We ARE Together (Yamaguchi Tadashi x OC)
by hikariotakuhime

Summary

There's a boarding house in Tokyo occupied by boys attending a local college. Hysteria and romantic drama ensues when a female tenant is left in charge of her group of friends who all happened to play volleyball together in high school.

This is an AU fanfiction for the series "Haikyuu!" that focuses on the character Yamaguchi Tadashi and his girlfriend, an original character made by me. It's also self-indulgent because I love my boy so, so much and this is my first real fanfic, lol. I hope you enjoy!
*Some details before we start*

Chapter Summary

THIS IS JUST BACKGROUND DETAILS ON THE OC; GO TO THE NEXT CHAPTER FOR THE STORY

Hello, I am Hikari aaaand this is my first fanfic! Sorta? Well, first fanfic based on an actual series (things I’ve written before were based on role-plays).

Anyways! I just wanted to start off with briefing you on what to expect out of this thing as well as state some (spoiler free) details about the OC so you can start reading with some details about her.

As I stated in the summary, this an alternate universe in Haikyuu that takes place with (almost) everyone being in college. I'd like to mention now that I am no expert on Japanese culture, economics, political stuff and so on. I've never lived in Japan, I've only learned bits and pieces from taking two years of Japanese in high school. I also watch anime, duh, but I understand that anime usually exaggerates or doesn't follow real-life customs for whatever reason the writers had. If there is anything in this story that is completely untrue or inaccurate, it's most likely that I am aware of it but I won't mind hearing you correct me. Especially if I don't actually know the correct information I would love to know for future reference :) for now though, I am doing my best in researching the information but a lot of times I will be altering things to fit my needs so DO expect some unrealistic stuff x'D

The original character was made in my vision and, I’ll admit it again, a self-insert bECAUSE ISN’T THAT SUPPOSE TO BE THE POINT?? I JUST WANNA ROMANCE WITH MY 2D BOYFRIEND OK ; 7 ;

The character is a young female named Tsukiko Yamauchi, which I’m sure you may be thinking now… “did you really just name your character with parts from Tsukishima and Yamaguchi’s names?” I SWEAR I CAME UP WITH THIS NAME BEFORE EVEN GETTING INTO HAIKYUU BECAUSE THIS CHARACTER WAS ORIGINALLY MEANT FOR A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SERIES SO THE NAMING IS A TOTAL COINCIDENCE ; u ;

I'll include a drawn character sheet here when I have time to make it, but have some basic information and background that is subjected to change over time lol

Name: Tsukiko Yamauchi ; prefers to be called "Kiko-chan"

Nomenclature:

• From Japanese 月 (tsuki) meaning "moon" and 子 (ko) meaning "child"
• From Japanese 山 (yama) meaning "mountain" and 内 (uchi) meaning "inside"

Appearance:
• stands confidently at 157 cm / 5'2" and weighs at least 52 kg / 115 lbs
• long black hair that reaches mid-back (or 'long enough to cover her breasts' as she calls it)
• usually has her hair down or whatever hairstyle someone ties it in (something she's not good at)
• underside of her hair is dark gray from having dyed it silver in her third year of high school
• has a hime cut where her bangs frame her face nicely and just barely cover her beauty mark
• her "erotic" beauty mark is just under her left eye usually hidden by her hair or glasses
• wears glasses usually in private but she doesn't use contacts since she's not so terribly blind
• known for having a curvy body with prominent B-cup breasts and thighs that nearly touch
• despite how she looks she's fairly strong when she puts in the effort but her sharp nails are deadly
• her eyes are similar to Kiyoko's but livelier and with a more blueish tint when under natural sunlight

Personality:
• she doesn't like uptight formalities and will jump to informal interaction unless the person is obviously somebody of status, then she acts formal
• once you get to know her she's bright and outgoing with some childish tendencies such as her habit of giving people weird or unique nicknames
• gets along well with guys especially because she doesn't have much of a lady's mouth, but it doesn't mean she can't be girly either (though it's rare)
• speaking of being girly, she turns into a typical shoujo heroine when romance is brought up, becoming bashful and giddy like a love-struck maiden
• when angry, she WILL get physical unless somebody holds her back or if she absolutely can't start a fight for whatever reason (like if at work or in public)
• she's the type to bottle in her sadness and then later act like nothing happened, but when someone confronts her about her feelings she will speak out
• towards people she's fond of, she's very affectionate with them to the point she clings to them physically and often treats them like a lovable stuffed toy
• towards people she's not so fond of, she acts cold and mean to them but if she REALLY doesn't like them she will cringe from just hearing their name

Biography details:
• she is Kiyoko Shimizu's cousin; their mothers being sisters
• was born in Tokyo and raised there for a couple of years
• moved to the Miyagi prefecture due to a grandparent's health
• developed an interest in music because of friend that's a pianist
• attended a junior high school that had a special kind of music club
• met Yamaguchi and Tsukishima at this school in her second year
• went back to Tokyo before finishing her third year of junior high
• became a trainee for a high school idol program but quit before her first year debut
• attended Nekoma high in her second year, also becoming the volleyball team's manager
• returned to idol training under a new program after graduating high school

Aaaand that's about all I think I can say without spoiling too much? This story is going to be
focused on Tsukiko and Yamaguchi in their college years, but expect some flashbacks to high school. Hint: those times will be important~

One more thing I'd like to mention: I tagged this as crossover because I will be including characters from other series as background characters whenever I need them. It'll just be easier for me this way so I don't have to go give out random names to random characters that will appear more than once. Plus, I think this would make things more interesting? Spoiler hint: Bakugo from BNHA will be in this, lol~
“This was the time for endings and beginnings,” says the plaque at the front of Yorozu-kan; a stylish and modern boarding house located in Tokyo.

The time between the previous semester and the upcoming one seemed too short to be called a vacation. Days were spent wasting away from the exhaustion of final exams and projects but night was when everyone would go to drink or barbeque in celebration. When they’d awaken, hungover, there would be entrance exams and graduation ceremonies to prepare for.

“Hey, hey, hey!” shouted the loudest owl in the world, Koutarou Bokuto, a second year college student.

“Shuuut up, airhead! Stop hooting every ten minutes!” hollered back the scruffy black cat, Tetsurou Kuroo, fellow second year college student.

Another tall man entered the living space. With his olive-brown eyes, he stared down at his remaining housemates. “You’re impatient. You’re being loud too.” said Wakatoshi Ushijima, also a second year in college, directing the blunt comment at Bokuto and Kuroo respectively.

The three basked in the silence, which was a rare occurrence since the house was normally bustling with noise from rowdy college boys. Ushijima, Kuroo, and Bokuto were all that was left in the Yorozu-kan. Their previous housemates were seniors that just graduated, and therefore, could not continue living in the boarding house meant for students. The house happened to be conveniently located fairly close to the college the three attended together. Apparently the building aged over two decades old. It was only recently when the landlady had the place completely renovated to appeal to the ‘young and hip’ college students.
Speaking of the landlady, she was going to make an appearance today. Normally a landlord would also be living in the apartment complex as well but this one supposedly did not. Nobody knew where exactly she lived, only that the building belonged to her.

“They here yeeet?” Bokuto whined.

The three had spent the morning helping their, now, ex-housemates move out at the last minute. They remained close to the front entrance because they were expecting their landlady’s arrival. She had also mentioned in a letter that she was going to bring two freshmen that would be moving into the Yorozu-kan. It made sense seeing how there were plenty rooms available. But new arrivals also meant another moving truck for them to, this time, unload numerous boxes that belonged to the two new tenants and whatever souvenirs their landlady fetched from her vacation.

Time passed slowly, but extremely so in Bokuto’s perspective. He was sprawled on the long, five-seater sofa that was close to the hallway entrance. He laid with one leg hanging off the edge and the other over the sofa’s head.

Kuroo claimed the entire three-seater sofa by the large window that was reflecting the twitter feed from his phone.

Ushijima was left with the single seat that faced the other two.

Just as Bokuto was about to exhale another whine, all three pairs of eyes darted out the window. They were alerted by the sound of a familiar car rolling into the driveway. It was their landlady.

The owl and cat chose to wait inside, both having no desire to greet their landlady. Ushijima was the only brave soul who had the courage to approach the woman that gave them a nice home. She was a short and plump woman who appeared to be very enthusiastic about Western fashion, as evident by the ensemble she adorned. It looked as if she was heading to an opera house with her long satin gloves and formal party shoes peeking out from underneath her velvet overcoat. And as usual, she was wearing her thick-framed Gucci shades. It wasn’t even very bright outside, Bokuto would have said if he wasn’t distracted by the sight of a familiar face in the backseat of his landlady’s American convertible.

Before Kuroo would notice, Bokuto wasn’t with him. The fellow had dashed out of the house.
“AAAKAAAAAASSHHIIIIIIII!!!!!!!!!” came the ever-so-familiar and ever-so-missed cry from Bokuto. He nearly rammed into the car if it weren’t for Ushijima intervening with his strong, left arm.

“Bokuto-san, could you have at least waited until I got out of the car?” sighed Keiji Akaashi, the new freshman tenant.

Sticking his bed hair out of the front entrance was Kuroo, who only made his way to the car after Ushijima and the landlady went through the side gate that lead into the backyard.

“Yo!” the previous Nekoma captain greeted the Fukurodani vice-captain, who then later became the captain after Bokuto’s leave.

Akaashi glanced up at Kuroo then let out a sigh again with an exhausted look on his face.

“Was’dat supposed to be a greeting?!” Kuroo hissed.

The two were only joking in the moment and exchanged proper greetings after a brief laugh.

“Ah.” Akaashi leaned forward, reaching for the sleeping person in the front passenger's seat. “We’re here.” he said calmly as he gently pulled on their shoulder to awaken them.

Bokuto and Kuroo moved in curiously to get a closer look on the person; a girl wearing a casual spring dress with jeans and sunglasses that hid her face. The girl groaned upon waking up. When she removed her sunglasses to rub her eyes both Bokuto and Kuroo got a good look of her face then. It was small and cute but what caught their attention most was the beauty mark near her left eye. As soon as the two saw that, they screamed in unison.

“...the hell? Aa-kun, I didn’t ask you to wake me up with Kou-tan and Kuroo shouting into my ear.” complained the groggy college freshman that was also moving into the Yorozu-kan; Tsukiko Yamauchi.

Bokuto and Kuroo were stunned. It was a mix of ‘our new housemate is a girl!’ and ‘our new housemate is Tsukiko?!’ but the latter was more how Kuroo felt. He knew her back in high school; first as the plain-looking but strict Nekoma volleyball team manager and then the fine-looking but still strict Nekoma volleyball team manager. Explanation for that will come another time.
Suitcases were being hauled out of the convertible and soon enough the small moving truck that couldn’t keep up with the landlady’s driving speed had finally arrived. By the way, the woman goes by the name Madame. It’s suppose to mean ‘madam’ but she apparently hates ‘mu’ so she changed to ‘me’ at some point. She especially likes her name being called by the boys(wink).

“Wow…” Tsukiko gazed up at the Yorozu-kan’s greatness. It was too grand to be called a house; more of an apartment complex. There was the main floor, two floors with bedrooms, and then a small attic that had a skylight window and roof access. The driveway was spacious, allowing up to four cars to park on it. There was also a bike rack on the side next to a small garden. Tsukiko had a soft grin on her face as if reminiscing from the sight.

“Wh-what’s up?” Kuroo stepped closer to her with slight nervousness. They hadn’t seen each other in a while or even spoken since who knows when. Tsukiko would stop texting Kuroo whenever he used a suggestive winking emoji or a flirty one-liner. The answer she gave to their mediator about this was, “because I got no time for his fooling around.” Even now as Kuroo was inching closer, Tsukiko could only glare at him. But for the sake of their reunion she decided to be nice to the big guy, starting with opening her arms out for him.

“Long time no—” before Tsukiko could even finish herself she was engulfed by long arms that brought her small face into a warm chest.

“KIIIIIIKKKOOOOOO-CHAAAAANNNN!!! I MISSED YOOOUUU!!!!!” wailed Bokuto, who had stolen the friendly hug meant for Kuroo.

“HEY BRO!” Kuroo gritted his teeth while attempting to rip the owl off of his kitten. Akaashi watched them for a moment then went inside to take in the last of his luggage.

“C’mon, geez! I have two arms—one for each of you dorks!” Tsukiko muffled since her face was still stuck in Bokuto’s chest.

“Hey,” came a deep voice.

Bokuto and Kuroo froze in place, giving Tsukiko the chance to free herself from them. When she saw who the deep voice came from her eyes practically lit up before she sprung forward.

“WAKA-PAPAAA~!!!!” Tsukiko squealed, landing into Ushijima’s chest. She wrapped her arms
as best she could around his neck. The main stood exactly two-feet taller than her. He raised a hand to put on her soft head and the corners of his lips curled up by 0.01 degrees into a ‘smile’.

“Hello Tsukiko,” Ushijima greeted back.

“How are you? Are you still tired? I can assemble your bed frame right now if you are.”

Despite the utter lack of emotion in Ushijima’s voice, the girl still reacted joyfully. “I’m feeling muuuch better now that I’m with you again, Waka-papa!” Tsukiko answered with a childlike tone. The sight sickened Kuroo, though Bokuto was thinking overwise. He clenched a fist in envy, actually.

Akaashi interrupted everyone by telling them to head inside. “Madame wants to say something.” he added.

Ushijima took the single seat again, though this time with Tsukiko sitting on the armrest while leaning against him. Disgusted Kuroo, jealous Bokuto, and sighing Akaashi all sat on the three-seater sofa. The landlady, Madame, was in the middle of the five-seat with small goodie bags on both her sides. She silently sipped on chamomile tea in her special teacup from Switzerland with a pinky out. It was when her teacup clanked against the saucer that all eyes went to her.

With a small grin, Madame proceeded to announce, “I am going overseas.”

“Wait, didn’t you JUST came back from a trip?” Kuroo asked but was answered with one of the goodie bags tossed at him. Bokuto’s gold eyes trailed the object, giving it a look over in an attempt to see what was inside. Madame raised her voice to stop him.

“Do not look inside until I leave.” Madame’s words were law.

After a short moment of silence the atmosphere lightened up again and Madame continued to speak. “I am going overseas for business purposes. Contact with me may be scarce,” she quickly raised a finger when Ushijima was about to question her right there.

“I understand you are all full of questions. For one thing; how will this affect your lifestyle under Yorozu-kan?”
This was on their minds, for the tall ones especially. They had lived in the boarding house for a year and were already use to how things were managed. Dinner was always prepared by a cook that Madame hired each night. Laundry was also taken care of every day while the boys were at school so they’d return to clean clothes sitting on their bed. The house cleaning was also done then.

Basically, while the residents who were all college students were out of the house, Madame had hired help to go in and do everything necessary. It was always this way so the boys could focus on their schoolwork as well as social life and jobs, without worrying over house chores.

“Then... will we have to call in the cook and cleaners ourselves?” Tsukiko asked. At some point she had slid down to sit in Ushijima's lap completely. He was nonchalant about this, either having gotten use to Tsukiko behaving as an actual child around him or he really did not care. Either way, the jealousy continued to fuel Bokuto.

