would appear at any given minute of the day to try to convince me to drop the act and come back home.

— That’s understandable – handing the bunny back to its owner, Karamatsu took his chance and caressed the top of his head. – We were so worried about you that we did not know when to back off. We did not give you space.

Slowly and hesitantly, Todomatsu nestled the plushy against his chest, embracing it as he felt nostalgia slap him on the face.

— I … I thought you were against me – Todomatsu muttered. – That you would ruin everything. I knew that before I left home, you were simply curious, that you all wanted to know what was going on. But … – biting his lower lip, Todomatsu made himself look smaller, hunching over a little. – After dad hit me I stopped thinking rationally. I didn’t want to do it, because in my head things were never going to get better, that I had to look pass through it and keep going, that I had to stop considering any of you as someone to trust – with a flicker of a smile, Todomatsu looked up at him. – When I left, when we left… that got worst, niisan.

Afraid and yet curious to know where all that was going, Karamatsu accommodated on the floor, as he loosely wrapped one arm around him, hugging Todomatsu while he soothingly rubbed his back in a circular motion. Shortly enough, Karamatsu felt his little brother relax against him.

— You don’t have to talk about it, If you don’t want to – Karamatsu said, applying the same hushed rule they used on Osomatsu.

Todomatsu stayed quiet, internally debating in butchering his past circumstances or keep them hidden and never brought them up in this life.

Was Todomatsu being fair by not sharing that?

Probably not.

Incredibly, his mind jumped to the image of his kids.
What kind of example was Todomatsu giving them by treating his own brothers so badly?

If there was something, far more important to Todomatsu than his wellbeing; that were his kids. Todomatsu would feel guiltier if they happened to take his shitty example of what a brother and a twin should be like. In addition to that, they were merely four; they would grow curious and ask him about their uncles.

In his opinion, Todomatsu would rather tell a story where he talked to his brother and how they reunited than how they talked a second time and parted ways again.

Todomatsu would do it for his kids, for the future that will eventually come.

Closing his eyes, the youngest exhaled.

— I was not fine that first year – Todomatsu could feel his brother tense up at the tone he was using. — And the following one and so on – accommodating better in his hold, Todomatsu sighed. — I don’t think I’ll ever share this with the others. It feels like I would be pushing too much.

— I see. However, I’m honored that you’ll confide in me – squeezing his form a little, Karamatsu hummed. — As always, you can trust that I won’t tell a soul.

— You can share yours with me too, niisan – Todomatsu muttered, extending his offering to an equal exchange.

— That won’t be

— Necessary? – Rolling his eyes, Todomatsu spinelessly punched him on the side of his torso. – Don’t be stupid.

Karamatsu was beyond happy that Todomatsu was not looking at him now, otherwise his little brother would have seen the unmistakable excitement written all over his face.

— Well. If you insist my brother.

Todomatsu hit him again as if he could sense what he was feeling.

— No, I’m changing it – the youngest huffed. — I’ll tell you about my first shitty year, if you tell me about your failed ‘eloping’ story.

Karamatsu tensed up again. He really thought Todomatsu was not going to ask that, or that his brother wasn’t paying attention, like he would mostly do when they used to abuse the ‘let’s ignore Karamatsu’ prank.

— Promise it – pinching his side, Todomatsu forced Karamatsu to seal the deal.

Karamatsu was not going to avoid telling Todomatsu about it by any means.

***

Was it not strange?

Living as if he was in a movie.

Todomatsu adored the idea of it, but the fabricated freedom and the fake elation of the sudden change, crashed his life with a single sleepless night.

Todomatsu was awake laying on bed. He was tired of cleaning the place and arranging the new furniture they went shopping for, however, it was a nice change to have more than just the bare
necessities. They have been living together for two months now, two difficult and harsh months, he might have to add.

In the fickle time, he got to spend with Atsushi at their new home, Todomatsu voiced his lack of participation in this new environment. Todomatsu did not want to be a stay home boyfriend, suck his dick and then wish Atsushi a good day at work. No. He also wanted to go out and get a job; earn his own money. Although, receiving a generous amount from Atsushi was great and all, Todomatsu did like the feel of spending his own. Moreover, to have the means to spoil his man too.

Despite of that, it was one thing wanting to do something, and actually proceeding to do it.

His English was not as good as he used to think it was, shortening most, if not all interviews. His looks were not what they were looking for; his studies were under average compared to others. Overall, Todomatsu seemed to have the worst resume in the story of resumes. It could not get any worse than that.

Until, that night happened.

Todomatsu had woken up from a nightmare he could not remember. Surrounded by darkness, he groggily sat up and looked to his right. Todomatsu did not want to bother that much, so he decided to bug someone else. Shaking the body next to his, Todomatsu pouted and asked to be walked to the bathroom. When Atsushi woke up, Todomatsu could only see his lips move, too busy trying to make sense of what was in front of him, against what he sincerely believed in.

Why wasn’t his niisan there?

The next day, Todomatsu embroidered the taste of breakfast in his palette while Atsushi tried to understand and sympathize with him. Regardless of being thankful and not mocked for that incident, Todomatsu hesitantly assured Atsushi that it was an onetime silly mistake.

It repeated. Not once, not twice, but several times. The more Todomatsu made the effort to avoid it, the more he found himself calling his boyfriend like one of his brothers. If Atsushi loudly laughed, he would say Osomatsu niisan; if Atsushi wore his glasses and frown, he would call him Choromatsu niisan, and so on. Besides the obvious embarrassment, Todomatsu could see the worry in his eyes, but every single time, Todomatsu would blush, softly hit his head and giggle. Playing the cute card like his life depended of it.

Things did not change. Todomatsu made them change, bending them to his will.

Forcing his mouth to sew its lips together when Todomatsu felt like his brothers were in some of his boyfriend actions. He abused the brakes of his mind focusing on the frequent doomed interviews he would put himself through or by keeping a pristine order in their apartment.

Atsushi having being witnessing that, suggested the idea of inviting Todomatsu to an outing Atsushi had to attend, as a part of his job. That feeble excitement and variant rush of adrenaline hit both of them while getting ready. After all, Todomatsu considered they were the kind of couple that preferred to go out, instead of staying at home. Although the later one had been recurrent those past months.

Either way, they went ahead. Starting with a far better mood and great expectations.

The venue was aesthetically pleasing; a warm, cozy restaurant with a menu Todomatsu would fight for any given time, and an amicable company. Both were sure, Todomatsu was going to have a nice
time.
The first nervous stumbling words settled the knots forming in his stomach; keeping a nice smile on,
Todomatsu chuckled at his mispronunciation, quickly earning brownie points for owning his
foreigner mistakes.
Seeing that, Atsushi let him manage the conversation on his own.

It was great; Todomatsu was smiling and talking with others. They were curious about him, since
Atsushi had no qualms in sharing their relationship status. For how long they have been together,
how and where did they meet? Those sort of questions popped up, one after the other, but that lead
to deepen the conversation, until they innocently wondered about Todomatsu’s family.

To say that panic rose up to his face, was putting it simply. Atsushi tried to lead the conversation as
soon as he noticed Todomatsu tense up. Despite making a few of his colleagues change the focus to
someone else’s life, there was always one that would come back to ask Todomatsu about his family.

Atsushi though Todomatsu was doing amazing by holding back and cautiously answering to the
curious couple, sitting next to him. However, when they asked Todomatsu if he had any siblings, his
face instantly paled.

Todomatsu wanted to answer sincerely, he wanted to tell funny stories and sit at Chibita’s Oden cart,
drink beer with his brothers, eat and run away without paying.

His hands felt so clammy, the knots turned his insides into churn, Todomatsu was so aware of his
breathing, he had to pay all his attention into that one action to avoid stopping or forget doing it.
Confusion drowned him, when the sole of his feet twitched as Todomatsu intently tried to understand
the words directed to him, but they were muted by the overbearing clatter of silverware, chewing and
loud swallowing.

Todomatsu did not know what to do.

His hands did the only thing that seemed to help him regain the lost control. Gripping his own tights
with both hands, he began scratching.

Todomatsu heard an ‘okay’, he felt one of his hands being held and his windpipe constricted.

He had to get out of there.

With that set in mind, Todomatsu stood up, looked around for the quickest exist and without a single
thought that could prevent him from embarrassing himself and his boyfriend at their first real outing,
Todomatsu dashed off.

Fast walking out of there, wandering and turning at random blurry named streets, Todomatsu took in
as much air as his throat would allow him to, while he continued mindlessly moving.

Until his rushed stride came to a halt.

A short, little bridge dimly lighted over a pond, washed down some of his tension. The cold breeze
seemed to open up his chest as Todomatsu finally took a deep breath in, sparsely clearing his head to
approach it. Passing through all the greenery, Todomatsu walked towards the middle of the bridge
and leant on the edge. Observing the soft waves dance in the pond, he slowly came back to his
senses; realization hitting him hard with how atrocious his actions went that evening.

It was somewhat similar. The vibes, the fresh air, the rustling of the leaves, the moving waters.
Todomatsu swore that he could visualize the face of his brother if he stared long enough at his own
reflection. Almost on cue, another figure reflected by his side.
Slightly freaked out, Todomatsu faced the stranger, and it was only then that the horrid perfume abused his sense of smell, reminding him of one older brother in particular.

The worn out leather jacket, jet-black hair and jeans, made him wonder if Karamatsu was there. If perhaps, his older brother came after him. But, it were those piercing blue eyes that reassured Todomatsu, he was only imagining things.

Lowering his sight, Todomatsu pouted, turned around to face the bridge again and ignored the stranger.

For ten solid minutes or so, the stranger stayed where he was. He took a pack of cigarettes out of the inner front pocket of his jacket, offered one to Todomatsu; that he obviously rejected, and lightened his own up.

The dissipating smoke bothered Todomatsu, because Karamatsu would only smoke when things were extremely bad, and his brother would always make sure to do so in a way it would not be all over Todomatsu’s face, clearly unlike that rude stranger.

Scrunching up his nose, Todomatsu glared at his reflection. Hearing a low chuckle coming from that guy, just ticked him wrong.

Todomatsu did not want to deal with some noisy stranger. So, he ought to tell him off. Todomatsu should call Atsushi or a cab to get back home too.

Then, that annoying man looked up at the sky and smiled.

Trying as hard as he could, Todomatsu avoided directing his sight to the stranger while he attempted to locate his phone. Rummaging in both his pockets, his blood ran cold when Todomatsu realized he might have left it at the restaurant, or even worst, he fucking lost it on his way there.

The clear disgust summoned the other to start a light conversation with him, as if Todomatsu somehow gave him the signals that he wanted to talk. Nevertheless, the sincerity within his relaxing deep tone and Todomatsu’s previous failed gathering, worked magnificently to unlock something in him, giving up his stubbornness and sour experiences to follow that conversation.

It was so easy to let go.

It was so easy to open up.

Todomatsu got lead to the same topic that made him flee; however, he didn’t feel any different like it happened before. He found himself telling that stranger things that Todomatsu had not even discussed with Atsushi; things that he was not planning to share with anyone else but his own self.

That felt inevitably good. To have the freedom to drop such a bomb to someone and not have the dangers of repercussions coming after him.

Once Todomatsu stopped talking, he felt the muscles of his face twitch for how long he had been spouting his worries, and before he could think of anything else, Todomatsu let that stranger get involved. He let that man voice his opinion in the subject, more importantly; Todomatsu listened to what that stranger had to say.

Was that not weird for him.

Nonetheless, one phrase shone brighter than the rest, not because it was an eloquent thing to say, but it sounded so similar to what his older brother would have said.

The words, the odd flowery, the expressions. It warmed Todomatsu’s with a familiarity he have been
silently wishing to feel that again.

Hours passed; having forgotten his phone, Todomatsu did not feel the need to move from there, not when he was calmer. Eventually and when there was so little to exchange for the evening, Todomatsu asked for his name.

That should have been the first thing Todomatsu should have asked.

Mathew.

Todomatsu could not keep that name aligned with that face. He did not look like a Mathew; in his eyes, Todomatsu could only catch glimpses of Karamatsu, and he was more than fine with that.

Mathew borrowed Todomatsu his phone, so he could call. Knowing Todomatsu must have called Atsushi first, he still did not want to deal with what would come if he did; to avoid all that, he called for a cab. However, it was supposed to be a fair trade, and for getting the phone, Todomatsu gave Mathew his number.

That night, when he arrived home, Atsushi embraced him so hard, so tight, Todomatsu feared his boyfriend was not going to let go of him to freshen up in the bathroom.

Keeping that little adventure to himself, Todomatsu did not peep a word to Atsushi about the stranger, beginning to trace a lie that felt bittersweet as a resemblance of what he used to do back at home.

Although Atsushi constantly expressed how dead worried he was, Todomatsu apologized for his behavior at that restaurant. After that, they laid next to each other, submerged in different things within the same bubble.

It would have been great that it would have stopped there; that it would have ended with one magical night to remember; to fake situations and morph them into memories Todomatsu never once possessed.

Todomatsu was elated when he received an awaited text from Mathew.

Atsushi was at his job, Todomatsu was doing absolutely nothing. After getting down on several interviews that week, he decided to take a short break for the day, and what a lucky day that one was.

Instantly, Todomatsu began to text him back.

In a spawn of a month, Todomatsu had been talking and texting with Mathew so much, that it ended up being almost a daily thing. He could easily compare it to the once in a while conversations he held with Aida and Sacchi; the differences in the time zones destroyed most of his line friends with how little he could share with them, but with this new friend, Todomatsu didn’t have to stay up at night or wake up early to text a simple ‘hi’.

His boyfriend would ask him what was making him so happy, and Todomatsu would answer him with a joyous smile, telling him about his new ‘online friend’. Atsushi would listen to him about the things they supposedly had been talking about; leaving aside anything that might sparsely touch the dwelling truth.

At the start of the next month Mathew invited him to go out, Todomatsu was unbelievable happy to
finally meet that man again. In his mind, Todomatsu was already thinking about going fishing, perhaps shopping or just hang at the bridge. All those sounded perfect to Todomatsu. Regardless of how badly he desired to be at one of those places, having a nice chat, Todomatsu found himself in front of an extremely nice café.

Suspicious rose in his mind as wallflowers in spring, but the artistic atmosphere linked him to the memories of all the time Karamatsu would attempt to forge his musical career, at the expenses of everyone’s hearing.

Having that as a saccharine sweetener, Todomatsu did no longer think about anything else.

That first meeting made him learn a lot about where Todomatsu was living; he got some tips and tricks Todomatsu could use in a daily basis, great hidden gems where he could venture with Atsushi, if he was free any time soon, which Todomatsu highly doubted. Nonetheless, he learnt plenty not to have a repetition of the same, with that being said, they decided to meet again, at least two times per week.

They would always go out when Mathew had a day off, unlike Atsushi whose job seemed to gradually hog all of his time. Now, Todomatsu’s daily life had that one thing he have been missing. He would do chores, spend the short mornings with Atsushi, then try for another job position and when he was done with that, Todomatsu would directly go to meet with Mathew.

Since they were always connected, it was not hard to move some things just so they could find the time to meet.

In every opportunity, Mathew would invite him to a new and different place to eat, when they got to spend most of the day together, he would take Todomatsu on those short surprise trips to get better acquainted with the city. It worked as a charm to water down the foul mood from failed job interviews, and it did help a lot that Mathew would often hum this same short tune; whether they were walking, resting or sitting down, he would always start humming.

That enjoyable routine lasted for a whole month.

However, one evening when Todomatsu was having a picnic with Mathew to show him the acoustic tunes he had been practicing on with his guitar; Todomatsu received a call from his boyfriend. At first, Todomatsu grew worried, thinking that something happened to Atsushi, something bad. But, when Todomatsu answered the call, he heard a faint echo, which could only mean, they were close to each other without even realizing it yet.

The ill sensation worsened when Atsushi told him that he left early so they could meet and have dinner outside.

In any given situation, Todomatsu would ditch his older brothers to spend a better time with acquaintances and friends. Despite that, Todomatsu would never ditch any of them that casually, especially if they prepared to set all that up. How could he ditch Karamatsu for his boyfriend? Although, he really wanted to show Atsushi all the fun and interesting places he had been to!

Just when Mathew began striking the cords to show Todomatsu the bridge of his new song, Atsushi’s side of the line went silent.

Todomatsu frowned, picking on the grass beneath them while he asked Atsushi what was wrong, until a looming shadow darkened his sight, making Todomatsu look up.

Surely, there he was. Cutting the call, Atsushi stared at Mathew. While his friend interrupted the
song to say ‘hi’, Todomatsu saw as his boyfriend walked pass him and punched Mathew close to his eyes.

Next thing Todomatsu knew, Atsushi was taking him back to their apartment.

That was so rude of him. Not only Todomatsu ditched Mathew, he also got him hurt. That was not how Todomatsu wanted this to go. He was being a horrible friend.

As soon as they were at the privacy of their home, Todomatsu voiced his displeasure towards the violent approach Atsushi took. Regardless of saying how irked and embarrassed he was, Atsushi stayed quiet.

When Todomatsu finished, his boyfriend sat him down on the loveseat of their common room and straight forwardly asked him, what he was doing.

What was he doing? Was it not obvious? Todomatsu was having fun with a friend, someone he met by himself, quite often as well.

Hearing that ticked Atsushi off. It was only a matter of time for his boyfriend to think so negatively of their friendship; feeding that alarming thought, Atsushi asked Todomatsu if he was cheating on him with Mathew.

Honestly, Todomatsu wanted to roll his eyes and shake his head; instead of that, he froze up.

Cheating. Why would he? He was having fun with a friend, going out fishing and visiting interesting establishments to eat. Good activities that Todomatsu would love to keep repeating as long as his brother wanted to.

The displeasure in Atsushi’s face morphed into something completely different, baffling Todomatsu and clogging his ill temper.

Why was Atsushi looking at him like that? Todomatsu was going out with his brother, as they would sometimes do. Was it that surprising?

Bombarding Atsushi with those entire questions raised only one from his boyfriend.

‘Your brother?’

And it hit him, that shocking return to his reality. Osomatsu was not there, Choromatsu was not there, Ichimatsu was not there, Jyushimatsu was not there and Karamatsu… he was definitely not there.

Now that he thought about it, Todomatsu never addressed Mathew as such; he rarely said his name when they went out.

What was he doing? What should he do? Why were his stupid older brothers not being noisy? Why were they not telling him what to do? Even if it was a shitty, useless idea.

Todomatsu was alone.

He was alone in that apartment, alone at the interviews, alone in that table, alone, alone, alone, alone…

Feeling both his hands being held, Todomatsu hesitantly looked up to Atsushi, and with little coercion from his boyfriend, he spilled the tea; starting from that uneventful evening two months ago and finishing with that very same day. Regardless of getting it off his chest, of coming clean to his
boyfriend, something in Todomatsu switched when Atsushi asked him to stop seeing Mathew.

Atsushi wanted Todomatsu to be alone again. Why? How dare he? Did Atsushi have any idea how terrible it was feeling like that?

Todomatsu should not put any efforts into that line of thoughts when his boyfriend was nothing but an only child; a rich, spoiled only child.

Atsushi would never understand.

Their heated discussion followed the same path; Atsushi trying to convince Todomatsu that he should let him help for real, instead of going after a stranger to cope, while Todomatsu refuted and defied Atsushi about not seeing Mathew again.

Reaching a moot point, they ate dinner and went to bed. Todomatsu faced the wall and moved to the corner of it, wanting Atsushi away from him.

The next following days, everything turned sour; Todomatsu told Atsushi that he was not going to stop having fun with his friend, and fulfilling his words, he would still meet Mathew at the same time, have a great evening and then come back home to eat dinner with Atsushi. Besides greeting and asking for each other day, they were not really talking, because it took one of them to open up their mouths to blaze the silent atmosphere of their apartment into another tied discussion.

Despite of the emptiness Todomatsu felt when he had to return home, Atsushi never ceased to repeat to Todomatsu that he should not go; his boyfriend had the tenacity to insist in his honesty, vaguely wanting to convince Todomatsu about Mathew’s intentions. Something that baffled Todomatsu and managed to summon his anger each time.

Lasting more than Todomatsu thought he could handle, Todomatsu snapped at Atsushi when he heard the same statement that morning. Todomatsu have never yelled so harshly at him before; he had gotten so irritated that it caused an imbalance with his troubled emotions. Yelling at Atsushi about how wrong he was, about how rude he was, and how he wanted Todomatsu to feel alone again.

Although, he saw Atsushi does nothing but stand there and be yelled at, Todomatsu could see in his eyes that annoying sadness, that lingering pity, that noisy worry; all of it infuriated him even more. With a heavy heart full of commotion, Todomatsu went out that evening as any other, but as soon as he caught a glimpse of that leather jacket, he could not hold back.

Bombarding Mathew with all the troubles and repercussions, with his pain and confusion, details that Todomatsu would blindly trust to his brothers about his relationship; his whole existence felt so heavy and yet empty.

‘Why don’t you stay with me for a while?’

Drowning within a tarnished cloud, Todomatsu took that offered chance with both hands and followed it blindly.

After Atsushi left for work, Todomatsu packed his gym bag and walked out of their apartment early in the morning, leaving behind a simple note in the middle of their little decorated table.

That false thunderous bravado melted into nothingness when Todomatsu sat down in a worn out, second hand couch.

What did he just do?
With a bitter cup of coffee in his hands, Todomatsu counted the minutes as he stared the screen of his phone, mentally expecting Atsushi to call him, but Mathew took the phone away from him with a smile. Uneasy, Todomatsu sipped that lukewarm coffee.

That night, he slept on that same shitty couch; his phone did not ring, then again, Todomatsu let Mathew take his phone away, like an idiot, because Todomatsu thought he could trust him.

However, he began feeling nervous, wary of his surroundings. It was too dark, too cold, too humid, and as tired as Todomatsu felt, he could not blink an eye without thinking someone was watching him through that obscure corner of that dingy room.

When morning came, Todomatsu realized he had not closed his eyes for hours; rubbing them did nothing to convey a bit of resting hours, or to wash it out and dully wake up.

A warm bath and a nice breakfast would have been perfect.

The rest of the day passed fast, Mathew tried to make him feel at home, telling Todomatsu that he could use the shower and grab something to eat as he pleased while he was at his part time job. Groggily, Todomatsu nodded and thanked him for letting him stay.

Once the other was gone, Todomatsu looked for his phone everywhere. Intruding in Mathew’s bedroom, he checked each cabinet, backpack, even jacket to locate his phone. Todomatsu lost the rest of the evening doing that and in the end he found nothing.

Mathew’s schedule was always short, so it did not come as a surprise when he barged into his own room at the right time. Seeing Todomatsu trying to call, using Mathew’s home phone, did not sit well with his supposed called friend. Taking the phone from his hand a second time, he put it back in place before Mathew asked Todomatsu if he was hungry.

