The Catcher and The Rye

by hatakaashi

Summary

The loneliest people are the kindest. The saddest people smile the brightest.

Notes

[screams and burns forever] My very first time writing for this pairing and fandom. Ain't gonna be the last :3c

Furuya Rei has always considered himself a decent human being. Patient, generous, kind. Cheerful. He enjoys simple things in life: having a long hot bath, a good mystery novel, that new car smell of untouched leather seating that promises miles and miles of adventure road trips.

He also enjoys other things, like feeding stray cats, helping elderly cross the street, carrying groceries for pregnant women, holding doors for strangers. Simple acts of kindness are wonderful and kind and they cost nothing. Zilch. Nada. Zero.

Because that’s who he is.

At least, he used to be.

Zero.
That being said, he is not neat and pristine. Innocent. Godsend. Though there are parts of him that are, looks can be deceiving. He may seem like a flower, but he is not.

He is stemmy, sometimes thorny, and while his cheeks are as posy as roses, Furuya Rei is not a flower.

He looks like a petal, but bites like a Venus.


In all honesty, Furuya’s ideal day would begin with a dead body. Preferably not his.

No amount of caffeine could get his blood pumping quite like a murder case that needs solving. No coffee or tea would ever be as invigorating.

They might be across town somewhere when it happens, at a cherry blossom viewing or at a peace pagoda or the last five and dime left standing. Or down the dirt road from Mouri-sensei’s Detective Agency, just right below, past the tilted, sagging mailbox and window screen with scratched out stickered name, that now, over time, has come to simply read: C FÉ P IR T.

And Furuya might be cooking breakfast for the early birds - egg and cheese burritos or his trademark club sandwiches - and watching the local morning news on the tiny TV above the kitchen fridge, listening to the weather report about an impending thunderstorm or the strawberry picking festival that’s starting soon.

He might be writing down the daily lunch and dinner menu in chalk on the pedestaled blackboard at the front, or simply taking the order of a huffy suit that works a 9 to 5 office job and takes pleasure in yelling, being bossy and making people they consider below them feel small, waiters, like himself. Furuya likes getting those customers, prefers it even, because that means Azusa wouldn’t have to. He can deal with rude, easily. She doesn’t need to. Doesn’t deserve it. The world is a trashy and shitty place as it is and planet Earth could do with more people like her, Azusa, bless her gentle heart.

There are no angels left, though, not here.

Azusa Enomoto might be the last one. Mouri-Sensei’s daughter too. Vermouth thought so long before he even met Ran.

Whenever she asks him how he could handle nitpicky customers that just want to fight and remain cool as a cucumber, composed and polite, he says “Sneeze muffins, Azusa-san. That’s my secret.” and winks.

He might be doing any number of things actually, but Furuya’s day doesn’t fully start until he hears a high pitched scream, followed by shock and then, eventually, tears. And all those things always come. Death is a finicky old thing. It doesn’t bother to slow down for holidays, stick to a weekday schedule. Like clockwork, it arrives.

When he first joined the police academy, he used to carry around a constant worry that today would be the day he’d have to work on somebody he knows.

“You can’t think of them as a somebody, Zero. It’s just a body now. Or what’s left of it.” Scotch would say.
A body. Not somebody.

He doesn’t have to worry-itch these days, though, it’s fine, he’s all better. Furuya’s stopped knowing people. Because the ones he did, they’re all sleeping comfortably beneath dirt.

Whenever he wakes up, Furuya has a little routine he does. He does it every day, every morning. He takes a moment or two staring at his reflection in the mirror, seeing things that aren’t really there, not tangible, at least. Ghosts of the past. His family.

Elena and her endless supply of band aids that would fix up his banged up, knobby knocked kiddie knees. She was the one that taught him how to pronounce his name, since he always had difficulty rolling his R’s correctly. Her daughter, Akemi, and her bird chirpy laugh, the soft clap of her hands when hearing him play a favourite tune on his guitar. Date and teasing him for his toothpicking habit, the two competing for the top spot in the class, best ones in the year. Smoking cigarettes in the car, calling shotgun before Hagiwara, hiding Matsuda’s sunglasses in the glove compartment for shits and giggles. Scotch. Oh, there’s just so much there. Remembering details, inventorying all the souvenirs he allowed himself to keep, without a trace, all locked up in his brain and lodged between his ribs. He’s got lots to choose from, so many years, so many memories. Furuya’s never forgotten a thing. Won’t. Confused smiles and easy dimples, scruffy chin. Broken guitar strings and laughter. Whiskey shots and shared secrets in the dark. Lips, familiar and comforting in an uncomfortable world, lips that loved to smile and laugh and kiss and be kissed. Before the distracting distraction distracted him, before he started to pull away, before that.

After that come the dreams of eternally long legs and piercing olive eyes, along with a knitted cap and lengthy, raven hair beneath it, unspoken feelings and swallowed down hearts. An invitingly bare nape of neck.

He banishes those away, out of sight, out of mind. Best as he can. He tries. Failing.

He grew up in an orphanage, never knowing his biological parents despite all the hours and effort he put into sleuthing, trying to uncover the mystery behind his own existence.

Like habit, like ritual, like prayer, Furuya addresses them all, thanking them for existing, for putting a mark in his life, a little "hello, I know you were here, once, and I’m grateful". For giving him strength. Nobody else but him knows it, because there’s nobody around to tell, nobody around to listen.

It’s nearly 6 o’clock in the morning and Furuya wipes the sleep from his eyes. He stops the phone alarm 4 minutes short of it ringing.Feels like an ordinary day, but it isn’t. Still. There’s no calls from Vermouth, nor from any of his higher ups. No urgent, pressing matters, therefore he should be ordinary today. Doing a double shift at Poirot, because he requested it. Just because.

Murphy’s law states: Anything that can go wrong will go wrong.
And since he would like to keep himself busy with work in the next 24 hours, his mind off things, wandering, of course, of course, it’s quiet and calm and nothing happens.

The horizon is dark blue, pitch black at parts, even. Like spilled coffee, ink and regret. The night before, the weathercast predicted a downpour and for once, it might actually be right.

Good.

The sky should cry its darkest tears today. It’s fitting.

Furuya’s car is at the mechanics and that’s okay. Public transport is excellent for blending in, being a nobody in the crowd. A no one. Zero.

He doesn’t bother with an umbrella. Not like he ever minded the pelting droplets of cold and wet anyway. He’s not made out of sugar, he won’t melt.

Besides. The beautiful thing about rain is the smell that follows. If you’re lucky, you might spot a rainbow, too.

It’s all good.

First thing he does, as he walks out of his apartment building, is to close his eyes a moment, extending his hands, inviting. Letting the rain wash over him. Why not. Rain has that quality of making you feel purified, like it could wash away all your sins. It doesn’t really - nothing could ever wash the bloody trail and body count he’s left behind, off his hands - but he’s a master of pretending.

By the time Furya reaches Café Poirot, he is sopping wet, hair matted to his skull.

As expected, Azusa worries, giving her worries a decibel, about the rain ruining his shoes, dark blotches, ruining his clothes, sticking and clinging to his body, ruining his gorgeous golden locks, and that’s not all of it, that’s not even the most of it.

“Amuro-san, your immune system is fragile as it is, but this is you practically begging for pneumonia.” She says, in the sister he never had tone, caring.

Admittedly, he has called his fair share of sick days in, for someone to cover his shift, but never due to actual, physical illness.

Furuya accepts her kindness, the towel she hands him to dry off, with a smile, an apologetic eye crinkle, a word of gratitude.