Madame took another sip of her tea before answering, “Absolutely… not.”

Everyone gave Madame a confused look as she continued to smile with her bright, red lips in front of them.

“There are already cooks and cleaners here.”

Everyone, except Ushijima probably, was still confused by this.

Madame continued by saying, “I decided I’ve been far too nice to my tenants, which is why I am now changing things from here on out. From now on, you all must learn to take care of yourselves and each other.”

Tsukiko shot up, almost startling Kuroo since the very action triggered a brief flashback to their time in high school. Again, explanation on that history is saved for another time.

“Apologies, Madame, but... do you really think these boys know how to cook and clean for themselves?” Tsukiko said, her words instantly ticking off Bokuto and Kuroo.

“As the only female here it’s very likely that they’ll shove the duties onto me, you know?”
Kuroo then stood from the accusation, hands in his pockets as he leaned in close to meet Tsukiko’s level with a smirk on his face.

“Oh ho? Do you really doubt us that much? I think your ‘manager’ face is showing.” he said with a provocative tone that always manage to get Tsukiko riled up and huff.

Akaashi rose to get between them as the voice of reasoning. “Now, now… let’s be adults here. For real.”

Tsukiko folded her arms across her chest and scoffed. “Well, I can see Aa-kun and Waka-papa being responsible… it’s really just these other two that I’m concerned about.” her dark eyes shifted to Bokuto and Kuroo, who were now standing side by side with their arms crossed vexingly too.

The angry owl and hissing cats were just about ready to throw down in the middle of the living room. Bokuto and Kuroo could in fact literally throw Tsukiko down too; not that they’d do it for real, possibly.

Ushijima was the only one still sitting since Madame was handing him a goodie bag for himself and to hold the one for Tsukiko. She also passed the remaining two to Akaashi while the other three had their glare-off.

The sparks were flying and a storm was brewing but with Madame’s absolute power of simply snapping her fingers, she had ceased everything.

Everyone instinctively straightened their postures and gave undivided attention to the landlady. She, again, had paused for a moment as if to add dramatic suspense for what she was about to say.

“For the time being, I am making Tsukiko your housemother.”

Half an hour of silence had passed when Tsukiko awakened from her initial shock. “SHE MADE ME WHAT?!!” Frustration had the girl tug at her hair while pacing around the room.

Kuroo and Bokuto were leaning back on the sofa, holding the goodie bags that Madame gave them. “Oh yeah, we can look in these now right?” Kuroo said. Without a second to lose Bokuto had
already dumped the contents of his bag. What fell out onto the center coffee table was a metal key and note card attached to it. The rest opened their bags. Everyone had just about the same thing; a key with a note, save for Kuuro who only had a note.

“Well?” Tsukiko looked at the boys. Once everyone had a look-over of their individual notes it was then shared with the rest of the class.

Akaashi’s note read: “here is the laundry cleaning procedure, follow it as best you can and good luck”

Ushijima’s note read: “here is a list of websites and magazines for cooking, have fun!”

Bokuto’s note read: “here is the key to the gardening shed, don’t let my greens die or else”

Kuroo’s note read: “here is the order of which you must clean the house, good luck”

“ppPFFT…. YOU’RE ON CLEANING DUTY.” Bokuto laughed at his bro who grovelled to the floor.

Akaashi and Ushijima were already pulling out their phones to start researching for their tasks.

Tsukiko was also on the floor with her note card crushed at her feet. Her note read: “Congrats, you’re a (house)mother now”
Thanks for reading!

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Cooking Arrangements and Magic

Chapter Summary

Bokuto started screaming, as if he was powering up to become a super Saiyan.

Ushijima began his duty as chef of the house. He had some basic cooking knowledge already so he started making what he already knew. This way the others get a quick sample of what they’ll be eating for a while. Akaashi and Tsukiko sat at the high counter so they could watch Ushijima in action. They purposely left Bokuto and Kuroo to continue their arguing after one of them tried to negotiate for a job switch.

“I highly doubt someone so clearly lacking in docosahexaenoic acid could mow the lawn!” Kuroo barked.

“Please, it’s easy! I just push the thing around and it eats the grass, right?!!” Bokuto groaned.

Kuroo would roll his eyes if he had the energy to as he replied, “If it’s so easy, why are you asking me if that’s right?!!”

The longer the two continued to go at it the more it was sinking into Tsukiko that she was basically a team manager again. She had hoped to be done with that job after graduating from Nekoma High. While her time as their manager for two years was overall enjoyable and fun, it was still stressful at times to handle. Whether it was getting hit on by some of the boys or dealing with them as if they were children; it made her question why she accepted the job. Majority of the time it was a certain half-Russian behemoth that made things difficult on both her and the pudding-head vice-captain.

“Aaaaaaaaaa-kun…..” Tsukiko rested her head against Akaashi’s arm and turning in her seat so her knees would touch his. The close physical contact was something, even after over two years of knowing each other, he couldn’t get used to. She started rubbing her face against his sleeve too, which only made him think she had a cat-like behavior from being a Nekoma High graduate.

“Kiko-chan, can you please just call me by a more… normal name? The one you give me is too similar to Bokuto-san’s.” Akaashi gently pleaded.

Tsukiko pouted as she responded with, “But you told me not to call you Keji either!”
“My name is Keiji. You’re forgetting a syllable.”

“Keji.”

“Keiji.”

“Ke-ji.”

“Ke-i-ji.”

“Kenji.”

“Kei—wait, did you just...”

“It’s done.” Ushijima interrupted the two as he announced his dish to be completed. Bokuto and Kuroo had stopped bickering when they heard lunch was ready. They stood behind their respective underclassmen with awe.

“Wow! Waka-papa, it looks great!!” Tsukiko complimented the chef while taking a picture to post on social media. The other boys were also fairly amazed. None of them even thought Ushijima was capable of cooking.

“Well then,” Kuroo started with the spoon he snatched from Tsukiko. “Thanks for the meal!”

One by one they all took a bite out of Ushijima’s dish.

Silence fell in the room. Nobody was saying anything. They even still had their utensils in their mouths. The stoical brunette blinked, unsure of when they were all going to respond or react. He took a spoon for himself than a bite of the dish he just made.

“It’s good.” he said out loud, causing the others to scream in shock.
“Good?! Now way!”

Akaashi coughed. “Not nice Kuroo-san. Well, uhh… Ushijima-san… it’s—”

“IT HAS NO FLAVOR WHATSOEVER MAN.” Bokuto roared.

Tsukiko sobbed to herself. “Such a pretty egg omelette too… I didn’t even have to use filters...” she muttered.

What Ushijima had made was an egg omelette. It was simple and plain as an egg omelette could be. However, judging by everyone’s reaction to the taste, it made Ushijima want to ask more specific questions.

“Was there a step in the process I messed up on? Which part needs the most improvement?” Ushijima inquired.

The taste testers groaned, not knowing where to start with explaining how bland Ushijima’s cooking was. Instead they described the kind of tastes they liked best and Ushijima took notes for the coming future.

Lunch ran short and unfulfilled, plus a lot of dishes to clean. Tsukiko gave everyone pointers on how to wash the dishes, how to avoid using too many dishes, and then stating she would enforce a rule that they immediately clean up after themselves in order to avoid building a pile of dishes to clean come dinner time. Akaashi and Ushijima looked like the only ones who were listening, which she was grateful for.

“Wait, that’s right. We both need to unpack.” said Akaashi upon realizing they hadn’t left the main floor even after the landlady took her leave. Tsukiko nodded, since this had slipped her mind as well.

“Let’s do that now then.” she said while motioning for all of the guys to head to the foyer where they had placed the moving boxes and suitcases for the time being. Most of it belonged to Tsukiko. She had been living alone throughout high school before now so she had a lot more things to pack.
Akaashi on the other hand moved out of his family’s home, so he only took what he believed was necessary and decided he would slowly retrieve more of his things later.

“Alright, so which rooms are open?” Tsukiko asked the trio that were already living in Yorozu-kan, though she was facing Ushijima when she raised the question.

Ushijima answered, “Rooms 2, 3, 7, 8, and 9 are all vacant. Bokuto and Kuroo’s rooms are 6 and 5 respectively—”

“Hey, hey, HEY!!” Bokuto interjected.

“How is Room 3 open when that’s your room?!” he said. Kuroo nodded, having wondered the same thing.

Ushijima blinked. “I switched rooms with our senpai after helping him move out last week,” he answered bluntly.

Bokuto started screaming, as if he was powering up to become a super Saiyan. “NO FAIR. THAT’S THE ROOM I WANTED FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.” he shouted.

Kuroo was also a bit upset but only because Ushijima had never mentioned the change. Though Akaashi did find Bokuto’s shouting rather nostalgic, he still wanted the other to tone down the volume.

“I’ll take Room 2 then, if you will excuse me.” Akaashi said before taking one of his boxes up the stairs.

“Wait,” Tsukiko stopped him with a tug on his shirt. Once she had his attention she pointed in the direction of the kitchen. “There’s an elevator over there.” she informed him.

Bokuto screamed again.

“THERE WAS AN ELEVATOR IN THIS BUILDING THE ENTIRE TIME?!!?!” his voice boomed even louder because of how shocked he was from the revelation.
Kuroo wasn’t too surprised. He had noticed the strange door months ago but couldn’t figure out how to open it or if it was even functioning. Ushijima though had already known about the elevator and that it was in fact working. He just never mentioned it to anyone because taking the stairs was faster and more beneficial.

Tired of Bokuto’s constant shouting, the new housemother pulled on the owl boy’s ear firmly and brought it to her level. “You’re being annoying! Go stand in a corner and think about your actions!” she ordered.

It broke Bokuto’s heart to be treated like a child by a girl, especially one he’s rather fond of and had romantic hopes for at some point. He fell into a depressive state and slugged to a corner like he was told. Kuroo couldn’t help but snicker until Tsukiko threatened to give him the same treatment as well.

Ushijima raised a hand for permission to speak, which Tsukiko happily allowed him to do. “What about you?” he asked her. “Which room would you be taking?”

Tsukiko placed a hand on her hip, though didn't dwell long on the question. “Well, Room 10 obviously.”

“Pardon?” Kuroo questioned and was threatened a second time for speaking up. He resisted the urge to click his tongue but continued himself. “We’ve been here for a year now and while the elevator was mostly a mystery to us, we’re pretty sure that a ‘Room 10’ doesn’t exist.” His statement made Tsukiko roll her eyes. She had no choice but to explain everything from the beginning.

It turned out that Tsukiko had lived in Yorozu-kan before anyone else. Her grandfather was the original owner before giving it away to a family friend, who happens to be Madame.

“I grew up here and after I moved to the Tohoku region I continued to come here during vacations,” she explained to the boys. She mentioned how the building was different inside and out, but the infrastructure was just as she remembered it to be. Having grown up knowing Madame too, Tsukiko was aware of the woman’s interesting quirks.

“C’mere to the living room.” she motioned the boys to follow her, leaving the boxes in the foyer again.
“The Yorozu-kan’s history is inside the walls.”

The four (Bokuto joining the group after reviving from curiosity) took what Tsukiko just said as a metaphor. She proved what she meant by literally pulling out a photo album from the wall. It was hidden in a drawer compartment that blended with the wall seamlessly.

“My grandfather had a fascination for ninja, so in his honor, Madame added stuff like this to the building.” she said while flipping through the picture-filled pages with a smile on her face. The boys got closer to get a look for themselves. The first half of the album was full of old pictures that hardly had color in them. Then came the pictures from Tsukiko’s childhood in all their glory.

“How adorable.” Akaashi complimented the child version of Tsukiko.

“Is this man…?” Ushijima pointed to one of the pictures at a male that was holding the little Tsukiko. Her lips curled into a smirk as she replied, “Yep! That’s my actual papa.”

The man appeared to be tall and his hands were big, even compared to the little Tsukiko. Though the daughter revealed he isn’t as tall as anyone in the room. What the boys really noticed though was Tsukiko’s father’s striking resemblance to Ushijima himself; the only differences being their hair color, skin tone, and Tsukiko’s father wearing glasses and having a mustache.

“With some makeup and props… you really could pass for her dad!” Kuroo added as a joke. Bokuto chimed in as well, saying, “and here I thought Kiko-chan had a daddy kink!”

The two let out hysterical laughter but were quickly stopped when Tsukiko jabbed both of their sides, her fingers hitting just below their rib cages. It caused them enough pain to helplessly fall to the floor.

Tsukiko continued to show everyone the hidden secrets she knew that were on the main floor. Anything else that Madame had added without Tsukiko’s awareness would be left undiscovered until later. She then showed them how to use the elevator. The buttons were on a panel in the wall that had to be flipped over to reveal itself.

“When you hear that snap, that means the magnets connected and the buttons will be functional.” she informed them. Seeing how the elevator was explained last, Tsukiko suggested they use the opportunity of testing it out while taking things upstairs. Ushijima, of course, said he would take
the stairs instead.

The others took as many boxes as they could fit into the elevator with themselves. Tsukiko hit the button to take them to the third floor. Kuroo looked and noticed the number of buttons displayed. “There’s a basement here too?” he asked.

Tsukiko seemed hesitant on answering until Bokuto almost hit the button for it. “Don’t! The basement… is somewhere none of you should ever be.” her warning only made the boys more curious as to what was down there.

“Is this gonna be like Attack on—”

Tsukiko stopped Kuroo from finishing his sentence.

“Never go to the basement. Otherwise… you’d be invading Madame’s privacy.” she said. As soon as Madame was mentioned the others shivered in fear and understood to never go into the basement.

Reaching the third floor, everyone waited with boxes in arms for Tsukiko to show them to her room. The third floor didn’t have much and rarely did Bokuto and Kuroo ever go up there, since their rooms were on the second floor. Coming out of the elevator on the right would be Room 9, then 8, then 7 with the end of the hall having the staircase leading to the remaining floors below.

“See, there’s no Room 10 here.” Kuroo pointed out.

Tsukiko rolled her eyes again and continued down the hallway. They stopped just in front of Room 7 but were facing the wall on their left.

“Nothing is here! Just a random hallway mirror!” Kuroo stated as he put Tsukiko’s stuff down on the floor.

“Hold up cat-face, I’m getting my key!” Tsukiko said while holding up the very thing. It was the key that came from her goodie bag. She approached her reflection and did what none of the guys expected— she smashed the mirror with the key a few times. The boys started panicking and stepped back to avoid glass shards, only, there weren’t any. The mirror did appear to be cracked but its shattered pieces weren’t flying out of the frame.
“Don’t worry you pansies. This thing has a plastic cover to keep it mess-free.” Tsukiko chuckled. She then picked at a corner with her nail and peeled off the broken mirror, revealing the true door that was hidden behind it. Setting the cover aside, she yanked off just the bottom piece of what was thought to be the mirror’s frame to show the gaping space between the bottom of the door and floor. Sunlight was visibly seen coming out from underneath.