Dinner had an eerie aura, the fast food was too greasy, the music too loud and stuffy. Above all that, he was dead tired too. But, Todomatsu stayed there, like a fool on his own free will.

Again, he asked for his phone back, and as an answer, Todomatsu received a dull invitation to take a sit on the couch.

For a solid second, Todomatsu wondered why Mathew would try to have a serious conversation with him, when it was not the right moment nor did Todomatsu had anything else to say to him or the urge to say it.

His brothers would have waited for him to be in a better mood if it was something serious. Karamatsu would have offered something simple or maybe something over the top and downright embarrassing, nonetheless it would show how much he cared.

Then again, Atsushi was right; Mathew was not his brother, he was not Karamatsu, he will never be Karamatsu.

Todomatsu understood that too late. When chapped lips crashed with his, when a slimy tongue forced its way inside his mouth, when his back hit the seats of the couch and wandering hands roughly groped his tights, nausea came to him as a plague.

Atsushi was the only one that had the permission to touch him like that.

It felt so wrong, so disgusting. Todomatsu did not want that.

Taking the reins of the situation, Todomatsu squirmed, hit him, fought him back and tried to push him away. He did anything and everything in his power to get Mathew off him. In all his life,
Todomatsu have never had this much trouble fleeing an uncomfortable prospect. Trying to play deaf to all the nonsensical and lustful gibberish that man was saying between kisses. Todomatsu had a quick idea of what he could do, all thanks to a flash memory of Ichimatsu’s cat.

He bit Mathews tongue, hard, making him groan in pain and pull away instinctively, blessing Todomatsu with space and minutes to kick him off the couch and himself. Jittery, anxious and full of adrenaline, Todomatsu reached for his bag and stormed out, rushing his peace far away from that nightmare and to the first phone he could get his hands on.

Todomatsu recalled what happened months ago as he marked the only number he knew by heart. His hands turned so cold, he was not sure how he was holding the phone.

The dialing tone was abruptly cut when Atsushi picked up.

He did not want to cry and ask for forgiveness, to beg through a phone to be taken back when Todomatsu was unsure if Atsushi would ever consider doing such a thing after all the burden it could mean. They were not through, because they did not break it up. Then what?

‘Todomatsu? Darling?’

Throwing it all out of the window, Todomatsu asked Atsushi to come and pick him up as he made a poor attempt to keep his breathing steady. Unexpectedly, Atsushi told him not to cut the call. His darling boyfriend stayed on the line with him the whole trip to the address Todomatsu gave him as Atsushi calmly asked what happened, not even glazing about Todomatsu leaving, nor expressing any hostility. At least Todomatsu expected some coming from him.

Within twenty minutes, Todomatsu ran back to his open arms.

Giving Atsushi the address to Mathew’s place, the same cab drove them back there, thankfully Atsushi told him to wait in the cab, which was more than fine for him.

Keeping his sight glued to the window, he saw Mathew opening the door and a second after Atsushi pushed his way in and closed the door behind him.

Anxious and with a better idea of what could be happening, Todomatsu held his breath for the few seconds that door stayed shut. The second time it opened, he saw his boyfriend coming out with a bit of blood on his lower lip and Todomatsu’s phone in his bruised hand.

All of that was his fault. He managed to hurt Atsushi in more than one way in two days; first by leaving him and now that.

Guilt was a tricky subject to handle when Todomatsu could not start leading his own life with less drama.

That same night, while Todomatsu promised Atsushi to better himself, to be cautious, to trust him again as he should have, Todomatsu bathed him with apologies for everything he did wrong; starting with not listening and ending with wanting to hide things from him. Todomatsu didn’t sleep much either, however, they took those hours to make up, to grow closer, taking it as a free lesson from life.

Regardless of earning a nice outcome, Todomatsu set on stone in his mind that sooner or later, he was going to have to experience the backslap of his horrible actions.

***

When Todomatsu finished, Karamatsu did not know if he was feeling sorry for what he had to experience on his own or appalled by everything really; the late hour did not help to process all that
information.

— Every time I think about it, I get madder at myself for being so stupid – shaking his head, Todomatsu smiled. – I mean, who would be that blind? Seriously, he was flirting with me and I just looked through all that – with an exaggerated sigh, Todomatsu turned around to look at him, expecting Karamatsu to share his opinion.

— As I see it, that man caught you at your lowest.

— So? I literally cheated on my husband – Todomatsu whined.

— You felt alone – before Todomatsu could refute him, Karamatsu added. – But, I do consider what you did, little brother as cheating, even if you thought you were not doing it at that time – seeing him nod and agree with what Karamatsu was saying, proved to him that Todomatsu learnt from that crack in their relationship.

— Right? Sometimes I wonder if Atsu is not fine in the head – Karamatsu could not help himself snorting after hearing that coming from Todomatsu. – He is always reassuring me that it was a simple mistake that I was not at fault and that I did not mean it – lifting the little bunny up, Todomatsu moved the plush side to side. – I know I fucked up. I know I hurt him, and yet, he kept treating me so nicely.

— Well, from someone that have been cheated on each time – dropping that so casually, was bound to snap Todomatsu’s focus back on Karamatsu. – I say, he understood what was troubling you and preferred to get you back instead of giving up on you. It’s not an easy thing to do. But you did fight a lot to be together, even got the guts to leave as a couple.

Todomatsu wanted to ask Karamatsu about it, to get to know his brother’s missteps in life too. Despite of the nurtured curiosity, they were both tired and it was pass three in the morning; Todomatsu still had the time to catch up.

— Niisan, lend me something to sleep in.

Karamatsu blinked once, before he nodded. Carrying the leftovers of their dinner back to the kitchen, both brothers moved to Karamatsu’s bedroom.

Wearing his older brother’s gym clothes, Todomatsu laid on the right side of the cramped bed, Karamatsu on the left side and the bunny in the middle, still in his hold. The oldest of the two was about to fall asleep, when Karamatsu felt the rustling of sheets and the creaking of his bed.

— Niisan.

— Hmm? – Karamatsu responded, keeping his eyes close.

— Goodnight – Todomatsu muttered, curling up a little.

— Goodnight Totty – with a smile, Karamatsu let his body sink in the comfort of his bed, knowing that next morning, Todomatsu was going to be there.

His little brother was going to have the honor of tasting his magnificent breakfast.

Oh! He could not wait to blow his palette away with his extravagant touch! A fusion of two completely opposites that would come together fabulously!

— Niisan. You are thinking too loud.
When Todomatsu vaguely regained his consciousness, after such a good night of sleep, his first line of thoughts were how quiet everything was. Too quiet for his liking.
Frowning, he wondered why his little girl was not bawling her eyes out, or why his bundles were not running around and playing with the elevator. Did the monsters get them? No, no. Those were not real. Maybe Atsushi took them all out. Impossible, his husband would not dare to go over him like that, let alone take their children without even telling him first.
Growing uneasy, Todomatsu grumbled as he sat up.

— Yua needs a change… She must be hungry too.

Todomatsu brushed all his hair back with his fingers before he heard a chuckle.

That was not his husband.

— I bet she does, but I’m sure she is going to be fine.

Pouting, Todomatsu shook his head, remembering where he was and how silly he was being: getting all worked up like that in the morning.

— I swear I almost began to freak out – Todomatsu said, looking up at his older brother. – And you
were just there, silently staring at me – he whined, squinting his eyes at Karamatsu.

— I was going to wake you up – Karamatsu tried to save himself and his good intentions, but Todomatsu was not buying it. – But you were sleeping so soundlessly I didn’t want to take that away.

— You have been spared, for now – yawning, Todomatsu stretched his arms up. – Oh! You have to tell me about your exes today! – seeing his older brother shrink a little and his smile waver for what Karamatsu would not be capable of getting away from, satisfied Todomatsu’s silly needs of gossip. – I’m sure it will be a great topic for breakfast, right?

— Yeah…

Sighing, Karamatsu mentally prepared himself to revisit those unlucky years, all due to fulfill his baby brother’s curiosity and meet the end of their deal. Regardless of how disagreeable it might be, Karamatsu had to do it. Todomatsu was the only brother that did not know about how truly pathetic he had been in the past. He just did not learn; at least Todomatsu did get the message, unlike Karamatsu that it took him several tries to understand that he was doing the same things repeatedly and reaching the same end.

While Todomatsu freshened up, Karamatsu set the little wooden table in the kitchen, finishing in time to have his younger brother walk in, wearing the same clothes than the day before, and only changing his hair to putting it all up in a bun.

— And here I was going to offer you some help.

— There is no need for that. You are my guest. Therefore, rest assured my baby brother there is nothing you should worry about – Karamatsu flashed Todomatsu a smile as he showed him his seat with a grant gesture, making Todomatsu scrunch up his nose, but he took his seat nonetheless. Karamatsu followed him, sitting down on the other chair and letting Todomatsu get the first taste of his cuisine. Todomatsu eyes popped out almost comically when he bit into the piece of the fluffy pancakes.

— Oh! This is really good, Niisan! – Todomatsu said, cutting another piece and trying to top it off with the sliced fruit and whipped cream, it had in the middle. – Do you always cook for yourself?

— Mostly, yes – nodding, Karamatsu went for his coffee first. – You don’t cook?

Todomatsu snorted and gave him a funny look.

— I don’t have time to cook for anyone, let alone for myself. However, I do like to bake with my bundles, some cookies or brownies. Just easy stuff, sometimes we don’t even use the oven, we just put it in the fridge and get some yummy bars – Todomatsu explained as he enjoyed his breakfast.

— Your parenting skills amaze me – Karamatsu sincerely said, putting his coffee down.

— Parenting skills? I don’t know how you see that, but I feel like I have none. Sometimes you just feel like the very first day they came to your life. Useless – chuckling, Todomatsu changed tactics
and began stealing the fruit. – Oh! Right! You were going to tell me about your love life.

More like, Todomatsu was going to make Karamatsu talk about it, but those were minor details. Straightening up in his seat, his older brother looked at his half-empty mug.

— Well, I seem to have a tendency to bore all my partners away – Karamatsu started, trying as hard as he could to not look that affected by it, but for the look Todomatsu was giving him, he was olympically failing at it. – Don’t get me wrong. I am happy that I had the chance to experience love once again.

— But? – Added Todomatsu, encouraging his older brother to keep going.

— But, I wished I could have done something else to save at least one of them – taking a bit of his stack of pancakes, Karamatsu frowned. – Apparently, I am too much for all of them, and I also happen to not be good enough. Can you understand that? – Karamatsu asked Todomatsu, who only raised a waxed eyebrow at him, showing him that his little brother did not believe what have been said to him. – Exactly!

— What did you do that was so wrong? – Todomatsu wondered. – Smoother them with surprise bouquets?

— It seems so – Karamatsu clicked his tongue. – Not only did I tone it down when they asked me to, they also said it was not enough.

— Well, what did you do? I mean you can be easy to manipulate – Todomatsu muttered the last part, however, it did not get lost.

— Maybe I am. Maybe that is what ruined all of my past relationships – Karamatsu grumbled, getting mad at his past self, resembling how Todomatsu felt the night before at his own qualms.

— Even if you are, it does not mean they get to do it, niisan. Besides, you also told me that you were cheated on, more than once; so if you consider those, they were the ones fucking it up – literally; Todomatsu might add.

— But they would not have looked for someone else if I was better, if I made them happy – Karamatsu insisted in what have been said to him.

— No. Don’t say that – Todomatsu immediately intervened in those thoughts. – You don’t have to be better for anyone else but yourself. If they were not clever enough to notice that you could be a decent boyfriend, it’s their fault, not yours.

His older brother stared at Todomatsu as if he had said something enlightening. Todomatsu thought it was both weird and endearing, dusting his full cheeks with soft pink, tuning with his hair.

—What? – Todomatsu pouted and frowned at him. – Don’t tell me no one said that to you, because I’m not going to believe it.

Karamatsu blushed and grabbed his mug of coffee again.

— No. It’s not that – taking a good gulp of his warm beverage, Karamatsu felt the muscles of his shoulders relax. – A lot of people have told me that, but it’s feels different coming for you. Heh – Karamatsu smiled a little. – It might sound stupid to you, but I didn’t expect to have this conversation with you so soon. Although I was the only one that kept thinking you were going to come back, or at least we were going to know about you.
— Well, I wasn’t planning on meeting with any of you. I was going to do my job here and then leave as fast as we could. But, that’s another thing, niisan. Don’t try to change the subject – Todomatsu kicked him under the table.

— I wasn’t doing that – Karamatsu chuckled and retaliated, kicking him back. – I was saying that I think this is what I really wanted to hear.

— Why? I don’t get it – scrunching up his nose, Todomatsu went back to eating his pancakes.

— It doesn’t matter Totty. Anyways, as I mentioned before all of them cheated on me at a certain point – adding a bit more sugar to his coffee, Karamatsu smile turned bittersweet. – Years, weeks, even days after we started dating, they would start cheating on me. That is not normal, or it shouldn’t be.

— I don’t know about you but I would have been really mad about it.

— I did get mad at them and at the other party too – frowning, Karamatsu munched on his breakfast again. – After a while, it gets boring to have to be mad at them; and I am not talking about trying to get them back. Those conversations drained everything from me.

— Where they all women or

— Yes, they were all women, but that’s not the point.

— I was just asking, niisan – Todomatsu rolled his eyes. – I just… How did you deal with all that? I freak out the second I think something is wrong – he shuddered.

— Sincerely, I still don’t know how to deal with it. But, more than freaking out I have this bad tendency to try and do everything to get them back – Karamatsu sighed, shaking his head. – I know that’s not what you are supposed to do, I just could not help it. Healthy or not, I really wanted those relationships to work.

— I cannot say I understand niisan; however, when you are in love, you do want your relationship to work.

— Yes, and after my third relationship I sort of predisposed myself to have that same negative response than the last one, therefore I could kind of avoid getting affected.

— But you still do – Todomatsu said, nodding.

— Yes, I still do – Karamatsu repeated, defeated.

Both brothers sighed, taking in how life changed and how little they did. Focusing in finishing their breakfast, they ate in an uncomfortable silence, with Todomatsu holding at the tip of his tongue all of the questions that remained floating unanswered, and Karamatsu trying not to feel sorry for himself, nor embarrassed for the lack of progress in his life and overall input in life. However, Todomatsu was not known for wanting to be out of the circle; any social circle that he had an interest in really, so it didn’t come out as a surprise when the youngest of the two brought the same topic back.

— When you went to our home, I heard you sort of talking about your relationships, but I only caught three. Were those all or did you have more? – Todomatsu had to acknowledge that it amazed him to know his older brother had that many, if any romantic relationships at all. On the contrary,
Todomatsu accepted that if Karamatsu actually tried to act ‘normal’, he could elevate his low rate of success up to three positions; and Todomatsu was being generous by rating him that high up in comparison to the rest of his older brothers.

Nevertheless, seeing Choromatsu getting ahead in the romantic world, surpassing all the hopes and expectations Todomatsu had for the second oldest, was something he hadn’t even imagined.

— Um… I had five girlfriends in these ten pass years, ex-girlfriends now, however…um…You see – clearly stalling, Karamatsu stretched in his seat, as if that was going to help. – I married my first ex-girlfriend, it did not work, we got a divorce, and then I just dated for a few years. I married and divorced my fourth ex-girlfriend and seven months ago, my last ex-girlfriend broke up with me.

Todomatsu stared in silence, processing the official summary of Karamatsu’s romantic life, while his older brother uncomfortably stayed on his seat.

— You mean to tell me you are a divorcée.

Karamatsu nodded.

— It wasn’t once, it was twice.

His older brother nodded again.

— And they all cheated on you?

Karamatsu sighed, but nodded.

— I… Wow. I don’t know what to tell you – Todomatsu tilted his head to the side, keeping his sight glued to his older brother. – Aside from that, I didn’t know you had it in you, niisan. I’m really impressed – he offered Karamatsu a nice smile. – Three ex-girlfriends and two ex-wives under your belt, who would have thought that? – Todomatsu muttered to himself, before he raised his voice again. – Niisan, you did better than I thought you would!

With a slight frown, Karamatsu smiled back at his little brother.

— Thanks?

— Your welcome! – Todomatsu happily said.

Karamatsu shook his head at Todomatsu’s odd way of showing affection.

— Is it that surprising? – Karamatsu wondered, taking the empty plates and stocking them one over
the other before he stood up and moved them to the sink. — Didn’t you date someone else before you
decided to marry Atsushi? — Karamatsu asked the youngest as he walked back to his seat.

— Hm? Actually, I did date very briefly this one girl, and although my asshole husband ruined that
relationship for me, I did kind of ruin his in the process — Todomatsu chuckled, covering his mouth.

— Honestly, you two are a weird match — it was Karamatsu’s turn to laugh now.

— Weird? — Todomatsu huffed, looking rather annoyed. — Niisan, the circumstances were so
horrifyingly well played I still ask myself how I did start having any kind of positive feelings towards
him.

— What does that even mean? — Karamatsu shook his head again, but he just could not stop
imagining how mad and confused his baby brother must have been at the time.

— It means exactly that niisan! — straightening up, Todomatsu pouted, maintaining a slight frown. —
You have no idea how much of an idiot he was. Atsu was so rude to me, and a full time, personal
nightmare to my whole existence. I was beyond speechless to think that I found someone that could
make me ridiculously mad in seconds — sighing; Todomatsu eyed the piled up napkins and took one
to start playing with it.

— My little brother, your story is a perfect example of the thin line between love and hate. You just
decided to follow the path of love.

— Ew, Stop niisan — Todomatsu kicked him again.

After their little chat and nice breakfast, Todomatsu received a call from home. As one would expect
from the youngest of the Matsuno brothers, he arranged the rest of the day through a phone call with
his husband, planning to go shopping before stopping for lunch with Karamatsu; since it was
obvious Todomatsu did not want to part ways just yet. With a little coercion from his part,
Todomatsu managed to make Atsushi accept those changes of plans from the day, promising him to
have the rest of the noon free.

Todomatsu did little changes to his limited wardrobe; all because he did not bring along any other
choices with him the night before, however thanks to his older brother, Todomatsu got his hands on
two clean possibilities, so he would not have to waltz on the streets with the same clothes clinging to
his body.

Picking the basic white short-sleeved shirt up, Todomatsu arranged it accordingly on his body,
assuring it would flatter him more than simply pooling over his torso like a used bag.

Both brothers left Karamatsu’s house behind and jumped to the train. Although, their little
impromptu shopping trip would not officially begin without some aesthetically worthy selfies, and
some stupid ones Todomatsu could sent to their chat group.

It was sort of fun for Todomatsu, seeing his older brother hold back with the purchases he decided to
get. As the youngest, he did not fully understand where the problem was in wanting to buy
something that not only looked good, it also accentuated and elevated an overall basic outfit. Should
that not be the point of buying clothes? To think Karamatsu rejected him when Todomatsu offered
him to pay for the ones that he could not take home. Unbelievable.

Despite of their fleeting discussion over why Todomatsu should not buy Karamatsu what he had
been eyeing, literally the whole time; they had a great time. Each carrying a good amount of bags
with accessories, shoes and full outfits as they kept walking, this time with Karamatsu leading the way.

Knowing exactly where his older brother was taking him, Todomatsu shook his head.

— This is your worst idea, niisan – Todomatsu said, looking at the baby accessories through the shop windows. – I don’t think you fully understand how my baby fever works and you are making it worst! – He loudly whined, starting to fight back that itchy urge of barging in and buy everything he thought it would be necessary for Yua.

— I apologize Totty, but I saw this cute bunny onesie a few days ago and I thought you would like it for Yua – Karamatsu side glanced at his little brother with a warm smile on his face.

— Oh my god. A bunny onesie – Todomatsu repeated, imagining how cute Yua was going to look wearing that. As a proud parent, Todomatsu would have to arrange a photoshoot and a set, and with that in mind, he knew that was going straight to Easter cards. – Niisan, why? You are going to make Atsushi cry, you are going to make me cry – he kept on whining.

Chuckling, Karamatsu showed him the shop.

It was unnecessary to say how that turned out. Todomatsu bought it on the spot and added a few cute accessories that kept on growing. If Karamatsu had not been there, his younger brother would have purchased half of the store.

Making a short stop for brunch, Karamatsu had to hear Todomatsu gush about how he was going to dress Yua up and where he was going to shoot those Easter cards, the placements of the Easter eggs, the perfect hour to use natural lighting and so on.

After that, Atsushi came to pick Todomatsu up. Arriving slightly earlier and with Yua in his arm, he smiled seeing Todomatsu with so many bags and a permanent satisfied expression. As the good husband Atsushi wanted to be, he exchanged Yua for Todomatsu bags, carrying all of them to the car for him and accidentally giving Todomatsu extra time to be with his older brother.

— I love how our princess goes straight for the goods, don’t you niisan? – Todomatsu asked, walking closer to Karamatsu so Yua could get a good hold of that thick gold chain on his neck.

— She certainly knows how to win anyone’s heart too, I can only hope she is learning from the best – giving Todomatsu a knowing look, he moved closer and let Yua catch his necklace with both hands.

— Of course, she is. When she gets older, I’ll teach her all my tricks – Todomatsu nodded at his own words.

— She is going to be an amazing lady then – Karamatsu fondly looked at the baby in Todomatsu’s arms.

Another face of the past appeared, walking straight towards the Matsunos with a bit of a waddling. Touching Karamatsu’s shoulder, she made him turn around.

— To-totoko chan! – Karamatsu almost jumped off his own skin when he saw her.

— You don’t have to react like that. It’s not like you saw an alien – Totoko said, rolling her eyes. – And I did not know you were already dating someone …. Oh – with her eyes glued to Todomatsu,
Totoko began smiling. – I didn’t know you were here!

— Totoko chan! – Todomatsu smiled back at her, doing a quick check up of her and noticing how pregnant she was. What did Osomatsu do? Well, that was something he would love to ask her, in private. – You are looking as beautiful as ever Totoko chan.

Totoko bathed in that sugary compliment, blushing and holding her fuller cheeks with both hands.

— Right? – She beamed. – I didn’t know you were here … Um… Tatty um… Matsu!

That was close enough, considering they were all Osomatsu in her eyes, for a long time.

— Todomatsu – he corrected her with a stiff smile.

— Right! So, where were you? – Totoko asked, putting a hand on her stomach.

— I moved to England, but I came back for my job – Todomatsu answered with a slight pout.

Both, Totoko and Todomatsu slowly turned to look at Karamatsu, who was staring, wide eyed at Totoko’s middle.

— Niisan. I think is rude to stare like that.

Right after Todomatsu said that, Atsushi walked back.

— Where those all the bags? – Atsushi asked.

— Ah, yes – Todomatsu nodded.

Totoko changed her focus onto the new face with a soft blush.

— Tatty aren’t you going to introduce your friend? – Totoko asked as she tucked her loose hair behind her ear.