Right on the dot, 8:45 sharp, a most expected customer shows up and just like every other day, he would ask for his usual order, and Furuya would be thinking how much he would like to serve him nothing more than a knuckle sandwich with a side order of obscenities, on the house.

Not today.
“Good morning.” Okiya Subaru greets, taking a seat. “I would like to have-”

“Our deliciously strong, hot and bitter coffee, triple shot, isn’t it?” Azusa smiles.

“Ah, no, thank you. I would like to have a glass of your finest scotch. Neat, please. No rocks.”

“Oh.” Azusa blinks. “A bit too early for hard liquor, isn’t it, Subaru-san?”

“Well, yes, I suppose it is. But today I’ll make an exception. And I believe I could go with the “it’s 5 o’clock” somewhere rule.” He smiles back.

So he does remember the date.

Furuya swallows down the bitter taste in his mouth, as he takes a glass, filling a quarter of it with a blue Johnnie. It’s not the best, not by a long shot, but it’s the best they have at Poirot.

“If there is anything else you would like, Okiya-san, please let us know.”

It’s November, too early for gloves, despite the biting cold, and Subaru’s naked fingers close halfway around his hand as he places his drink on a coaster in front of him. It’s warm, like Furuya remembers it to be, back in the day, and for a moment, he wants to cling to it. Just for a bit. Then he remembers this is neither the time nor the place, that he decided long ago those hands, those painfully familiar 10 digits, and all the warmth that came with them, are not for him, he wants nothing to do with those.

Furuya has to remind himself he doesn’t want them.

He has to remind himself he doesn’t care.

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Around the mid-afternoon mark, Conan and Co show up, talking about homework and 1st grader gossip, discussing favourite superheroes and most despised villains, favourite this and that, vital stuff for 7 year olds.

“Subaru-san, you’re here too!” One of the Detective Boys says, the one with the dusting of freckles, he believes his name is Mitsuhiko.

As the kids make themselves welcome at Subaru’s table, he prepares and serves 4 hot chocolates with those tiny marshmallows that melt inside, alongside 3 slices of red velvet cake, 1 lemon pie. He nods enthusiastically, agrees to whatever they’re saying, making small talk, chit chat. Their voices sound like a detuned radio, because his mind is elsewhere, miles away.

“Ehhh, this cake tastes heavenly! Amuro-no-niichan, did you make it? May I please have another slice?” Genta asks.

“Ayumi thinks it’s sad that Professor Agasa and Ai-chan aren’t here to try it, because it’s so good.”

“How about I wrap some up for you to take to them?” He offers.

“Thank you, Amuro-san, you’re so generous.” Mitsuhiko says, making him smile.
This is his favourite part. The thing he enjoys most is seeing people he likes be happy. When it comes to his friends - well, none of them are left alive, but he still considers this bunch close, friends, even - he always puts himself last. If they are happy, then so is he.

“If it’s not too much trouble, I would like to have one too, Amuro-san. I wouldn’t like to miss out on an opportunity to try what Heaven tastes like. After all, it might be the closest I’ll ever get to it.” Subaru says.

Yes, it will be, you bastard. It’s red and terrible and red, just like you.

“I never much acquired the taste for sweets, but this red velvet cake is truly otherworldly. I believe I’ve heard from Conan-kun you don’t mind sharing the trade secret behind your ham sandwiches, so if it’s all the same to you, I would like to get the recipe for it, Amuro-san.”

“You want my red velvet cake recipe, Okiya-san? You’d have to kiss me first.”

No.

No.

What Furuya wanted to say - what he meant to say - was “I don’t kiss and tell” or “You’d have to kill me first”, but he couldn’t decide and-

Why, God, why?!

“Ah-le-le? I think Shinichi-niichan would refer to this as a Freudian Slip.”

“I believe that could be arranged.” Subaru smiles, while the Detective Boys burst into fits of giggles.

Furuya wipes tables, washes dishes, makes sure all the customers are served and satisfied, before going back behind the counter.

“Detective-san, why are you all the way over there? Why don’t you come join us?”

“Ayumi, he’s working.” Genta replies.

“He is not right now, though, I can see him reading!”

“Ayumi-chan, you should never disturb anyone when they are reading.” Mitsuhiko adds, knowing.

“But Ayumi wants to know. Detective-san, what book is it?”

“Oh, it’s an old thing, but I’m trying to polish up my memory, as it’s been so long.” He holds the covers up. “It’s called ‘The Catcher and The Rye.’”

Furuya doesn’t miss the worried glance Conan shoots Subaru.

“But the title says ‘The Catcher in the Rye’.” Mitsuhiko notes.

“Does it?” He feigns ignorance, a laugh. “My mistake. It’s a good thing I’m rereading it.”

“So what’s it about?” Ayumi asks.

“No spoilers. You’ll probably have it in your syllabus when you’re older.”

“But does this catcher ever catch the rye?” She presses, a child’s curiosity.
“As I said, no spoilers. But if Rye isn’t more careful, he will get caught.” Furuya answers and winks, once again, acutely aware of the worry etched across Conan’s face.

The kid’s impressively good, but he has to work on that poker face.

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Furuya glances out the windows, noting the sky hasn’t changed.

It’s raining outside, but also inside. His heart weeps, despite the broad smile his face is sporting.

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The second his shift clocks out, Furuya removes his apron and walks out of Poirot, glancing back, once, just to be sure nobody is tailing him. Nobody sane would, not in this weather.

Then again, who is even sane, nowadays, anymore?

He makes a quick stop at a flower shop, before trudging on forward, determined.

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Not every section is quite so handsome, to be sure. Some have only but a few strands of vine, placed and replaced, sakura petals blown over by the wind, others with wilting cheap supermarket cellophane taped bouquets, dug into the earth around, hasty, but well meaning. Others are barren and empty, too much in the stretch of time and effort, for anyone to mourn them further.

It’s sad, but it rings true. The world is too busy living, spinning on its axis, to pay attention to the dead. They rarely ever get visitors, unless it’s a special mark, an anniversary.

An 8x3 patch of earth, now turned into mud, covered with splotches of color, from all the begonias, irises, lavenders, marigolds and the fresh whole troupe of swaying, dancing black-eyed susans he places. He doesn’t miss the new arrival of items which weren’t there yesterday, pack of smokes and whiskey bottle, laid against the gravestone.

It’s Furuya’s most visited and most favourite place in the wide, wide world. And he will be mourning for lifetimes.

He sits on a bench, stuffing his cold hands in his wet jacket pockets, letting the sky wash over him, along with the swimming memories of happier times and better days.
Eerily quiet footsteps that are impossible to actually be heard, still sound like breaking glass, ringing in his ears, deafening.

Furuya doesn’t hear them, but knows them to be there.

“Your skulking ways are as admirable as I’ve always found them to be, but I wouldn’t be alive if I was unable to tell. Not with what we do. So, please, do come out.” He says, peeks a glance as Subaru takes a seat next to him, holding his umbrella more above Furuya’s head than his own.

Furuya is glad that he doesn’t speak, that he’s not pretending to be this Okiya Subaru guy, a babbling wanna-be stranger, almost as if he’s trying to make up for lost time, all the silences in the past, whom he used to be.

Who he’ll always be, no matter the disguise, to Furuya, at least.

Despite it all, despite everything, Furuya is grateful, nonetheless, that he doesn’t use that device around his neck, no, he remains quiet, respectful of the dead, as he should, especially in front of Scotch’s grave.