The girl had literally done a magic trick in front of everyone.

“Okay… but what about the door hand—”

Tsukiko cut off Kuroo again, this time with the key pressed against his lips. She faced the door and stuck the key into the corresponding keyhole. When she turned the key click sound was followed by a door handle popping out from the door itself. Kuroo stood in bewildered silence.

“Alright guys, here it is!” Tsukiko swung the door opened. Being revealed was a clean and spacious room that nobody knew about until now. It even left Bokuto being quiet. He was too awestruck. Akaashi was as well. Kuroo couldn’t believe what he was seeing either and had no choice but to give a tally mark to Tsukiko on the metaphorical board of ownage.

“So this is what the master bedroom looks like,” said Ushijima who had just arrived with the last of Tsukiko’s boxes.

“MASTER BEDROOM!?!?!!!” both Bokuto and Kuroo shouted together, resulting in another physical punishment from Tsukiko and an order to do fifty push-ups.

Akaashi started chuckling lightly. The nostalgia just kept hitting him today.
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“By touching them I bet.” Kuroo snickered.

Tsukiko glared as she put down her spoon. “That’s how body massages work you idiot!”

The rest of that day was spent unpacking and rearranging the rooms. Bokuto was going on about how he wished there was a ‘Room 4’ because then it would match his previous Fukurodani player number. The reason there wasn’t one in the first place was because Madame happens to be the superstitious type. Because of that, she intentionally didn’t name the actual fourth room as such.

To compromise as best she could to avoid a depressed bird, Tsukiko told Bokuto to move into Room 3 since the number was ‘close enough’. This way Bokuto could also be roomed next to his great friend Akaashi, much to the latter’s dismay. Kuroo also wanted to switch rooms and had chosen Room 7, the room directly across from Tsukiko on the third floor.

“Don’t want my kitten sleeping alone and so far away from us~” he purred. As much as Tsukiko wanted to tell him otherwise, she decided to let him do it. She had doubts Kuroo would actually assault her in her sleep. If he ever did then Ushijima, as he firmly stated, “would sprint up the stairs and knock the door down to stop anyone that would hurt Tsukiko.” Kuroo smiled nervously at this and simply gave his word to Tsukiko that he had no ill intentions.

Bokuto and Kuroo had completed their room switches fairly quickly thanks to everyone’s help. They didn’t have a lot of stuff to begin with either. Every room comes with a bed, closet, and desk too so there wasn’t any furniture that needed to be transferred.

That was about it for move-in day.

“What should we do with dinner?” Kuroo asked as he sat down at the stairs and waited for someone to answer. All eyes turned to Ushijima, the assigned house cook. He merely stared back in silence. Would it be alright to let him cook something again?

Tsukiko let out a sigh. “I’ll handle it. My treat to you guys for today’s hard work,” she told them.
Bokuto began to beam with excitement. “KIKO-CHAN’S COOKING!!” he cheered. Kuroo was looking forward to the girl’s cooking, even getting up from the stairs to follow her to the kitchen. He sat at the high counter and smirked at Tsukiko’s sloppy ponytail. It was odd how she could never manage to tie her hair up properly but he thought it was cute anyways. She did have the long hair he happened to be into as well.

“What will you make?” Ushijima asked. He tried to join Tsukiko in hopes of learning from her but she stopped him with her palm to his chest. “Away. All of you.” she said while putting on an apron. Then she stated that she preferred to cook without an audience.

The boys were forced to remain in the living room with their heads facing the television, away from Tsukiko. Several times they would try to sneak a peek but, as though she had eyes on the back of her head, they’d only see a glaring woman holding a kitchen knife in her hand. As time went by though their noses eventually took notice of what was being made. It was a scent everyone was familiar with: curry.

“Thanks for waiting.” Tsukiko said after she allowed the boys into the dining area. They stared in awe at the curry roux that filled the pot then up at the girl who stood with her hands on her hips in a triumphant manner. She awaited a verbal response but was confident in getting a positive reaction from them.

“How come you never cooked for the team back then?” Kuroo asked with a slight pout in his lips.

Tsukiko dropped her grin for a moment. She chose to ignore Kuroo by looking at the others with it back on.

Akaashi gave her a meek smile back. “It looks great, I can’t wait to try it.” he said. His compliment made Tsukiko look as happy as Bokuto when praised.

Everyone began to eat and immediately the taste response was the polar opposite of what Ushijima got during lunch. Bokuto was even crying, really.

“PLEASE BE MY WIFE!” he sobbed while continuing to shove spoonfuls of curry and rice into his already full mouth.

“Seriously, why did you never cook for us in Nekoma?!” Kuroo asked again while also stuffing himself.
Tsukiko this time gave him a shrug. “I only did what I was asked to do and making food for an entire team was not on my task list.” she answered.

“What things did you do as the Nekoma team manager then?” inquired Akaashi. He was genuinely curious since he couldn’t recall Tsukiko doing much work back then. Ushijima nodded in agreement, meaning he wanted to know too.

Tsukiko raised a brow. “Uhh, manager things? I tossed balls, picked up balls, passed balls, blocked balls, cleaned balls—”

Bokuto interrupted to ask for a second serving of curry and because he nearly choked from laughter. Tsukiko refilled his bowl before continuing her answer. “The most I really did though was making sure everyone was physically healthy.” she added.

Kuroo jumped in to say, “Yeeaaah… you were a real pervert about that.” His comment warranted a punishment of getting his unfinished plate taken away.

“You did help during the training camp back then.” Ushijima commented before handing Tsukiko his plate as a gesture for seconds. It wasn’t hayashi rice, his favorite, but he was enjoying the girl’s food regardless. He only wished he could have watched her cook to learn from her technique and skill.

“What training camp?” Akaashi asked, the question directed to Ushijima if not Tsukiko.

Tsukiko ended up explaining the time she briefly attended an exclusive training camp for first-years in the Miyagi prefecture. Coach Washijo of Shiratorizawa was running it the same time as the All-Japan Youth Intensive Training Camp that was held in Tokyo. Tsukiko mentioned attending the training camp in Tokyo but only for half a day.

“There were so much more talented players that it even made my stomach curl like Hinata’s would’ve.” she joked. “Oh! Speaking of Sho-tan, he was there! The Shiratorizawa camp. Ahh, it was so cute watching him being a ball boy~”

Kuroo purposely cleared his throat to interrupt Tsukiko swooning over a boy that’s just as little as her. She glared at him for a moment before talking again.
“Anyway! Back to the physical health bit. Coach Washijo somehow caught wind of my existence under a weird nickname I am not disclosing. All he had me do was look after the boys’ bodies and watch for any sign of injury or fatigue.”

“By touching them I bet.” Kuroo snickered.

Tsukiko glared and put down her spoon. “That’s how body massages work you idiot!” she huffed.

Kuroo clicked his tongue. “Who tells a bunch of guys to take off their shirts so she can ‘analyze’ their bodies then force her smooth, magical hands on them?!”

The cats stood up and pressed foreheads against each other while hissing and growling. The rest of the tenants continued enjoying delicious homemade curry; Bokuto even helping himself to a fourth serving.

Over a month has passed since everyone settled in the Yorozu-kan and since began their new semester.

Mornings would start off with multiple alarms going off at once. The only person who didn’t have one was, as expected, Ushijima. He always woke up exactly at 6 a.m. to start his early morning run. By the time he’d return it would still be a while until the others woke up, which gave him chances to prepare breakfast. It was by the third week of living together when Ushijima’s egg omelettes finally developed flavor. Though, out of everyone’s reactions, he only paid attention to Tsukiko’s. Akaashi could have sworn he saw the usually stone-faced Ushijima somewhat smiling that morning.

At school, everyone rarely stuck as a group. Kuroo and Bokuto had their circles while Ushijima didn’t really socialize so he would either be studying or hitting the gym. Akaashi and Tsukiko however had a class together. They would sit next to each other in the lecture hall and then hang out afterwards. The whole group would meet up for lunch on some occasions; like to taste test a lunch made by their Ushijima. Aside from that, there was another time when everyone was in one place on campus and it was for volleyball practice. Akaashi had joined and the other three were already members. The bros made their joke about Tsukiko being a manager for them, but she had joined another club that met up on the same days as volleyball. She would leave after dropping off Akaashi.
“I wish we could see how good Kiko-chan looks dancing in tight, form-fitted stretch pants…” Bokuto said with the thought distracting him from noticing a volleyball had bounced off his head.

“Ah, yes… the blessing bestowed upon us by leggings.” Kuroo adds as he picks up the ball that hit his friend. The two nodded in agreement while imagining what Tsukiko changed into after leaving for her club.

“Don’t think dirty about her dancing clothes you two.” Akaashi attempted to scold them but with no luck.

The second week of a new month arrived and at Yorozu-kan it meant one thing: rent payment week. Madame was too nice on her (usually young and male) tenants, giving them an entire week every two months to pay for their rent. It wasn’t so costly either that even one part-time job could keep them afloat.

The group sat down in the living room for a meeting on rent payment. There wasn’t a problem from what they could tell. Nobody had less than what was expected of them and turned in within the time limit.

“Um. Kiko-sama? Why did you call us out here? Kuroo asked as he casually scooted closer to Tsukiko on the sofa, only to get pushed away.

“I just wanted to know something that I’ve been wondering for awhile now.” she started.

“Are you guys… having your parents pay your rent?”

“Yes,” the boys answered immediately.

Tsukiko made an ‘I thought so’ face which had the boys wondering if getting financially backed by their families was suddenly an issue.
“Aren’t your folks doing the same for you?” Bokuto asked her to which she swiftly answered, “No.”

Knowing that Tsukiko lived on her own back in high school, this came as a shock to them.

“How have you been paying rent then? Unless because you’re family friend, Madame isn’t charging you…” Kuroo eyeballed the envelopes on the table. There were only four and none of them came from Tsukiko. Then again, she was the one collecting rent money in Madame’s absence.

“I have a job.” Before the boys could gasp from shock Tsukiko followed up with, “I’m an idol, remember?”

“But you’re washed out!” Kuroo’s comment rewarded him with a hard jab in the side, causing him to move to the edge of the sofa to get away from Tsukiko’s reach.

“You still get paid even as a trainee?” Akaashi asked curiously.

Tsukiko leaned back while she explained her situation. “Even though I am a trainee I can still get offered jobs for modeling and minor television roles. High school idols were, and still are, a big rage so I got a lot of offers back then. Though I don’t get as many now, what I do get actually pays higher. My earnings then get used by my company to pay for expenses like school and, in this case, my rent.”

Kuroo jumped up, angrily pointing fingers at the girl. “SO YOU’RE BASICALLY LIKE US.” he stated.

“Sh-shut up! My finances are totally different from the rest of you!” Tsukiko retorted with shifty eyes.

“WAIT. KIKO-CHAN IS AN IDOL?!?” Bokuto shouted into Akaashi’s ears while shaking him for answers.

“Bokuto-san, did you seriously forget? We even attended her demo concert…”
“Oh yeah, that did happen.” Bokuto chuckled.

In the midst of another loud yet exciting scene going on in the living room, Ushijima was preparing dinner.

Tsukiko grumbled with her arms across her chest. “Really though, have you guys even thought about finding a part-time job?” she asked them.

“Can’t rely on your parents forever, and Madame did leave us to learn responsibility from our house chores. I’m sure she wants us to practice independency too.”

“Not like you do much around here anyway,” Kuroo muttered while rolling his eyes. If he weren’t far away from the girl the comment was directed towards, she would have clawed his face.

“She’s right.” Ushijima said from the kitchen. He went on to explain how he was, in fact, looking for a job ever since his previous year. “Nobody called me back after my interviews though.” he added. Everyone had an idea as to why Ushijima never landed a job. It had to be his emotionless face. Especially considering it was places that involved customer service he applied to, that was the easiest guess they could make.

Tsukiko tilted her head from side to side. “Alright. I’ll ask Madame for her connections when I send these in to deposit.” she informed the four as she gathered their rent money to put into one large envelope.

Akaashi raised his hand. “We can go job hunting ourselves, so it’s not necessary to contact Madame. Plus, she did say contact with her would be difficult.” he said, but Tsukiko assured him that she would find everyone a part-time job as soon as she could.

“Just doing my duty as housemother,” she grinned.

“Pffft. Duty. Like yours, Kuroo.” snickered the immature owl.

Another day, Tsukiko sat on her bed with a notepad and pen in hand. Across from her was Akaashi,
the only tenant other than Ushijima who was allowed in her room. Being in the same writing class they usually studied and worked together even though it wasn’t necessary with how smart they both were. It was really the company they gave each other that made the work less dreadful and boring.

When Akaashi looked up from his laptop he noticed Tsukiko being lost in thought over the wrong thing. He peered over and read what she had written on her notepad. It was a list of summer activities.

“Kiko-chan, please.” Akaashi called her out.

“We have this final essay due very soon. Is my conclusion good or not?” he asked with a bit of attitude in his tone. From other guys Tsukiko would not have that used on her, but with Akaashi she was much more forgiving. She could never be mad at such a sweet guy who was the closest person she had for a ‘female’ friend at the moment. There was something about Akaashi being masculine but also somewhat feminine at the same time. He had a calm, soothing voice and caring demeanor. The guy was very helpful when it came to hygiene care as evident by the pack of face masks and cleansers he recommended for Tsukiko. Akaashi also knew how to tie the perfect ponytails and braids. She speculated that it probably had to do with him growing up with sisters.

“Sorry, sorry~ I’m just so excited for all of this to be over!” Tsukiko chuckled and stretched forward to sprawl over her bed with arms resting on Akaashi’s lap. Since having more time to bond with Tsukiko the physical contact was steadily becoming something he had gotten used to, just like Bokuto’s mood swings.

“Hey, hey, hey! Aa-kun~!” the weird nickname however was still an iffy thing to him.

“I think your hand is bigger than Kou-tan’s!” she said while taking his free hand to compare it with her own. Akaashi allowed her to do this as his other hand was setting down his laptop. “You have quite the observant eyes behind those thick-framed glasses.” he said, the cheeky remark making Tsukiko puff her cheeks.

“Well duh, how else would I know when someone’s about to pull a muscle before they feel it.” the girl scoffed.

Akaashi laughed lightly and Tsukiko did too. They continued to hold off on their final essay to indulge in casual conversation. First they talked about how much Ushijima’s cooking improved, even looking back at the photos Tsukiko had taken of the past dishes. Next, they discussed what summer activities Tsukiko was planning out.
“Beach trip is a must!” she said.

Soon enough Akaashi decided to ask Tsukiko about her current relationship. He usually brought it up when talking to her privately just to see her speak happily. As her ‘closest person to a female friend’ he had to keep updated too.

“How are things with you and your boyfriend?” Akaashi asked with a grin.

Tsukiko instantly started blushing, even cupping her hands onto her warm cheeks. The subject of romance and her boyfriend usually made her act this way. It’s as if she were a shoujo-manga protagonist.