Atsushi smiled and introduced himself as Todomatsu’s husband with the best of his intentions. Although those were rather slim. When Totoko heard that, her smile disappeared, along with the forced niceness she was trying to use.

— Oh, you got attached to a Matsuno – Totoko dryly said.

— That I did – Atsushi agreed with her. Looking to his husband, he caught the attention of their daughter. – I can carry her if you are too tired.

— Um? No. I’m fine, Atsu – smiling, Todomatsu accommodated her better in his arms. – Well. I have to go. Are you sure you don’t want us to drive you back home, niisan.

Karamatsu had to take a full second before he denied with his head.

— I would not want to intrude, my baby brother – he said, but he just did not want to be in the same closed space than his… his brother in law.

— Oh, okay then.

— I could use a lift – butted in Totoko, expecting nothing aside from a positive answer from them.

Atsushi and Todomatsu exchanged looks before the youngest smiled at her.
— Sounds find to me. Besides, you look like your feet are killing you. I don’t think I could just leave you here anyways, right Atsu?

The tone Todomatsu used to say that, explained everything to Atsushi; with his words and with the look he was giving him, Todomatsu wanted to be alone with her, alone as in, without his older brother, which was more than fine for Atsushi.

— I see no problem with that – Atsushi nodded.

— Perfect! You have a good husband Tatty!

Todomatsu took a deep breath and mentally scolded Atsushi if he ever dared to use that annoying mispronounced nickname on him. A simple smirk would be enough for Todomatsu to kick him, since his arms where occupied with cuteness incarnated.

After they said goodbye and parted ways with Karamatsu, the couple lead the way to the car, not expecting Totoko to gush about the vehicle and how expensive it looked; at least, not that loudly.

While Todomatsu secured Yua on the baby chair, Atsushi helped Totoko to get in the car before they both walked to the front seats.

With the given address of Totoko’s home, Atsushi started the car to what was going to be a long trip.

— She is cute – Totoko said, with a written fondness of someone that would be a parent.

Todomatsu raised his sight up to the mirror, to check on their princess as he mostly did.

— Totoko chan, you look almost ready to have that child, you know.

— And for the way you said that I imagine that idiot did not tell you – Totoko sighed and frowned, glaring to the side.

— That you were pregnant? No.

— I swear I will hang him from his balls if he still does not remember that I am pregnant – Totoko gritted her teeth.

— Did you tell him? – It was obvious that she did, but Todomatsu needed to know if she actually sat his older brother down and told him or if she simply mentioned it. Finding that was going to be the breaking point to what happened to Osomatsu and to their relationship.

— Of course I did! I did it once every week; and Osomatsu did not bat an eye! He even called me fat!

Oh dear.

Atsushi fought back an intrusive laugh, keeping a firm hold on the wheel, while Todomatsu covered his mouth, battling with the same demons.

—And that idiot did it every day in each meal; he would smile at me as if he had something meaningful to say, before he dropped that annoying commentary – crossing her arms Totoko glared at Todomatsu. – I bet my life, he only talked about me kicking him out – she muttered.
— Osomatsu niisan said you went crazy on him – Todomatsu said, ready to get the backlash of a pregnant and angry woman.

— Me? Crazy on him? – Totoko huffed and squinted her eyes. – If I see him again and he still does not know why, Osomatsu will know how mad I can really get.

Todomatsu was going to make sure he informed his oldest brother of his sudden death, next time he saw Osomatsu.

— Totoko chan are you planning on leaving your child with no father? – Todomatsu chuckled as he wondered of his older brother’s fate.

— I am planning on leaving the father with no other chances to have more kids – Totoko grumbled.

For Todomatsu, it felt like he was living a variety show. He got so worried over Osomatsu’s situation, he could not think of anything else but what really was going on in his life. As much as Todomatsu wanted to call Osomatsu or text him right away, he could not intrude; maybe Todomatsu would give him some hints, although there was slim chances that his older brother would catch those before any other Matsuno would. Karamatsu saw Totoko too, and if he was not careful, Todomatsu could see Karamatsu break and spill the tea under pressure.

It was not their fault that the eldest didn’t have a good working neuron up in his airy head, an attribute Todomatsu and perhaps Totoko wished it was not passed down to their soon to be born child.

The baby girl that was known to have no patience and a volatile humor, noticed Totoko’s negativity and as both their parents feared, that sugary smile turned into a wavering pout as her tearless cries blown out in the car, startling Totoko.

Todomatsu turned around on his seat and looked at his princess.

— Should I pull over? – Asked Atsushi.

— Yes, Yua doesn’t seem like she wants to stop even if we try.

Atsushi searched for the closest place he could stop the car, while Todomatsu reached for Yua, only to pat her head.

— How can you be so calm? – Wondered Totoko, uneasy and rather distressed by all those high-pitched screams and wails a baby of her size was making.

— Uh? Well, She has a tendency of doing this when she wants something, and we don’t want Yua to hurt her throat. Besides, she is the youngest; therefore, we are shamelessly spoiling her – Todomatsu smiled at his crying little girl.

— Wait, you have more kids?

Leaving Totoko hanging, Atsushi parked the car and let Todomatsu change seats, before he started the vehicle again. Taking the one in the middle, and hearing Yua stop screaming, told her parents that she just did not want to be close Totoko.

Oh well, there wasn’t much to do about that.

— She doesn’t like me, does she? – Muttered an offended Totoko.
— Don’t take it personal Totoko chan. Yua reacts like that towards strangers – Todomatsu explained, fixing his princess up with baby wipes and re doing her hair by putting back in place the butterfly clip on the side of her head.

— She didn’t do that with Karamatsu – Totoko mentioned, definitely stung by the rejection.

— Ah. No, she actually loves him – chuckling, Todomatsu clapped his hands as he finished his work. – Karamatsu niisan is her favorite, but I think she likes him better because he lets her do anything she wants – he hummed. – But that’s just me. Maybe Yua likes those tacky necklaces he wears.

— I think that’s it. Remember, darling; she tried to choke him and eat that thing – Atsushi added, showing a bit of a smile.

— She didn’t try to choke him – Todomatsu rolled his eyes.

After ten minutes of driving through new streets, they reached a two-store building. Parking close by it, Todomatsu offered Totoko the help to get out of the car, extending his aid to walk her all the way to her front door on the second floor. Stairs for Totoko at that point in her pregnancy, sounded like a nightmare. No wonder, she was so mad at Osomatsu. What if her water broke and she was alone?

Making sure, she was safe Todomatsu exchanged numbers and told Totoko to call him if she needed something.

Thinking they were going to relax together, and with their kids, they went back home. However, the car that was parked in front of their house, took every plan to do absolutely nothing away.

Atsushi’s mother was waiting for them.

— You took quite a while to get here – She said, sipping on her unsweetened coffee as the quadruplets played on the common room.

— And you were supposed to be in England, mother – Atsushi smiled at her, helping Todomatsu with the consequences of the little shopping spree.

— Mama!! – The four toddlers stopped everything they were doing, to run towards Todomatsu and welcome him with tight hugs and kisses as each boy talked at the same time to tell him about their night and morning without Todomatsu.

— I already did my job there, and I checked how things were here and I admit you are doing a great job in the company. Changes are good. If one can’t adapt and evolve then things will only get stuck – she shrugged with a relaxed demeanor as she accommodated on the sofa.

Awkwardly walking, trapped in a sea of his bundles, Todomatsu sat next to her, letting Yua reach for the many bracelets and rings Aiko san; Atsushi’s mother, loved to sport accordingly to her mood, trends and occasion; and for the look of it, Aiko came straight from business.

— I swear she gets cuter every day – Aiko said patting her head, minding the butterfly clip on her side.

— Right? – Todomatsu smiled at Aiko. – Where you waiting too long?
— Never mind that – Aiko dismissed him. – You two need to relax more, spend time together, besides. I can always keep an eye on all my grandchildren’s and with my amazing abilities to brew a cup of coffee; I have everything I need for a day.

For her, keeping an eye on them, always meant spoil them more than their parents were already doing, but with more trips than Todomatsu and Atsushi could hope of doing. Chuckling, Todomatsu told her about the things he bought that morning while they waited for Atsushi to join them.

Taking a seat next to his husband, Atsushi sent the four clingy boys to their playroom. A little bummed out, they obeyed with the promise of getting revenge.

— The truth is I did not fly back to England as you though because there is nothing else for me to do in that company – Aiko began giving an explaining to her oddly free schedule. – When I took the kids out, at the start of this month, I was already done with the check-up – sighing, she closed her eyes. – I did not want to tell both of you this the same day Todo met with his brothers, but I’m afraid the most I could extend your stay in Japan is at the end of the month.

What?

— …This month? – Asked Todomatsu in a hushed voice.

— Yes. This month.

Atsushi sight went right to his husband.
Todomatsu was awkwardly stiff, definitely counting down the time he had to stay with his family. Even for Atsushi a month was too short to spend time with his brothers and talk to his parents at the same time.

— Sweetie? – Atsushi softly placed his hand over Todomatsu’s thigh.

— Hm? – Humming in a dormant reply, Todomatsu turned to look at his husband.

— You are looking a bit pale – Atsushi said.

— Maybe I shouldn’t have stayed up so late last night – Todomatsu forced a tiny smile and tightened his hold on Yua.

Aiko did know what Todomatsu was doing, since her son told her about the plan he had to make for Todomatsu to reconnect and talk things out with his family. As a mother, she wouldn’t be surprised if Todomatsu preferred to back out of a rushed confrontation, however, Aiko had spent a lot of time helping both through the years to learnt that her son-in-law could also favor the given opportunity for an approach.
Regardless of which one he will chose; Aiko hoped Todomatsu could make the most of it in the following days.

— I would have told you a week later, but I rather not ruin any more plans – she admitted, sighing.

— No, no. It’s completely fine – Todomatsu shook his head, looking to his other side to face Aiko. – I wish I could have more time, but that’s my fault for not doing this sooner. I just have to stop
dwelling on how to do it and actually do it.

— We still have two more weeks, and since it is summer, I’m sure you can spend some extra time with your brothers as well as to visit your parents – Atsushi caressed his thigh in an attempt to comfort him.

Nodding, Todomatsu gave him an unsure smile. Despite the obvious accommodations he will have to do, the youngest of the sextuplets could not afford leaving without mending his crooked rupture, a minimal approach would be enough, and Todomatsu could breathe better if he managed to catch a glimpse of a traced conversation. Anything that could hint at Todomatsu that his parents wanted something to do with him, his children and with his new family, would sate his empty hope for a lifetime.

Aiko stayed, and she even took Yua along with her as she went down to check on the kids, leaving Todomatsu and her son alone.

— If you need me to do something I – Atsushi would have finished that phrase, but as soon as they were alone, Todomatsu slumped over his lap, face down on the next cushion. Humming, Atsushi picked his husband up and brought him close against his chest. — Hey. We could always come back next year.

— It’s not the same – Todomatsu pouted, snuggling to hide his face.

— How about you come back alone. Stay with your older brother for a week or two, maybe your parents if you want to – pecking the top of his head, Atsushi let Todomatsu glue himself to his body.

Whining, Todomatsu stayed in silence.

— There is a way for you to stay – Atsushi said, making his husband look up at him.

— How? — He muttered.

— If you really want to stay, I could arrange for you to be transferred here. You’ll have the same position, work with the same people as we have been doing since we came to Japan – resting his chin on the top of his head, Atsushi frowned.

— But?

— But, we’ll have to be separated – feeling his husband twitch, Atsushi knew it was an uneasy idea. — As in, I work and live in England and you work and live here, in Japan with your family.

With a little scare of not hearing an undoubtedly denial from Todomatsu, Atsushi had a flash and an awful mental trip of how his life would be without his cute husband. What was he going to do without him?

No, no. That could not do. No.

— Atsushi, there are some times where you have such good ideas, and there are others, like now, where it seems you have no brain at all – Todomatsu said, looking at him straight in the eye with a
Atsushi should be offended, most people would be; however, he was not like most people, otherwise Atsushi wouldn’t have chosen to stay with Todomatsu, the youngest of six neets. Barely hurt, Atsushi kissed his forehead, instantly forgiving him for his harsh words.

— I’m banning you from thinking of any other possible plan. Idiot.

Calling Atsushi an idiot and clinging to him, was one odd way to show him how much Todomatsu cared for him. It was severely flawed and too rough, nonetheless Todomatsu felt like he was understood within their weird range of appreciation.

— To think you thought I was going to let you live alone? – Todomatsu huffed. – With all those thirsty woman out there? No way.

— What about you? What if someone tries something with you; I would have to fly my ass back here and remind you how much you love me – Atsushi began attacking Todomatsu with more kisses.

— No! If you are going to kiss me do it for real! – whining, Todomatsu tried to escape from Atsushi’s random kisses. Who kisses the side of the nose!? – I said I want a real kiss!

— These are all real my cute prince – smiling, Atsushi pressed his lips over his right eyebrow.

— But I don’t want it there! – Todomatsu pouted, closing his eyes and secretly hating Atsushi; although it wasn’t much of a secret for them considering the face Todomatsu was making.

— No? How about here? – Moving one hand down his back, Atsushi groped his ass. – Would you like it better if I kissed you there? – He smirked.

— It’s still sore – Blushing, Todomatsu arched his back a little more, to give his husband a better access.

— Aww, poor you – Atsushi cooed. – I did you so good you are still feeling it after a few days? – He added his other hand to fondle Todomatsu better, falling into his impossible words with ease.

— You did – Todomatsu nodded and tilted his head to the side. – But If you are just going to kiss it, then I don’t wanna – he added giving Atsushi a bit of a frown.

— I could always do a bit more for a cutie like you – finally planting a kiss on his lips, Atsushi made him smile.

Undeniably cheered up, Todomatsu enjoyed all the well-placed kisses and the shameless fondling that quickly escalated to full on make out sessions, and a sparsely break for spontaneous planning that Atsushi had the tolerance to listen to, for a few seconds that’s it.

Recollecting the useful bits of that quick planning, Todomatsu decided how to arrange his schedule for the two remaining weeks and that included telling his brothers about leaving.
The next few days, Todomatsu could not find any breaks from work. From early in the morning to late in the noon, he would be glued to his desk, with his sight doing minimal intervals between the folders on his left and the computer screen on his right. Being trapped in his job made the hours pass so fast, it seriously felt like Todomatsu was horribly daydreaming of working. Not only that, he was the only brother that could not text nor post within that nightmarish week.

When Saturday barged in and Todomatsu could actually submerge in his phone, he was amazed of the quantity of lines and private messages his inbox accumulated. Reading one by one was going to be a hassle, and time was running out, so, Todomatsu put his money on skimming through all of them; even that took him a good hour.

Once he was finished, Todomatsu began texting with his brothers, to try to implement his first plan for that weekend right away.

First things first. Todomatsu had to spend some time with Ichimatsu and Jyushimatsu. They were the only two brothers he had not visited nor talked that much with, and that could not do nor be.

Texting with Jyushimatsu was less awkward than doing it with Ichimatsu, not to mention that getting the fifth brother to meet with him was the easiest task so far. Agreeing to see each other after lunch that same day, put Todomatsu in a good mood for having such a good start.

— Uh?

A new, long and full of emoticons text intervened in his tactical chat with his older brother. Checking that one out, Todomatsu immediately smiled when realization slapped him on the face. How long has it been since Todomatsu had talked or seen any of his friends? Years! Aida had contacted him because she saw the selfies he took with Karamatsu a week ago.

Well, screw lunch at home. He was not going to miss this one chance to gossip properly by any means.

Using his best puppy eyes, he convinced Atsushi; the best husband in the world, to let him get lunch with Aida. A brilliant idea Atsushi wasn’t so fond of but still let Todomatsu go for it. Dressed up and ready to challenge the scolding summer sun, he took his own car with him to drive to the texted address.

It felt so good to take his pink car out on the street, unapologetically flaunting it for a magical boost. Besides, Todomatsu had always wanted to rub his luxuries on the same faces that laughed or mocked him once. Friends or not, he was going out with style.

When he arrived, Aida was already there. At first, she did not recognize him, but after Todomatsu waved at her, she invited him to join her in her table.

— Sorry. I saw that you had pink hair in the pictures, but I just couldn’t fully imagine it – Aida said, looking up at him. – I almost thought it was a wig.

— A wig? – With a funny expression, Todomatsu took a seat. – This is my natural hair.
— You mean, your bleached, pastel hair – she tarnished his vague response. – But it looks good on you.

— Thanks.

With a dry stop, both ordered their lunches.

— It’s been so long since I saw you Totty. How is everything going? I do check your social media, occasionally, but I didn’t know you were here until recently!

— I feel the same way about you! – Playing with his ring, Todomatsu snacked on the bread it was served in the center of the table. – And things are a little hectic right now – he chuckled. – Since, I have to come clean to my parents about, well… everything.

— Yikes. You haven’t talked to them yet? Do they know anything about you, anything at all? – Aida wondered with a slight frown forming on her face.

— No and I don’t think so. I haven’t seen them nor contacted them for so long – sighing, Todomatsu lowered his head. – I feel like the worst son they ever had.

— As long as they don’t disinherit you, deny your existence or close their door right on your face, you are going to be fine – Aida dismissed Todomatsu adding the worst possible situations all in a row.

All of those sounded awful. What if one of them happened?

No, no, no, no.

— Aaagh! I don’t want to think about it.

For the rest of the lunch, they gossiped about Todomatsu’s old friends and acquaintance as they enjoyed their meal. It was nice to know how everyone was doing; it was refreshing to have a spec of information of a world he used to be so involved. Regardless of the short-lived encounter, he was more excited to spend the noon with his direct older brother. After he took care of the bill, they went their separate ways. Deciding to wait for Jyushimatsu in his car, he walked back where he parked it, and right next to it, Ichimatsu was staring at the vehicle with an expressionless look.

— Ichimatsu niisan! – Rushing his peace, Todomatsu approached his older brother.

— Oh – with a mild surprise, Ichimatsu raised his sight, keeping his hands in his pockets.

— What a surprise! What are you doing here niisan? – He was quick to ask, strangely happier than before.

— Uh. Jyushimatsu said that something important came up so – Ichimatsu explained, staring at his younger brother.

— Oh. I’m meeting Jyushimatsu niisan too – Todomatsu added. – Maybe something came up and he forgot to cancel with me? – He thought with his external voice; a habit Todomatsu couldn’t get rid of.

Shrugging, Ichimatsu checked his clock.
— Come on – without letting Todomatsu think about what to do, Ichimatsu grabbed him by the wrist and dragged the youngest to the next street, where they were supposed to meet the fifth brother.

Todomatsu let him, focusing in the silly cat stamped on Ichimatsu’s shirt, and the paw prints on the back. Wasn’t he an adult? Why would Ichimatsu be wearing all those cute details embedded into his clothes? Was he having a middle age crisis? Ew, Todomatsu did not want to deal with that.

— Aren’t you too old to be wearing cat themed clothes? – Todomatsu voiced with a pout. Which was a bad move from his part.

— Aren’t you too old to have your hair dyed pink and own a pink car? – Ichimatsu bit back, jabbing at the youngest with his unforgivable tongue.

— My hair is stylish and owning a car is far from childish – Todomatsu muttered, savaging what he could.

— Far from childish? A pink car?

Filling him with doubt, Ichimatsu lead the way until they both could see Jyushimatsu from afar. Leaving their discussion disperse in the past as nothing, they met with the fifth brother.

— Oh! You two came together! That’s great!

— Is Totty the important thing you told me about – Ichimatsu asked pointing at the youngest with his head as he let Todomatsu wrist free.

Jyushimatsu eagerly nodded.

— Idiot here, thought you were going to cancel on him – snorting, Ichimatsu added.

— Niisan! – Todomatsu whined for being outed like that.

— Totty no! – Jyushimatsu rushed over to envelope Todomatsu in a tight hug. – I would never cancel any plans like that!

— I’ve got it niisan. Now let me go, you are sweating – Todomatsu whined, uselessly breaking away from his hug as Ichimatsu smiled at them.

After receiving that long hug, Jyushimatsu lead them to a Kombini to buy a large amount of snacks; and thanks to Totty’s wallet, they left the store with their hands full of goods. Walking back to Todomatsu’s car, he drove them to Ichimatsu’s apartment, not without getting good selfies of them in his dream car.

Although it ended being a short and comfortable trip, nothing compared to the ridiculous feeling of coziness that apartment offered them. Despite of the fur stuck to every, single thing inside; Todomatsu could swear to his own mother that he saw a few floating in the air; it had a good vibe with the unique touch of the ‘edgy’ Matsuno.

Putting their shoes away, the three younger brothers moved to Ichimatsu’s common room, or more exactly, the cat’s domain and his work station, but, hands down the cat’s domain.

— Sit wherever you want – Ichimatsu said as he reclaimed his seat on the grey, scratched couch.

Jyushimatsu sat on the floor close to the bags of snacks and Todomatsu sat next to him.

— So, are you going to murder your husband already? Because I saw this perfect spot, where I can
hide his body – Ichimatsu started. With a start like that, there was no say as to how the rest of the day was going to go.

— Niisan no. Not yet. You have to wait for me to get rich first – Todomatsu answered him, rummaging through the bags, searching for that one brand of chips he would never find in England, unless he shipped them, but there was no fun in that.

— Aren’t you rich already? – muttered Ichimatsu with the same lazy smile on his face, while Jyushimatsu threw him the box of chocolate bars he liked. – Greedy.

— I’m not greedy, I have simple needs – Todomatsu corrected him.

— Like your girly car – Jyushimatsu chuckled at Ichimatsu’s snarky remark.

— It’s not girly – with his nose up, Todomatsu squinted his eyes at him. – And if you are saying that because of the color, well, let me tell you that colors are just that; colors. I can like any color I want and its not girly, its pink.

Both older brothers shared a good laugh, embarrassing the youngest while they avoided giving Todomatsu a hint as to at what they were laughing. When it subsided, they sunk into the familiarity of the environment and the present situation, reliving sentiments from the past.

— It’s great to have you back Totty – Jyushimatsu said. – We are going to spend a Christmas together! And our birthday! – He added, smiling at nothing.

— Sounds fun – Ichimatsu muttered, nodding. – We could go to the horse races or something.

— Or we could plan a trip together!

— Where to? – Ichimatsu muttered, probably thinking of a location as well.

Staying out of that, Todomatsu focused on eating the chips.

Wasn’t it fun when you hold the power to ruin something? Most of the time, yes. In this case in particular, no, it wasn’t. Todomatsu was far from ready to inform them the same freaking day, of the imminent countdown Todomatsu had as a noose around his neck.

He wanted to have fun and make the most of the days he had left. On the contrary, he should ask his brothers about their parents, to make sure Todomatsu would not accidentally get into their bad side if he visited them.

— What do you think Totty? – asked Jyushimatsu, while Todomatsu turned to look at him, having no idea what he was talking about.

— Uh? Think about what? The trip? – Todomatsu tried to get back into that conversation.