Thank you, Furuya says, but doesn’t really say. Not out loud, at least. But it’s fine. It’s not needed, not between them. This is why they were a good team, back in the day, because they understood each other without words.

Before it all turned to shit and gatecrashed straight into the burning pits of Hell.

“The cigarettes and the whiskey are a nice touch, he would’ve liked those.” Furuya says, something soft.

Not adding how Scotch probably would’ve liked being there with them, alive, celebrating his 32nd birthday, being surrounded by friends, instead of cold soil and dirt and worms.

All three of them would’ve liked that, actually.

Furuya didn’t think so, at least not before that Rokumichi Hado case they ended up solving together.

He knows the truth, though, doesn’t need confirmation for it.

Behind Scotch’s death, behind Okiya Subaru.

He knows those, now.

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When they leave the cemetery, it’s raining even heavier than before. Lighting cracks, accompanied by echoing thunder, the sky persistent in making them feel like drowned rats.

Which is exactly what they are.

An FBI and a PSB rat.
Furuya shotguns, belts himself in, says “Drive.”, without giving a direction, because it doesn’t really matter. Anywhere but here would do.

Subaru drives around town and the radio is off, deafening silence between them in the downpour, but it’s not boring at all.

Eventually, he breaks it.

“It’s the hands. The way you always carry them inside your pockets. Along with you being a lefty.”

That’s all the explanation Furuya gives, doesn’t comment on the rest.

The face structure, the strong jaw, the straight nose. The handsomeness, that was once rugged, now overly. Muscly, but not too much, even now, not. Layers of clothing that hide away the actual, physical strength he knows to be there. Chest stretching the stripy black and white high-collared shirt, under a creamy coat, lines as familiar to Furuya as the ones of his own body.

He doesn’t comment on the way he just fucking knows, could never be fooled.

Doesn’t need to see the crack of eyelid, the green orb, not shielded behind gleaming unprescribed glasses, staring.

Because Akai Shuichi is the one, the only person, that could ever make him feel this way. Akai Shuichi needn’t say a word to get his blood boiling, being annoyed and pissed off, losing his shit by him just breathing and being there, existing.

Subaru is smiling, that familiar half-smirk, and Furuya hates him for it. He is looking at him and Furuya is burning up with a fever.

Furuya won’t give him the satisfaction of losing his cool and exploding, refuses to.

With a sigh, he realizes just how tired he is. How much he would have liked to be able to pretend his smile, how much he would’ve liked it to be genuine, but he can’t, he really cannot. Birthdays stopped being fun long ago, right around the same time they turned into visits to lonely graves and broken promises.

He feels tired and used and old.

“Take me home.” He sighs again.

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The car ride goes by quickly, more quickly than ever, despite the rush hour and the traffic jam. Regrettably quick.

Furuya keeps his eyes on the road, wondering if Subaru - before he became Subaru - is also remembering the last time they were in a car together. Kicked off shoes, cramped up limbs in the backseat, windows foggy, from the hot and steamy-

“This is it, isn’t it?”

Furuya nods, not bothering to ask how exactly Subaru knows the precise building he lives in. Once
an FBI agent, always an FBI agent.

He allows Subaru to get the door for him, walk him from the parking lot, umbrella in hand, their shoulders bumping, arms brushing. Subaru follows him inside the elevator, shaking his umbrella dry.

It’s not just the cramped up space between, no, no, it’s the smell, that familiar scent of diamond waterdrops and aftershave that Akai hasn’t changed, that makes his head buzz and spin. That makes him stare into the green eyes he has tried, over and over, to forget, to learn how to unread. That makes him bite his lower lip, unable to help it, but also not wanting to.

Furuya knows what he’s doing, of course. He’s completely and totally in control, he wouldn’t let things to go too far. He’s just trying to test out a theory, is all. To see if he could still do it, if he is capable of making Akai weak, if he is just a man, after all.

He is.

Akai is a weak, weak thing.

Furuya could tell, just like he could tell everything else, the way Subaru sucks in a breath, heavy in his lungs, caught in his throat, by the way his shoulders square up, like a violin string that’s about to play its final, highest note and Furuya wants nothing more than to see it’s inevitable snap, the crack and the pop and the burst, for Akai to become a puddle at his feet.

The elevator dings its arrival on the 7th floor and as they step out, Furuya can’t stop the amused curve that tugs at the corners of his mouth.

He could so damn easily have Akai out of his disguise, out of his clothes, in minutes time. Less. Tomorrow they would find a Hansel and Gretel trail, instead of breadcrumbs, Subaru’s long coat and his kicked off Oxfords, that lead to Furuya’s doorstep.

But such a tomorrow wouldn’t come to pass. Furuya wouldn’t allow it, no way.

He puts his key in the lock, twists, opens the door and steps in. He glances over his shoulder, relishing the way Subaru is looking at him, shoulders no longer high and mighty, but slumped, beaten.

It’s a good look on him, Furuya thinks, not getting what he wants.

“I suppose this is goodnight. So… goodnight.” Fake voice or not, it still scrapes against Furuya’s skin like a knife, cutting into him more than the cold night air.

He should definitely get off that high horse of his, thinking Akai is the only weak man, because before he could bite down the words off his tongue, he hears himself asking.

“Do you want to come in for some coffee?”

“I could never say no to coffee.”

Yeah, he knows.

It’s probably why he asked.
“Let’s get one thing straight. I know who you are, you know who I am. I don’t want any of that fake bullshit under my roof, is that clear?” Furuya scowls.

Subaru accepts the offered slippers, before he clicks at a button against his neck, then rips the mask right off.

“Crystal.”

Furuya ignores the shudder that runs down his spine, obvious and treacherous, at hearing the familiar tone and seeing the familiar features.

If Akai notices it - probably does, those damn eyes miss nothing - he doesn’t comment and Furuya is grateful for that, at least.

He does comment on Furuya’s staring, though.

“...Yes?”

“It’s your face. It annoys me. You have such an annoying face, Akai Shuichi.”

“I think it’s safe to assume it’s not just my face that annoys you.”

“I’m impressed, the FBI making a correct deduction without a blunder, for once. This must be a Guinness Record.”

“You’re a hard man to impress, Furuya-kun, so I’m glad I do.”

He doesn’t recall saying that, but it’s not Akai having a selective hearing on, no, no, he knows it isn’t, it’s Akai tempting him to rise up to the bait.

He doesn’t. He will not.

Although, admittedly, he does feel robbed of turning snappy and rude, that Akai made no mistake in calling him Furuya and not Amuro.

How annoying.

God. Akai’s not even trying, and he’s already pissed off.

Then again Akai never had to try too hard, or reach too far, to annoy him, not really. Must be a gift.

Akai steps inside, looking this way and that, satiating his curiosity. After all it’s his first time visiting... Or is it? He wonders, although he hasn’t noticed any break-ins. Then again Akai is stealthier than any cat, than any thief in the night, so, really, he doesn’t know.

It’s his first time being invited in.

Furuya wonders why Akai’s eyes are darting around like they are. What is he looking for, bugs and cameras?

“You haven’t changed…” Akai notes, soft and quiet.

He doesn’t have to wonder further.
Because Akai’s eyes weren’t in search of spyware, but chaos and mess.

Back when the three of them shared a loft, it was Bourbon that always scolded Scotch and Rye for being slobs, for leaving an overfilled ashtray, empty beer cans and take-out boxes of Thai and Chinese at the table, like, really, would it really take that much of an effort for you two to throw them away? Would it kill you to hang your clothes and not leave them strewn all over the floor like a mismatched carpet?