“We’re still foolishly in love as always~” she admitted bashfully. “Me and—”

As though on cue, a certain bed-head poked into the room. “Tsukki, right?” he smirked. A gudetama plush toy hit Kuroo in the face harder than he expected. Fortunately it wasn’t a volleyball, but he still remembered getting something that was called the ‘Hinata experience’ once when Tsukiko had spiked the ball into his face before.

“Rude!” Tsukiko barked while pushing up her glasses, making her angry face more cute than threatening.

“My boyfriend is the one and only—”

“Oikawa Toooooruuuuuuuu~!”

A fist nearly got flung into a wild pretty boy’s face if it weren’t for Akaashi doing his best to hold Tsukiko back.

Everyone’s attention was turned to the two guests that were standing at Tsukiko’s door. One was a stylish brunette with a silly grin on his face and the other had scrunched eyebrows due to his irked expression.
“I’m home my hunny~! Or should I say, we’re home!” chimed Tsukiko’s third fanboy, Oikawa Tooru.

“We don’t live here Shitty-kawa.” said Tsukiko’s low-key second ‘daddy,’ Iwaizumi Hajime.

Akaashi having sisters is a headcanon of mine but his hand being bigger than Bokuto’s is canon trivia, lol

thanks for reading!

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Nervous Sweating

Chapter Summary

Curiosity took over and he ended up asking, “Why does Kiko-chan call you… you know. And why do you accept it?”

Chapter Notes

screaming because I just finished drafting a super great chapter lol hope you enjoy this one though!

In the foyer two young men sat on the floor with their heads low while a woman berated them for entering her room without even knocking. Seated on the sofa were Akaashi and Iwaizumi who simply watched the unfortunate ones get what they had coming for them. Bokuto was also watching but safely from the kitchen high chairs and Ushijima was doing his job as the home chef.

“Do I need to start putting a security alarm at my door now?!” Tsukiko huffed.

“No ma’am…” Kuroo and Oikawa answered together. The girl gave them a couple more of her stern thoughts until she felt that enough was finally enough. They were then allowed to stand— or at least try to since their legs had gone numb at some point.

“Geez… who even invited Oicchi to dinner.” Tsukiko blurted out while helping Ushijima set up the table. Having heard what she said, he immediately responded to her question.

“I did. Though I only offered Oikawa an invite on the condition he notify me at least a week in advance. Sorry. Had I known he’d be here I would have informed you first.” he told her honestly.

The girls features took a complete turn.

“Well, if it was Waka-papa’s idea then it’s A-okay with me~” Tsukiko assured him with her childish tone.
“Eeeehh???? Kiko-chan has a daddy kink? How come I’m not your—” Oikawa retreated to the floor not because his legs were still numb but because Tsukiko’s threatening forward lunge was frightening enough to make him fall back down. She would have actually got him if Ushijima didn’t physically restrain her.

Oikawa was relieved.

“Th-Thanks Ushiwaka-chan… you saved me there.” he sighed.

Everyone kept silent while looking with awe at the sight of Ushijima holding Tsukiko up to where her feet weren’t touching the floor. Without realizing it, he raised her even higher and the others started clapping. They caught on the Lion King reference he was apparently making. This just ticked off Tsukiko some more however.

Dinner was half silence and half conversation between whoever felt uncomfortable by the lack of interaction. Only Bokuto was able to confidently and naturally start talking about something that almost everyone could join in and say a word or two. Volleyball, duh. Things got more interesting when he brought up the one topic that everyone could easily chime into.

“Hey, Kiko-chan!” Bokuto called her out.

“Are ya still dating Tsukki’s friend? Or was it Tsukki?”

Kuroo raised his fork for a moment and spoke with his mouth a bit full.

“I already made that joke bro,” he muffled.

Ushijima shot them both a glare, but such a thing would appear to be part of his normal deadpan expression.

“The one who always followed the tall french fry, right? I never spoke to him but I remember his float serve.” Oikawa mentioned with Iwaizumi nodding in agreement.

Tsukiko found it rather insulting how none of them could even say her boyfriend’s name; as if they
forgot or were intentionally belittling him because of the lack of court presence he had due to not being a starting player at first.

Akaashi noticed the boiling frustration growing on her face and jumped into the conversation before she could blow her fuse.

“She’s been with the same guy and you all know it. Especially you two, Bokuto-san and pain-in-the-ass-Kuroo-san. Stop making fun of them out of jealousy.” he finished with a gentle smile while facing Tsukiko. Seeing the smile of an angel loosened the tension between her brows.

“That’s right! I’ve been with him for like six years now, and that’ll never end!” Tsukiko boasted, returning to a cheery attitude.

“I’m stuck with my first and only boyfriend, Yamaguchi Tadashi~!”

After some grumbling from three envious boys, dinner was finished and (almost) everyone pitched in clean up. Akaashi, Iwaizumi, Ushijima, and Tsukiko did most of the cleaning but with four people doing the dishes it made the process go by much faster. The group then gathered in the living room where they continued to chat and watch TV together. Getting caught up in their fun, it eventually got too late for Oikawa and Iwaizumi to return to their apartment. Tsukiko offered to let them stay the night using any of the vacant rooms. Oikawa, of course, made clear his desire to sleep in Tsukiko’s room. This earned a headlock punishment by his muscle-packed friend.

“Go Haji-kun, go! Hold him down until he can’t breathe!” Tsukiko cheered excitedly, making Akaashi worry a bit for Oikawa.

Iwaizumi smirked.

“Since the lady ordered it, TAKE THIS!” he said as he tightened his grip around his choking friend.

Summer vacation was only hours away but oddly enough it had started raining. The boys were supposed to spend their remaining time on campus in the gym for volleyball practice. Unfortunately, the gymnasium roof began leaking when the rain grew heavier and so their practice had to be cut early.
“Should we head home then?” Kuroo asked his friends with a yawn. He wasn’t tired but something about the cold rain made him want to take a nap. The same thing was happening to Bokuto but it had more to do with him being bored and disappointed about losing practice time.

“You three can go ahead.” Ushijima said from behind. In his hands were two umbrellas. Kuroo made a snarky comment on Ushijima’s ability of being prepared but then asked why he had a second umbrella with him.

“It’s for Tsukiko. Her bag was too small to hold one so I’ve been carrying this for her.” Ushijima answered.

Akaashi narrowed his gaze. It was during situations like this that made him wonder if Ushijima took the ‘papa’ name seriously. Curiosity got the best of him and he ended up asking, “Why does Kiko-chan call you… you know. And why do you accept it?”

The dance club was on the other side of campus from them. While making their way there, Ushijima began telling the story behind the so-called ‘daddy kink’ everyone called his relationship with Tsukiko.

The two met during high school when Tsukiko was a first-year and Ushijima was a second-year. At the time, Tsukiko was only visiting a friend at a hospital in Sendai even though she was supposed to be training in Tokyo. Their encounter was basically a scenario straight out of a shoujo manga. Both of them had reached for the same magazine in a convenience store and then awkwardly started a conversation centered around it.

“I still have the issue too. It’s a sports magazine with an article about the top sports players from high schools all over Japan.” Ushijima said. He slowed the group’s pace as he looked at the room signs ahead of them before he continued to tell the story.

“According to Tsukiko back then, she was interested in a baseball player who was nationally known as a genius catcher. However his name has long slipped my mind.”

“His name is Miyuki Kazuya and I actually have a towel with his name on it~”

The boys looked forward and saw that their female housemate was standing in front of them. She appeared to be returning to her club after buying herself a drink, as evident by the item being in her
hand. Tsukiko gleefully approached Ushijima who then handed her the umbrella.

“Were you telling them how we met?” she asked with a grin. She felt it was completely out of the ordinary for someone like Ushijima, who barely speaks, to share something as personal as how he met a girl.

“Yeah.” he simply responded.

“Hey, hey, HEY! Ya still haven’t told us what started the dad—I mean, why Kiko-chan calls you ‘papa’ this and that!” Bokuto intervened. Tsukiko glared at the owl for a moment before turning around to lead the boys to the dance club’s room.

“I’m almost done with practice. You guys can come in and watch while you wait for me.” she told them. In the moment she thought it was better to have them wait for her inside rather than out in the rain where they’ll die of boredom. Bokuto especially.

Kuroo pursed his lips to the side. “As if we’re gonna stay in some smelly dance room when we could be at home—”

Once inside, the first thing the boys noticed was a large set of breasts being held up by a popping red sports bra. Kuroo whistled while pushing the stunned Bokuto along to a set of chairs lined against the mirrorless wall.

“Those look bigger than Kiko-chan’s, don’t you think?” Kuroo commented out loud to purposely get on Tsukiko’s nerves, which she either did not hear or intentionally ignored. Akaashi however made a point to Kuroo to not say anything dumb while there was a club practice going on, otherwise he’d be distracting the members and Tsukiko.

“Alright, all dancers step up.” said the person in charge. Standing in the middle of the room were about twenty people; one of them being Tsukiko and another being the red sports bra that caught the two boys’ attention when they entered the room. Tsukiko did hear Kuroo’s comment and she noticed Bokuto had his wide eyes locked on the girl’s chest too.

“Sorry Momo-senpai...” she whispered to the red sports bra. “I shouldn’t have invited them now that I think about it.”
The girl, Yaoyorozu Momo, was tall in height and did in fact have a bigger chest than Tsukiko. She adjusted her spiky ponytail while whispering back to Tsukiko, “There’s no reason to apologize. You wanted them to watch your dancing, did you not?”

“Wh-what?! As if! I-I just didn’t want them going home without me.” Tsukiko stammered, putting on a tsundere act.

“Oh? So these are the men you live with?” Momo inquired but the girls had to cease their chatter when the club leader started talking again.

“I know this may be asking a lot but I would appreciate it if all of you continued to come in for additional practice.” There was some slight groaning and whining but it stopped when the club leader stomped a foot on the hard floor.

“Reason I plead is because there’s some high expectations riding the upcoming show. If we do extremely well, more than other clubs from the other campuses too, it’ll give us more recognition from the advisors and possibly more sponsorship funds. I’m sure all of you would love to have a bluetooth stereo in here instead of the CD player we have currently…”

All eyes momentarily went towards the outdated equipment on the other side of the room then back to the club leader.

“Now, to close today’s meeting… we’re gonna do improvised dancing!”

The room was then mixed with cheering and more groaning, Tsukiko being one of the groaners. Improvised dancing was her biggest weakness but she knew she had to do it since her trainee program required her to join the dance club for that purpose. Sometimes she wished her manager didn’t have as many convenient connections as Madame did.

Music started playing, making the volleyball boys pay attention to see what the dancers do. They were excited to see how Tsukiko would dance, Kuroo most of all. He still hasn’t forgotten the demo concert she had after Nekoma went to nationals. Back then, she moved like a complete amateur and kept waving her arms around. A few times she swung her hips as if to purposely flash her skirt around to compensate.

The dancers formed a half-circle, providing room in the middle of the floor for those who wanted to get down to the song that played. The first song was techno and only two guys moved inside,
popping and locking with their body along to the beat. It was honestly an interesting sight that amazed even Ushijima. A lively song switched over and immediately a guy and girl coupled to do a mambo dance which had the others cheering.

The music continued to change between different songs for members to improvise dances that appeared to match the genres they moved to. Eventually a jazzy and almost seductive song started playing. The only person who had yet to move their body was Tsukiko. Pressured by the liveliness coming from her fellow club members, and then by Bokuto and Kuroo’s howling, she took a step into the circle. As she moved forward she did a quick spin and gradually, but also gracefully while following the music, made her way down to her knees. One hand ran back through her hair while the other smoothly trailed down from her stomach to her inner thigh. The pose was finished with her tongue sticking out to lick her lips.

Kuroo was stupefied. Bokuto literally dropped his jaw. Akaashi was also wide eyed and nearly slipped off his chair. Ushijima, however, appeared to be as shocked as he was when he faced Karasuno during the Spring High Preliminary. Seeing their reactions made Tsukiko freeze. She couldn’t bring herself to stand back up and do an actual dance.

“Wooooww~ my hunny is sexy! WOOT!”

Emitting cheers from the entrance was Oikawa, his appearance making some of the other girls in the room scream gleefully.

“Coming all the way to this campus was definitely worth it, since it meant seeing all you beautiful ladies~” he winked to them charmingly. Most of the crowd had then shifted over to the door to fawn over the brunette.

Tsukiko remained on the dance floor, stuck in her seductive pose as if she was turned to stone. She couldn’t move a muscle with how heavy embarrassment weighed her down.

“Hurry and get your things. The rain got lighter.” said Ushijima, returning to his deadpan expression. The command helped the girl’s body loosen. Instead of picking herself up she was slouched over in shame.

“Y-Yes sir…” Tsukiko replied sheepishly while attempting to find it in her to get back on her feet.

Bokuto and Kuroo on the other hand were posing with their hands on their chest and legs to mock
the poor girl. Akaashi still didn’t say anything except wonder how they were going to leave the room when the only exit was blocked by Oikawa and the horde of admirers.

But backtracking to the reason behind Tsukiko and Ushijima’s strange father-daughter relationship; it all started when they were looking through the sports magazine together. Tsukiko had called one of the featured players in it ‘daddy material’. What she didn’t realize at the time was that the player in the article happened to be the guy standing right next to her. That’s right, she accidentally called Ushijima ‘daddy’ without noticing the stranger she was talking to was ‘daddy’ Wakatoshi Ushijima himself.

The explanation she tried to save herself with was, “by that I mean you look like you’d make a great dad!” and then she added to her cover up, “you even look like my dad! SO I’LL CALL YOU DAD IF THAT’S OKAY WITH YOU???”

Despite Ushijima’s initial confusion he ended up telling her, “do as you wish.”

And with that, after an awkward exchange of contact information, their ridiculous friendship began.

The end?
lmao what even :") also really can't wait to post the chapter where Yamaguchi actually shows up because omg omg omggggg

p.s. the Momo girl mentioned in this chapter is actually Momo Yaoyorozu from BnHA, but I thought I'd leave out her full name since she will be coming back in a later chapter where more of the BnHA cast shows up

Thanks for reading!

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Oh!

Chapter Summary

“I want ice cream! I want short-shorts! I WANT THE BEACH!!” whined the housemother, still dressed in her tiger kigurumi pajama.

Chapter Notes

decided to upload two more chapters because I drafted two new chapters! also, I told myself I wouldn't mention K-pop AT ALL (because it's really common to bring up in long fanfics from what I've read) buuuuuut since I'm stuck in the 2010 era it's okay? :')

The summer break officially began. Unfortunately for the Yorozu-kan gang it wasn’t the perfect start they were hoping for. What everyone expected was sunlight so bright they would have to wear sunglasses indoors. What they got instead was weather gloomier than Bokuto’s depressive mood swing.

“I want ice cream! I want short-shorts! I WANT THE BEACH!!” whined the housemother, still dressed in her tiger kigurumi pajamas. Tsukiko rolled on the living room floor as though she was an actual child throwing a tantrum over the unexpected weather conditions. The soul brothers ignored her while they were helping Akaashi take laundry back from the outside and then tossing all of it into the dryer machine. Of course the one day he wanted to have laundry smell like the warm summer air happened to be the day the sun was away.