— You were not listening – Ichimatsu pointed out in a calm and yet uninterested fashion.

— Totty, is something wrong? – Followed Jyushimatsu.

The pressure of having both brothers staring into his soul was so strong, it made Todomatsu doubt if he wanted to share the truth or a nicely shaped cover up to protect them. Gulping, Todomatsu silently decided that he needed less salt and more sweetness; changing his almost empty bag of chips for vanilla flavored animal cookies.
— I’m just nervous, okay? – Todomatsu settled for the cover up.


— I don’t think so niisan, but It’s about time I visit Mom and Dad – separating the head from the body of the elephant shaped cookie, Todomatsu sighed. – I don’t want to let it pass neither I want it to end like it did before.

— Déjà vu.

Todomatsu thoroughly agreed with Ichimatsu in that. It was sickening how similar everything was and how it did differentiated from the past. It felt like playing the same level with an upgrade in difficulty. Not to mention that it seemed like he hadn’t matured at all! Dwelling in the same problem within a bigger one! It wasn’t about fairness and what was correct or not, It was about trying to fish tranquility after years of being out of his center.

Aside from the present weekend, Todomatsu only had the next one to fit that worrying conversation along with any repercussion that could come from it. Important details that would make a difference to his life, for the best or the worst.

— Homura and I live with Mom and Dad – said Jyushimatsu. – If you need me or us to stay there for you, we will do it – he reassured Todomatsu, gifting the youngest with a fresh change. – Unless you want that to be more private, then we could always go out.

— Thank you Jyushimatsu niisan – smiling at his brother, Todomatsu stopped decapitating the cookies and ate one of the dead ones.

— Are you planning on going alone or do you want to go with Atsushi? – Asked Ichimatsu.

— I really don’t know niisan – slumping over a little, Todomatsu looked up at him. – I have been spending most of my time debating between going alone or with Atsu, but I can’t decide. I have no idea, which one is going to be better for us and for them – playing with his ring again, Todomatsu’s mind rattled. – Would it be too rude if I showed up with Atsushi? I mean, he is my husband, but I don’t want them to think that I came back to flaunt. More importantly, depending on how that goes, they would get to meet their grandkids. If it all goes to shit, my bundles, nor Atsushi will ever get to meet Mom and Dad. What do I tell my kids then? That It was my fault? Our fault? What if they ask me why they don’t get to see them? What if they think their grandparents don’t love them? I can’t tell them that again. I cannot do that again, I utterly refuse to let them down again.

By the time Todomatsu finished, he noticed how much he talked and how fast he did it. The sub sequential rhythm his tongue waxed played along with the uncountable times he twirled his wedding ring in the same blessed spot. Todomatsu hadn’t acknowledged how truly cornered he felt, he fooled his reality with beautiful illusions of eternity that turned sour just like it happened to Cinderella. His clock was never stopping, no one’s does until it has to, and for the same reason, the sharpness of that obvious realization only managed to make him feel worst for lying when it wasn’t needed.

— Ah – looking back at his brothers, Todomatsu forced a smile; which wasn’t that hard with the years of practice that one expression had. – I’m sorry niisans – he chuckled. – It seems I just needed to vent.

— Totty, If you are that nervous, you shouldn’t push yourself to do it right away – Jyushimatsu firmly placed a hand on his shoulder and gave it a good squeeze. – You have plenty of time to calm
down and decide how you want to tell all that to Mom and Dad.

— Yeah. Stop thinking that much or you are going to make your brain absorb all that hair dye in a second.

Hearing Ichimatsu’s addition reminded him how stupid he was. Todomatsu could not find a way out of stumbling with the same rock and it infuriated him, it haunted him, because Todomatsu kept on seeing what bad he had done and how it manifested, lacerating with sulfuric steps the sole of the next pair.

If he wanted to see a change, he will have to start with himself; otherwise, things will come back in a nightmarish orchestrated wheel.

Dropping the smile, Todomatsu fixed his posture.

— Actually, I don’t have plenty of time for that niisan.

— What do you mean? – Ichimatsu questioned him as Jyushimatsu stayed in silence.

— I told you that we came back for work, but it wasn’t permanent – Todomatsu tried to ease the news with delicacy. – Atsushi’s mom told us that we implemented the changes this company needed and that the most she could extend our stay here was until the end of this month.

The quietness obtained a blue hue on its own, sluggishly dyeing the brilliant spurt of disintegrated joy into an uncomfortable tune of a hurt repetition. Two pairs of brown eyes looked for the catch in his statement, a catch that did not exist.

— You are leaving… next week – Jyushimatsu said in a hushed voice.

— I have to.

— That’s why you are so eager on visiting mom and dad – sighing, Ichimatsu ripped the plastic off the chocolate bar and bit into it. – Were you trying to hide that from us? Because we would have found out one way or another.

With a shameful burn on his cheeks, Todomatsu did not deny it; he couldn’t find it in him to do it for fun either. Tucking a piece of his hair behind his hear, he thought on what to say.

— I assume you haven’t told the others – Ichimatsu pressed on.

— No, I just… I sort of found out about it a week ago – sighing, he mentally scolded himself. – Truthfully, I forgot I wasn’t going to stay here – Todomatsu bit his lower lip, picking on the skin.

— There isn’t much to do about that – the fourth brother sighed. – But, regarding our parents, I think you should do it alone.

— You think it would go better if I do it alone – Todomatsu questioned Ichimatsu, stopping that bad habit and leaving his lips out of his problems.

— It could be too much if you visited them with him.

— I think Totty should go with Atsushi – voiced Jyushimatsu, sharing his opinion as he tried to overlook Todomatsu leaving so soon. – In that way you can have him on your side! And if everything goes well, he could ask for their blessing! – Smiling, Jyushimatsu raised both arms to strengthen his point.
— If dad is in a bad mood, his husband will have to beg for their blessing – said Ichimatsu with a hushed voice that did reach Todomatsu.

— If it goes somewhat smoothly, that does make sense – placing the tip of his index finger over his bottom lip, Todomatsu looked at the window on the side. – Although, Atsushi is not good at begging, he has no patience for that.

Ichimatsu smirked and threw the chocolate wrapper at Todomatsu.

— What are you mumbling about now?

When Todomatsu turned to face his older brother, he met with two suspicious looking brothers.


— Oh, nothing – easily answered Ichimatsu, maintaining that creepy smile of his.

Squinting his eyes at them, Todomatsu huffed.

— I’m going to ignore that for the rest of my life.

— Do whatever you want to; the truth of your words will haunt us for an eternity – Ichimatsu poked at him with his words as one of his furry friends made its way on his lap.

— It’s not like you would understand – leaning forward, Todomatsu looked for the seasonal juice that he would sadly, never find anywhere in the world, ever again.

— I do! I do! – Laughing, Jyushimatsu reached for the large soda and put it between his legs. – Homura chan is really good at making me beg! If I don’t then I can’t hustle my muscle in her!!

The horror of hearing that from Jyushimatsu was pure and real. Todomatsu clasped his hands on his ears to protect himself from any more details he did not want to know. Humping the air, Ichimatsu snorted while Todomatsu stared at the fifth brother, embodying the shame Jyushimatsu didn’t have at the moment.

— Jyushimatsu niisan stop doing that!?

— My hustle? – As innocently as possible, Jyushimatsu pointed that soda right to Todomatsu’s face.

— Put that down! – facing the opposite way, Todomatsu’s blush worsened.

— Why are you looking away? Aren’t you like a connoisseur of dick? – Ichimatsu could not hold back, breaking into a loud laugh. – D-did you run away from your husband’s dick too? – Even Jyushimatsu was laughing now.

— Stop picking on me! I’m an adult, you can’t pick on me like this! – Todomatsu uselessly defended himself.

— Bad news Totty. We will always pick on you.

His ominous words, earned a justifiable scream from the youngest of the three, because Ichimatsu was right, they would never stop and Todomatsu did not have the strength to make them. That was the curse of being the youngest.

Later on, and after Jyushimatsu stopped tormenting Todomatsu with his soda dick. They ended playing a board game, well, the two youngest did, while Ichimatsu took the role of calling any of
them out if they were cheating; which he did, every five seconds Todomatsu tried to move or advance in Life.

In the middle of their game Todomatsu’s phone began chiming. Telling Ichimatsu to keep an eye on Jyushimatsu was a hopeless petition; however, Todomatsu preferred to check his phone.

…

It was Osomatsu.
— This is bad.

Both older brothers looked at Todomatsu while they casually arranged the cards and pushed Totty’s car two spaces back.
— What is it? – Asked Ichimatsu.
— Osomatsu niisan wants to go drink with Atsushi.
— Oh. His time came then – Jyushimatsu nodded at Ichimatsu’s statement.
— Rest in peace – added as a final touch the fifth brother.

It wasn’t that Todomatsu did not trust Atsushi, far from that and quite the contrary. He did not trust in letting his older brothers get near his husband when he was not close by. They could traumatize Atsushi just by breathing near him. They could embarrass his husband without even trying. Despite that, Todomatsu knew Atsushi was curious, he did want to somehow bond with them; which was unthinkable for so many reason. His silly husband was going to regret it so much.

**Osomatsu niisan**

**Hey totty**
i matched my days/night off with Karamatsu so
can you like, borrow me your husband tonight?
It's for drinks
and fappy is coming too

The way Osomatsu worded that text made it sound worse than it should have been. Borrow his husband… who would put it like that?

You better return him without a single scratch on his handsome face
Osomatsu niisan

ditto
When Todomatsu arrived at his home, he went straight to the swarm of the loving arms of his kids, wet kisses and tight hugs generated of their growing bond surrounded him for the first minutes. After he filled his quota with his bundles, he focused on his next most important test. Getting Atsushi ready for the night.

As a Matsuno, he knew things will get out of hand and downright horrible for his husband, it didn’t matter whether Todomatsu was one of them or not, going out drinking with more than one Matsuno was meant to be a different kind of experience. Atsushi had a minimal intake of what that was going to be like. Everything counted, the context, the situation, what was between the lines and more importantly the intentions behind that invitation. It was logical to be suspicious, Atsushi wasn’t going to be alone with one of them, he was going to be alone with three of his older brothers –it was truth, his husband did meet up with them alone and behind his back, but that was a different situation, they had another motivation. Now, Todomatsu was unsure of how bad it would go, where they would take him and what they would actually do to him. With a hundred percent of certainty that in one way or another, his brothers were going to return Atsushi to him, Todomatsu was not going to sit and stay calm, he was going to be alert and glued to his phone, keeping himself informed, blindly trusting in one of his sober brothers. Todomatsu swore that if they did not return Atsushi unharmed and in one piece, he was going to make their lives miserable.

— Darling, you are staring – Atsushi chuckled.

He was right Todomatsu was staring at him.

— It’s just… this is weird – frowning, Todomatsu crossed his legs, accommodating on the white daybed that was close to the window.

— You don’t have to worry that much about it. I doubt they’ll do something bad.
Atsushi’s words failed to soothe the quivering suspicious sprouting within his core, a center forged alongside the same brothers that were going to get his poor husband drunk off his ass in less than an hour.

— Sweetie, do you think this black shirt would look better or the one with the stripes? – Atsushi turned around, holding two different short-sleeved shirts in each hand.

— The black one looks so good on you, but the one with the stripes has pink on the bottom – it was no secret that both enjoyed to see the other wear their colors, every chance to flaunt their significant other counted to them. Taking in consideration where Atsushi was going, a black shirt would be better. – The pink one would be nice. But, if they want to destroy you, I prefer you go with the black one.

— Destroy me – Atsushi muttered. Putting back the rejected shirt and taking the chosen one in his hands, he put it on. – How do you come up with all that stuff? – Walking to the night table, Atsushi secured his clock on his wrist and slid his wedding ring back on his finger.

— I’m basing my worries on facts – Todomatsu refuted any mention of him being too dramatic. – And you shouldn’t take your wallet with extra anything. Actually, you should leave your credit cards here and go with enough money for you.

— Are you insinuating your brothers would rob me? – Raising an eyebrow, Atsushi did what his cute husband suggested, leaving his wallet with the basics and a bit of cash inside.

— I am sure, Osomatsu niisan is going to try. And if he gets your wallet, which he will, you won’t have to worry about him never returning it – uncrossing his legs, Todomatsu checked him out. Atsushi looked perfect; handsome and out of the market.

— Darling, I think I am going to be fine – Atsushi insisted in normalizing Todomatsu’s older brothers with a smile. – I left all my cards here and I am only carrying cash, okay? Does that sound better?

— I’m not joking Atsushi, they really are that bad, you kind of saved me for getting worst! – That was the kind of thoughts that let Todomatsu sleep at night. Nonetheless, it could have been better if it was actually real. – And it makes me nervous that I am not going to be there to save your ass from them – he added, grabbing his head with both hands, feeling the desperation of the unknown.

Shaking his head, Atsushi approached his silly husband.

— You don’t have to worry about me. Actually, you shouldn’t worry about it at all – he took a seat next to Todomatsu. – We are going drinking, darling. I went out for drinks with you more times than I can count and I did not lose my wallet.

No, but Todomatsu did make him spend more than he should, and without Atsushi noticing it seems. His poor husband was going to die and Todomatsu was too young to be a widowed man!

— Promise me you will not let them intimidate you. If you have to bite back, you have my full permission to do so.

— Sweetie, this is getting out of hand. I am going to be fine – Todomatsu’s insistence was doing nothing to make Atsushi back out of that, in fact, he was looking forward to the given opportunity. – I doubt your brothers would do any of that, darling. Maybe they just wanted to have a talk with me regarding the happiness of their cute younger brother. You should just relax and stop thinking about it, okay?
As Atsushi finished saying that, his phone rung, displaying Osomatsu’s name on the screen.

— Ah. They are here – leaning forward, Atsushi gave Todomatsu a chaste kiss on the lips as a good bye. – I’ll see you later.

— Okay. Be careful.

Atsushi was for sure a goner. However, if he managed to come back alive, his dear husband was going to have a real taste of what Todomatsu warned him about. He could only hope, Atsushi would have to take that nightmare as a lesson and learn from that terrible mistake.

— … I feel like I need some cookies.

Atsushi approached the car parked in front of his house, hopped on the back seats, and let himself be dragged into the fine endeavor he had been waiting for.

Choromatsu, who was the self-designated driver of the outing, drove Osomatsu, Karamatsu and Atsushi to the bar the oldest of the three personally chose for the occasion. Finding a place where to park the car took Choromatsu longer than it normally should, instantly regretting choosing a day when everyone seemed to crave cold beer and a nice chat. Regardless of that, the third brother, with the useless pointers Osomatsu gave him, found a parking spot a few streets away from the niche bar.

The walk there was eerily silent due to Karamatsu and Atsushi walking next to each other, while the ones walking in front, lead the way cluttering every bit of chances to talk with their usual bickering. Not like they were trying anyways.

Leaving the busy streets behind, they waltzed in the bar and sat on one of the empty tables, occupying one in the middle, thanks to the lucky timing of getting there at the right moment to see the workers clean the recently unoccupied table. However, once they were all settled and with their first round of drinks served, the awkward silence was still very vivid between those two.

— There is no way I am going to let this keep going – Osomatsu voiced after he downed half of his beer already. Looking straight to Karamatsu, he leant on the table. – Why are you so quiet?

— I’m not – Karamatsu answered, in what could only be labeled as his worst try to get anyone off his case.

— Karamatsu that was so bad coming from you – Osomatsu sighed, staring at the second oldest after that poor attempt.

That was the end of it, again. Choromatsu shared a look with Osomatsu as they mentally decided how to proceed. Since, the first-born had his failed attempt to make the outing come alive, it was fair that Choromatsu had his chance next.

— I am surprised that Totty didn’t turn Osomatsu’s invitation down and let you come along – the third brother started with a safe point. – We did have a few backup plans.

— I still think mine was better – Osomatsu added.

— Please, you just wanted to sneak in and get him out – Choromatsu looked at Osomatsu, definitely annoyed.
— Of course! You would have come with me while Karamatsu distracted Totty. It was a master plan, Choromachuu – Osomatsu insisted with his magnificent idea.

— It wasn’t a master plan at all, Osomatsu – Choromatsu air quoted. - And Totty would have murdered you on the spot – Choromatsu said shaking his head.

— Totty? Murdering his caring older brother, are you sure? – Osomatsu smiled, finishing his first glass of beer.

— The beer is getting to your head, brother – joined Karamatsu on his own; finally. – Our baby brother would’ve have gotten so mad, he would have threaten you if not yelled and slapped you.

— You think? – Osomatsu jokingly wondered as his mind kept soliciting to consider the easy way out by jumping off a window.

— Even if you were capable of distracting Todo, our kids would have noticed right away. There is not much escape from them – Atsushi informed his brothers in law, recalling past tries of fooling their little ones.

— Oh right – Osomatsu snorted. – How are they doing? – He was quick to ask.

— They are fine – Atsushi smiled. – Although, is probable that they are convincing Todo to let them sleep with him – as recurrent as that was, Atsushi simply grew accustomed to have little feet and hands poking at him in random places, every time he arrived past their bed time.

— Cute – Osomatsu muttered, thinking of a bed full of squirming, tiny, warm kids.

— That’s really creepy of you – Choromatsu shoot him a disgusted glare, before he moved on. – And I bet my life he lets them. But, that’s so stuffy, besides for some reason kids are too warm.

— Of course he does – Atsushi’s smile widened a little. – There are nights when I even see Yua’s crib settled in our bedroom.

— Mastering the art of Cockblocking – Osomatsu snorted, receiving a harsh slap on the back of his head, courtesy of Choromatsu.

— Don’t get me wrong I love our kids, but sometimes I’d rather have him alone in our bed – the disappointment coming from that made both, the third and the second brother uneasy. – It’s less stuffy and way more comfortable.

Osomatsu was the only one laughing and for the tone of it, he wasn’t even forcing it nor he was drunk yet.

— Ah man, I still don’t know why Totty never talked about you – adding a break to let his comment set in, Osomatsu got a refill. – I mean, I know I did fuck up, but it would have been nice to meet you – he drank a bit, before smiling again. – Basically, what I am trying to say is that we don’t really know you as a person.

Choromatsu wanted to say something or pat his back for the clever segway.

— That’s fixable – Atsushi nodded. – What do you want to know?

Karamatsu had a lot of questions for Atsushi and he was going to go for it, until the first born butted in.
— Do you have any siblings? A sister maybe?

As much as Osomatsu wanted to sound casual, everyone who was paying attention knew that was far from the truth. Choromatsu was the first to react wanting to go full out on scolding mode for the clear insinuations that question entailed.

— Sadly, no. But, now I’m not so sure if that’s a bad thing – Atsushi quickly answered to drink a bit more. He was already foreseen that he was going to need it; with a start like that, things could only go worst.

— Great, you are an only, rich child – Karamatsu maintained that harsh exterior. – That explains a lot.

— Oi. You have more information than we do, that’s not fair Karamachuu – Osomatsu whined.

— Yeah, what do you know? – Choromatsu asked, agreeing with Osomatsu at last.

Atsushi looked at the second Matsuno, waiting for whatever ammo Todomatsu might have provided him the night his darling stayed over at his brother’s house.

— For starters, before Totty left years ago, he did talk to me about you – Karamatsu began, looking back at Atsushi. – It wasn’t that much, but it was something. Now, he told me a bit more and although it doesn’t change much, I still dislike the fact that you used to be annoyingly mean to him – he finished with a frown.

Now, all eyes were on Atsushi.

— I’m not going to use any excuses – Atsushi sighed. – At first, I was hard on him, I did everything there had to be done to get him out of my old group of friends because he did not fit in, but Todomatsu insisted in staying. I used to have so much fun discussing with him. He would put up those incredible expressions, talk back coldly and verbally demolish me; he still does that. I admitted back then and now that I was one hundred percent trying to hog his attention – Atsushi chuckled. – However, I remember one time when we were downright scaring the rest away with how much we were jabbing at each other, I said something about his family and I kid you not, Todo did not let me finish that and socked me right on the face. He even made me fall off my chair in front of everyone. To most people that would have been a deal breaker or something similar, for me that was more of a wakeup call.

The silly yet fond smile Atsushi had, did not cease the irk Karamatsu would still feel over that fact, neither was that story helping him to. On the other side of the table, both brothers quickly placed things together, constantly questioning how or why things turned out as they did for them.

Relaxing against his seat, Choromatsu decided to finally, order something. If he wasn’t going to drink, he could always eat.

— That sounded like one of your animes Choromachuu – Osomatsu blurted out, snickering. Making Choromatsu blush for outing him like that. – Totty punched you and you fell for him.

Osomatsu seemed to be having more fun than expected.

— Not like I realized that. But, it made me want to see more of his reactions – almost finishing his first drink, Atsushi smile turned sour. – Shortly after that, I began dating a girl in the company and a few months later, Todo showed up with his girlfriend too.

— Ha? His girlfriend?
Osomatsu’s amazement resounded in Choromatsu as the three of them stared at Atsushi, who stared back as well.

— What? – Lifting an eyebrow Atsushi tried not to think that much about their reaction.

— No, is… You said girlfriend and Totty in the same sentence – Osomatsu nervously laughed.

— Yes? – Atsushi slowly nodded to re-affirm what he said before.

— Totty told me that too, that both of you ruined each other relationships – Karamatsu added that bit of knowledge, fortifying the truth Choromatsu and Osomatsu did not want to accept.

— My ex-girlfriend dumped me in the same week Todo’s ex dumped him – smirking, Atsushi downed the rest of his beer.

— Poor you – Karamatsu said between his teeth, earning a look from the third brother. – Must have felt weird – he kept probing.

— At first it did, but Todomatsu and I grew closer after a few drinks – Atsushi widened his smirk, beginning to taste the fun.

Karamatsu’s frown deepened, roughly putting his beer glass on the table, he pointed an accusatory finger at Atsushi. Despite of having all the intention to drag him down, Karamatsu was brutally stopped by beer. Osomatsu didn’t bother to serve him, opting to shove the cold beverage down his throat.

Atsushi’s faint buzz, passed to the background while he stared at their antics. Which made him doubt of his security with how the only sober person in their group didn’t physically participate, choosing to stay put and give a leisure advice. Atsushi should have thought that outing better.

With a knocked out brother on the table and two empty bottles of beer around him, Atsushi gulped, praying to be spared from that.

— Ready for another round, Atsushi? – Osomatsu asked with a dangerously looking smile.

Todomatsu was right. He should have listened.

— A-ah, yes.

— What about your parents? Were they okay with your relationship? – Choromatsu took the reins from Osomatsu, bestowing a break upon Atsushi.

— Mother thought I was pranking her when I told her, but she was kind towards Todomatsu, and they made me sit and listen them talk about a new clothesline for two hours straight – hanging his head loud, he sighed. – At least they found common ground.

Hearing that brought a fresh breeze to both brothers, knowing Todomatsu didn’t have to suffer on that side, melted past and constant worries with ease.