Akai’s content, in finding that his organized and dead tidy manner hasn’t been altered, is visible and Furuya realizes it’s not just his mind that’s stuck reliving the past, when things were good, when things were great. That he is not the only one trying so desperately to cling onto the once-befores, clutching, holding on for dear life. Life that’s not there anymore, but used to be.

That Scotch is gone, but Bourbon and Rye are still here and trying their goddamn best, to keep on keeping on. It’s all they’ve got, it’s all that’s left.

Because no matter how you slice it, the fact of the matter is, it was Akai and Furuya that ended the lives of two people that deserved more, better. That they were the ones responsible for strapping Scotch and Akemi with a pair of wings, sending them off on their merry way to an early grave, to go knock knock knocking on Heaven’s door and meet God and the angels.

Maybe it is true, that only the good die young.

If that’s the case, Akai and Furuya wouldn’t hear the bell tolling, but live on and burn forever.

Before his mind continues to go deeper and further into its shadowy depths, where he tries to keep memories of things gone awry and wrong, disappointments and regrets, repressed, he goes behind the kitchen counter and clears his throat, slightly embarrassed.

“Akai.”

“Furuya-kun, please do feel free to call me Shuichi.”

Thanks, but no thanks.

“My coffee machine’s broken and I haven’t gotten around to fixing it.”

As expected, Akai nods with a tiny smile. He finds this whole thing amusing, the bastard.

Furuya wipes that dumb smile right off his dumb face as he launches a canned coffee into his direction, like a hand grenade. Unlike a hand grenade, Akai doesn’t shy away from it, catches it.

“There you go, your favourite.”

“You used to hate this stuff.” Akai cracks it open, takes a long sip.

“Oh, I still do.”

“Why would you buy something you hate? Surely you didn’t plan on having me come over?”

He snorts. Of course Akai would give himself such importance, like it was bought for him, especially. Like he has some sort of claim over canned coffee, like he’s the only one that drinks it.

What an asshole.

“I sometimes find myself craving things I hate. Maybe you’re familiar with the feeling.” Furuya leans
against the counter, the only barrier between them. He licks his lips, meaningfully, like it’s not obvious as it is, the silent point he’s making across.

“No, I’m unfamiliar. I only ever crave things I love.”

Something about Akai’s simple reply, without batting an eyelash, makes Furuya’s stomach jump and drop low.

Admittedly, there was a time in the past when they were-

No, Furuya’s not going down that route, it’s in the past, like it’s meant to be.

Doesn’t mean much, doesn’t mean anything at all. Doesn’t matter. Not now.

He shrugs it off, throws the weight of it right off.

“You want anything stronger than that?” He asks when Akai slides the empty coffee can across the counter.

“Well, if you have any bourbon-”

“I do.”

“Then I’d like a glass.”

“No.”

Akai sighs. “Why bother offering me a drink in the first place?”

“I did not ask your preferred type of alcohol, I simply asked if you wanted any. We’re drinking scotch. Or is that a problem for you?” He raises an eyebrow, challenging.

“No, not a problem.” Akai replies and walks over to the couch, making himself comfortable. He flicks through the TV, settling on a music channel that’s playing rock from the 70’s, the good shit. Best.

Furuya doesn’t ask how Akai wants his drink, doesn’t need to. Double, no crushed rocks, but an ice ball. Just like him. The way a whiskey is meant to be enjoyed. He is halfway done with preparing snacks, when Akai’s voice reaches his ears, asking if he needs any help back there.

“No. I’m all set.”

Drinks and food platter in front of them, they settle on each side of the couch, watching retro music videos.

Eleven minutes pass, Furuya counts them in his head, before he announces he’s going to the bathroom.

He pushes himself up from the sofa and he could easily walk around the corner, but no, of course he doesn’t do that. Roughly, he pushes past Akai’s knees and the coffee table, feigning clumsiness
that’s not really there, that they both know it not to be. But Akai says nothing, plays his part accordingly, fingers against Furuya’s upper thigh, steadying him.

He glances back, but Akai’s eyes are glued to the TV screen.

Yeah, right.

As he washes his hands, he inspects his reflection in the mirror. His cheeks are red, too red from one drink, even if a double. Partly it’s the effect of the alcohol, partly it’s Akai, the effect he tends to have on him. Either way, he splashes cold water against his face, allowing it to dry off without a towel.

When he returns to the living room, he plops himself down on the sofa, not in the corner like before, but closer to the middle. He takes a sip from his glass, which Akai must’ve refilled in his absence, letting the amber liquid warm his throat, his insides. Then he puts his foot up, tucking his chin over his knee.

It’s not the need to break the silence, that’s not it. He just really wants to talk, is all. Honestly, that’s all it is, just talk. But at the same time he doesn’t feel like taking the first step, he doesn’t want to be the one to put them on the right track.

And so Furuya waits.

He doesn’t have to wait too long.

Only 3 minutes before Akai grabs the remote and lowers the volume, almost muting it. Almost, but not quite. 176 seconds to be exact, but hey, who’s counting.

“Hey.” Akai says, like a moron. “The weather was bad today.”

All Furuya gives him, is an arched eyebrow. Even that is more than Akai deserves.

… Maybe he is expecting too much.

Maybe this is the goddamn best the goddamn FBI can goddamn do.

Acutely aware that Akai has never been a man of words, always been a man of action instead, he considers lowering the bar, being more lenient. He won’t give Akai a gold star for attempting to strike up a conversation by talking about the weather, although he does appreciate the effort. Kinda.

He genuinely doesn’t expect Akai to speak further, but he does.

“The enemy of my enemy is my friend. I already told you I don’t want you as an enemy. Never considered you one, either.”

He glances at him, snorts. “You and I are not friends.”

“A while back we were. We used to be.”

“No. You and I have never been friends.” Furuya replies, words clipped, words pressed paper-thin between his lips, clenched fists, a set of gritted teeth in his mouth.

When will you learn to read between the lines? We were never friends, because we were always so much more than that, when will you fucking get it.

The air crackles around them and for a moment Akai looks like he might argue, but he doesn’t. He remains cool and composed, like always.
Admittedly it has been a long time, but Furuya never thought Akai would fail to remember their go-to routine, their whole dynamic.

He really is expecting too much, he realizes, and sighs.

Disappointed, he downs his glass and places it back on its coaster with more force than necessary.

In his head, it breaks, ringing.

The TV is showing some shogi match Akai is following intently, although the emerald eyes glance at him here and there, the look of them so much of a synonym for “home” that Furuya feels his chest growing heavy, heavier. It’s a replay, he knows Akai must’ve seen it live, as one of the players is his younger brother. He’s already watched it too, knows Haneda Shukichi is the one that bags the victory. Furuya isn’t really paying attention.

He keeps staring at Akai’s hands, full of cuts and old scars, stuffed comfortably in his pockets, only moving to light up a cigarette. Those hands could hold the world in them, if they wanted to. And they did, for Furuya, before. It’s just fucking awful, remembering everything, the way things used to be.

Furuya considers distracting his mind and hands by eating a slice of cheese or apple, but his appetite isn’t there, not for food at least.

Akai tries again, this time hits bullseye. Typical. He’s always been the best marksman.