“Wash your hands before you eat,” said Ushijima as he put lunch on the dining table and high counter. Seeing that Tsukiko was being stubborn about getting up he approached her with the intention of scolding her. When he got close she suddenly raised her arms towards him.

“Carry me.” Tsukiko said.

Without complaint, Ushijima picked her up like a child then carried her from the living room to the kitchen sink to wash her paws first. Akaashi, Bokuto, and Kuroo walked in just in time to witness this. They weren’t surprised, save for Bokuto who would find just about everything to be astonishing no matter how many times he’s seen it.

“Please don’t do this before I’ve eaten…” Kuroo groaned as he took a seat at the high counter,
which he assumed was where Tsukiko was going to sit too. There were only two seats at the high
counter and six chairs at the dining table. Tsukiko usually sat at the counter just so she could swing
her feet while eating, but to Kuroo’s dismay the little tiger chose to sit at the dining table.

Being carried to get her hands washed for her was laziness. But then sitting on Ushijima’s lap
because she didn’t want to bother taking her own seat was too extra.

“Feed me.” Tsukiko told Ushijima and he obliged.

Akaashi sat across from them and let out a sigh like a tired mother would. “Must you spoil her so
much?” he said to Ushijima.

Bokuto took the other high seat with his lonely friend and started chowing down on lunch. Every
time he ate he would make it a point to declare Ushijima’s improvement when compared to the
first day he cooked. Kuroo continued to pout while poking at his plate before eating as well.

“I am spoiling her?” Ushijima said in question. While one hand was putting food in Tsukiko’s
mouth the other was holding her up to keep her from falling off his lap. They really did look like
father and daughter at times that even Akaashi would think their relationship was just hardcore
roleplay.

In the middle of eating, Kuroo pointed out, “Yeah you spoil her rotten! She’s not your actual kid—
heck, not even your girlfriend either so stop this!” he said.

Tsukiko gasped, nearly choking on her food when it was going down the wrong way. After
drinking water to clear her throat she shot up to her feet and looked at Kuroo.

“Are you saying… COUPLES ARE SUPPOSED TO DO THIS KIND OF STUFF?!!”

The room went silent, minus Bokuto’s horse-like chewing.

“Well. Haven’t you done these things with Yamaguchi-kun?” Akaashi asked as he got up to grab
Bokuto a napkin from the kitchen.
Tsukiko’s face suddenly went red. She shrivelled to the floor, hands cupping her warm cheeks and mumbling something. Ushijima knelt beside her to make sure she wasn’t suddenly sick.

“Hm? What you say kitten?” Kuroo smirked, finding her bashfulness irresistible to tease.

“Don’t tell me… you’ve never had your boyfriend feed you? Or hold you on his lap? Or carry you like a baby?” he would force a dramatic gasp in his inquiries.

Tsukiko again shot up, this time almost hitting Ushijima. The hood of her kigurumi slid off her head revealing her hair tied back in a braid, thanks to an effort by Akaashi.

“NO I HAVE NOT. IS THAT A PROBLEM!?” Tsukiko shouted suddenly.

Kuroo started snickering. Instead of physically retaliating to this, Tsukiko remained standing with her head dropped in shame. Ushijima put a hand on her shoulder.

“Sit down and eat your breakfast.” he said, holding a utensil to her.

“Y-You don’t need to tell me that!” Tsukiko replied while plopping in the seat next to Ushijima and eating her food in a sloppy manner like Bokuto. Akaashi gestured for her to slow down while also handing her a napkin.

“Please Kiko-chan, if you do that you’ll—” As he expected, the girl started choking and desperately reached out for water.

Breakfast came to an end with hyena laughter filling the room and a previously hungry owl left satisfied. Akaashi and Tsukiko started doing the dishes while Ushijima went to his room to study. Kuroo and Bokuto then went to watch television, only to end up complaining about the weather forecast for the week. It was summer and yet most of Japan was being covered by dark clouds.

“But seriously though, Kiko-chan.” Akaashi whispered to Tsukiko while scrubbing bowls with her.

“You probably shouldn’t be so clingy and physical with other guys. I understand you and Yamaguchi-kun have a long-distance relationship but that doesn’t mean you can do things like this
Tsukiko listened to his concerns. She didn’t realize her actions were out of line from her relationship status. Even knowing how much of an anxious mess Yamaguchi could be she never stopped to think how different her interactions with other guys were compared to who she was around the guy that mattered most to her. The problem was there wasn’t much to compare considering they rarely met up in person. Travel fare was expensive and the most they actually got to see each other was during volleyball practices between Karasuno and Nekoma. They only had gone on a date twice; once in middle school when they first started dating and another after both played in nationals.

“What would he think…” Tsukiko muttered. Her thoughts were clouded by questions because of Akaashi’s words. It was starting to bother her enough that she never realized when she got to the sofa and that Kuroo had put his head on her lap. Once she noticed though she squeaked and pushed him off.

“The hell?! Thanks for the warning!” Kuroo said from the floor. Bokuto just laughed, having known that was bound to happen.

Tsukiko’s face flushed again, though she was more distressed from being caught off guard.

“You’re… You’re not my boyfriend so don’t do that!”

Noticing what she just said, Tsukiko gasped and covered her mouth.

Kuroo got up slowly with a rare, empty expression on his face. “Yeah. I’m not.” he said with no feeling in his tone either.

“Oh… I…” Tsukiko pulled the hood of her kigurumi completely over her face and beelined for the elevator before any of the guys could reach out to her. Bokuto attempted to chase her but the door had closed too fast on him.

“Hey, hey, heeeyy!!” Bokuto pointed at the sign that indicated what floor the elevator had moved onto. “WHY DID SHE GO TO THE BASEMENT??!!” Him and Akaashi tried to get the elevator
to return to the main floor so they could follow Tsukiko down but the thing wouldn’t work anymore. They kept pushing the button but to no avail.

“Strange…” Akaashi figured the elevator could be switched off from the basement. It seemed logical for a power switch to be located there.

“This is the only way to the basement too. What do we do?” he wondered.

Panic began to rise. Both guys were worried that if anything happened to Tsukiko in uncharted territory then they wouldn’t be able to reach her. Bokuto slammed a fist into his palm when an idea came to mind.

“I think I saw some door on the ground outside while cutting the grass!” he informed Akaashi. They went outside and immediately found the door Bokuto mentioned. Disappointment came to their faces as they discovered the channel was filled with cement. Akaashi started panicking even more.

“We should tell Ushijima-san. Maybe he could… pry the elevator open? And then we climb down from there??” he suggested hastily.

Bokuto was baffled. “Hey! I know you’re more logical than that Akaashi!”

“Just leave her be.” said Kuroo as he leaned against the doorframe while fiddling with his phone.

“She has a habit of hiding when upset. Give her time and she’ll come back to us all sun-shiny.”

Akaashi gritted his teeth. He couldn’t believe how nonchalant Kuroo was reacting, even if what he said were true. “What if she gets hurt down there? We won’t know at all!” he said with a raised voice, something that he rarely did even when dealing with Bokuto’s unstable behavior back in high school.

“If something does happen she has her phone.” Kuroo glanced up at Akaashi for a moment to glare back at him. When he felt his phone vibrate he put on a cocky grin. “See, that’s probably her right now.” he said before answering the call.
Instead of Tsukiko’s sweet voice like he had expected, it was a deep male voice saying, “Just check the surveillance feed.”

Kuroo immediately hung up.

“Well? What’d she say?” Bokuto asked with his head tilted.

“N-Nothing. Wasn’t her.” Kuroo replied.

When the three returned inside to the living room they were greeted by Ushijima. It was still hard to tell the difference between an angry expression or his resting blank face.

“Did you hear me on the phone?” he asked while facing Kuroo who simply looked away and whistled.

Ushijima ignored the fact that he got ignored then turned to Akaashi. “I heard everything from my room.” he told the other.

“What did you tell Kuroo-san on the phone?” Akaashi asked.

“I told him to check the surveillance feed.”

“WE HAVE SECURITY CAMERAS HERE NOW TOO?!” Bokuto exclaimed.

Ushijima answered quickly. “Yes. But only in the basement.”

“Wait, how do you know this? We thought the basement had something to do with Madame that we’re best left not knowing...” Akaashi started getting angsty again just when he was calming down. He couldn’t help but fiddle with his fingers.

Ushijima didn’t answer with words though but instead went to show everyone what he was talking about. He took the remote and turned the TV off.
“Yo! We were watching!” Kuroo shouted but Ushijima continued to ignore him.

With the television off, Ushijima used the remote to enter ‘000’ and before Kuroo could comment that nothing would happen— something did. Everyone except Ushijima gasped. Multiple videos were displayed on the television, each with a number stamp. Ushijima imputed another code which then filled the screen with the video that had Tsukiko in it. She was sitting in the corner of what appeared to be a dance studio similar to the one from their school.

Kuroo clenched a fist then grabbed for Ushijima’s shirt. “How the hell do you know about this creepy thing?!”

“Yes. Please enlighten us.” Akaashi said with an almost demanding tone.

“Do not assume I’ve been keeping this from all of you. I only found out about this when Madame was last here. And if you hadn’t hung up on me I would have given you instructions.” Ushijima stated as Kuroo released him to let him continue the explanation.

“The basement is actually a private practice room for Tsukiko’s training. It has a dance floor, dressing room, and recording booth. Madame planted cameras inside to supervise Tsukiko’s practices. The reason I was informed about the basement was in case of situations such as our current one. Since knowing Tsukiko, she would keep the basement a secret from us out of shyness.”

Akaashi rubbed his temples. If he had known he was going to live in a weird house he would have reconsidered staying with his family instead.

Attention turned to Bokuto who was sitting way too close to the TV.

“WHOA!” Bokuto gasped. A grin formed on his face, reaching from ear to ear. The others went wide-eyed when they saw what was happening on the screen: Tsukiko was unbuttoning her kigurumi.

“Hey! Don’t look at her!” Kuroo said to Bokuto. He placed his hand on his friend’s face to pull him away while Akaashi tried to stand in front of the TV to protect Tsukiko’s womanhood from being seen.
“It’s fine.” Ushijima pointed out. All eyes went back to the screen and a sigh of relief escaped them; Bokuto’s being out of disappointment, however. Tsukiko had been wearing a t-shirt and leggings underneath her kigurumi, which made sense because of how baggy it was on her. Sitting crisscrossed in the thing would expose her after all.

The boys observed for a bit. They watched Tsukiko do warm up stretches on the floor. Only Kuroo had seen her stretch like that once back in high school, though, she would do it with his friend Kenma just to have an excuse to touch him.

“Woo~” Bokuto whistled when seeing Tsukiko stand and lift her leg up straight.

“Them legs.” he commented to which Kuroo fist bumped him in agreement.

“Okay, this is way too creepy and inappropriate. We shouldn’t be spying on her like this.” Akaashi said but it looked like nobody was listening to him. Even Ushijima didn’t take his eyes off the screen, which seemed more concerning than Bokuto and Kuroo’s goggling.

Akaashi grumbled. “That’s it. How do I turn this off—”

The one with the remote was still Ushijima and Akaashi didn’t feel brave enough to take it away.

Meanwhile in the basement...

Tsukiko had kicked off her kigurumi and tossed it aside. She stood in front of the wall of mirrors and watched herself stretch. When she lifted her leg up she was surprised by how much more flexible she had gotten the past couple of months.

“I haven’t been able to keep a leg lift this straight since middle school.” she said out loud to herself, and technically to the boys too since the live feed included audio.

The reason Tsukiko started stretching was because she quickly got tired of moping in the corner. She felt it was best to clear her mind by moving around, so she decided to start dancing. Walking over to the sound system she connected her phone to it then scrolled through her music playlist until finding a song she felt like dancing to.
The boys watched intensely as Tsukiko stepped up to the center of the dance floor. When the music started playing they were taken aback by her fluid movements; most notably seen with her hips. Since they didn’t actually get to see her dance the other day they couldn’t compare how she moved then to now. Even though some of them attended Tsukiko’s “high school idol demonstration” concert she hardly did any dancing at the time either.

“THE PART WHERE SHE DOES THAT CUTE KNEE LIFT IS CUTE!” Bokuto cheered while attempting to mimic the lovely girl on the screen, only to look absolutely but hilariously ridiculous doing so.

“I don’t see why she had to hide this from us. She is an excellent dancer despite her claims.” Ushijima commented.

Kuroo shrugged with a smug grin on his face. “I’m happy to have found a channel I’ll never stop watching.” he said, earning a mean glare from Akaashi.

“This is still wrong. But… I worry how she’ll react if we tell her about this.”

“THEN WE DON’T. PLEASE. AKAAAAAAAA—”

“Stop shouting, Bokuto-san.”

Dinner was awkward for once. Akaashi wanted to bring up the live surveillance, but couldn’t. Kuroo’s face was stuck with a weird grin. Bokuto wouldn’t stop bouncing in his seat. Ushijima was also not giving in to Tsukiko’s childish demands. The girl ate her food quietly, wondering what happened to the boys while she hid.
next chapter is beach chapter!!!!!!! THANKS FOR READING!!

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In the next couple days the desired weather for ice cream, short-shorts, and a beach trip had finally arrived. Several people had the same idea though; emphasis on several. Social media reported the nearby beaches being heavily occupied by the locals and tourists. Luckily for the Yorozu-kan group, they managed to find an alternative beach getaway spot.

“Maaaan is there ANY space here at all?” Kuroo said sarcastically.

“Right! There’s soooo many people here too.” Bokuto added.

Akaashi sighed. “Will you two stop that. What if you jinx us.” he said.

“Not a problem. This is a private area.” Ushijima informed.

“That’s right~” Tsukiko hopped out of the rental car and helped the boys take things out of the back trunk. She then opened her arms out as a light breeze brushed against her bare skin.

“Welcome boys, to Madame’s private beach!”

When the weather forecast finally announced clear skies the Yorozu-kan tenants immediately began planning their trip to the beach. They saved up to buy food and entertainment, such as
fireworks and water guns. Swimsuit shopping was a must too but Tsukiko did it without them so a certain dirty cat and sly owl wouldn’t try to suggest to her provocative selections. Most importantly they invited more friends to play with.

Waving for attention was a group that had walked all the way from the nearest bus stop.

Tsukiko dropped her things at Kuroo’s feet as she squealed with excitement and dashed towards the arriving friends. “Ken-Ken~! Yakkyun~!” she called them as soon as her arms were around their necks. The one in her left arm had distinctive blond hair with black roots while the other in her right arm had short light brown hair. Both were just around her height, though taller than her by at least three inches.

“Tight.” complained Kenma as he patted Tsukiko’s back for a ‘let me go’ gesture.

Yaku laughed while hugging the girl in return. “You’re still growing your hair out Kiko-chan? I really think you’d look super cute with it short, or at least shoulder length.” he commented.

Tsukiko puffed her cheeks. “Well excuuuse me for not being your type.” she ended with a chuckle.

Behind the Kenma and Yaku were three others, two of which Tsukiko honestly didn’t want to invite.