— Then, Todo insisted on meeting my father – straightening up on his seat, he drew a fine frown on his face. – He wanted to do things the right way.

Just by the posture Atsushi took, Osomatsu’s undying nervousness came back to the present with urgency.

— How bad was that? – Choromatsu talked on Osomatsu’s behalf.
— Father didn’t acknowledge our relationship at all. He insulted us so casually and frequently too – Atsushi brushed his bangs off his face. – I tried to make that visit as short as I could, but Todomatsu didn’t want to leave like that. He told father what I could not voice, he made him shut up and listen – Atsushi closed his eyes as one end of his mouth curled up. – Todo gave him a piece of his mind.

Despite of being confronted with reality, my father gave me one last warning. As you can see I did not follow, but by doing so he kicked us out of his house and took the liberty of choosing a ‘proper’ nickname for Todo.

It was at a time like those, that Choromatsu regretted designating himself as the driver. He could really use a cold beer now.

— Believe it or not, Todo was the one taking care of me while I was miserable. As a thank you I took him to a weekly trip to Disneyland – smiling once again, Atsushi opened his eyes staring at nothing in particular. – After that, Mother divorced Father. And for a while, he did not bother us.

— Wait, he is still in contact with you? – Osomatsu frowned.

— No. Regardless of that, my father has always found a way to either call us or visit us. It is a constant nuisance.

— Why does he do that? If he doesn’t approve why bother? – Choromatsu wondered, not expecting Atsushi to give him an answer.

— He still believes that Todo is, as he calls him, my plaything. That he has to talk me out of our relationship, hoping that I will reconsider my audacious lifestyle – shrugging, Atsushi faced them. – He even had the nerve to tell Todo that I was going to leave him and the kids for a real family, a normal one - huffing, he glared at the table. - Do you understand how damaging that is for them? For him?

It was a curious thing, how what they thought to be a perfect life, took its form out of situations like those. Experiences meant to force their hands into giving up for an easier path. Although all of them had their own pebbles in life, vaguely comparable, it was the youngest who was walking on a rougher road. Osomatsu’s fears throughout the years went from insatiate ignorance to the truth his doctors tried to make him overlook.

— The last time he visited us as a surprise, was a year ago. My father did the same as always, so I sent Todo and the kids with one of our friends, but Hiro; the oldest, asked him, why was he so mean to his Mama? And he – gripping the hold on the glass, Atsushi frowned. – He told our three-year-old son that Todo was a degenerated. He would have kept going if it wasn’t for how furious Todomatsu got. Not once, Todomatsu had ever raised his hand against our kids or me, but he left his hand imprinted on his face. I had to force my father to leave afterwards – bringing the beer up to his lips, Atsushi submitted to it. – With a drama like that we had to sit down and explain to our kids what that word meant, why their grandparent said it, and so on – barely gracing the aftermath, Atsushi cursed under his breath and downed the whole glass, eternally annoyed with his father and haunted by the pain written on his husband face.

They would not blame him if Atsushi did not want to keep talking about such a touchy subject. In their minds that seemed to happen years ago, when in reality it was recent, a year ago might as well felt like months ago. For a child of that age, to have to experience the hardness of the world by someone that was supposed to be close must have disillusioned him and hurt all of them. Doing such a thing was unimaginable, malicious and wrong. If they were feeling so shaken by listening to it, how would have Todomatsu felt when it unfold?

— You deserve another bottle for that.
Choromatsu completely agreed with Osomatsu there, ordering more drinks for the two of them.

Because Atsushi did not take his husband’s warning seriously, he ended following Osomatsu’s desires, encouraging him into drinking until his face reddened, and the number of drinks lost its importance as it blended in a gooey mix, taking another man down with great success.

— Okay That’s enough buddy. No more for you – Osomatsu said, pushing the snacks and a glass of water close to Atsushi.

— Todo is going to get so mad at me. He is going to ignore me now – Atsushi slumped over the table, knocking over his last empty bottle.

Osomatsu grinned, reaching for more snacks, since he was not going to be paying might as well eat as much as he could.

— That’s normal. Totty is good at dismissing my whole existence – the oldest said, keeping his head high and proud.

— That’s not something to be proud of – Choromatsu sighed as he kept a close eye on a stirring Karamatsu. – Ah. He is waking up again.

— Wooh! Morning – greeted Osomatsu, chuckling at how confused Karamatsu was.

— Morning? – Squinting his eyes, Karamatsu responded in a gurgle. – Are we still in the bar? Did we spend the night here?

— No, you just passed out, but now you are back to join the fun! – Osomatsu explained.

— Hmm… I’m tired – Atsushi said in a hushed voice, resting his head on his arms.

— Aw, come on. Not you – throwing a balled up napkin at his brother in law, made Atsushi grumble and face the other side. – We have more questions.

— I don’t think that’s going to work – crossing his arms, Choromatsu observed Atsushi, thinking on what to do to keep him awake.

— Oh! I’ve got it! – Snapping his fingers, Osomatsu’s face brightened up.

Choromatsu could only brace himself and pass a bottle of water to Karamatsu.

— Choromatsu – with a serious tone, Osomatsu stared at Choromatsu.

— What? – pursing his lips in a frown, the third brother glanced at Osomatsu.

— We have always agreed that Totty is not cute, like at all – putting more emphasis in the name and the last word, Osomatsu glued his sight to Atsushi. When Choromatsu didn’t seem to continue with his brilliant plan, he signaled Choromatsu with his hands to hurry and say something.

— Oh! Yeah – gulping, Choromatsu quickly thought of where to lead the conversation, while he straightened up leaving behind his usual awkwardness. – We have the same face; it makes no sense that he considers himself as the cute one.

Atsushi’s body twitched, making them assume he was paying attention. They were not wrong on that.
— Totty is calling us cute every single time he does that without noticing it – leaning close to Choromatsu’s side, Osomatsu loudly whispered. – Between you and me, I still think he’s not cute.

— My Totty looks nothing like you… like any of you – grumbling with a sour humor, Atsushi used both arms to elevate his torso, albeit a little wobbly he somewhat straightened his posture to make his point clear. – He has the cutest brown eyes, the cutest pouty lips and the best expressions, unlike all of you.

Osomatsu snickered alongside Choromatsu, enjoying the show.

— Your Totty? Excuse you but he is our baby bru… brother. He is not yours – Karamatsu corrected him.

— He so is, Todomatsu is mine because he uses my last name now – Atsushi dragged his words as he tried to modulate them better.

— This is so much fun Choromatsu – wrapping his arm around Choromatsu’s shoulders, he pulled him closer. – It would be better if I could join the fun.

— That would be a nightmare, and I would focus on driving Atsushi back to his home – the third brother dryly said.

— What? You would abandon me here? – Osomatsu exaggerated his pout, keeping Choromatsu in a vice grip.

— I wish I could – Choromatsu sighed, admitting defeat by default. – Karamatsu on the other hand – grimacing at his inebriated older brother, Choromatsu had no doubts that between those two, Karamatsu would be the one staying behind for sure.

Osomatsu and Choromatsu did their job, babysitting two adult men as they bickered left and right, overthrowing and smashing each other’s biased opinions, to end up agreeing about Todomatsu’s cuteness within minutes of their verbal confrontation.

Osomatsu would sneak and take a picture of Karamatsu and Atsushi to share it with Todomatsu, always adding a vague description to the image, such as “they think you are cute” or “Karamatsu is talking about your nipples”. As a result, the youngest would text back with dry, straight to the point replies asking them, and specially his stupid older brother to stop.

It was in one of their following heated discussions that Osomatsu intertwined for the sake of his own fun.

— Oi. Remember when Karamatsu had that scare with one of his exes – Osomatsu planted that little something that would, without a doubt grow out of proportion.

— Oh. The fake pregnancy scare? – This chance Choromatsu was faster to respond, secretly wanting to see how it would develop.

— Yes. That girl was so happy to start forming a family and Karamatsu was in utter denial.

Their short conversation reached the ears of the drunk side of the table, luring those two with a much-wanted success.

— What are you talking about? – Karamatsu glared at them.

— That time when you almost ended up being a dad – emphasizing the end of his phrase, Osomatsu
entertained himself with the pained regret of his direct younger brother. – Remember Karamachuu? – He added as a final touch with a grin.

— Ugh. Don’t remind me of that Aniki. It could have been the biggest mistake of my entire life – withered Karamatsu, planting his face over the woody surface with a harsh ‘thud’.

— You are scared of one baby – Atsushi snorted. – We started with four – squinting his eyes at Karamatsu, he huffed. – It was so hard… And I almost dropped one of them.

— I pushed my first child off the bed by accident – Choromatsu empathized with Atsushi on that end. The horrors that surrounded that edgy situation was unimaginable, not to mention the stress it provided! Truly terrible.

— I’m sorry Darling – Atsushi apologized to a faraway Todomatsu. – I don’t even know which one of them was. Todo dressed them with the same onesie – Atsushi blubbered out all teary eyed.

— This is gold – Osomatsu snickered, snapping a couple of extra pictures to send Atsushi’s misery to Todomatsu.

— Atsushi is so drunk – Choromatsu stated the obvious with a smile.

— You couldn’t tell your own kids apart? Shitty parent, shitty parent I said – Karamatsu raised his head up just to nod at his own words.

— They looked the same! – covering his face with both hands, Atsushi whimpered in shame. – How did your parents do this? If I get the chance, I need to get some pointers.

— Are you going to take notes Atsushi? – asked Osomatsu, pointing the camera of his phone at him.

— Notes – uncovering his face, Atsushi nodded. – Yeah. I think I’ll have to take some notes. Many notes that will last for a lifetime.

— You are a bad parent. Totty should get away from you and come live with me instead. I could be the best brother and the best uncle – trying to point at his chest, Karamatsu slipped over, falling on his face again.

— No – dragging that one word as much as he could, Atsushi deepened his frown.

Hearing the oldest chuckle made Choromatsu leant over Osomatsu’s shoulders as he peeked, looking at the screen of his phone.

— What are you doing now? – Choromatsu asked as if what he saw wasn’t obvious.

— I’m recording an indie film.

Sure enough. Osomatsu was shamelessly recording those two.

— Totty is going to get so mad at you – Choromatsu whispered, not wanting to ruin that masterpiece, because like it or not, he was having fun.

— With this evidence by my side, my ass is completely safe.

Talking on their own, led them to give Karamatsu and Atsushi the space to begin with the new segment of who did this first and who was better at this and that. Although it could be perceived as nothing but two drunkards babbling, fighting to stay balanced and focused on what they were doing. The amount of moronic honesty they were dripping was close to earn the label of disgust. Osomatsu
was more surprised than grossed out, unlike Choromatsu, whose face adopted the full meaning of that word, scrunching up his face as he listened. Among the variety of confessions, a few that came from Atsushi sounded so creepy, it made him seem like an old man prying on a child. However, Karamatsu was not far behind. If his brothers did not know him well, they could easily brand him, as the closeted incestuous brother of the bunch, and that was quiet the dishonor, even for Shittymatsu.

— … I’m not so sure you should send this to Totty – Choromatsu advised.

— Yeah.

Ending the video with enough evidence to put those two behind bars by accident, Osomatsu put his phone away, while Choromatsu relaxed on his seat.

— I’m going to have to live knowing all that – massaging his temples, Choromatsu felt the dread of knowledge, as it gathered in his head without his permission.

— You and me, both – Osomatsu patted his back, feeling the mutual dread suck up his life. – At least I’m listening this instead of being harassed by phone calls at your place.

— Now that you mention it, Totoko chan has been calling more than usual – Choromatsu recalled the several calls from her in the past weeks.

— It’s so scary, what if she hired someone to off me and wants to let me know before I end up dead on the floor? – Osomatsu went beyond with his unreal assumptions, proving Choromatsu once again how stupid he was.

— What if you go get your head checked?

Albeit slow, said woman’s name resounded in Atsushi’s head.

— Totoko chan?

That was all he was able to modulate, being sufficient for the sober men in the table to direct their attention towards Atsushi.

— You know her? – asked Osomatsu.

— Kinda… I- we saw her like a week ago, right? – turning to face Karamatsu, but the other only nodded, probably too tired or done to continue.

— How… How was she? Was she okay? – Choromatsu eyed Osomatsu with a knowing look while the oldest of the three present brothers expressed his worries.

— She was so big, Todo and I drove her back to her place – Atsushi answered.

— Big? What do you mean by big? – Choromatsu’s frown deepened; unaware of the process Osomatsu’s head was going through.

— Like this – pushing himself back on his seat, Atsushi attempted to make a circle with his arms.

— Wait…

When Choromatsu connected the dots, he choked on his own words and turned around to see a stunned Osomatsu, by the looks he was sporting the third brother dared to think Osomatsu might have reached the same conclusion.
— That’s why she wanted to kill you! – The third brother finally pushed out.

— I should call her – before Osomatsu reached for his phone, Choromatsu slapped his hand away.

— Are you crazy? If she is that big, the last thing Totoko would want to do is get up! – More anxious than the first born, Choromatsu seemed to perfectly portrait Osomatsu’s toned down feelings.

— But – groaning at his newfound- no, at what he forgot, Osomatsu sunk on his seat. – And I called her fat…

— You did what!?

While Choromatsu was a second away to lecture him about how that was the prime example of what not to do, Atsushi snickered.

— She was so angry… s-she, um, she badmouthed you all the drive – Atsushi snorted remembering how hard it was to hold his laugh in.

— Damnit! Agh… I’ll go see her tomorrow – disheveling his own hair out of frustration, Osomatsu kept on mentally blaming himself. What else was there for him to do at the moment?

— You should go now, maybe Totoko chan would let you come in, if you tell her that you remembered – Choromatsu offered another option to his older brother.

— Maybe, but I can’t leave you here handling those two on your own. Besides, I promised Totty that I was going to take Atsushi back – shrugging, Osomatsu sighed.

— Thanks – Choromatsu felt less troubled hearing that. He was not going to have to deal with two drunk idiots.

The four of them stayed at the establishment until it neared the closing hours. Carrying those two, back to the car was the easy part, getting them in the vehicle was a different story. Karamatsu fought back, aggressive and rowdy for reasons Osomatsu was not going to bother correcting. While Atsushi wasn’t putting much of a fight, he turned into the embodiment of a personal task to taste Choromatsu’s patience. When he thought Atsushi was going to get in, the other would find any excuse to resist and ask repeatedly if they were going to see Totty. How did Todomatsu deal with him? How Todomatsu haven’t murdered his stupid ass yet?

Strapping both idiots in place with the aid of the seatbelts, Osomatsu and Choromatsu rushed to the front seats. The third brother started the car, leaving Osomatsu with the responsibility to keep Atsushi alive.

When Choromatsu parked in front of Todomatsu’s home, he sent him a quick text informing Totty that they were outside the house. Walking Atsushi to the front door went without major problems, Osomatsu had a meaningful conversation on the short walk with Atsushi, before the door swung open, revealing a sleepy looking Todomatsu in pajamas.

— As I promised, he is back in one piece – Osomatsu told him, passing Atsushi to his little brother.

— Todo – with a dopey smile, Atsushi slumped over Todomatsu’s arms. – I’m a little drunk… I’m sorry, don’t leave I can be the best dad…

— A little – Osomatsu repeated, covering his smile with his hand.
— Niisan – Todomatsu warned him after he helped Atsushi to sit down at the entrance to take Atsushi’s shoes off. – Dear, can you stay here and not move for a bit?

With a weak thumbs up as a positive answer, Todomatsu returned to the door.

— You didn’t do anything weird to him, did you? – Todomatsu was fast to suspect his older brother and point fingers with no mercy.

— Nope, nothing at all – his words were meaningless against the youngest resolution. Todomatsu was not buying it. – Ok, ok. I did record this video of Karamatsu having a fight to the death with Atsushi.

— Send that to me.

— Uh… I don’t think you would like to watch that – scratching the back of his head, Osomatsu poorly convinced Todomatsu to back off from that idea.

— Ugh. It’s too late for this. As long as it not posted anywhere I guess is fine – Todomatsu sighed. – Good night, niisan - he bid him farewell with a tired smile.

— Good night, Totty – Osomatsu was going to pin that advice in his mind, to not screw him over nor meddle with anything weird. Besides, his hands were going to be full at first hour in the next morning, he wasn't going to have time for any of that.

Closing the door and locking it, Todomatsu faced his husband, or what was left from the man.

— Come on Atsushi. Let’s go to bed.

Slow but secure, Todomatsu walked half-carrying Atsushi to their bedroom, dealing with his endless drunken lines throughout the lengthy process. When he manhandled Atsushi to put his nightclothes on and actually put him into bed, nothing felt as relaxing as those faint seconds of laying in bed, before his husband trapped him in his arms, falling victim of his growing libido, due to an innocent game of footsies and groping.

Next morning, when Atsushi woke up, he rose up with bliss finding the blinds down, medicine and a bottle of water on the night table. The regret of his actions came shortly after he regained his full consciousness, although using the word regret was hardly relatable when Atsushi remembered the fun he had feeling Todomatsu up under the sheets.

Later on that lazy Sunday, Todomatsu received good news from Totoko and Osomatsu separately, both announcing two different things. Totoko saying that his older brother finally remembered about putting his dick in her months ago, while Osomatsu happily wrote that they were together again. Todomatsu could be wise and ask Totoko about that, but he had his hands full with his own situation to intrude in theirs out of curiosity. In short words, he believed Totoko a hundred percent.

— How much do you remember from last night?

Since Atsushi got out of bed, Todomatsu had been trying to make Atsushi spill about what ensued on that night. Atsushi being a strong independent adult was having the hardest time sidetracking his husband’s attempts. On one side, he wanted to tell him, but doing so would drag the consequences of oversharing. Atsushi would be forever grateful if Todomatsu’s older brothers would keep the things he said as a vague dark memory. It was one thing to tell Todomatsu about how much he wanted to screw him, and how he wanted to do it, but it was a completely different story to voice that to his
brothers.
If Todomatsu wanted to share their intimacy with them, that would be fine, they were his brothers after all, however, Atsushi did feel bad for doing it himself.

The things Karamatsu said were also something Atsushi wished he could erase from his mind. He could imagine the reaction Todomatsu would have if Atsushi did as much as skim over the topic.

As Atsushi saw it, he could be sincere and face his cute husband or infuriate him and have him nagging for answers until Atsushi answered. Both were so bad, but he could only try to do his best.

— Mostly everything, especially after I got back home.

— I would be offended if you forgot that part – humming, Todomatsu held Yua as she approached Atsushi on her own, moving one foot after the other.

— I’m surprised you let me go all the way – crouching down, Atsushi waited for Yua with open arms.

— With the things you were saying, it was too hard to say no – Todomatsu explained, slowly advancing with their daughter. – You are almost there, princess – he cooed to the baby girl, who took a short break to bounce.

— Aww, Yua. Yua come here – Atsushi called for her and almost instantly, Yua began moving towards him again.

Todomatsu went along, taking a step back and releasing his hold on their daughter when she was three steps away from Atsushi. As they should have seen it coming, Yua wobbled a little and reached for her father to pick her up, succeeding with her daily milestone of a task.

Hugging her, Atsushi and Todomatsu congratulated her by repeating how much they loved her and how cute and smart she was, things that as a developing baby would not fully understand but what Yua got from there were only good things, encouraging her to express the happiness in the form of squeals and smiles.

Although Todomatsu felt anxious spending that Sunday relaxing at home and not with his brothers, he would not change it for anything in the world. It has been countless of days since they could all sit down and do nothing. The children’s music playing on the background, their needy demands to make both parents participants of their imaginary fantasy, the smile on their faces when they complied. Atsushi and Todomatsu knew that it was going to take a while and lots of hard work to replicate a similar opportunity. For the meantime, they were going to make it count for their kids. Hopefully they would remember this day with fondness on the following years.

At a refreshing peace, the night made its appearance and with that, both adults could hog the lifelong hour of unexpected tranquility. Laying in bed, next to the other, they embraced the minutes they were capable to stay awake to gaze into each other’s eyes, contemplating in silence the patterns of their lives, woven on their skin with fine lines that would be visible the older they grow.

— We’ll have to start packing again soon – whispered Atsushi, drawing circles on the back of Todomatsu’s hand.

— Yeah… We still have four more days of work here – sighing, Todomatsu pouted. – Just thinking in doing all that a second time is so troublesome.
— We also bought a lot — now it was Atsushi’s time to sigh. — We are going to need more boxes too — bringing Todomatsu’s hand close to his mouth, he kissed his fingers.

— Can we get a few boxes of chips? — Todomatsu asked, keeping his hopes up for a positive answer.

— Uh? I thought you would like to buy some Ramune too and maybe a few sweets.

Todomatsu was not going to deny that he loved the idea of going back with all those snacks. Despite of it, he didn’t want to see his time pass in front of him while he purchased those; adding it to a long and complicated list of things to do next week. Troubled, he moved his other hand up to play with Atsushi’s hair, tousling the strands a bit.

— Wouldn’t that be too much? — Todomatsu said, twirling a short strand of hair around his fingers. — We have a lot to do.

— If you think so. We could also contact your brothers to get them and ship those to us once we are settled. Does that sound better? — humming, Atsushi closed his eyes, signaling his husband that sooner rather than later, they were going to fall asleep.

— It’s still scary when you are so nice — smiling, Todomatsu moved closer, getting between his arms to cuddle against his chest. Looking up at Atsushi, he brought his hand down to wrap his arms around his middle.

— Wait until we grow old. I’m going to be so nice to you, you’ll ask me to stop — chuckling, Atsushi let go of his hand to lie down and plant a kiss on his forehead. — Night.

— Ew, Atsushi kun no — exaggerating his whine, Todomatsu joined him, ready to rest for the start of their last week. — Night.

As a carbon copy from the week before, they couldn’t find any time to spare, having to wrap up the work, and the new rules they have been implementing, as well as passing all the information to their respective substitutes, since they were going to be the ones in charge for the rest of the year or years that would come. Aside from that, they had to start packing, but before they started, they preferred to write a list of what to pack first and what to pack last, to keep a minimal order without having to alter their lives to a critical point, and not forget anything, making a good use of the time.

The very last day at the company, they were surprised with a nice farewell party, hosted by the one and only, Aiko san. They should have predicted that.

Nevertheless, that celebration presented them with a free afternoon, allowing the pair to commence with the packing galore. Todomatsu was aware that he could have hired someone else to do all that job for them, but where was the fun of having the kids help with a team of strangers. Exactly, nowhere.

The four brothers chose one plushy to keep for the rest of the week, gathering the rest of their toys; with the help of their parents, to start filling up the boxes.

Todomatsu had the amazing idea of leaving sweets and snacks decorating the table, putting the kids in a better mood, since to them it resembled a fun moving out party more than a hardworking activity of dread and stress.

Little by little, the bedrooms changed with the lack of uniqueness it behold through the vivid or
subtle decoration of their belongings. That whole floor seemed colder, and they were just starting.