“Scotch and I became close because of you, in a way. Mostly we worked together, while you were working with Vermouth. Just like you do now. It was during one of those times you were off to meet up with her. You were going to some fancy party event, to get intel on one of the VIP. God, I remember it like it was yesterday.” Akai says, smiles fondly. “Scotch and I were playing a friendly game of poker, while you were getting dressed. You were wearing a tux, shirt, tie, shoes, everything white. You checked yourself one last time in the mirror, making sure you were good and proper, ready to go, before you turned on your heal to leave and that’s when it happened. Scotch and I bumped our heads together, because we were both trying to get a better angle to look at you. And the smiles we exchanged back then said it all. That’s all it took for us both to know that we were passengers in the same boat, him and I. After that, neither of us denied and pretended. We didn’t even try, because there was no point. We already carried enough heavy secrets as it was and it felt good to be real, between all the lies. All Scotch could talk about was you. I used to take pride in knowing how to read people, but that was before I met you. You always were a closed off book, impossible for me to decipher no matter how hard I tried. Thanks to Scotch I got to know you a little better, from his words, the things he told me.” He swallows hard, like there’s something stuck in the back of his throat. “I’m no good at heart talk, and I’m aware that your razor-sharp mind has already figured out what I’m trying to say here, but I still want you to hear it from me. Scotch wasn’t the only one that was in love with you.” His lips press into a tiny curve. “Good God, Furuya-kun, I was half in love with you when we first met. Then you looked over your shoulder, smiled at me, shook my hand and introduced yourself as Bourbon and I already knew I was a goner.”

1905 days ago, when their golden whiskey trio was at its peak, three guys feeling on top of the world, almost, when Scotch was very much alive and well, it had been him, Bourbon, who had not known how to shut up, unlike Rye, who back then wasn’t Akai Shuichi, but Moroboshi Dai, ever so silent and still like a lake.
But back then is not now.

Akai just lets the honest words seep right out of him, like water from an open bottle. Furuya genuinely doesn’t know what to make of it.

“Why are you telling me this?” He thinks, not realizing he’s thinking out loud.

“Is that your usual reaction when somebody confesses to you, asking “Why?”’, or is it because it’s me?” Akai blows a ragged breath through his nose, mixed with cigarette smoke. “That’s why it’s called a confession isn’t it, to confess? I’ve been playing it off cool, like I’m indifferent, when I’m the furthest thing from it. You were the one that said you don’t want any bullshit under your roof, right, so, there you go, Furuya-kun, no bullshit. I’m just following your rules.”

No.

Well, yes. Yes, that might be most of it, but it’s not all of it.

It’s because he wants to talk about Scotch, Furuya realizes, he misses Scotch too, just as dearly. The two of them are the only ones left alive that knew him, like they did, that they would always mourn him.

Akai let the truth come out and he feels the need to reciprocate, he wants to be just as sincere.

Half-aching and nostalgic, Furuya allows his mouth to move, speaking.

“Scotch was my senpai back at the academy. He knew how much I hated being alone, so he said “Join the police force with me and you’ll never be alone again, Zero. We’ll always be together.”. He’s the reason why I enrolled. But he’s not here anymore and I’m right back to square one. No, not even there.”

“You mean you’re at ground zero. But zero is where everything starts.” Akai says smoothly.

Akai knows, he knows his nickname. Must be why he says it in the first place.

Glass breaks again, shattering between his ears, resonating.

Furuya would love nothing more than to say what happens next is unconscious, the way they slide closer to each other during commercial breaks, the way Akai all but diminishes the distance between them. There’s no one else, nobody would ever ask, nobody would ever know about it, but it eases his mind some, he tells himself, that if the topic ever gets brought up, he could say he didn’t mean any of it, that it was all unconscious.

The way Akai drapes his hand over the back of the sofa has nothing to do with him leaning into the not-there-yet touch.

So what, so what any of it?

He is just relaxing, because it’s his home and he’s allowed to do so, fucking sue him.

The way their knees bump together, accidently, of course, of course, how they become a long-limbed tangle. The way he allows his head to loll back, into the crook of Akai’s arm, just like he used to, with Akai’s thumb rubbing circles, trying to ease his tense muscles, the burden they’re carrying.

Furuya would keep his hands clean and blame it on the alcohol, on muscle memory. There’s tons of
things he could blame it on and if push comes to shove, he would, he absolutely would.

Akai lights up another cigarette and it’s completely conscious, the way he lets his fingertips dance over Furuya’s thigh, finding a home there. It’s completely conscious how his eyes, no longer at the TV, close as he breathes in the familiar scent coming off Furuya’s hair, the honey and vanilla shampoo, inhaling deeply. The way his lips ghost over the shell of Furuya’s ear, the “God, you smell good.” that softly tumbles out, completely conscious, making him shudder, skin prickling.

But Furuya doesn’t know how to be gentle and soft and lovely, not with Akai, not when they’ve always torn at each other, at their clothes, like wild animals fighting for meat, biting, their teeth and claws sharp and raw and messy and bloody, like the wolves that they are.

He doesn’t want Akai to be soft and gentle. Had he wanted that, he would’ve stuck with Scotch, where things were predictable, slow and easy, smooth sailing.

Furuya never wanted any part of this, the calm, it’s not what he needs. What he needs is fire and smoke, ones that would equal his own, just as wild and consuming.

And so he strikes a match, waiting for Akai to let it burn.

“Scotch was the last family I had. We weren’t actually related, if that’s what you’re thinking. But family doesn’t end with blood. I don’t expect you to get it. Because you don’t know. You would never understand.” He glares at Akai, who’s got a mother and two siblings, a younger brother and a sister. “You don’t know the first thing about family, because you ditched yours behind to go to the US-of-A. What does America have to offer that Japan doesn’t, you bastard?”

He expects Akai to snap back, to tell him he’s not the only one that’s loved and lost. Or to feign indifference and be carelessly cool.

What he doesn’t expect is, once again, the truth.

“The last case my father was involved in before he died. Or went missing, I don’t know, his body was never found. That case is why I became a cop. I don’t remember much of him anymore. In fact, the only thing my memory of him can muster up is how he always wore a cap. Which, I know it’s silly, but—” Akai shrugs, ”it’s why I always do too, wearing a hat.”

Oh.

Furuya’s fight deserts him, shoulders slumping.

No matter how many times before he has found himself being irrationally angry with Akai, just nitpicking, even, mostly, a reason to start a fight, he can’t now, not for this.

There is just way too many a time the three of them would be at a stakeout and he would bitch at Akai for never taking off his stupid knitted cap. And Scotch, ever the remediator between them, would say ”C’mon, Bourbon, lay off Rye’s fashion choices, not everyone can be a freakin’ model like you. What are you, the fashion police?” and the three of them would laugh and laugh, like it’s the funniest joke in the universe.

It was, back then, it used to be, in that universe.

And it turns out that stupid knitted cap is his father’s memento. No. Such a thing would never be stupid. It isn’t.

It seems… it really seems like Akai is trying his best here.
“It’s not silly at all.” Furuya gets up and disappears into his bedroom, in search of that something he knows is there, neatly tucked away into the back of his bottom wardrobe drawer.

“Furuya-kun…?”

He places the cap he wore when he was impersonating Akai over his head, but still leaves it a little high, just so the green eyes wouldn’t be obscured from him. He doesn’t want them to be.

“There.” He says, takes back his seat. “Now you won’t have to feel so naked anymore.”

Because he was wrong to think the hat was stupid. Just like he was wrong about Scotch.

Well. This is the closest damn thing Akai is ever getting to an apology from him.

Akai blinks, then grins. “You know I don’t mind being naked in front of you.”

“I’m aware. Just like I’m very aware you were checking out my ass when I got up. Both times.” He scowls in annoyance. But he’s not annoyed, not really.