“Heyo Kiko-senpai!!” Long arms suddenly wrapped around Tsukiko like snakes. In the blink of an eye she was swallowed into a hug from Nekoma’s personal skyscraper. The height difference between her and Lev was extremely amusing that just about everyone started laughing at the sight.

“Stoooop you’ll break my hunny!” whined Oikawa as he waited for his turn to hug Tsukiko, which wasn’t going to happen anytime soon or ever for the matter of fact.

“Let’s set up already, I’m tired of carrying all this stuff and it’s hot.” said Iwaizumi while already heading to the shore ahead of the others.

The beach was clean and in a completely isolated area. It was also small but still the perfect size
for a group of ten or more.

“I bet we could fill this whole beach with all of our volleyball friends.” Tsukiko said, though meaning it more as a suggestion.

“Pretty sure if we did that we’d be playing volleyball nonstop like this were a training camp.” Kenma noted.

The two who disliked the sun the most remained under the large beach umbrella for shelter while everyone was out and about having actual beach fun. Tsukiko did say she wanted to go to the beach but she had precious skin to take care of. Getting a tan wasn’t on her idol agenda either. She tried to lean against Kenma but he was the most difficult to make skin contact with. As strange as it sounded, Tsukiko wanted to touch him because she found him adorable. He still had a small body even as a young adult and seeing his hair grown long enough to reach his shoulders gave her temptations to play with it. Kuroo had his thing for girls with long hair, while Yaku preferred short hair. Then there was Tsukiko who enjoyed messing around with a guy’s hair if it’s long enough to tie into pigtails.

“You said you’d stop.” Kenma muttered while fixated on the portable game in his hands.

Tsukiko jerked. She pouted and brought her knees to her chest. The girl wore a light blue romper with a thin beach poncho to hide her bikini that was underneath. Additionally she applied sunscreen beforehand back at home, knowing how much certain boys would be jumping at the chance to touch her.

What Kenma was referring to was the conversation the two had over text some time ago. It was back when Tsukiko was hung up over her clinginess towards guys that weren’t her boyfriend. She then told Kenma she wasn’t going to hug or act coy around others guys; which really were just Akaashi, Ushijima, Iwaizumi, Kenma and Yaku. The other half of their current group were the fortunate ones to not get hugged or affectionately close to Tsukiko.

“Hey, Ken-Ken.”

“Hm?”

“I wish Tada-kun were here.”
“Oh.”

Tsukiko gasped from Kenma’s quick and short response, though, it was still completely expected coming from him. She took his shoulders and started shaking him vigorously. “Meanie!” she called him.

Kenma put his game down for a moment. He faced the ocean where most of their friends were throwing each other into the salty water. “What’s on your mind.” he said with a subtle sigh.

“It’s just… I’m really touchy with others guys.” Tsukiko answered. There was a chance for a snarky remark, along the lines of, ‘did you just notice?’ but Kenma kept it in his thoughts as to not ruin the mood.

“When I’m with guys like Kou-tan, Kuroo, and Oicchi I act irritated by their faces but I admit they are good looking and have their respective charming points. Yes, even Kuroo.” she continued to say.

“When I’m with guys like Aa-kun, Haji-kun, and Waka-papa who don’t annoy me I can’t help but feel relaxed and want to rely on them. Now, with haikyuuties such as yourself and Yakkyun and Sho-tan I just— I just want to squeeze you all into my chest!”

Without her noticing, Kenma had moved some distance from Tsukiko because of what she just said. His fingers itched for his game too but he instead chose to be a good friend and keep listening.

“Then there’s my actual boyfriend, Tada-kun. Don’t get me wrong I haven’t lost interest in him or anything! I’d never! But I guess… I’m having a hard time coping. He’s not here and I just can’t pretend he is because that would make me miss him even more…”

Meanwhile, Iwaizumi and Ushijima were setting up a court to play the one thing everyone here loved. They noticed how Tsukiko and Kenma were alone together and appeared to be having a serious conversation. Iwaizumi waved to Ushijima for his attention. “Something up with princess?” he asked. Ushijima turned around and took a moment to watch the two under their shady shelter. He already had an idea of what they were talking about, considering the events of the other day. Deep down he did wish he could express himself like the others did, so maybe Tsukiko would share her concerns with him too. For now all he could do was show her that he would be beside her when she needed. “She’s well.” he said.
Noticing the net was getting put up everyone that was playing in the water was now back on the warm sand. They all started discussing how they were going to play and most importantly who was going to be on which side of the court.

“Let’s see… one, two, three… I guess if one of us steps out as referee then we’d have equal teams of four.” said Akaashi as he made his way to Bokuto, as if already choosing to team up with him.

“Wait, but there’s ten of us.” Lev pointed out. It was until he directed his finger towards Tsukiko that everyone understood what he was implying.

The sun continued to blaze down on the earth but the ocean breeze kept the area cool and refreshed. Tsukiko felt an eye twitch as she stood in the middle of two groups of young men. She had to choose who to side with before they could play. Behind her sunglasses she looked back and forth between each team member to calculate which side had higher winning probability. After letting out a sigh, she came to her decision.

Team A led by Kuroo (middle blocker):
  - Kenma (setter)
  - Lev (middle blocker)
  - Yaku (libero)
  - Bokuto (wing spiker/ace)

Team B led by Ushijima (wing spiker):
  - Oikawa (setter)
  - Iwaizumi (ace)
  - Akaashi (setter)
  - Tsukiko (wing spiker)

“WHY!?!?” Bokuto fell to his knees from a sense of betrayal. The two people he wanted most, Akaashi and Tsukiko, were on the opposing team.

“This actually doesn’t look so fair now that I see it…” Kuroo said. His team was generally well-balanced, considering everyone’s position. Ushijima’s team consisted of two setters, one of which had enough power and game sense to qualify for other roles, and then two wing spikers that were himself and Tsukiko. Their team were most surprised that wing spiker would be her position in volleyball but the Nekoma members supported that she in fact had the skills for it. Additionally, the reason Tsukiko sided with Ushijima and the others was because of the team consisting of powerhouses.
“Alright then.” Tsukiko stepped on the court at her designated spot. She removed her sunglasses and poncho, tossing both to the side into the sand then used a rubber band on her wrist to tie her hair back. But since it wasn’t working out for her she handed it over to Akaashi to tie it. Once she got her high ponytail, Tsukiko had a fierce look in her eyes.

Kuroo and his team were wowed, almost feeling nostalgic from the sight of their former team manager preparing to beat their asses in a little game of beach volleyball. “I better not see you guys tumble, otherwise I’d need to teach all of you how to move on sand for balance training again.” Tsukiko said with a smirk similar to Kuroo’s when in a scheming mood.

The first match began with Kuroo’s side. Serving was Kenma and, as expected, he didn’t put any effort into his serve at all. All that mattered to him was that it got over the net, which it did, but then it was immediately shot back over in a flash. When the dust cloud cleared to show the ball stuck in the sand everyone looked over to see who had spiked it. As some of them had thought, it was Tsukiko.

“Idiot! You don’t do that!” Kuroo shouted, only to get a bratty tongue stuck at him.

“Bleh!” Tsukiko blehed.

The match continued with a calm rally going back and forth because everyone was testing the waters first. Playing volleyball on sand was obviously much different than flat, solid flooring. They had to keep control of their balance otherwise they’d slip around or wear themselves out faster. This was something Tsukiko had the Nekoma team do the last year she was their manager. She suggested a training session at the beach with coach Nekomata to help the boys practice their balance control. It ended up being so helpful for the team that, from what Tsukiko was told, coach Nekomata made it a regular training regime.

“EAT THIS!” Bokuto shouted as he did a straight spike. Unlike when he first started doing it in high school, he had practiced the technique to be untouchable. Even Ushijima would have trouble during early game. The ball hit the sand just in-between Tsukiko’s legs. She glared at Bokuto, thinking he had purposely aimed it at her. Her suspicion felt confirmed seeing how Bokuto started fake whistling terribly.

As it reached high noon the matched ended with Ushijima’s team being victorious. Upon prior agreement, the winners get to eat watermelon first and the losers had to cut it for them.
“That was a learning experience!” Lev said as he handed a melon to Yaku to cut in halves.

“Well, you better take what you learned back to your team.” Yaku told his giant student.

“Ah, so he’s still in high school?” Iwaizumi took a seat beside Tsukiko under the umbrella. She nodded in response. “Though I won’t be surprised if he gets held back because of his grades.” she added and made herself heard by Lev who threatened to drop her watermelon on the sand.

Oikawa sat on the other side of Tsukiko, purposely pressing closely to her much to Iwaizumi’s discomfort. “You were so great babe~” he showered the girl with compliments, which she didn’t mind at all so she allowed him to be near her as long as he continued to fill her ego.

Once the watermelon was cut the winners took their first bites. They felt immense relief from the refreshing juice. Watermelon had to be the perfect thing to eat right after a volleyball match under the sun on a beach. Tsukiko felt in total bliss, as if she was eating watermelon for the first time. After a couple more slices for herself she passed the other pieces to the losers. “Eat up, kittens.” she called them mockingly.

Everyone rested under the large umbrella to let the snack settle before continuing their activities. However, some people had knocked out in that time. It was the perfect photo op that Oikawa wasted no time in getting out his phone to take the picture. He was more focused on Tsukiko’s sleeping face so he purposely cropped out Kenma and Kuroo that were beside her. “Such lazy cats,” Yaku joked while also getting a picture for himself to share with others from their previous team.

The nappers soon woke up to see their friends playing another round of beach volleyball without them. Kuroo yawned while reaching over to wrap an arm around Tsukiko, but she dodged it rather quickly despite having just woken up. She rolled over to be closer to Kenma and took advantage of his daze to twirl a finger around his hair.

“So soft~” Tsukiko grinned as she brought more fingers to Kenma’s blond locks. Kuroo pursed his lips to pout, feeling envious of his childhood friend getting the most attention from the cute girl. Much to his surprise though, Tsukiko had suddenly reached out to touch his hair too.

“Hmm… you ever think of growing out the back of your hair?” Tsukiko asked. Feeling her fingers brush against his nape was pleasant enough to make him purr; if he were an actual cat of course.
“I’ll do it if it means getting noticed by you.” Kuroo said jokingly but under his tone he was almost serious.

“Nah, don’t.” Tsukiko interjected. “With your natural bedhead long hair on you would turn into a mullet.”

Kuroo gave her a mean glare but not for long because the way she ran away laughing was too cute. Kenma turned to his friend, handing the other a water bottle from the cooler.

“Thanks, I was thirsty.”

Kenma rolled his eyes. “Obviously.”

The next volleyball match ended with Kuroo’s team taking their first victory.

“STRIP. STRIP. STRIP.” chanted Bokuto.

Losers had to get dunked into the water. It was a ridiculous condition that Tsukiko only agreed to because she was confident that Ushijima and the others would help her win again. But somehow at some point the tides literally turned resulting in the current situation.

Akaashi was the first to go, followed by Oikawa who was thrown in by his own teammate; Iwaizumi. Nobody was willing to carry Ushijima though, nor were they even sure they could, so he dove in himself. Last in line was Tsukiko, who had to remove her poncho and romper before entering the water.

“UPHOLD YOUR LOSS.” Kuroo shouted while chanting along with Bokuto and Lev.

Tsukiko gritted her teeth then let out a heavy sigh before she pulled the poncho off over her head. Just the first layer of clothing being gone made the boys start howling. The romper was strapless so all she had to do was slide it down her body, which excited Bokuto and Kuroo very much. They
looked intensely at Tsukiko’s bikini. It was a mystery to them how the top kept her breasts up and they were amazed to see her full thighs. But when Tsukiko sheepishly turned around to hide her front she ended up giving them a view of her backside, to which Bokuto and Kuroo responded with their hands clapped together in prayer.

“Thank you.” they said. “Now time to dunk you.”

Tsukiko’s nostrils flared and her cheeks flushed with red reaching ear to ear. Having her body seen half-naked was one thing, but to get touched by their perverted hands was another. Bokuto and Kuroo aimed for a pincer attack but the girl managed to sprint past them and the others, including Lev. She ran from them as fast as she could then leaped high into the air. Oikawa extended his arms out to catch Tsukiko but was greeted by her feet first before getting shoved back into the water.

The rest of the beach trip was spent swimming, sandcastle building, water gun fights, and playing more volleyball until finally the night sky waved over. It was time for the group’s last activity; fireworks.

“Where’s the black worm!?” cried Bokuto.

“You only get ONE popper!” Yaku told Lev.

Preparations were completed once Iwaizumi and Oikawa returned with a water bucket and trash bin. Akaashi passed around the lighter since everyone had chosen their own things to play with. Ushijima and Tsukiko opted for simple sparklers. They stood together watching the stick get shorter and the small flame shine brightly in various colors.

“Did you have fun?” Ushijima asked her. Tsukiko gave him an immediate nod.

“Would it have been better with him here?” he asked again, though this time there was a pause of silence.

“Doesn’t mean I don’t enjoy your guys’ company.” Tsukiko told him. “But how about you, Waka-papa?”

“I had a lot of fun as well. In fact, I am still having fun.”
Tsukiko started laughing, grabbing the attention of the other boys. She lit up two more sparklers, holding one in each hand, then ran past everyone with a light trail following behind her. One by one they all did the same and soon their little area on the dark beach was colored with streaks of sparkling light.

this chapter's title is based on the ending song from the anime Yuri On Ice! because I was listening to the song while writing the ending scene of this chapter~

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Summer break concluded which meant going back to the books. Everyone had new projects to work on and exams to study for. This made the Yorozu-kan quiet because of the intense focus on schoolwork. It even got to the point where they left their chores around the house undone; such as Kuroo forgetting to restock the toilet paper in the half-bath or Akaashi leaving laundry in the washer for too long. One night they even had to order take-out because Ushijima didn’t have the time to make food, or even enough ingredients to cook with for that matter.

This made things at home chaotic sometimes but one night, Tsukiko and Kuroo were found arguing in the hallway of the third floor. Their voices were loud enough to garner attention from the other three tenants below them.

Bokuto remained by the stairs to watch safely from afar while Akaashi and Ushijima tried to pull the riled cats away from each other.

“Just go buy some cheap headphones from the convenience store down the street!” Tsukiko said.

Kuroo scoffed at her. “I wouldn’t need to if you’d stop blasting your music!”

The stress of school work appeared to be getting to the both of them as neither was backing down. Even Tsukiko was ready to start a physical fight but Ushijima had locked his arms around her to prevent that.

“I was practicing for an important show!” she shouted back.

“Then why not just go practice in the basement!?” Kuroo blurted out, not realizing what he just said until the hall was overcome by silence.

The boys looked at Tsukiko, and as they expected, she had a look mixed with fury and embarrassment.
“H-How do you know that’s what I do down there!?” she stammered.

They glanced at each other knowing they still couldn’t bring up the cameras out of fear for what Tsukiko would next. They knew it wasn’t right though remained hushed about it again.

“I, uh, took a peek… out of curiosity.” Kuroo lied, in a way.