Without thinking too much, Todomatsu killed two birds in one shot. Sending a quick text to his brothers, asking if they could all meet up somewhere, intruding in whatever conversation they might have had throughout the last days.

Karamatsu ķīsan

did something happen, my baby brother?

Choromatsu ķīsan

Is it urgent? Because, as of now I am a little busy.
I might be free later tonight. If that works

Ichimatsu ķīsan

im free

Osomatsu ķīsan

yeah tonight sounds good
where to?
your place?

Jyushimatsu

I will tell mom to get us snacks then!!

The messages kept piling up, but with to the buzz of securing and closing the boxes, showing the kids how to do certain things, summoning eyes on the back of his head to keep his lovely sons out of trouble; Todomatsu didn’t text back until everything was a bit calmer. Giving the fact the quadruplets already broke a couple of dishes and knocked over the juice, staining the tablecloth and ruining it for good; there were slim chances for Todomatsu to check his phone just yet, not when all happened in those brief moments where he was not watching what they were doing.

Taking a break to excuse himself to the bathroom, Todomatsu left the kids under Atsushi’s care. Bringing his phone along, he read the messages as he took care of his business. The very first thing in his head was to prevent them from coming to their house, all the ruckus in the second floor would turn things sour, making them realize what was going on. Regardless of two brothers already knowing, the remaining brothers could react badly at the news of his departure. How wouldn’t they? When they were thinking of celebrating Christmas, New Year’s and their birthday together.
you can't come here is a little messy

He quickly texted, trying to save his ass.

Osomatsu niisan

woah you took your sweet time answering
busy living in paradise?

Oh. So he wanted to play.

busy cramming up reading how to raise a child for dummy’s? :3c

Todomatsu didn't have time for any of that.

Choromatsu niisan

That was a good one totty

Ichimatsu niisan

wrecked

Osomatsu niisan

so mean totty

Karamatsu niisan

then where do you suggest we meet?

Ah. Todomatsu hadn’t thought about that yet. He should hurry up too; hearing Atsushi mediate with the quadruplets was alarming enough to jinx another decoration that could possibly end up in the garbage bin.
I don’t know at one of your places choose a house and I will drive there okay? Im super busy rn I have to go

With the last glimpse of several of his brothers typing at the same time, Todomatsu returned to the awaiting chaos in the second floor.

Not bothering to check his phone, he neglected the messages that cluttered his inbox and by doing so, the ring bell chimed alive after a couple of hours, mistaking those five demons with the two large pizzas they ordered for dinner.

Todomatsu’s smile fell when he opened the door and saw his brothers standing out there at the front gate.

— W-what are you guys doing here? – Mentally answering his own question, Todomatsu kept his feet planted on the ground, unmoving.

— We texted and called you. When you didn’t answer we decided to come here – Choromatsu explained, eyeing Todomatsu’s posture suspiciously. – Is everything alright? – He questioned.

— Yes… But Niisans I told you not to come here – Todomatsu said, clearly upset of his bad luck while he walked back to the house to let them in, after unlocking the gate. – I’m busy and the house is a mess – sighing in a premature defeat, Todomatsu put his hands on his hips. – It’s not even night, you know.

When he finished saying that, the rumble of a bike announced Todomatsu that their dinner was about to be served.

Trying to play it cool, Todomatsu lead the way to the messiest floor in the house. If the packed boxes hogging one side of the room, the tools and materials scattered on the floor didn’t give away his announcement (if it could be called like that), he did not know what else could.

— Mama’s clones!!

The kids face brightened when they saw their uncles, blessing Todomatsu with a good distraction to collect his thoughts together.

— Hey kiddo. What are you guys doing? Camping? – Osomatsu asked the excited boys, already having the idea in mind of what was going on.

— We are packing! – Hiro answered with the biggest smile. – It’s super fun too!

They were not a good distraction.

— Darling, do you want to finish packing those two boxes after we eat, or do you want to leave it for tomorrow? – Atsushi appeared with Yua in his arms, holding her bottle at an angle to feed her. – Oh. So that’s why you ordered two large pizza’s – he muttered, glancing at Todomatsu while he walked in and out of the kitchen to get some napkins. – Welcome. Did you just arrive?

— Yes. Why are you packing? Are you moving? – Karamatsu questioned going with the feeling in his gut.
Having a full picture of what his husband wanted to do, Atsushi looked at Yua.

— You should stay for dinner. I believe we might have ordered enough pizza for all of us.

— Don’t forget dessert Daddy!! – said Ryo playing with the tape, again.

— I want two desserts! – giggled Yuu, holding two fingers up.

— Right, and dessert – smiling, Atsushi helped his daughter finish her bottle.

Avoiding breaking the news for Todomatsu, he excused to leave the empty bottle in the kitchen sink. Promising to wash it later.

Making place on the table, Todomatsu put one pizza at one end and the other at the opposite end. Serving the quadruplets one slice each, he snatched two for Atsushi and himself.

— You can grab a slice or two niisan – he offered, biting onto it and stretching the cheese into threads of delight.

He could have enjoyed that first slice at its fullest if he wasn’t growing anxious with the stipulated vow of silence his older brothers resolved among themselves. Perhaps they were being mindful of the little ones sitting in front of them, refraining from intoxicating a good day. If that were the case, Todomatsu wouldn’t mind listening to them for a full hour on how shady and secretive he was, he would confidently endure it.

After the kids finished their dinner, Atsushi allowed the quadruplets to go and play in the still decorated playroom; dismantling it was going to be a demolishing task for the next day. Excusing themselves, the four little boys rushed to the elevator without extending an invitation to play with their uncles, too immersed in the plans for their new game.

— Totty why are you packing? Are you guys moving to a bigger house?

Karamatsu’s crumbling question shook Todomatsu out of his safe bubble.

— No, niisan. We have been transferred back to England – Todomatsu said letting that chunk slowly set in, before he moved forward. – We have to leave in four days - looking down, he focused in the oily residue glistening on the white edge of his plate. - Our flight is on Monday - Todomatsu muttered, cheeks flaming with embarrassment.

— Next Monday? – Choromatsu asked in the same hushed tone as he scooted closer to the table.

— Yes. We should have left earlier, but we’d been granted with a longer stay – Atsushi added, wanting to provide Todomatsu with his support.

Three out of two brothers had to take their time to let that sink in. Ichimatsu and Jyushimatsu didn’t try to act surprised, but they did look a bit down at the reminder of the news.

Denying to let his brothers stuck like that, Todomatsu armed himself with a frail courage to face them and apologize.

— I’m sorry for not telling you sooner I

— Were you planning to hide that from us? – Slightly mad and irritated, Choromatsu cut Todomatsu off from feeding them with excuses.

— No. I was
— Then why didn’t you tell us that sooner? Did you ever stop to think how we would feel about it? — closing his eyes, Choromatsu pinched the bridge of his nose. — We just reunited after years Todomatsu. Not one nor two, but ten years, and you are going to leave? You haven’t even met our families yet, don’t ever let me get started about talking to our parents. Seriously, Todomatsu… — running his mouth, Choromatsu did not let the youngest explain a single thing, bursting through his lips the unraveled raw emotions the third born could poorly contain. — Why are you always like this? Did you not learn from the past? — leaning against his seat, Choromatsu sighed.

The lack of intromission from the others, told the youngest they agreed with some of that, if not all of what Choromatsu said. Despite of the strong urges of defend himself and get them to understand his reasoning, Todomatsu overrated tactic had no effect whatsoever, it never really did. So why bother implementing it again?

If Todomatsu told them that, he did not mean to keep it as a secret, they would surely not believe him and if they attempted to, it would mostly be with a cautious degree to back off and side with the rest of his brothers. Although, he did not blame them for thinking like that, Todomatsu had always battled to trust in his family with certain topics. He learnt not to share his private endeavors, dreading of seeing them lose the initial shine due to the lack of response it would have. That was back then; now, it was imperative to suck it up and join their silence, because he had nothing to explain that would not be questioned right away, or taken as another excuse.

— I did say this change was not a permanent one – Atsushi said as a little reminder of the first time they had dinner together. — We could have been already in England by the beginning of this week if it wasn’t for that gracious extension we received.

— T-this is exactly why I didn’t want you to come here – muttering his thoughts, Todomatsu pursed his lips in a frown as he twirled his ring.

Having said that, Todomatsu ended killing the conversation on the spot. What else was there to say? The only two brothers that weren’t that affected did not do shit to make it more pleasant either. However, there was one brother, which had not peep a word.

— If it is about your job you don’t have a choice – began the first born. — But… is that what you want? - Raising his head, Osomatsu looked straight at the youngest. - Todomatsu, do you want to leave home again?

Asking with such a soft tone, Osomatsu surprised most of them with the approach he took.

— It’s not that I want to leave…

— Sorry, Totty. That came out way too pushy – Osomatsu chuckled, scratching the back of his head. — It’s just… too soon, you know - he said with a bittersweet smile. - At least I think we all find that it is too soon. I mean, there is still so much to do!

— Don’t even remind me of that – Todomatsu sighed, averting his gaze. — I have to cram up so much in these few days. I want to spend a few hours with you guys and I also want to visit our parents - slouching his back, he pouted. - Everything is happening so fast but I don’t want to use that as an excuse.

Another stuffy silence showed up, but the oldest of the sextuplets did not look affected by the crappy atmosphere.

— Ah – snapping his fingers, Osomatsu smiled at the youngest, vibrant with a recent idea. — Would a sleepover help? – Osomatsu asked.
— A sleepover? – repeated Todomatsu, tilting his head wondering where his older brother wanted to go with that sort of question.

— Ugh, don’t listen to him. It’s not a sleepover – Choromatsu was quick to smash Osomatsu’s invitation and what entailed, thanks to his personal experience.

— It is one - Osomatsu insisted. - It is us sleeping over at your house. Well, the common room, but it still applies, right?

— You are not right but that is also not wrong – squinting his eyes, Choromatsu dwelled further into how right in its wrongness that explanation was.

Were they actually implying to have a children’s activities at Choromatsu’s house? Does that mean they were going to sleep together, together? They were adults! Why would they want to sleep like that again!? Didn’t they enjoy the feeling of freedom growing up offered them?

— Ew, that’s disgusting – grimacing, Todomatsu imagined himself sleeping between the two sweaty and smelly older brothers.

— Todo, darling are you okay? - Atsushi asked, chuckling at his revolted expression.

The utter revulsion show casted on his face gave the way to let his older brothers bicker and discuss how fussy he was and what not, even bringing his little short stay at Karamatsu’s place to the table, fighting at their favor. Despite of that, Todomatsu did not intend to turn their invitation down, leaving their second sleepover of the year to the next night, a Saturday night.

After their visit, Todomatsu felt lighter, crossing the announcement out of his mental list left plenty of space to think about what to do regarding his parents.

Packing started as early as they woke up, sucking up the hours with an astounding peace. Todomatsu found himself drawn in what he was doing, to the point of effortlessly forgetting that he should have gotten out of the house half an hour ago. The ringing of his phone was the reminder of how late he was, among other added rude comments, sponsored by his lovely brothers.

The very first thing Todomatsu focused on when he walked into that foreigner house was their old futon. Perfectly laid out in the middle of the common room.

— Is this some sort of twisted plan to make me stay? – Todomatsu grumbled, lifting an accusatory eyebrow.

— What? No, no! We used it months ago for another sleepover – Osomatsu explained rubbing underneath his nose with his stupid smile in place.

— Wait... Do you do this for fun? – ruining every nice attempt to look on the bright side, Todomatsu judged him, judged all of them for it. What did they turn out to be? Perverts? Ah. No. They have been perverts for years, and that included himself too.

— I think we should use another futon – Ichimatsu said, refreshed with the bad memories of being uncomfortable sleeping there. – If we didn’t fit without Totty, there is no way we will do it with him.

Osomatsu’s lighthearted laugh moved no one. Choromatsu and Karamatsu went to look for the extra futon while Osomatsu went to the kitchen for the snacks. Jyushimatsu and Ichimatsu stayed back dumbly staring at what Todomatsu put on the futon; compact mirrors and three hydrating facemasks.
He was kind enough to bring along facemask for all of them. Did they don’t know how sleepovers worked? No, they were probably doing sleepovers wrong.

— Count me out. I’m not doing it – Ichimatsu bluntly said, looking straight at an unsurprised Todomatsu.

— Totty! This is for girls! Homura chan has many of these masks at home! – Jyushimatsu chuckled, sitting down on the futon and taking one of the mask in his hands.

— It’s not just for girls niisan. Facemasks are relaxing and helps your skin to be healthy – Todomatsu took some wipes out of his duffle bag and handed it to them. – You really should do this more often – he said showing his brothers how to clean their faces with the wipes. Jyushimatsu followed right away, moving closer and reaching for a mirror. – Besides, this is the easiest and lazier way of doing it. In case you didn’t know this is almost a ritual and it is a long one.

— Tsk. I already said I didn’t want to – Ichimatsu kept himself firm as he observed his two younger brothers focus on what they were doing. Looking down at the wipes and the mask in his hand, Ichimatsu silently sat down next to them and began doing the same.

When the older bunch of brothers returned, they found the three youngest blissfully relaxed on the futon with their facemasks on.

Chapter End Notes

Again, im sorry for all those mistakes!
Chapter Notes

It is doooooooone!!

V (⌒ o⌒) V

I can't believe this is the last chapter...

First of all, i am sorry for taking so long, i sincerely could not write and i was tired so i

OBVIOUSLY procrastinated when i had the time to do it >_>_uU

Anyways, I hope you enjoyed this huge thing. It was fun to write :3c

Don't be afraid to tell me if i messed up somewhere!

Have fun and comment if you liked it~!

All rights reserved to the creators of Osomatsu-San. This is a fanfiction.

Hearing his older brothers chat, lulled Todomatsu to doze off. Effortlessly ignoring their tries to keep
him awake, he let his body relax abandoning the conversation without a care in the world.

The tranquility of the clear water, did not burn.

The breeze tousled his pink hair, toying and twirling it away from it.

Wet and warm, he sat up.

The vast ocean ran as far as his eyes could see, showing him nothing else but that.

He had seen that before. He knew how that ended, how it felt, but not how it played out.

Anguished, Todomatsu submitted to a predisposed failure, unable to find what he needed.

Tangling up his fingers, he gripped his hair from his scalp.

Distress crawled up his skin, prickling his pores and strangling his lungs.

It burns. It burns from inside.
Darling…?

Wide eyed, Todomatsu laid frozen in the futon. His ragged breath, returned his consciousness in a second, making him very aware of his whereabouts.

Sweaty, partially trapped between two worlds, Todomatsu rose up, leaving his spot in the futon behind.

What time was it anyways? It wasn’t dark anymore, but the summer sun always grazed them close to four and five in the morning. Yawning, Todomatsu gathered all his messy hair up in a ponytail, giving up on gaining more hours of rest. Finding his way to the bathroom with little difficulty, he washed his face with fresh water before Todomatsu raised his sight up to meet his own reflection.

— Today is the day.

Muttering those words to himself was an unique experience.

Todomatsu came out eons ago to everyone, each person at a different pace, and all of them with a different range of reactions. But his family was; and still is, such an important part of his life, the band aid he used to patch up the gash was not going to work a second time. Todomatsu knew he wasn’t the only one at risk. He could always back off and keep going on with his life as nothing happened. Why? Because, he did not want to experience an utter rejection. That would do more than just subjugate him to his bed for a week.

It could go far more than worse.

— I have to stop thinking about it.

Reaching for a towel to dry his face, Todomatsu shook his head.

— As if I could do that, now.

The truth was that Todomatsu was never alone. However, this second try to better his relationship with his parents could transform into a bad experience for his family if, only if things go wrong.

— Right. Nothing to worry about.

Looking at the mirror, Todomatsu took a deep breath and straightened up. As stupid as that might sound, the little pep talk he gave to himself in Choromatsu’s bathroom, helped him quite a lot to rid himself from the scraps of nerves that wanted to tie him down.

For now, he was going to be okay.

— I am going to be okay – nodding, Todomatsu engraved his words on stone as he voiced them, empowering him to keep going forward.

Turning to the door, he opened it, facing his older brother, Choromatsu.

— Uh. I was just about to knock – lowering his fist, Choromatsu looked at Todomatsu. – Are you okay?

— Yeah. I was just —, giving myself a pep talk. As if saying that was going to help. – Never mind.

With a rightfully raised eyebrow, Choromatsu stared at Todomatsu while he walked out of the
bathroom.

— You sure you are okay? – Overly worried, Choromatsu didn’t waver to ask him again.

— Peachy, niisan.

Without bothering to look back at him, Todomatsu went to the kitchen.

The brightness that room offered warmed up his skin, welcoming him to the very last day in Japan. Sighing, he inspected the leftover snacks hoarding the kitchen counters, mentally choosing which one to nibble. It was the perfect excuse to stop thinking about the rest of the day.

— I can’t believe this.

— Believe what?

He should have suspected that his older brother was going to follow him.

— How noisy, Choromatsu niisan – lacking his intrepid tone, Todomatsu pouted and reached for Karamatsu’s famous cookies. Taking an extra one for his brother as well. – I’m just contemplating on what to do… and if I want to do it.

— Uh? What do you mean by contemplating? Aren’t you going to see our parents? – Frowning, Choromatsu took his cookie and bit into the chewy dough.

— I’m not so sure… Niisan. I’m too nervous to go alone and I have so much more to lose this time around – devouring the biscuit without realizing it, Todomatsu continued. – And I don’t have the luxury of being depressed in bed, because I have five kids and a job – unconsciously, Todomatsu grabbed the closest snack and brought one up to his mouth. – And don’t get me wrong, I do know that it is important to have time for yourself, but I can’t just be that selfish. I really can’t.

— If it’s going to make you feel bad, maybe you shouldn’t go.

Choromatsu’s words made him stop and focus on him.

— What?

— Todomatsu, you are clearly nervous – Choromatsu started, slowly taking the half-eaten snack away from his sugary-coated fingers. – And rightfully so. However, as much as I would love for you to make amends, if it is too much I don’t see it going anywhere. I rather see you leaving content than… well, not.

Todomatsu knew that, he thought about that exact same thing several times. He rehearsed it in his head thousands of times, but…

— What if I can’t come back in a long time? What if by the time I can it is too late…

— Ah.

Not knowing whether he was going to be able to see his family again in a few years, was worrisome, and adding that up to the fragility of life, it was normal for Todomatsu envisioning himself at his parent’s funeral before he could ever exchange words with any of them.

If rejection could hurt him, not having the chance to try due to the demise of one or both of them, would destroy him.
— Sorry, niisan. I didn’t mean to turn everything so dark.

Todomatsu had too much in his head, and it wasn’t a secret.

— No, no. It’s fine – Choromatsu smiled at him. – Well, now that you are awake. Do you want coffee? Milk tea? Or tea?

— Tea sounds good. Even better if you have something for the nerves – Todomatsu smiled back at him, gripping with a vice hold the edge of the counter with one of his hands.

— I’ve got you covered then.

Between the two of them the left overs reduced to crumbs in the spawn of two hours. Which they spent talking about life, work and sex, a whole lot of sex. What could they say? A Matsuno was always going to be a Matsuno. Although the differences were ridiculous, they still managed to extend that conversation.

Later on, and with all his brothers awake, Todomatsu kindly offered to cover the expenses of lunch at Choromatsu’s place. Sadly, Jyushimatsu and Osomatsu had to leave, but they did promise to bid him farewell later on that day, whether that be trough a call or a text.

Choromatsu’s wife overpowered his (shitty) kindness by inviting Todomatsu’s family over. With the idea settled, the remaining brothers went out to purchase the ingredients she requested.

If that cramped house was incredibly packed with four or five people living there, adding nine more was a chaotic concurrence. Lunch came out a bit later than usual, but no one complained, when everything was simply delightful.

After dessert, Todomatsu and Atsushi kids surrendered to their satisfied hunger, letting them use one of the rooms in the house for their nap. Choromatsu’s daughters on the other hand, were allowed to meet Yua with Karamatsu’s supervision. Meanwhile, the rest of the adults were seamlessly chatting in the common room, getting to know each other all over again, as well as, for the first time. However, the fall on the same subject was inevitable.

What was Todomatsu going to do?

Was he sure of this and that?

In all seriousness, Todomatsu was unsure of everything. He had no idea how he was still smiling and sharing with others when all he wanted to do was to lay down and order Atsushi to cuddle him until he said so.

He couldn’t do that now, could he?

— Totty?

— Hm?

— I’ve been talking to you for like five minutes.

Choromatsu’s voice seemed to slowly accommodate to the motion of his lips and his posture, as Todomatsu came back from another trip to his deep thoughts.

— Sorry, niisan. What were you saying? – Todomatsu asked with a smile.

— I was telling you that Mom and Dad like to go out window-shopping around four in the afternoon
— Choromatsu repeated what he was saying earlier, probably with fewer words too. — If you don’t want to talk to them, maybe we could keep them out long enough for you to meet Homura and just see the house.

Like a ninja, huh? Sneaking in and then running away. What a safe getaway…

— No. There is no need for that. It is too complicated for something as simple as a talk.

Most of them were looking at him, as if he grew another head. Maybe it wasn’t going to be an easy walk on the beach, but Todomatsu couldn’t be a bigger coward than he already was, and cheat his way out.

Going through with it seemed fairer than running.

— But – turning to face to his right, Todomatsu looked at his husband. – Can you come with me?
— You don’t need to ask me like I am going to say no – Atsushi warmly chuckled. – Silly.

For him to be that passive with Todomatsu, he must have looked quite pitiful. How annoying.

That bold decision could have been changed anytime, and perhaps some of his brothers would have preferred it like that. Nonetheless, it remained as it was.

Following the schedule of Todomatsu’s parents, they waited for them to go out before his brothers took the liberty of going after them to bring them back home at six sharp, perfect for a little chat and hopefully for a nice refreshing dinner. With a poorly traced idea of a plan, he let the seconds feed his nerves as it run.

Parting ways from their children felt a bit odd. Mostly, because Todomatsu never imagined he was going to be walking back home, hand in hand with Atsushi. He thought they would at least drive there.

— This is surreal – Todomatsu said, focusing on the path in front of them.
— What is it? – Astushi asked him.

— This whole situation – sighing, Todomatsu casted his sight down to his comfortable shoes. - I can’t believe you are finally going to meet my parents.
— Oh. Neither can I – Atsushi admitted with a shaky tone.

— You don’t have to be so nervous, Dear – squeezing his hand a little, Todomatsu looked at him to meet his gaze.
— Is it too obvious?

His concern was the perfect sweetener for the occasion, making Todomatsu smile at his expression.

— If another anxious person is noticing it, I think it is pretty obvious, Dear – giving in his state, Todomatsu walked closer, hugging his arm. – At least this feels like a date.