“It’s not my fault that it made eye contact with me first. If a great ass looks at me, I’ll look right back. I care very deeply about that kind of thing, I don’t want to come off as rude and impolite.”

“Yeah, you’re all heart. A true humanitarian.” He snorts. “Watch the damn match, won’t you?”

“I’ve seen it already. I should introduce you to Shukichi, you two would get along.”

“What makes you think that?”

“Great minds think alike and he’s the smartest one in my family. You and I used to play shogi together, but I’m a very far cry from being my brother’s peer.”

We used to do a lot of things together, Furuya thinks, doesn’t say.

“I already know you’ve met Masumi. You’re all she talks about in front our mom. You and that boy.”

This is news to him, but he chalks it up to them solving cases together, she is a detective too, after all, a great one at that. But he does wonder how and if Akai has missed the part where his own sister is completely taken by Mouri-Sensei’s daughter. The same girl that’s managed to earn Vermouth’s seal of approval, which is impossibly rare to come upon, and not only that, but an actual promise from him, to never let any harm fall upon either her or Conan.

Not like he would, but he definitely needs to look further into that. The more dirt he’s got on Vermouth, the better his chances of staying alive.

Scotch and Akai always did mention in conversation how Vermouth was so very fond of him. But that’s not true at all, because it’s not fondness, it’s him knowing her dirty little secret.

Furuya doesn’t feel like discussing teen romances with Akai, though, and he also doesn’t quite know how to react to this family talk Akai springs on him.

So he navigates them back to where things are safe and sound, a common ground.

“Akai, if you like looking at asses so much, why don’t you just look in the mirror?”

Akai throws his head back and laughs. It’s almost ironic how such a quiet man, as Akai Shuichi,
would have such a laugh, vivacious and loud, like a roaring lion, full of lungs and belly, that ends up with a tiny little snicker. And the sound of it feels just as familiar as the eyes, giving him that homey feel Furuya’s been desperately trying to bury down deep and forget.

“You’ve been doing that a lot tonight.” He notes.

“What’s that?”

“Laughing.”

“Is that a crime, Furuya-kun?”

“No, just a mere observation.”

“You make me happy.”

“You-you’re really letting all your walls come down, aren’t you?” He sputters.

“I am. You could try doing the same, it’s a good feeling.”

“Where is your sense of security?! Especially now that you’re not wearing your stupid disguise! What if I pulled a gun on you, right now, and then hand you over to the syndicate, huh? Would you still be laughing?”

“Are you really going to do that?” Akai’s eyebrows rise up, disappearing into the hat and his hairline.

“It’s not like I’m about to tell you!”

“If you pulled a gun on me, I would wrestle it out of you. Or at least try to. I refuse to go down without a fight. But we both know you’re not about to betray a comrade-”

“You are not my comrade! Stop being delusional!” He barks.

“Right. Okay. My mistake.” Akai’s palms go up in the air, calling for a time-out, a ceasefire. Then he sighs. “Furuya-kun, don’t you ever get tired of it? Of being so paranoid all the time?”

“This paranoia you speak of, it’s what’s kept me alive for so long! It’s what protects me.”

“I’ll protect you.”

“I don’t want your protection, Akai! I don’t need it. Besides, what would I ever do with the protection of a man who doesn’t even know how to protect himself?” He yells. It’s too low of a blow to bring up Akemi and Scotch, even for him. Which is why he doesn’t.

“I’m still here, aren’t I?” Akai asks, and gently, as if treading on thin ice, places his hand over Furuya’s thigh. “You said you hated being alone, but you aren’t. You don’t have to be, Furuya-kun. It doesn’t have to hurt anymore. If only you would just let me in.”

Despite all of Furuya’s pretenses and the carefully constructed lies and the skyscraper-tall built walls, Akai is the chink in his armor, his Achilles heel, and he matters to him, a whole damn lot, more than he is ever willing to admit, even to himself.

He is not immune, of course, God no, he wishes to be, but he is only human. Above anything else, though, he is a self-preservist. So even though Akai has always been his weak spot, he can’t let his guard down, refuses to. He’s already suffered way too many loses, he can’t lose Akai too. He does
not want to. He can’t. He absolutely cannot.

And so Furuya slaps his hand, his words, his kindness away.

Akai sighs. Then tries a different approach, he tries for another way in. He just won’t fucking quit.

“If Scotch was here, he would tell you the same thing I’m telling you. That you need to learn how to relax, every now and again.”

“Scotch isn’t here, though. He can’t be, because I killed him. We’re both aware how good of a liar you know how to be, but don’t you dare deny it!”

“I was afraid this day would come, but I always knew it would. As expected, from one of the two best investigators in Japan.” Akai purses his lips, pained.

“Why, Akai? Why did you pretend, all this time, for so long?”

Akai sighs again, rubs his eyes. He hasn’t even said anything yet and he already sounds tired.

“Do you even have to ask?”

“If I had the answer, I wouldn’t be asking in the first place.”

“You already have it, Furuya-kun, you’re just too blind to see it. You don’t want to see it.”

“You’re speaking in riddles! Just tell me the truth already!”

“Because I love you! Goddamn it, I love you, okay? Can’t you see, that every step of the way that I’ve taken is because I’ve been trying so desperately to shield you away from the truth? There’s nothing in this godforsaken world I wouldn’t do for you. With Scotch’s blood fresh all over me, I didn’t even have time to lament, I only had seconds to think, before you barged in and-” Akai shakes his head. “You didn’t want a savior. You never wanted a hero to save you, because you’re perfectly capable of saving yourself. But your story was lacking a villain. And so I assumed the part you needed to be taken and played along.”

Furuya swallows and it feels like there’s razor blades and glass shards he is swallowing down, against his throat, cutting into him, his heart, cutting him right down to the core.

“You made me hate you.”

“Yes. That’s right, I did. But like I already said, I only had seconds to think. And it was automatic, I didn’t even have to use my brain. The things the Organization forced us to do was the stuff of nightmares. Seeing it all, knowing I was a part of it, made me feel- I don’t know, I guess it made me lose faith in humanity. And then you came along, just walked right into my life. I was lost, I didn’t even know that I was, until I took on your pain.”

“Akai, after you did what you did, after you “assumed the role of the bad guy I needed”, did you ever try to put yourself in my shoes? You were fucking me in the backseat of your car, before you left me there to “solve a little problem” and when I came to check it out, you were standing there with a smoking gun and my best friend dead at your feet. Do you know what that felt like?” He asks, and despite his curled fists at the ready, his eyes fill with pieces of sadness, about to overfill and leak out, those traitorous things, the eyes, admitting things his lips never would.

*I didn’t just lose Scotch that night, I lost you too.*
Furuya wipes at his wet face with the back of his hand and he’s angry with himself, because his bravado is crumbling down, revealing the bruisable skin beneath, exposing so much of his true feelings, too much.

Akai stares at him silently and for a moment Furuya thinks he is about to reach out for his hand and kiss it, right under the knuckles, but he halts himself. Because he already knows Furuya hates being this vulnerable in front of him, doesn’t want to be.

And so Akai places a cigarette between his lips, takes a long drag and exhales, before he relaxes against the couch, spreading out like he owns the fucking place.

“Furuya-kun, you should be showing me a little bit more gratitude and thank me. I made you a better agent. You were good. I made you great. Sharper. Faster. I’m not even going to mention all the times I taught you how to be a better sniper, how to fire a shotgun one handed. It’s all because of me, when you started chasing me, when your love turned to hate. So, you’re welcome.”