There was a long pause until Tsukiko responded with, “And like they say, ‘curiosity killed the cat’ right?”

Tsukiko nearly got a hold of Kuroo’s shirt collar from Ushijima accidentally loosening his grip on her for a moment. Akaashi started speaking up to get her to calm down but for some reason she continued to be upset with Kuroo. This made him suspect their argument had more to do than just loud music.

It required some force but Akaashi managed to get Tsukiko back into her room. He shut the door behind them for privacy but took one last glance back at Kuroo. Facing Tsukiko, he watched her pace around for a bit before plopping down in an empty space that was between her bed and nightstand. Seeing her this frustrated was starting to bother him too. Akaashi fidgeted with his fingers before cautiously approaching Tsukiko.

“What did he say to you?” he asked bluntly while setting himself in front of her.

Tsukiko lifted her head, revealing the heavy tears falling down her face. It was the first Akaashi ever witnessed her crying this hard. He couldn’t help but reach over to pull her into a comforting embrace. At the same time he was pissed at Kuroo, even without yet knowing what the guy had done to the poor girl.

The two spent some time sitting on the bed with the only sound being Tsukiko’s sobbing. Akaashi continued to rub her back until she was ready to talk. When she was, she explained what happened.

What led to Tsukiko’s argument with Kuroo began with the phone call she was having with her boyfriend. It was practically tradition that they’d have a nice long chat on the weekends when Yamaguchi was free. Tsukiko also had music blaring from her laptop that was on the other side of her room. She only did this to keep her phone calls unheard. However, this one time, the door happened to be open just a crack.
Kuroo was trying to take an online test when he noticed the sound of unfamiliar music escaping into the hallway and then trailing into his room. He knew it was ‘calling the boyfriend’ night the way. Kuroo then left his laptop to boldly enter Tsukiko’s room and interrupt the call to mock and tease the couple. At the same time it would warn Tsukiko that her door wasn’t closed. Kuroo intended to be quick about this too since his test had a timer.

Tsukiko, being in an emotionally unstable state due to a certain monthly routine, was not having it. She chose to literally kick the guy out of her room when a simple “get out” remark would have done the job. Kuroo didn’t take the physical attack as part of their usual joking around so he ended up getting mad too. He retaliated with a snide comment that went, “Yamaguchi must be into the violent types,” as well as mentioning, “I’m curious if he knows you’re the ‘clingy with other guys’ type too.”

After that, their back-to-back shouting went from being about Tsukiko’s relationship to small complaints of each other, such as the music argument that everyone showed up to hear.

“What the hell? How jealous can that guy get?” Akaashi couldn’t believe what happened. He didn’t think Kuroo had romantic feelings for Tsukiko, and despite the playful teasing, it wasn’t so excessive to him that he considered it serious. Plus, the way Tsukiko would sometimes go along with it also made it seem like that was just how their friendship was. What he really didn’t expect though was Kuroo being disrespectful enough to say something as negative as what he did say to Tsukiko.

“It’s the ‘clingy towards other guys’ part that really got me…” she added while pulling herself away from Akaashi’s shoulder.

“I didn’t end the call when Kuroo said all of the other stuff too so I’m sure Tada-kun heard him.”

Akaashi grabbed the entire box of tissues on the nightstand to prepare for the incoming waterworks. But Tsukiko wiped her tears around her face instead of the tissue that was offered. Apparently she read online that tears were a natural face cleanser. She then added some distance away from Akaashi, much to his surprise.

“Well, you can ask Yamaguchi-kun and if he did then just talk things out to clear the misunderstanding.” Akaashi said.

Tsukiko pouted. “He’s such a sensitive guy though. He’s even still worried that I might actually
like Kei more than him!”

A knock came from the door and the two sat frozen in silence, waiting to hear who was there. “May I come in?” asked a deep voice, which could only belong to Ushijima. But as a precaution, Akaashi went to check and confirm that it was in fact Ushijima.

“Yes?” he asked with a bit of relief that it was the only other sensible person in the house. Ushijima held up a small tray with a single mug in the center. “I brought Tsukiko hot chocolate.” he explained.

Once Tsukiko had the warm mug in her hands, Ushijima actually stuck around to have the details behind the argument repeated for him. There was a hint of anger in his expression, evident by the slight scrunching between his eyebrows. Tsukiko assured him and Akaashi that she didn’t want them to start a fight with Kuroo either, despite having prepared to do so herself earlier.

“I know, how about we make brownies! It would go great with hot chocolate.” she suggested.

There it was, the other habit of hers that Akaashi caught on to during these past few months.

Whenever Tsukiko would become overwhelmed with negative emotion she would do two things: run away to hide in a narrow space and then sweep things under the rug after she’s bounced back. In this case she was attempting to move on by doing something positive, such as baking sweets. Ushijima and Akaashi looked at each other before agreeing to do it. There was still studying to be done but their house mother's health was also as important to them.

Come the following morning, Tsukiko and Kuroo were conversing casually just as they normally would. Akaashi could only assume they were acting this way because Kuroo already knew how to handle Tsukiko after an argument. Now he just had to make sure Bokuto kept quiet about last night’s events so the girl wouldn’t be reminded of it.

Before everyone left the table to split off for the day, Tsukiko made an announcement.

“I’m inviting all of you to the dance club’s show that’s coming up.” she said while handing each guy a ticket of their own.

“Don’t miss it, and don’t invite Oicchi— assuming he hasn’t already bought a ticket…”
Skipping forward, time passed to the show night of the bi-annual concert presented by the university’s theatre and dance clubs. The event was called, “Get Down Tokyo Night: Jazz edition” and was being performed at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theater.

The Yorozu-kan boys were sitting together in the reserved chairs that were center front. Surrounding them were excited family members of the other performers in the show. Kuroo was thinking they had to look out of place until a grandmother asked if he was invited as someone’s boyfriend, to which he showed a gentle smile and a lying ‘yes’ rolled off his tongue. Bokuto jumped in to add that he too was the boyfriend.

“You two are confusing the lady.” Akaashi sighed.

“Can you believe them—” When Akaashi turned to face Ushijima he was caught off guard by what he was looking at; Ushijima holding up a video camera much like a father would at his daughter’s recital.

“Ehh?! No fair! They get to be so close to the stage!” whined Oikawa, who was sitting on the second floor with Iwaizumi. Along with the Yorozu-kan group he spotted Kenma and others seated some rows behind. He puffed his cheeks in envy of everyone else sitting closer to the performing stage.

The auditorium lights started to dim, signifying the hall to become silent as the event was about to start. Opening the show were department heads and organizers of the event simply giving thanks to the audience for attending and briefly describing the overall theme they wanted to achieve with the concert. As advertised, the focus was on the jazz genre and therefore things were going to get expressive.

The first act immediately kicked off with band students on the stage with saxophones, trumpets, flute, and bass guitar. Some moved around on stage to make way for dancers and theater actors to enter. The performance combined everyone from each campus club; appearing in the costumes they would be seen later on in their individual acts. It was most likely that this first act served as a preview for what was going to be in the show. Despite how much different activity was going around on the stage, it fits well with the exciting music. Tsukiko wasn’t seen by the Yorozu-kan boys because of her position in the back of the moving crowd, but Oikawa and Iwaizumi were able to notice her from above.
After the big opening act the atmosphere was brought down by a comedic skit. The two characters were a pair of eccentric lovers who committed odd robberies in strange costumes. The audience was especially captivated by the quick costume changes done on the stage.

In the next shows that came it was finally the first performance by their campus’ dance club. In the pitch-black darkness, stagehands were moving props off and onto the stage while a small figure took her seat in the center.

“*One, two, one…*”

When the music began a single spotlight shone on Tsukiko dressed in a dark red female suit. She lifted her face, winked, then hopped off her chair and started dancing around. As it turned out, the dance club’s opening act was a solo performance by their first-year member, Tsukiko. This came as a surprise for some of the boys; Ushijima having already known from reading the pamphlet they were given earlier.

Tsukiko was quickly moving from one side of the stage to the other but eyes were still able to keep up with her. Sometimes she was leaping into the air on beat and in slow parts of the song she gratuitously slid the blazer off her shoulders, only to pull it back on when the music picked up in speed. Bokuto and Kuroo nearly lost it there because of the teasing. Ushijima was just about on the edge of his seat when Tsukiko started dangerously spinning around the stage on the chair. Akaashi got concerned about that part too but he was relieved to see she managed the stunt flawlessly. At the end of her dance they all applauded.

The next dance club performances varied with solos of certain members and group dances. A few of the group ones also included Tsukiko, though, seeing her pair up with other guys irked her fanboys. This was forgiven later when Tsukiko was dancing with red sports bra girl, aka Momo, in another number.

After a two-hour long show, with an intermission in the middle, it was finally the curtain call when everyone was able to give their loudest cheers.

“Encore for me at home babe~!” said Oikawa, which obviously earned him a smack from Iwaizumi. Had they been seated closer to the edge of the railing he would’ve pushed Oikawa off the second level.

“Hey, hey, hey! I know her and her!” Bokuto pointed to the stranger next to him at Tsukiko and Momo.
“That’s our manager! Er— was!” shouted Lev from the back, his height making him the most noticeable person out of the entire sea of standing people.

Next came the closing statement to show appreciation for the organizers and performers. It was after this when the hall began clearing, with the performers and their invited family and friends stepping out to take their group pictures and such. Meanwhile, backstage crew remained to break things down for the night.

Tsukiko stepped onto the stage again while the teardown work went on behind her. She stared towards the empty seats, then at the very first couple of rows that her friends occupied. With a smile on her face she held up a hand, pretending to be holding a microphone, while the other waved at her audience below.

“Thanks for coming everyone - suki~ ” she said in her cheery idol voice. “Have a daaaaiisuki night!”

The boys clapped and whistled.

“We love you too WUG-chan!” Kuroo jokes, garnering laughter from his friends.

“I do remember!” Bokuto shouted out, having realized he did in fact attend the demo concert Tsukiko had a long while back. Akaashi just exhaled a chuckle.

Yaku pretended to wave glow sticks while Lev lifted Kenma; only to quickly put him down when he got irritated by the action.

Oikawa attempted to blow kisses but Iwaizumi was kicking him from behind.

Everyone settled down when one by one they noticed Tsukiko was about to do something just as dangerous as spinning around the stage while on a chair. The taller boys hurried out of the audience seats and quickly gathered at the front of the stage with their arms out, ready to catch the crazy girl who apparently enjoyed leaping off of high places when she’s on a thrill. The fact they knew exactly what she was going to do meant this wasn’t the first time Tsukiko had done this. She landed safely on them and happily at that, then gestured for everyone to gather for a group hug.
The group picture they took of this night now hangs in the Yorozu-kan living room among several others from the beach trip and summer festivals.

title is a combo of the anime Baccano opening song "Gun's & Roses" and the anime Kakegurui opening song "Deal With the Devil" since these two are currently my most favorite jazzy anime openings so I couldn't help but be inspired to use them in this chapter!!

thanks for reading!!!

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You WANNA Be

Chapter Summary

“I-I know! How about you guys come with me?” Tsukiko ended up suggesting on a whim but was shocked to hear no immediate response, especially from Bokuto.

The rest of the autumn season seemed to go by quickly, as if nothing had happened or simply because the writer of the story ran out of ideas by this point. Even though exciting events such as the summer festival, stress work over the fall semester, and a Halloween party would have been great; it’s apparently being brushed over for the time being. And so, time has skipped to the start of the winter vacation.

“Now THAT was a morning workout— whew!” Bokuto plopped down on the sofa and removed his thick winter coat. His body was cold and tired from shoveling snow off the driveway by himself. He rolled over to poke Tsukiko who was sitting in the kotatsu and gave her pouting, puppy-eyed face.

Practically reading his mind, Tsukiko moved over to allow the owl inside. It was what he wanted her permission for. The comforting warmth took over and Bokuto became relaxed instantly. He rested his upper body on the tabletop. Something cold tapped his lips. When he opened eyes he didn’t expect Tsukiko to start feeding him a chilled tangerine. Delightfully, he accepted the offering.

“Meow?”

Kuroo was laying on the floor with half of his body under the kotatsu. He poked his head up to see that it was Bokuto who joined in. His gold eyes turned into a wanting stare that was directed at Tsukiko. She didn’t have to read his mind to know what he wanted, since Kuroo was even easier to predict in moments like this. She groaned lightly then reached over to feed Kuroo some of the cold fruit too. The reason she was being benevolent to the two was because, in her head, she imagined she was feeding the pet owl and cat she secretly dreamed of owning.

Tsukiko continued to place a piece of tangerine in their mouths and her own, but then she stopped being nice when they took the advantageous chance to lick her fingers.

“Ahhh…” Bokuto and Kuroo whined, both even whimpering as though begging like dogs.
Akaashi and Ushijima soon joined the three with warm drinks for all of them; Tsukiko specifically getting her favorite hot chocolate. Things then got crowded under the kotatsu but it worked out somehow with everyone’s cooperation in leg arrangements.

During their free time like this, the Yorozu-kan gang usually watched daytime shows together. Right now they were watching a variety show called *KeyaBingo!* that was starring an idol group. It was picked by Tsukiko, of course, under the claim it was for learning purposes since the girl had been back to training to become an idol herself. Speaking of which, she actually had a training job to attend to in an hour but the kotatsu chained her down.

Tsukiko’s phone vibrated on the table. Nobody could focus on the TV show well because of her phone’s bell charm making noises due to the vibrations. Ushijima looked at Tsukiko, noticing how she was purposely avoiding answering her phone.

“It’s from your manager.” he informed but was plainly ignored by the girl.

“If you don’t go to work you’ll get in trouble.” Akaashi followed with a sigh, something he thought he wouldn’t ever have to do while under the gratifying warmth of the kotatsu.

Tsukiko groaned and attempted to leave but only managed to wiggle out enough where her knees were still under the thick blanket. She didn’t need to glance up to know that Ushijima was sternly staring her down.

“I-I know! How about you guys come with me?” Tsukiko ended up suggesting on a whim but was shocked to hear no immediate response, especially from Bokuto.

“We’re fine here,” they all said.

An hour later, the Yorozu-kan boys found themselves sitting in the audience seats of a chilly studio. Around them were people in mostly dark clothes as they moved around to set things up. There were only two cameras stationed with boom operators and between them was an empty director’s seat. In front of them was the performing stage that just consisted of a white backdrop and colorful high chairs, each seating a different cute girl.
Sitting in a purple chair was Tsukiko. She also happened to be wearing a large purple sweater to match. It actually belonged to Ushijima, but he wouldn’t complain when the girl goes through his laundry.

A sign lit up in red that indicated the recording session had begun. Entering from the right of the stage was the show’s host dressed in a black suit to contrast the bright-colored female guests.

“Welcome to Wan-Na Bi! The show that everybody’s gonna wanna be on!” announced the emcee as he struck a pose in front of the cameras.

The girls and audience clapped as instructed by the ‘applause’ sign that shone above the stage. Only Bokuto was genuinely laughing at the terrible pun, even repeating it to Akaashi and explaining the meaning with an obnoxious tone.