— A date? Where you this nervous in our dates? – Atsushi muttered, nuzzling his face against Todomatsu’s shoulder. – To me this feels more like I have to ask for their blessing.

— You do know we are already married, right?
— What are we going to do if they say no? – Completely ignoring him, Atsushi continued with his silly line of thoughts. – Will they change their mind if I bribe them with money?

— Maybe? I mean. It worked with me so-Ouch! Atsushi stop it! It hurts!

Having his cheeks pinched were one of the most unfair punishments his husband liked to use on him. In his defense, Todomatsu wasn’t being mean on purpose. Okay, maybe he was, but he did not think his words were going to be taken so seriously. How stingy.

Regardless of their altercation, Todomatsu redeemed himself, bathing his husband with short flattery that encased his feelings for him. Being insistent with it earned Todomatsu the freedom he used to pull Atsushi down and embarrass him by planting a warm kiss on his cheek. Seeing him battling to gain control over his blazing face, pushed Todomatsu to keep doting on his husband for the rest of the walk, or until Atsushi decided to play along, accepting all of them with pride.

Halfway there, Todomatsu’s mind began to panic. All sort of scenarios interrupted the calm and quiet of an incandescent day. Was he dressed appropriately? Should he have worn something else? What about his husband? Was he dressed for the occasion? Did it really matter? Absolutely. As someone who worked socializing with many important people, Todomatsu knew the importance of giving a good impression. The correct one.

What if wearing matching shirts, as they were doing, would make his parents uncomfortable? What if that piece of fabric made everything worse?

All those stupid ‘what if’ questions clouded his senses to the point where Todomatsu didn’t react as much as he thought he would when he saw the bench outside the house from afar.

Atsushi was the only one of the two who was properly conscious. Thanks to that, both reached the first milestone of the day by standing outside of the house.

— This is it – Todomatsu muttered.

— Yes – Atsushi added in the same hushed tone.

That threshold muddled up anything that was occupying his head. Dragging Todomatsu to a blank space, he did not know he still had. The encouraging caresses on the back of his hands, forced him to stand his ground. This was happening.

With the fleeting idea of walking away and never looking back again, Todomatsu stepped closer to the front door and knocked. Holding his breath, he muted Atsushi’s whispers of reassurance, focusing on the noise coming from inside. When the door slid open, Todomatsu gripped Atsushi’s hand in anticipation, until he finally meet eyes with his mother.

— … Todomatsu?

She looked old and yet eternal. The gray hairs adorned her head with an abundance nature granted her over the years, complementing the marked lines of expressions she obtained with the lengthy years of raising not only children, but young adults too. Shit, they truly were shitty sons too.

— Mom… Mom I – before he could finish that sentence, Matsuyo wrapped her arms around Todomatsu, obliging him to lower himself a bit for that welcoming hug.

Todomatsu didn’t remember her being so short. Was it time that jumbled his memories into thinking that his mother shrunk? That Todomatsu grew a few inches?
No realizing that his hand was set free he stood there like an idiot, only awakening when his mother moved away and hit him on the shoulder.

— You didn’t call! – She hit him again. – I did not raise you to act like that Todomatsu!

In an unexpected turn, Todomatsu dumbly stared at his mother, while Matsuyo began to scold him, leaving Todomatsu with no room to defend himself nor think. No mercy at the entry of the house would’ve been a nightmare back then, however, listening to her voice the worries about not knowing how Todomatsu was doing, brought a relieved smile on his face. One that melted when Matsuyo’s emotions came afloat.

Todomatsu anxiety spiraled upwards seeing her crying like that. Unsure of what to do and what to say, he opted for awkwardly flailing his arms before he stuck to hug her back.

He was a bad son.

After that fresh salty rain, and with the approval of his mother, they entered the house. Both stealing quick glances of the scenery surrounding them while they took their shoes off. Atsushi being more cautious than Todomatsu, who was hungrily taking in every little thing that had not changed. Nearly everything stayed the same.

— I can’t believe you are here – Matsuyo fondly said as she waited for them. – It sure took you some time to come back – she smiled. – And you are finally going to introduce us to your boyfriend.

She just had to go there right at the start.

— M-mom, please – silently begging Atsushi not to fall in her trap, Todomatsu whined, following her to the common room. Again, it was the same as always.

— Husband. Matsuno san.

Todomatsu stopped in his track, mid-step to turn his head to the side and look at his stupidly naïve husband. Next thing Todomatsu felt were the well-deserved slaps on the back of his head, courtesy of his mother.

— A letter or a postcard would have been enough! – Matsuyo huffed and in a blink of an eye, she faced Atsushi with a gentle smile. – Oh. I apologize for his behavior, but please come in, take a seat.

While Matsuyo excused herself to get juice for them, Todomatsu frowned and pouted, sitting near the table, completely ignoring Atsushi and his fruitless tries to cheer him up for that slip. Todomatsu forgot how crude and badass his mother was. He had been obliterated within seconds of his arrival.

— Stop it.

— How did you want me to know that she was going to do that? – Atsushi chuckled, rubbing Todomatsu’s back as an apology.

— From who did you think I learned most of my tricks? – Todomatsu glared at him. – If you thought I’ve got that from my brothers you are seriously stupid.

— Aw, darling.

Right when Atsushi was going to start smothering Todomatsu to be on his nice side, Matsuyo walked in, carrying a tray with their cold beverages.
— Am I interrupting something? – She asked, placing one glass in front of each and leaving the last one on the empty spot next to her.

— Oh. No. Nothing, Matsuno san – Atsushi quickly answered, for everyone’s sake.

Smiling, Matsuyo looked at the couple sitting on the other side of the table.

— Now I understand why your brothers were acting so strange – she hummed. – For a moment, I thought I was going to be a grandmother again. But having you here is nice too.

Nice she says.

Avoiding any catastrophe, Todomatsu moved one of his hands under the table and firmly gripped Atsushi’s thigh, dangerously close to his crotch as a clear warning not to share anything else for the time being.

— W-well, they have always been on the obvious side – Todomatsu muttered with a nervous smile.

— Thanks to their poor performance, I sent your father to buy a few snacks – Matsuyo said, sipping her cold juice. – He should be back anytime now.

Todomatsu would highly appreciate if it stagnated for the rest of his life. If only that was possible.

By the look, his mother was giving him and the tender pressure on his hand; he must have looked as scared as he thought he was going to be. However, Matsuyo didn’t interfere to appease his nerves. If he deeply thought about it, even if she did say something, Todomatsu would have still felt the cold sweat roll down his back.

Shortly enough, they heard the tired steps of his father, announcing his return and ridding himself of his shoes. For obvious reason, Matsuyo was the one to greet him, keeping their guests as a surprise. If Todomatsu was his father, he wouldn’t be so happy with that visit.

It was funny and kind of ironic. Todomatsu always had different scenarios on how everything would play out. Personally, he tended to lean more to the chaotic side of things, imagining screams, punches and slurs flying everywhere, always resulting in a disgusting mess of snot and tears. When it really happened, things took a different direction.

— We were right. Our sons were hiding something from us.

Hearing his mother so content changed nothing. Gulping down, Todomatsu lowered his head to stare at his trembling knees. A dull thud made him twitch and shut his eyes close, visualizing the exasperated semblance of his father while the rapid steps creeped on him. But when he could sense the warmth irradiating from how close his father was, Todomatsu felt a gentle touch on the top of his head that turned into a comforting ruffling.

— Welcome back.

Shooting his eyes wide open, Todomatsu ever so careful dropped his defenses, letting himself understand and digest the situation he was living.

Was he sleeping? He must be.

— Son, come here and help me with the snacks – Matsuyo said to Atsushi, while she stood up.

— A-ah. Yes! Of course! Matsuno san – Atsushi was fast to respond.
Being left alone in that darn room with his father was an ultimate test for him. Those minutes of having his hair messed up were all it took to burn down all of his crazy scenarios and expectations. Although it never truly disposed of the somber sensation that things could turn around in a snap, Todomatsu’s head flew to the side in unbelievable shock when Matsuzo apologized.

— …I’m so sorry, Todomatsu – sighing, his father averted his eyes for a second before he valiantly returned his gaze to his son. – For what…for what I did. For getting out of control… for the things I said to you that day – with a wobbling voice, Matsuzo kept going. – Regardless of how I felt, I shouldn’t have done any of that… it doesn’t justify how wrong I acted.

He did it again. His father apologized again.

— I could apologize for the rest of the day, but I think doing that is not going to be of much help for you – Matsuzo said in a bittersweet tone, aware of the harm he had done throughout the years living with a missing son.

That was not truth. Todomatsu thought.

— I-it still helps, I guess – ditching his configured shyness to go along, Todomatsu slowly turned his head to the side, facing his father.

Although it was a tad awkward, Matsuzo brought his son close, caging him in tight bear hug.

They were both aware that gesture would not mend the left gashes, but it was a step. A step Todomatsu was glad he could take at the same time his father did.

His dad still held that smoky aroma from all the cigarettes he consumed, meshing with the soapy detergent his mother would still use, brought nostalgic memories as a little souvenir from that trip.

The cooing of his mother shattered the moment in pieces, making both men froze in their candid embrace. With a knowing smile, Matsuyo returned to her spot, followed by Atsushi who put the bowl filled with sliced pears in the middle of the table.

A postponed want grew with the inopportune silence that reigned in the room. Todomatsu could have thoroughly enjoyed sweet juicy pears, as his soul demanded him to do. However, with the sudden change in the atmosphere, he resigned to chew and swallow with less enthusiasm than ever. His father seemed to wait for either of them to talk first, Whereas his mother stayed as a mere observant, keeping to herself the things she already knew. Todomatsu perceived that Atsushi was in a compromising situation, even more so than he was, thereby keeping his mouth shut would be the closet strategy to maintain him ‘alive’. Unless one of Todomatsu’s parents decided to break his secrecy with a ruthless interrogation.

How should he start then? Todomatsu felt as if there was so much he wanted to talk with his father in private, and at the same time, Todomatsu was sure he would never have the guts to do it, to be honest.

His father apologize happened so easily, so fast, Todomatsu doubted the raw emotions bubbling up as if it were saying ‘it’s real, it’s over’. How? How could something that hurt him so much be over in seconds? Was it a joke? Was he deluding himself? Todomatsu didn’t say he forgave his father for what happened that day. Did he forget something? Why was this different from what happened with Osomatsu? Why did it feel empty?

His older brothers told him they were not ashamed. His parents did not look ashamed.

Something was amiss; Todomatsu didn’t know what that could be. He was nervous all over again.
He felt like he was in his mid-twenties, cornered, hopeful, and nervous.

— What do you mean?

Oh.

— Stand up like a man, Todomatsu.

Climbing out of the grave, those embedded words sprouted through aged soil, making him relive that last day he saw them.

Todomatsu might be getting it all wrong, but no one could say he did not try. Taking a deep breath, he forced himself to look at his parents.

— Mom… Dad – successfully shifting their focus to him, Todomatsu felt his stomach do a dangerous flip as his tongue turned into sandpaper. – This is the man I told you about years ago.

His face was twitching, itching as it resembled the punch that knocked him off his feet.

— The one that makes you happy? – Matsuzo questioned, alluding Todomatsu to believe that he too, didn’t forget about their altercation.

— Yes.

— Well? – As if that sustained for itself, Matsuzo changed his sight to stare at Atsushi. Raising an expectant eyebrow for him to continue. Making Atsushi feel concerned and nervous all together.

— Oh, drop it already. You are making them more nervous – Matsuyo butted in, stopping Matsuzo’s stiff act before it would keep dragging everything behind.

— What? I thought it would be fitting – his father refuted, crossing his arms and closing his eyes in thought. – Was that too strong?

— It was a bit forced, but overall it was fine – Matsuyo concluded with a smile. – Now, let our son keep going.

Keep going? What did she mean—?

— Ah. I apologize, again. I haven’t properly introduced myself yet – Atsushi said.

With a warmed up face, Todomatsu saw Atsushi bow as he politely introduced to his parents. Not as a friend, nor a boyfriend, but as his husband. Todomatsu did not have to look at his father to know the kind of face he could be making, because the surprise in his voice gave it away.

Vigilant, he observed the strained knots slither back into the intricate loops, relaxing and returning to their lane, scenting their path with the rain of sweet peas and bidding them farewell. An aromatic good bye Todomatsu was still hesitant to accept. Regardless of that VIP seat in the disassociating train wreck he confined himself, Todomatsu tried to adjust the best he could not to sour what was
finally happening, wanting to partake in what could be; would be, a defining moment in his life.

— I’m not completely happy that you married our youngest son without our blessing – Matsuzo said.
— But, at least you two look like you are doing fine.

— Right? – Matsuyo smiled at her husband. – Now we have another son that’s actually married.
Three out of six! – She beamed in excitement.

— That’s more than we were expecting – Matsuzo nodded, agreeing with her.
— We need to convince Osomatsu to marry Totoko chan and we will have one less single son!
— I can’t believe they all stopped being virgins neets – keeping his head high he took pride in his words.

Todomatsu could not believe they were aligning that to the self-growth they all had so much trouble
in achieving. The snort coming from the side aggravated his first hand embarrassment, as he saw
Atsushi holding back a laugh at what was said. Asshole.

— Ugh – leaning forward, Todomatsu let his forehead gently collide against the table.

Feeling Atsushi’s hand rub his back in consolation did nothing to soothe him.

The conversation adopted a pertinent flow, an easy game of questions and answers. Atsushi didn’t
need help for that, thus Todomatsu didn’t interfere. Listening to his husband fill up the gaps of their
life to his parents lifted the repressing responsibility to do it himself. Occasionally, his parents would
stop to inquire further about their jobs, where they lived and Todomatsu’s career. They seemed
genuinely pleased of the last one.

Conveniently, neither of them probed in the topic of kids, giving the time for Todomatsu to once
again, make extra sure he wasn’t crossing too much before he could tell them about the little ones.
Cutting the smooth line the chat was following, Todomatsu stole one sliced pear before he
approached the topic.

— You don’t sound mad…

— Why would I be? – Matsuyo asked, placing one hand on her cheek. – You have a stable job, you
even studied for it and you are married to someone you love. Why do you think we would be mad
about you being happy?

— Well… I’m not straight, mom –, like that wasn’t obvious. – That kind of blew it the first time –
Todomatsu muttered, pouting.

— That was because someone – Matsuyo stalled mid-sentence to hit Matsuzo on the arm. –
overreacted.

— B-but I tried to apologize afterwards – saying that got him another slap on the back. – Now I did
it for real – Matsuzo pouted trying to be on his wife good side.

— Ah. You were right. That’s exactly where you got it from – Atsushi said in a hushed voice that
didn’t go under Todomatsu’s radar, getting a nasty glare for his unnecessary comment.

With a slight frown, Todomatsu looked at his parents. It was now or never.

— But are you sure you are… okay with it? – He couldn’t keep five kids hidden from them;
Todomatsu tried to come up with something that would work as an equal plan. It was futile. Selfish to keep them hidden in the name of protection.

— We are, son – deeming that suspicious, Matsuyo observed him.

— Mom, it is one thing to say everything is fine now, that both of you accept it. And, it is a whole another story that you just tolerate it – gesticulating with his hands, Todomatsu inadvertently showed his parents how important their opinion was for him.

Sharing an everlasting look. Both, Matsuzo and Matsuyo returned their full attention to their youngest son.

— Personally, it is going to take me a bit more time to get accustomed to see you two together – Matsuzo bluntly said. – However, I rather be dumbfounded and put off than losing the same son for a second time.

Eh?

— Although it is a pity we can’t get grandchildren from you. I hope both of you would come visit us more often – Matsuyo added. – Once in ten years is hardly acceptable, Todomatsu.

Eh? What?

— Did you hear that? – Atsushi smiled at him, holding his hand under the table.

Unresponsive, Todomatsu looked back in all those years he spent martyrizing himself over the supposed shame he brought upon his family. Shame he engraved on his silly head out of a chaotic chain of reactions, Todomatsu couldn’t really overcome on his own. He had to seek help, and that was after he began tarnishing everything that remained by his side, carefully recovering at the verge of no return.

Even with all that, with the life he was living, with the connection he has, Todomatsu still pended through a feeble thread. That was no more, right? He wasn’t hanging at the edge of a gold cord, he was comfortably sitting on the stable part of the cliff, having no idea on how Todomatsu got where he was in such a short notice.

It wasn’t perfect, but it did not need to be perfect. It simply needed to happen. The good response was pure luck and a great sum of benevolent compassion.

— Hm? – Plausible, Todomatsu turned his head to the side to face Atsushi. Studying his expression in honest confusion.

— Darling?

Suddenly, Todomatsu grew extremely aware, painting his whole face with dark pinkish undertones, as his pet name reached his ears. As much as he loved hearing ‘darling’, pour out of his lips, having his parents that close made his stomach flip in shame. Accidentally crossing their unspoken boundaries wasn’t something he wanted to do.

— Todomatsu?

— I’m… fine – butchering that phrase, Todomatsu squeezed Atsushi’s hand, in a subtle way of telling him he was sort of getting ahold of himself.

Those two spoken words lightened the coped up situation; aid it to breath. Until Todomatsu decided
to open his mouth again.

— Now that’s clear – Todomatsu looked up at Atsushi. – Should I tell them?

Connecting the dots all by himself, Atsushi’s eyes widened a little realizing at what he was referring. More accurately, to whom.

— Do you want to do it? – Atsushi asked, receiving an indecisive shrug as an answer. – I don’t mind telling them for you, if you want me to – he offered.

— No… I think I should be telling them – Todomatsu shot Atsushi’s offer down. – I mean I’m their son.


— Well… You are grandparents – Todomatsu said, clearing that up in a second.


— Yes. Mine and—

— Oh. You got someone pregnant – Matsuyo said before Todomatsu could finish his sentence.

— I wasn’t expecting that – Matsuzo boarded the same train of thoughts, trusting his wife without a doubt.

— What? No– I mean, technically yes, but it wasn’t like that – shaking his head, Todomatsu tried to recuperate to make his statement understandable; because it seemed like it was not. – Like I was saying. We have kids. Four boys and one girl.

Put off by the lack of response from their part, Todomatsu’s mind latched on the positive side of things as a desperate move. Fruitlessly concealing everything from crumbling down, he saw how his parents faces began to brighten up, to the point Todomatsu doubted for the thousand time that day, that it was happening in real life and not in his head.

— I told you we were grandparents again! – Matsuyo took immense pride in getting that hunch correct.

After delivering that delicate stroke to life, the four of them engaged in a comfortable short chat where the younger couple shared bits of their life that were more romantic, due to Matsuyo’s demand. Where they met, how they met, for how long they have been together, how old their kids were, and all sorts of similar questions arose. Although they answered accordingly, they still covered the brutal honesty with a faint thin layer of machined sincerity, making their story amicable and nice to the ear. Besides, Todomatsu highly doubted his parents would like to know the real one. Or maybe they would, but he was positive it wouldn’t have the same reaction as the one they told before. What it did discourage his parents from swimming deeper, was the humble offering of showing them the crazy amount of baby pictures stored in both their phone. The downfall from that; which didn’t sound much as one to Todomatsu, was that they hyped his parents to meet their new grandkids.

This time around, before Matsuyo and Matsuzo would start planning future outings with their grandkids, they avoided lengthening the reveal of the shortcoming end it would come in less than twenty-four hours. And as they must, they spilled the tea to Todomatsu’s parents regarding the bad news of their flash visit that evening. Going further as a means of a good explanation, they came clean by telling for how long they have been living in Tokyo, when they were expected to leave and why
they have to leave. Summarizing those three months with a careful procedure, thanks to Atsushi taking the lead on that. Immediately after finish saying it, Matsuyo went back into reprimanding her son, almost lecturing Todomatsu while she made it perfectly clear that they were not going to leave her house with an empty stomach.

Their primary confusion deconstructed observing Matsuyo standing up with fiery determination in her eyes.

— Todomatsu, call your brothers. I’m going to need help with this — she stated.

Dinner, they assumed.

— Call Choromatsu first. I need his pot.

Without a single question, Todomatsu dialed Choromatsu’s number first.

— Okay, then – Matsuzo stood up. – Atsushi, we are going to buy the rest of the ingredients – he said, looking at Atsushi in such a way it did not allow his husband to retract from that.

In mild panic, Todomatsu left Choromatsu talking alone through the phone, while he stared at his husband walking out of the room with his father. It was annoying how fast his troubled thoughts resurged, but he was more worried for his husband than anything else.

— Ah – frowning, Todomatsu moved his phone away from him as he contemplated how stupid he was. – Why am I calling him when I can just text everyone in the group chat? – Shaking his head, Todomatsu sighed. Returning to the call and finishing what he started.

Just as he said, Todomatsu wrote in the chat group about having dinner at their parent house. Needless to add, they were as relieved as the youngest with the coming event.

The rest of his brothers arrived in groups of two. The first ones to cross the front door were Ichimatsu and Choromatsu; looking tired and rather annoyed, but the third born brought the pot their mother asked for. The next one was Karamatsu and Choromatsu’s wife, dragging along Choromatsu’s daughters and Todomatsu’s kids. Todomatsu wailing kids. Since he wasn’t as occupied as he could be, Todomatsu left the chopping to his mother before he rushed to the entrance.

— Oh no. What happened? – Todomatsu tried to stay calm as the quadruplets attempted to run in the house with their shoes on. Luckily, and with the help of his brothers, they helped the four kids to take their shoes off, only to smoother Todomatsu with more restless crying and lots of genuine tears.

— It started when they woke up – pinching the bridge of his nose, Ichimatsu sighed. – We tried everything, even bribing them and it did not work – beyond done with their crying; the fourth brother walked in, going straight to the kitchen.

Awkwardly patting and rubbing backs, Todomatsu slowly soothed his sons while Karamatsu softly rocked Yua in his arms, trying to achieve the same goal. To calm them down. Nevertheless, if his four kids kept crying, there was no hope for Yua to stop. Not even Atsushi could make her calm down.

— I’m sorry Todomatsu – Choromatsu said, feeling guilty in a way a parent would for letting that happen under his supervision. – I told them you two were going to come back, but they grew impatient and then, they just did not want anything to do with us – he sighed, handing the bag with the pot to his wife, so she could take it to Matsuyo.

— It’s fine. That was my bad. I should have told them that we were going to go out without them –
Todomatsu ruffled their messy heads. – Thank you, niisan.

While Choromatsu left to help their mother, Karamatsu took his boots off, doing the impossible not to lose it with Yua’s broken wails and incessant squirming, as she pushed her pacifier out with her tongue every single time Karamatsu guided it back in her mouth.

Todomatsu wondered if he was holding his shitty self-back because Yua was a baby or because Karamatsu was simply done, just like Ichimatsu. Regardless of their fit, which was something that rarely happened with that intensity. Todomatsu knew how far his kids could go with a tantrum. Once they wanted to see their parents, there was nothing else to do but to call them or have someone pick them up. In short words, Todomatsu was rightfully surprised for their humble attempt.