That’s enough, more than enough, along with the hint of smirk playing at his lips, and Furuya’s fight returns even quicker than it dissipated. Vulnerability? No, such a thing never existed.

Because Akai’s words, every single one of them, are a spark, against concrete drenched with gasoline, flying everywhere and catching fire all around, torching everything down, every lie ever told, the two of them in the middle of it all, burning.

His blood is boiling, he is stark raving mad and he hears his voice rising high, high, high and Akai’s matches it, and then they are both shouting at each other and oh, that’s good, that’s so damn good.

Furuya’s the first one to throw a punch, Akai is the first one to draw blood. And before they know it, they are rolling on the floor like beasts, that want nothing more than to tear each other apart. Each fist and knee trying to pin the other one down, fighting for dominance and surrender, all bashing in of skulls and dreams, the need to feel each other’s wrath. It’s Hell, but this is their paradise.

Their mouths meet in the middle and it’s volatile and explosive, a tornado meeting a volcano, two forces that clash together, two magnets that are inevitably attracted, like fire and ice, Akai red and Furuya blue.

This is the part they’re good at, this is the part they excel at, fighting and then fucking, the same addictive combination of pain and pleasure every single time, four goddamn years of it.

This is the part where Akai just fucking gets it, gets him, by being just as reckless and destructive, allowing him to go first, to be the one that raises all the bets and calling all the shots.

This is the part that made Furuya fall in love with Akai in the first place, makes him fall in love and in lust over and over again. The way Akai makes him feel, like a God, absolute and powerful and complete, gaining everything by losing everything. Because Akai never holds back on him, never once stopped a word or fist from flying just because it would hurt too much.

When the fuck you, fuck you, fuck yous turn into fuck me, fuck me, fuck mes Akai has his handful of Furuya, carrying him, before pulling their mouths apart and asking for directions.

“Second door on the left.” Furuya replies and kisses him like he fucking hates him.

Akai makes sure to slam his back against every wall before his foot kicks the bedroom door open and throws him on the king-sized bed, it’s perfect to Furuya’s liking, the way he lands on his back, not at all soft and lovely, but rough.
Neither of them bother with the lights, they don’t need them. The dark works just fine. Leaves more room for yes and right now and more and again.

“I never loved you.” He says, when he hears Akai’s teeth rip open a cherry flavored condom wrapper.

But it’s a lie as clear as a cloudless sky in April.


“I know.”

“I hate you.” He adds, when he hears the squirting noise of a bottle being squeezed open.

“Good. I’m glad. Hate is a very powerful emotion, Rei-kun. I hope you hate me with passion.”

It’s easy from there, so damn easy, easier than breathing.

The way Furuya’s legs spread open by themselves, the way Akai leans into him and lets his fingertips run over his chest and slide below, the trail they leave behind a blazing fire, flames licking up at him, like Akai’s tongue.

The mattress is just another war zone, like all the other broken beds with creaking springs and floors and walls and showers and bathroom stalls and cars have been in the past, another battlefield between them, two freshly sharpened blades cutting into each other with that familiarly sweet ache, spraying crimson against white winter snow.

It’s almost ironic how two such different characters as theirs can fit together so perfect, like missing puzzle pieces, Furuya’s curved lines falling right into Akai’s sharply angled lines. Skin against skin, slapping obscenely delicious, fists curled into bed sheets and pillows, panting breaths and half-moans swallowed down by hungry lips, fingers that know exactly where to touch, with the right amount of pressure, for it to be good, for it to make them feel complete.

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Laying in a sprawled out sticky with sweat mess, they share one of Akai’s Marlboro Reds between their fingers. Furuya doesn’t smoke in his bedroom, because he would hate of his clothes and sheets to stink of it. He allows it only after Akai brings an empty ashtray and leaves the bedroom window wide open.

Tonight, it seems, he is indulging himself in falling back into the same old patterns and habits.

“Leave. Preferably not just out of my home, but Japan too.”

“What if I said no?”

“Well, I suppose I can’t hold it against you for not wanting to leave Japan. But you should go back to that mansion you’re staying at.”

“There’s no point in me doing that, because your car’s up for repairing, so you can’t take those “little naps” when you just happen to get sleepy driving past the place. Isn’t it better this way when we’re both here, so you can surveillance me from up close?”

Tch. Fucking FBI.
Then again that’s four years between them, of knowing each other like they don’t want to know anyone else.

No one else ever could, not like this, never like this.

“There is a point and it’s that my hospitality has a limit. One that you have exceeded, Aka-aaahhh!” There is something Furuya wanted to say, it was just there, right on the tip of his tongue, but his mind is drawing up a blank, because Akai is back to using his fingers, those damn nimble and crafty little things, that pluck him honey-sweet and just right, so fucking right, making him hum and then trash, back arching up gracefully off the bed.

“You were saying?” Akai asks teasingly, sinking his teeth into Furuya’s shoulder, but there’s no actual bite behind the bark, no baring fangs.

“So you’re ready for round two?”

Akai lets him feel his answer.

Furuya wants it dirtier and harder and faster, so he can have Akai out the door as soon as it’s over, but whenever he tries pushing it, Akai stills his hips and refuses him. Akai keeps it low-tempo and affectionate and it’s not the stuff the neighbours will be complaining about, it’s not fucking anymore. It’s slower than that, it’s a rhythm they could keep up all night if they want to, all smooth and choreographed movements, gentle and steady.

It’s Akai’s lips all over his body, as far as they would reach, kissing and kissing and kissing, the side of his foot, his trembling ankles, his hipbones and his bellybutton and his stomach and his chest and his arms and his hands and his neck, God, his fucking neck.

It’s almost as if Akai is trying to kiss away every bruise and pain and burden and grief and sorrow and loss, or so it feels like.

The kisses they share taste like making love, like all seven wonders of the world, all the worlds and all the galaxies, everything.

They taste just like they did before, like sloppy make-out sessions after way too many beers in the last booth of the bar, with smoke in their lungs and breaths, with the jukebox playing their favourite tunes, but only background noise, the two of them too busy getting drunk and high off each other, with Rye’s groping hands and Bourbon’s grinding hips.

They taste like when they first taught each other what it’s like to love, with all the book quotes and Hollywood movie hypes and all the songs finally making sense.

They taste like redemption, a second chance.

They taste like home.

-  

After satiating the thirst and hunger, with Akai’s chest rising and falling gently against his back, Furuya finds himself lying on his side, finger trailing little nothings at the edge of his bed, the only place where his sheets feel cool.
“Rei-kun-”

“You can drop the honorific. Just Rei would do.”

Akai presses his lips against his collarbone. “Rei, what are you thinking about?”

“I’m thinking about the way he used to call us when you weren’t around.”

“Tell me. I would like to know.”

“He used to call us double-o-seven.”

“Because all three of us have license to kill?”

He feels his lips curve up. “No, I meant the way Scotch referred to you and I. A zero for my name
and another one for what I do.”

“And I’m seven, because…?”

Furuya turns over and looks at Akai’s face and it feels like staring in the mirror, two reflections into
one.

*Because I think you already know it’s my favourite number.*

“Last time we did this, you still had long hair.” He sighs, letting his fingers drag over Akai’s scalp,
through the short and messy curls.

“Do you miss it?”

Furuya laughs softly. “I miss a lot of things. Hair grows back.”

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It’s 6 am and Furuya’s hand grasps at his phone to stop the ringing alarm. It’s been a while, since the
last time he needed it.

It *does* feel nice to not wake up to a cold, empty bed, but to a warm body pressing against his, an arm
and leg thrown over him, the soft and familiar snore coming out of Akai’s slightly gaping mouth. But
he wouldn’t admit it aloud, even with a loaded gun pressing against his temple.

Not actually wanting to get out of bed, because it’s too dark, too early and too cold, his mind
commands his aching muscles to move. He rises, without shining. God, he feels sore all over.

Refusing to suffer alone, Furuya’s hand slaps at Akai’s feet, before squeezing.

“Akai. Oi.”

“Good morning, Rei.” Akai wipes at his sleepy face and yawns.

“I’m going to take a shower and when I come out, you won’t be here anymore.” He announces,
before going into the bathroom.

Furuya lets the warm water pelt at his skin, awakening. He takes his time scrubbing himself clean
and then brushing his teeth and flossing. He observes himself in the mirror, noticing the little red tell-
tale bite marks against his neck. Akai, that territorial bastard. He would have to use a scarf. It’s fine, the weather is cold enough for wearing one.

Towel tied at his hips, he goes back into his bedroom, opening up the curtains. The sun is peeking out of the horizon, rays of sunlight hitting him squarely across the face, almost as if commanding him to have a nice day.

He carefully assembles his attire in his mind before he gets dressed, donning on his favourite pink scarf against his neck, a birthday present.

It’s the smell of freshly ground coffee, rich and earthy, that overfills his nostrils that make him walk out of his bedroom and into the living room.

He gawps, truly, mouth almost comically dropping.

Akai is in his boxers, smoking, a newspaper propped up against his knee, in front of a table overflowing with things, coffee mugs and honey and jam jars and freshly cut fruit, a plate mountain stacked with pancakes.

“What do you think you’re doing?” He croaks out, wishing for his surprised voice to come off more rude than it actually does.

“Reading the morning news. Come have some breakfast, Rei, it’s the most important meal of the day.”

He really, really does not appreciate being told what to do in his own freaking house.

...And yet his feet move and he takes a seat.

“You made breakfast. You actually made breakfast. You.”

“I fixed your coffee machine too.”

“I don’t remember asking you to do either of those things!” He barks.

“No, you didn’t. But I felt like doing both. As a thank you.”

“For what, Akai? For letting you fuck me?”

Akai winces, visibly upset by his harsh words. “That’s not what we did, you know it isn’t. And no, not because of that. It’s a thank you for providing me with something I haven’t had for the past three years. Being able to sleep in the dark.”

“You can’t sleep with the lights off?”

Akai shakes his head.

“Why?”

“Scotch won’t let me.”

Akai has them too, he realizes, the same nightmares.

The room feels heavy and Furuya doesn’t know what to say. So he doesn’t. He busies himself cutting into the food in front of him, taking a bite, taste buds alert, mouth at the ready for criticism.
What disgusting, good pancakes.
What disgusting, perfect Saturday morning.
“Stop staring at me while I’m eating.” Furuya chews angrily.
“It’s the first time you’re trying something I cooked.”
“And?”
“And I’m expecting a reaction. A compliment, even.”
What a jerk.
“You have impeccable aim with a gun. There’s your compliment. Happy now?”
“Very much so.” Akai smiles.
Newspaper forgotten, Akai sips on his coffee, Furuya continues eating, their eyes on each other, never looking away.
A moment passes between them.
“Akai, I know what you’re thinking. But it’s not going to be like last time.” He scowls.
“You have to give me a little bit more specificity.”
“When Scotch and I were living together. You kept spending the night again and again, until all of a sudden all of your crap were there and you were living with us.”
“Was it really-”
“Yes, it was really.” He interrupts, snappy and rude. “You’re annoying and a slob and, hands down, the worst person anyone could have as a roommate.”
“I’m different now. I’ve changed. I’m more mature, Rei, I promise you.”
“No, I don’t care for your promises, because you haven’t changed at all, you’re just assuming this Okiya Subaru persona, making breakfast and fixing broken coffee machines! A person’s home is where they can relax and be themselves. An enemy-free zone.”
Akai shrugs, grinning. “You know what they say, keep your friends close and your enemies closer.”
“No! What is it, Akai? Is it me knowing who you really are? I’m not the only one, your FBI buddies know too. You actually used to date that Jodie woman, so why not go to her and you two can go back to the States and live your happily ever after together? You love being alone anyway, so, really, why won’t you stop bothering me?”
“No, you’re wrong. What I love is being with you.”
“Ugh.”
Akai is too much, just- too fucking much.
He sighs. “Go take a shower and do your disguise bullshit. I already know you plan on staying at Poirot, so you might as well drive me to work.”
“Rei?”

“What.”

“While I’m touched that you would care this much, there’s really no need for you to be jealous of Jodie. I only see you.”

He punches Akai in the face.

- 

Furuya watches Akai become Okiya Subaru and uncrosses his hands. No. This wouldn’t do. He reaches into his wardrobe drawers and throws a peach turtleneck at Subaru.

“Change into that. I don’t want Conan-kun to deduct you and I- that you didn't go home, since you're wearing the same clothes as yesterday.”

- 

He really wishes it's a school day and not the weekend, because the Detective Boys are there, not even five minutes after his shift begins.

Furuya likes them, he enjoys their company very much, their innocent, cute little heads, curious children exploring the world.

He does not like them when they are curious about him.

“Subaru-san, you have the same turtleneck as Amuro-san.” Genta notes, despite the two slices of blueberry pie served in front of him, courtesy of Furuya.

“Genta, why would you remember something like that?” Conan asks.

Yeah, he would like to know the same thing. He would also like for the kid to eat his freakin' pie and not remember such irrelevant details.

“Because when Amuro-san wore it, Ayumi-chan told us “Look how handsome Detective-san is in that color!”” Mitsuhiko explains.

“Excellent work, you guys. And I can tell you it is actually Amuro-san’s turtleneck Subaru-san is wearing.” Conan grins. “I saw from upstairs Subaru-san parking at the back and the two of them came out of the car, so they must have been together.”

Furuya wonders if the outcome of things would be just as incriminating had he not asked Akai to change.

...These kids are too smart. Tokyo has got way too many detectives in one place for his liking.

Damn it.

“Well if they’re together, it’s no surprise they borrow each other’s clothes. That’s very nice.” Ayumi says.
“No! You’re wrong, we aren’t together!” Furuya says, scowling at Subaru. “Okiya-san, tell them it’s not true!”

Subaru raises his shoulders, smiling, before glancing at his watch. “Come on, kids, I promised I would take you to the zoo. Finish your pies, which Tooru-kun has so kindly given you and let’s go.”

The Detective Boys start yelling over each other, that if Subaru-san is calling him Tooru-kun and not Amuro-san, they must be together.

Yeah, Akai wishes.

What an absolute jackass.

- 

Furuya’s shift passes in a blur. He serves tea and coffee, but his mind is preoccupied, thinking about all things Akai.

The way he is, life neat and tidy and pure, Martha Stewart, making curry and breakfast and taking the kids to places they want to go.

Maybe he really has changed.

Maybe this is it.

Maybe they both need each other, to fight off the demons in the dark.

He is making ham sandwiches behind the counter, when he feels Azusa’s elbow against his ribs.

“Amuro-san, you seem happier than I’ve ever seen you. I really hope that you are.”

“Thank you, Azusa-san. I think I might be.”

- 

Just like last time, Akai brings over his toothbrush. And a week later he brings over his all.

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