— I can take her if you help me with them – Todomatsu offered an exchange to his older brother. – I’m just going to take them to the bathroom to wash their faces.

— Oh, no. Don’t worry my brother. I am fine – Karamatsu forced one of his ‘nice guy’ smiles.

Oh, but Yua was not having any of that. In a rapid move, the little girl hit his face, leaving Karamatsu’s sunglasses askew. Without a single apology, Todomatsu took Yua away from his older brother and bounced her a few times before he cradled his daughter against his chest. Managing to tone her crying down. Enough for Todomatsu to give Yua her pacifier as a last chance; all while he cooed for her.

Sniffles and shaky breathes were the remaining of their collected tantrum.

— Come on my bundles, you have to wash your faces to be presentable – Todomatsu informed his kids with a smile.


— When your face is clean I’ll tell you, ok?

Sealing that deal with insecure nods, Todomatsu got his sons to follow him to the bathroom. One by one, they stepped forward to the sink, splashed their red faces with water, and in the same order, they dried it up using the clean towel with gentle pats, exactly how they have seen Todomatsu do it before.

As promised, Todomatsu explained why their parents left them under someone else’s care for a couple of hours. Giving them a feasibly input in what occurred when they were away, and in what was going to happen next. Since they were rather unfamiliar with Todomatsu’s side of the family, until recently. The four boys found great interest in getting to know their new grandparents. Ones that according to Todomatsu won’t be as scary as Atsushi’s father.

Wholeheartedly trusting in their parent words, the young kids fixed themselves up the best they could, letting Todomatsu wash Yua’s face and brush with his fingers her hysterical strands on the top of her head, thanks to the dramatic fuss they all put together. Team effort.

When Todomatsu returned to the common room, he found Jyushimatsu and; who he supposed to be Homura.

— Ah. Jyushimatsu niisan and Homura chan..? – Todomatsu said, looking at the beautiful woman sitting next to his older brother.

Nodding, Jyushimatsu’s smile widened as he tightly hugged Homura by her middle.
— Well then. It is a pleasure to finally meet you, Homura chan –, proper this time. He wanted to add. Recollecting how they all went to spy on their date like weirdos. – I’m Todomatsu – he introduced himself, sitting down close to them.

— Is she the new grandma? – Yuu asked to his older brothers, in a poor attempt of a hushed voice.

— I don’t think so – Hiro shook his head using the same tone.

— She doesn’t look like a grandma – Ryo scrunched up his face in confusion.

— She is a pretty lady – Nao gushed, cupping his warm cheeks as he looked at her.

Homura only laughed.

— They are a handsome bunch – Homura smiled, glancing at them.

Her comment flustered the four boys, making them blush and scatter behind Todomatsu.

— They are bit shy, but I’m sure they are pleased to meet you too. – Todomatsu chuckled. – In order, they are Hiro, Nao, Ryo and Yuu – he introduced his sons, entrusting that they were still looking at her. Then Todomatsu turned Yua around in his arms, letting Yua have a good look at Homura. – And this cutie is Yua – as Todomatsu said that, the baby girl stared enamored at Homura’s long braid.

— She is so cute – Homura cooed at Yua, while the baby tried to reach for her hair with both hands.

— She is – Todomatsu agreed immediately. – But be careful, if she gets to your braid she is going to try to eat it and pull it – he warned Homura, keeping a gentle grip on Yua as she was gradually getting fussy.

— Oh. It’s fine – Homura dismissed the dangers of a baby. Her expression softening the longer she stared at Yua.

Todomatsu didn’t miss that.

— Do you want to hold her? – He asked.

— Uh? A-are you sure? – Homura’s smile distilled while she played with the ends of her braid with both hands. – I can hand her my braid? – She said, questioning herself.

— You’ll do great Homura chan! You already held Choromatsu niisan daughters once! – Jyushimatsu squeezed her middle a bit more. – And Yua chan choose you!


— Definitely!

— Besides. Yua is extremely meticulous with people. She doesn’t goes to everyone, she choose them; and I think she would stop squirming too if you hold her. – Todomatsu aided his older brother, encouraging Homura.

Huffing, Yua leant forward, restlessly fighting to get what she wanted. Homura, submitted to a heavy chain of insecurities, moved her hands away from her hair, resting them on her lap as she gave a short nod. Retaliating, Todomatsu got closer to her to place Yua on her lap. Todomatsu did not need to guide Homura to help Yua anymore, but right away, the baby girl reached for Homura’s braid and pulled, hard. That must have hurt. However, her face brightened, showing a different story.
— She is really soft – Homura muttered.

Unaware of how divided his four sons were regarding what was taking place, the soft yank on Todomatsu’s shirt stole his full attention. Finally noticing the quadruplet’s hesitation, but before he could ask what was bothering them, Yuu came up to act as the voice for the group. Which turned out to be more of a faint note.

— M-mama…

— Hm?

— Mama, can we play with your phone? – Yuu nearly whispered, reconsidering his bold decision.

— Sure. But since Daddy went out you’ll have to share mine. Is that okay? – Todomatsu asked them.

When he received four firm nods, Todomatsu handed them his two phones, and in exchange, he heard a perfectly timed ‘thank you’.

After having, his four sons occupied with the games in his phones and his daughter yanking someone else’s hair. Todomatsu went back to form a light conversation with his sister in law.

She didn’t need to explain further for Todomatsu to understand the situation she was living. He saw the impregnated sadness in her eyes. Her wavering balance in her strong words and at times, odd actions. Suffocating the doubts of outsiders and isolating in the warm sunshine Homura has as a husband. They were a nice, weird match.

Shortly after, both, Atsushi and Matsuzo made their arrival well known. Todomatsu turned his head to the open door, catching Atsushi carrying all the bags to the kitchen for his father. Once his husband was done with that, Todomatsu saw him walk in the common room to join them, probably lead by the squeals of their daughter.

The first thing Atsushi did was melt next to Todomatsu, wrapping his arms around Todomatsu and leaning his head against his shoulder. Recharging from that nerve-wracking outing.

— I made it alive – Atsushi said while he eyed Yua, who was eager to approach him. – Hey princess.

— I can see that – Todomatsu sighed, sneaking one arm around Atsushi to return his hug.

Homura was fighting her own battle to keep Yua in her grasp, but the baby launched herself forward, falling on her hands and tummy. Worried, Homura gasped and began to apologize, fearing that her mistake caused Yua to get hurt.

— It’s okay, Homura chan. Yua chan is just fine – Todomatsu reassured her, while he saw Yua lift her head and smile at them. – Besides, kids fall all the time, and as you can see, she is a rowdy one – smiling back at his daughter, Todomatsu heard Homura exhale in mild relief.

— Come here, princess – Atsushi called for his daughter, seeing her struggle to get a hold of anything that could help her stand up brought a smile to his face. – You are doing great.

More fired up than she should, Yua held onto Homura’s shirt while she awkwardly stood up. Almost as a reflex, Homura brought her hands close to the baby in case her balance betrayed her eagerness.

— Come on, come here Yua – Atsushi said again.
After three full steps, squealing and lots of wobbling in the way, Yua fell straight onto Atsushi’s arms. Lovingly sitting her on his lap, Atsushi caressed her head. Due to that great performance, the four adults in the room congratulated Yua.

In the middle of that, the rest of his brothers walked in and out of the room, arranging the space they had, placing another table and setting both for dinner. It was going to be a tight fit and everyone was going to be mushed together, but by the looks of what they were bringing, hotpot seemed like the perfect choice to a full family dinner in a short notice.

Leaving one last bowl on the far corner, Choromatsu handed Todomatsu, Yua’s bag. Thanking him, the youngest excused himself in that ruckus, going to the kitchen to prepare Yua’s formula. His mother was still busy with the last vegetables.

— I have honey in the fridge for her throat – Matsuyo said, glancing at her son. – She has good lungs.

— Thanks mom – Todomatsu hummed. Taking the medium sized jar of honey out of the fridge, he put it next to her bottle on the kitchen counter. – Yua chan screams and squeals most of the time. She is getting a good hang of walking too.

With lukewarm water, Todomatsu began adding the formula and a generous amount of honey, knowing how much sweetness she preferred in her bottle. Shaking it to mix it well, Todomatsu looked at his mother.

Nostalgia stabbed him in the heart, selfishly wondering how great it would be if he could stay. Todomatsu could buy her stuff and sent his parents to a nice vacation. He could visit them with the kids once in a while. They could even plan more dinners like the one that was taking place.

Too bad, Todomatsu already chose not to.

Sighing, he tested the temperature of Yua’s milk. It was just right. Putting the honey back in the fridge, Todomatsu waited for Matsuyo to finish up.

— Oh. You don’t have to wait for me – she laughed, leaving the used knife in the sink. – You should go feed your daughter so you can eat when everything is ready.

She was so right. There have been so many occasions, when one of them had to postpone their meal, fully prioritizing the baby of the family over themselves.

— Hm? I know that mom. It’s just… This is still weird – Todomatsu didn’t move from where he was.

— What do you mean? – Matsuyo asked, while she plated the recently sliced veggies and mushrooms.

— Everything. This whole trip, today – closing his eyes and sighing for what felt the thousand time that day. – I thought things would be more… I don’t know. Different? it is happening so fast, and it seems so anticlimactic.

— Anticlimactic? Were you expecting us to have a serious talk with you two and nothing else? – Matsuyo crossed her arms. – In all honesty, that would have been preferable if it wasn’t for your flight tomorrow. But, sometimes one has to make it work with what is given – uncrossing her arms and taking the two plates, Matsuyo smiled at him. – And I was not going to let you go until I meet my cute grandkids.
His mother priorities were unbelievable.

— Go tell you father to join us. He must be upstairs.

Following her request, Todomatsu looked for his father on the second floor. Venturing on that side of the house was mind-blowing. He could vividly remember all those little dents where he fell over, or where they were all brawling over Totoko chan. How could he forget the crazy Olympics style run with obstacles included in which they participated every morning to snatch the first place and claim the bathroom as the sole award? Sometimes Todomatsu forgets they all indulged into stupid and childish behaviors when they were full-grown adults. Nonetheless, those were fun to participate in, and record too.

Meeting halfway, Matsuzo seemed mentally connected to the idea of a big meal when Todomatsu found him walking out of one of the rooms. Accompanied by downstairs murmurs, they made their way to the common room. However, when they arrived they found Matsuyo stealing the spotlight with how much she shone, awe painted all over her face with the experience of seeing another bunch of same faces. Todomatsu wasn’t surprised that Atsushi helped with their introduction, whether that was encouraging them to do it themselves or by doing it for them.

Matsuzo didn’t lose a second to join Matsuyo.

While his parents were enthused with the four little kids, the rest were taking their chosen spots to start eating. Eventually they took a seat.

Just as Matsuyo told Todomatsu, he got caught with feeding Yua. Witnessing their extended family enjoy the delicious dinner, seeing how the tender beef vanished right before his eyes was a calamity on its own. Benevolence stroke down, blessing him with Hiro taking the initiative to feed him. His cute little boy was having some trouble in how he used chopsticks, and yet, Hiro still brought a cooked mushroom up, as close as he could to Todomatsu’s mouth.

— Thank you sweetie – Todomatsu cooed, thanking his son for his nice gesture before he ate his first bite. It was unimaginably delicious.

In an unexpected turn, Hiro’s chivalry ran through his little brothers, and as a ripple effect Todomatsu found himself trapped at the end of it. His other three sons were filling his bowl of rice with different vegetables because it was the closest for them to reach. But, he could also perceive with the repetition of the same mushroom in his bowl, that they were doing more than just being nice and cute.

When Yua finished drinking the very last drop of her formula, Atsushi decided to take her, giving Todomatsu a chance to taste his food as he took care of their little girl.

A bit overwhelmed, Todomatsu didn’t pursue any possible opportunity to get in their conversation. He let them pass without even trying. Until one question got directed to him, coming from the other side of the table.

It baffled him to a certain point that he wasn’t attempting to gloat about the good parts of his life. It had been a recurrent thought for the entirety of his stay in Japan, so when Choromatsu’s wife asked them about their engagement and their wedding, Todomatsu had to stop eating, realizing that no one else in the table had asked about that. Weird.

Sharing a look with Atsushi, mentally debating whether to give an easy answer or to go on with the full story, they preferred to play safe and ask them which one they wanted to hear. Receiving mixed responses, annulated the purpose of their question. Nevertheless, Atsushi stood up for the both of
As his husband filled them in with their engagement story, Todomatsu was still, clamored with the sensation of walking over broken glass and trying to not make a sound. Was that too odd for him? For his person? Listening to Atsushi gush out about that beautiful proposal brought comforting memories to battle against his ill emotions, shortly blinding him from entirely focusing in his family expressions.

Occasionally, Atsushi would steal glances in the middle of his story—as if he hadn’t noticed with the bubbling warmth his gaze made him feel. Gross. Definitely gross of their part. Aside from the flowery, under the rug flirting, the responses to it were quite refreshing. They wouldn’t do as much as ask, but there was a certain level of interest; positive interest in their words. However, he couldn’t shake off the idea it wasn’t truly sincere, if not more out of respect for the short time left. Regardless as to why, Todomatsu was receiving the attention he could only wish for a few years ago. He was not going to let that go to waste.

And how could he? It wasn’t a common occurrence to have the opportunity to brag about one of his happiest moments; when he felt irrevocably loved and important, to his family.

— I had no idea he was going to do that – Todomatsu pouted.

— That’s the whole idea my brother – Karamatsu said, surprisingly siding with his husband.

— Yeah, but I could have worn something better than pajamas!

— Those were cute on you, Darling – Atsushi smiled at him, caressing the back of Yua’s head.

Cute pajamas, please. As if he was wearing anything else besides one of Atsuhi’s shirts.

What a skill to have. To be capable of spewing so many lies with such a handsome face in front of everyone.

— Although, you took a long time to accept my proposal – Atsushi added.

With the snickering of some of his brothers as background noise, Todomatsu pried his eyes off him and back to his food. Todomatsu would never hate on a little alteration of the truth, more often than not, it made it slightly interesting. Nonetheless, Todomatsu didn’t have any intention of doing so to his family, or at least not that much.

Oh well, it wasn’t like Atsushi was doing it to cause trouble. Therefore, he kept going in the same direction his stupid husband was. Diving and finishing their newly butchered story as if it was another fun game for them. The same thing happened to their wedding ‘tale’.

As Todomatsu saw, having all their grandchildren together was a prime reason for his parents to go all out for desserts. And like some kind of ritual, or for a better use of words; a curse, Osomatsu arrived just on time to snack on left overs and enjoy dessert.

One hour turned into two, then into three. Leading Todomatsu to a point where he knew he should have left, and yet he still hadn’t move an inch, but he couldn’t keep overlooking his moody, cuddly sons anymore. They could surely talk more in the future, near future; he hoped.

Sighing, Todomatsu looked at his four kids. They were all trying to snuggle up to him the best they could, but none peeped a word about wanting to go back home. What a way to reinforce how much of a piece of shit he was. He couldn’t have that.

— Atsu, can you call a cab? – Todomatsu said in a hushed voice, petting Ryo’s head.
— Do you want to leave already? I’m sure we can stay for a little longer – Atsushi smiled, having no problem to let Yua sleep in his arms.

— We could stay, but they are tired, and we have a long flight to catch tomorrow morning.

If their flight wasn’t that early, Todomatsu would have stayed there until midnight.

Without a response to make him change his mind, Atsushi took his phone from one of their kids grasp and dialed the number. Now, it was Todomatsu’s turn to inform everyone, he was indeed leaving.

— Guys, I think it’s time for us to leave – Todomatsu said, directing his words only to his brothers. Escaping from anything that could reside after that, he turned his sight to his parents. – Dinner was really good mom. We should do this another time, okay? Definitely with more than a few hours – he chuckled, ignoring the fact that ‘next time’ might as well be in years.

— Oh – Matsuyo smiled back at him. – Give us a call beforehand so I can make you your favorite.

Nodding, Todomatsu accommodated a little, letting the blood flown back to his legs to have a chance to feel them before the cab arrived. He didn’t want to look like new born Bambi.

— You sure you have to go? – Karamatsu voiced among his brothers. – would you stay for a bit if we take you back home?

— I don’t know niisan – inadvertently, Todomatsu searched for who knows what in his husband eyes. He knew he didn’t need permission or anything of the sort, and if he pushed and pressed in the right direction, he was settled for obtaining what he wanted.

— Karamatsu is right. We could drop you off before midnight or something – Osomatsu backed Karamatsu’s idea with one of his stupid smiles.

It did sound like a nice idea, a selfish deal but one nonetheless. However, his bundles were all dozing off and Todomatsu could not picture Atsushi taking all of them into the cab with Yua in his arms, let alone getting them to their beds. It had been fun and all, to have all the free time he got in those past months. To hang out with his brothers again and joke around like they used to, like Todomatsu remembered doing. But it had to stop at some point.

— Sorry, niisan – with a more decisive semblance, Todomatsu looked back at them. – I really should go.

For some reason, saying that for what it felt like the thousand time, gave Todomatsu the sensation of breaking an unspeakable rule.

At first, none of them said a word, leaving Matsuyo and Homura with the boring task of picking the dirty plates up in a weird silence.

When the cab arrived, Todomatsu could hear the threads of his heart tighten up as it parked close by the house. Atsushi carefully passed Yua to Todomatsu while he picked up one little boy after the other to move them off Todomatsu’s lap. Once he was free and his legs were fully functional, Todomatsu reached for Yua’s bag, securing it over his shoulder. Walking to the entrance, he slipped his shoes on and turned around to look at everyone.

— Don’t forget to call us – said Ichimatsu.

— …I won’t forget – Todomatsu responded, feeling his hands clam up.
— Text us when you land! – followed Jyushimatsu.

— S-sure, niisan – Todomatsu drew a smidge of a smile, listening to his heart in his ears.

— Come visit us… soon – said Matsuzo.

— I would love to have all of my grandchildren together again – added Matsuyo.

— …Ah, yes – a gentle wave sneaked in his voice as Todomatsu forced himself to keep his eyes where they stood.

— Don’t worry about these idiots contacting you at odd hours. I’ll try to fit in their heads about time zones – Choromatsu genuinely smiled at him, crossing his arms.

— Pfft. I just have to text him at like 1am or something – Osomatsu said, immediately alleviating everything.

— That’s not how it works – Choromatsu sighed and shook his head.

— But that might actually work, niisan – Todomatsu giggled with a trembling voice.

He should have helped Atsushi with their kid shoes. He should have being sitting down next to them.

— Whenever you feel the need to talk, just hit me up, brother. I will answer – Karamatsu said, with a serious expression.

— I-I know. I know you will.

— Come on, up everyone, we have to say goodbye – Atsushi said to their sons, receiving only sleepy grumbles filled with an arising moodiness.

Following the example of his sons, Todomatsu did the same. Contrasting with the half mutters and yawns from his bundles, Todomatsu got hugs, pats on the back and the casual ruffling on his head as a farewell.

While Atsushi took the front seat, Todomatsu traveled on the back with all their children, as they dozed on and off from a well-deserved rest. That short trip crumbled into dust, leaving no remains of ever happening. Todomatsu’s head was too focused on that last image of his family, and his posture didn’t change when they arrived, nor when they put their children to sleep. Getting ready for bed passed in a flick of his fingers, stocked in his mind as unimportant. It wasn’t until Todomatsu got into his own bed, until the lights dimmed and the covers were up to his neck, that he grew aware of the new pressure in his chest. As a disease, the uncalled warmth spread fast, tickling his nose, burning his upper lip and prickling his eyes. Todomatsu was sort of confident that he could have stayed put, but the firm hold that Atsushi had on his hand tipped him over. Scattering and ruining the sheets to throw himself into his arms, Todomatsu shed tear after tear, pulling Atsushi so close by his shirt, wishing he would cage him in place, to hide his crying face from anyone, including himself. Although there was no one else in there and Atsushi could have chosen to do something different to calm him down, Todomatsu felt the chills of being crushed against his chest, drowned in the soft, wet fabric of his nightshirt while Atsushi comforted him, allowing Todomatsu to cry and cling, as he desired.

Not anyone had a family like the one he had. Not any family would have apologized and forgiven as Todomatsu’s family did. Things; as he kept on expressing, could have been far more worst, far more disappointing. He could have left empty handed, sick, hurt, but he didn’t. He had the luck to fit into
that group of people that could maintain a good relationship with the ones they deemed important, the ones they held dear.

Todomatsu was thoroughly happy with how it turned out, with how life offered the blunt options along with the safe ones, and how he chose to take one from that bunch, without backing out.

They didn’t hate him. They were not ashamed of him. They didn’t treat him differently. They apologized and he forgave them. What else was there to fix and mend?

Surely, Todomatsu would have loved to have more time to talk to Chibita, to listen to Totoko, to meet their mutual friends and see how they were doing. Regardless of the loose ends, of the untold stories, Todomatsu couldn’t shake the overwhelming emotions that stole a great part of his night, forcing both of them to stay up late, falling asleep only because they were too tired to keep their eyes open.

No amount of concealer helped Todomatsu to hide how swollen and red his eyes were. Thankfully, he had his sunglasses in the bag he was going to be carrying for the flight.

Dressed in their most comfortable pair of clothes and wearing the correct shoes for the long flight, Todomatsu and Atsushi lead their four sons to the van that was going to take them to the airport. It was a nice change seeing them so happy for wanting to see how their ‘old’ house was doing. Talking among themselves about the rocks they left behind, the dogs they used to pet, their nanny, the park they liked to play at and the biscuits they wanted to eat.

Once they were at the airport, waiting to be called for their flight, Todomatsu had this one thought crossing his mind.

— You know… Osomatsu niisan was using my old smartphone – he mouthed, taking his phone out and browsing in it.

— Yes? – Atsushi said, unsure of what was going on.

— I think he needs a new one – bouncing Yua and making her laugh, Todomatsu scrolled down until he found what was looking for. Gasping, in a very obvious way, he tapped his screen a few times before he looked up at Atsushi with a deceiving distress. – Oh no. I messed up the order. This one might be too hard for them, and it is too late for me to fix this when we have to leave so soon – he pouted.

— Oh Todo – Atsushi’s smirk turned into a low chuckle when he realized what Todomatsu had done. – I’m sure there will be no problems, Dear. As you once said, your brothers will learn how to use it – Atsushi said, tilting his head to the side with an ever-growing smirk.

With that last minute purchase, Todomatsu’s confidence spurted out, filling his conscience with incommensurable satisfaction after flaunting his money on their faces by buying each of them a new phone at the airport. Who else would do that, right?

A couple of hours after their flight landed, when they were getting out of the cab and crossing the front door of their actual home, Todomatsu checked his phone. The commissures of his lips curled up as his eyes feasted on the opening text.

Osomatsu niisan
You are such a brat totty
just wait until we get there

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!