“Today we have trainees from GAI-ROKU entertainment with us—because we needed cheap guests and fast!” The man joked.

After some laughter from everyone, the MC turned the show over to the girls by having them introduce themselves causally first and then with their idol personalities. The first one up was Tsukiko because she was the oldest of the bunch. She stood up from her seat and introduced herself normally.

“Tsukiko Yamauchi. I’m 19-years-old and an aspiring musician. I’m suppose to be the optimistic character.”

Then with her idol face on;

“Hello! I’m Suki-Suki the moon child of love! Together we can fill the world with hope and love - suki~!”

Bokuto and Kuroo had to use everything in them to hold back the hysterical laughter. It wasn’t the first time they had seen Tsukiko using her ‘Suki-Suki’ persona but they knew how much it made her cringe, even though she did come up with the character herself. She claimed to have thought of it while she was going through her ‘middle school syndrome’ phase when she first started idol training.
The other girls followed along, all having somewhat similar idol personalities but with individual traits that made them distinctive of each other. One girl was like Tsukiko, but with a playful cat-like twist. She caught Kuroo’s attention especially. Another girl had a ‘bookworm’ appeal and another was ditzy and loud, much like Bokuto himself. There was even a girl following the ‘tsundere’ character type.

After the introductions came everyone’s first challenge: a vocal range test. The twist though was they had to play a game where a character only moved by noise level. As simple as it seemed, the girls were having trouble. Some managed to make the character walk by holding a note. Those with high-pitched voices got it to actually jump a certain height depending on how high they got their voice to be. For Tsukiko, the thing didn’t move at all. Whether she hummed softly or screeched into the microphone it was ineffective. Everyone laughed it off as unfortunate luck or her voice was, “too good that it broke the game.” Tsukiko pretended to joke with them but inside she was actually frustrated and questioning what went wrong then.

The next challenges were more on the fun side of variety show entertainment. There were guessing games and quizzes, none of which Tsukiko failed in unlike with the first vocal range game. She knew some random trivia; such as the fact that the McDonald's clown mascot went by “Donald McDonald” in Japan because was easier to pronounce in Japanese. Tsukiko even went the extra mile to mention that the character was known as “Uncle McDonald” in Singapore.

The girls also did a dance competition using the video game that everyone knew and loved, *Dance Dance Revolution*. It was fun and exciting for the most part, until the emcee ‘accidentally’ made Tsukiko pick a song on the hardest level. She barely lasted ten seconds on the platform. Of course, she was genuinely upset because she knew what she could actually do, but Tsukiko couldn’t blow up in front of everyone. She put on a smile and forced a laugh instead.

Later came a popular segment among variety shows: an English conversation test. The girls were going to be tested on their English-speaking ability, as it was likely they would have to sing songs with English words or were partially in English altogether and communicate with overseas fans if their popularity reached that far. Only some girls were individually selected to participate and Tsukiko was one of the lucky girls picked. When it was her turn she approached the examiner without hesitation.

“How do you do?” she said to the guest English-speaker that was testing them. Her pronunciation was clean, which received surprising awe from the other girls and emcee.

“Good. And you?” They replied.

“I am… dwell? Ah, well. I am well.” She responded with a slight mishap.
The examiner rubbed their chin as if amused by Tsukiko. “Who is your favorite character?” They asked with a more challenging question

Tsukiko trailed in thought for a moment as she wondered what they meant by character. Did they mean character as in somebody in a cartoon? A character archetype? Concluding that they left it vaguely open to interpretation on purpose, Tsukiko answered confidently with the first thing that comes to mind.

“I like Hello Kitty,” was her final answer.

Everybody clapped for Tsukiko’s success and then even more when the examiner and the MC announced that she had the best English out of everyone. They even awarded her with an apple, which turned out to be a fake prop as soon as it was in her hands. “Just end me.” Tsukiko groaned in her thoughts while smiling like a goof towards the audience.

“How do you know English?” Kuroo asked while watching Ushijima and Bokuto make everyone’s okonomiyaki.

After Tsukiko’s job as a guest on a variety show ended, the group decided to eat out for a late lunch. They were also dreadfully cold from sitting still and quietly in the studio for a painful two-hour long recording. As an apology and token of appreciation, lunch was Tsukiko’s treat to them.

Tsukiko handed her phone to Akaashi for a moment, having him use it to take a video of the food being cooked from his side of the table for her.

“How? I learned from Madame-san,” she answered the Kuroo sitting next to her.

“Though I haven’t actually spoken an English conversation since high school so I’m out of practice.”

“You were great though! GURETO!” Bokuto said as he flipped the frying pancake, or at least tried to.
“Kou-tan, was that a Jojo reference?” Tsukiko asked the owl with a smug grin.

Kuroo leaned against Tsukiko while she was caught off guard to take a selfie of their smug grins together. When it came to pictures she hardly minded being physically close to the rooster head, but otherwise she would have punched him right then and there or even shove his face into the hot stove.

“Send that to me! I wanna put stickers on it.” she told him as she got her phone back from Akaashi.

“You better use cat filters too.” Kuroo smirked.

Tsukiko raised her chin. “Ha, who do you think I am?”

Kuroo’s lips curled more as he asked, “Kiko-chan, was that a Jojo reference?”

“No. Not even.” Tsukiko replied swiftly with disappointment in her gray eyes.

Seeing the cats snickering made Akaashi feel uneasy but he was also glad to see them get along to a degree—especially considering the feuds they often had as of late. The sight was really a breath of fresh air to him.

“But anyway, when you become popular introduce me to Perfume please.” Kuroo teased the girl again.

Tsukiko huffed and replied, “Assuming I’ll even know you when I become famous.”

Ushijima finished making Kuroo’s seafood okonomiyaki as requested. He scooped it onto the other’s plate and then went on to make another for Tsukiko. Bokuto on the other hand was stirring up a mess, literally, on his side of the stove. Seeing this made Akaashi regret saying he didn’t mind how the food would look with ‘master chef’ Bokuto in charge.

“By the way, what are your plans for Christmas?” Akaashi turned towards Tsukiko to start a
conversation with her while they waited. She put on her bashful smile, which only meant she was going to bring up her boyfriend in her answer.

“Tada-kun managed to save up money to come over and take me on a Christmas date~!” she said happily, resulting in Kuroo almost choking on his food and Bokuto getting hyped in excitement for her.

Akaashi smiled for her while holding Bokuto’s jaw up to make him shut up and not spit out his food. “Great, I can’t wait to see him again,” he commented.

“Yes, that’s good.” Ushijima added, making the others blink in amazement.

Tsukiko giggled while leaning against her father figure. “Make sure not to scare my boyfriend, Waka-papa~!”

“No promises,” he said as if attempting to sound humorous for once, which made Tsukiko laugh. The other guys weren’t sure if they were supposed to laugh too. It wasn’t like there was a sign above them that would be telling them to.
lmao :") broke the fourth wall? this chapter came out pretty short, but from here on out things will hit 3k words at the very least

THANK YOU FOR READING!!

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Goodbye Moon Town

Chapter Summary

Really he meant to say he was fine as an answer to her questions but his honest thought ended up being said instead. This only made Tsukiko start joyously crying Ghibli-sized tears again.

On the day of Tsukiko’s Christmas Eve date she was followed to the train station by her two bodyguards: Black Cat and Horned Owl. They stood close to her sides while waiting for the boyfriend to arrive. What they planned to do then was a complete mystery, even to themselves.

Kuroo glanced back at Tsukiko, taking notice of how dolled up she was for the occasion. It was a rare sight. She wore a baby blue sweater over a white dress that extended to her knees. Since she forgot to do her laundry beforehand she didn’t have leggings to wear underneath and had to go for thigh high socks as the alternative. Knowing that’s what was under the dress made Kuroo curiously imagine what she would look like in a shorter dress. The amount of absolute territory had to be a nice snack. He mentally clapped his hands together in prayer to the lewd images in his head.

Bokuto gasped loudly, alerting the attention of those around him. He pointed in one direction, which was the exit where the arriving train passengers were coming out from. Before Kuroo could spot out Yamaguchi he realized Bokuto had left his post of being on Tsukiko’s left side.

“TSUKKIIIIII!!!” he shouted at the tall blond he was rushing after.

Kuroo wasn’t expecting Tsukishima so he ended up asking, “did you really dump freckles for glasses?” While he knew the answer was going to be a firm, painful ‘no’ jabbed into his gut, he wanted to make the joke anyways for the heck of it. He and Tsukiko then approached Bokuto and the blond with an annoyed face.

“Kei, what are you doing here?” Tsukiko asked while looking around for her boyfriend, who she found to be hiding behind the towering french fry. The girl laughed as she pushed Tsukishima aside to latch onto her beloved shy guy.

“Ta-da-shiiiii–!” she squealed, releasing the excitement she had been bottling up until now.
Bashfully rubbing the back of his head and the short ponytail he was growing, Yamaguchi gave his adorable girlfriend a meek smile. He was nervous seeing her again after so long. Tsukiko definitely looked better outside of a video call. But seeing Kuroo and Bokuto with her was adding to his anxiety. Did they wanted to greet him too?

“I’m here, Tsukiko.” Yamaguchi managed to say to his girlfriend.

There was a moment of silence until Tsukiko suddenly started bawling her eyes out. Everyone, minus Tsukishima, started panicking. Yamaguchi especially was worried he somehow upset her but then she explained why she was crying.

“I’ve been waiting to hear you say that…”

Returning to Yorozu-kan with two new bodies, it surprised Akaashi that Tsukishima came to Tokyo too. He gave the familiar friend a welcoming smile. Ushijima looked up from the kitchen counter and immediately noticed Tsukishima as well. “How’s your blocking?” was the first thing he asked.

Tsukishima grumbled in his throat as he casually took a seat on the high chair. He would much rather be far from the social area that was going to be the living room even if it meant talking to a past, difficult rival. Already he could hear a certain tiny crow expressing envious shouts for how ‘lucky’ he was to meet with Ushijima again.

Tsukiko was stuck to Yamaguchi’s arm and dragged him from the foyer to the kotatsu after removing their shoes. It was almost strange to see Tsukiko being excited over someone that wasn’t as small as her like Kenma or Yaku. At the same time, Akaashi was glad to see her being happy around the guy she liked the most.

“You must be tired from the long train ride. Hungry? Oh, do you need to use the bathroom? Actually you’re probably thirsty too—”

Yamaguchi chuckled and placed a hand on Tsukiko’s forehead, which was their personal gesture of calming each other down. “Don’t worry, I missed you.” he blurted out. Really he meant to say he was fine as an answer to her chain of questions but his honest thought ended up being said instead. This only made Tsukiko start joyously crying Ghibli-sized tears again.
Everyone had split into two groups; Bokuto, Kuroo, and Tsukishima took their conversation to the back patio while Akaashi, Ushijima, and the couple were in the living room. Tsukiko went over the plans for her date with Yamaguchi, as if Akaashi and Ushijima were her parents. In a way, they were almost like guardians to her. Akaashi was the kind and supportive mother that always looked out for her while Ushijima’s caring protectiveness towards Tsukiko made him the doting father.

“Alright, we should get going now.” Tsukiko said after checking the time on her phone.

The four got up and went to the front door where Akaashi and Ushijima did the most parent-like thing: telling Yamaguchi to bring Tsukiko back by a certain time. The original ‘gym three’ trio joined to see the couple off as well.

“Got enough cash for a love hotel?” Kuroo said jokingly, bringing out a flustered reaction out of them both.

Once the couple took off everyone remained by the entrance for a while until Bokuto said, “we should totally follow them like last time.”

Akaashi and Ushijima raised their brows. “Last time?” they said in unison.

Kuroo elbowed Bokuto then told the owl to not say another word but Tsukishima casually ratted them out.

“The last date those two had, Kuroo-san and Bokuto-san were stalking them.”

“TSUKKI YOU TRAITOR!” Bokuto cried out. Kuroo pushed a finger against the blond’s chest while shouting, “YOU WERE THERE TOO!”

Tsukishima rolled his golden eyes back. “Only because I happened to be doing errands in the area at the time…” he muttered.

“LIES.” Bokuto and Kuroo howled.
Exiting Yorozu-kan, the couple walked down the main street and back to the bus stop. Tsukiko was still gripping Yamaguchi’s arm. Despite being together for several years they were still shy about holding hands—yet hugging and locking arms was okay. They couldn’t sit together on the bus, however, since it was fairly packed even though it hadn’t hit rush hour yet. Yamaguchi held onto a hanging strap. Tsukiko tried to reach for one but due to her height she couldn’t get a firm grip on it and had to lean on her boyfriend for support. It garnered attention from other passengers, some of which were murmuring things like, “they’re a bold” or “look how cute they are.” The blushing couple stood in silence for the entire ride.

The first activity of their date was Christmas shopping in Shibuya. They needed to buy last minute gifts and what better way to spend the first half of their date shopping for friends and family.

“Look!” Tsukiko called for her boyfriend’s attention. He turned around and nearly spat when he saw her holding up a Christmas dinosaur sweater. They agreed it needed to be Tsukishima’s present from them both.

Tsukiko continued to find more items that reminded her of her friends but an entire section of sweaters alone seemed to have everything. Tapping her chin, she wondered if getting everyone at Yorozu-kan sweaters would be lazy of her. She already happened to have a gift for Kuroo to because it was cheaper to buy online.

“You sure you don’t want anything for a gift?” she asked her boyfriend after finding him looking at decorated plates, most likely for his mother.

“Like I said before, being with you is my gift. I can’t ask for anything better.” Yamaguchi said as he approached Tsukiko with a smile. The girl felt her cheeks warm up as she nodded in agreement.

They had only been in one department store for over an hour but found a majority of the gifts they needed to get. “I can have these sent to Yorozu-kan so we don’t need to carry everything with us.” Tsukiko informed. Another advantage to knowing Madame was getting to use the woman’s special customer privileges with several stores she frequented, such as the one they were currently in. Having their purchased items delivered to the house later in the evening was one out of many Madame perks.

After paying for the gifts the two walked around the mall with arms locked. They talked about the things they got for their friends and families and the spirited activities going on around them. Several store mascots were wearing Santa costumes while handing out discount flyers and directing people towards their store. There was one surrounded by children that caught Tsukiko’s attention.
“GUDETAMAAAA!!” she shrieked with stars shooting out of her gleaming eyes.

Yamaguchi chuckled then guided the girl over to her favorite character mascot. “I thought you liked Hello Kitty,” he said in reference to her guest appearance on Wan-Na Bi that he saw on television the other night.

Tsukiko puffed her cheeks. “I wasn’t sure if Gudetama would be an acceptable answer in an English speaking test...” she told him, only to get laughed at again.

They took a picture with the lazy egg that wore a Santa hat and held onto a large candy cane. The first person immediately to like the photo on Tsukiko’s Instagram was Oikawa. “Oh yeah, I should probably get him a gift too. Maybe.” she said to herself until Oikawa made a comment on how he was looking forward to his Christmas gift from her. The fact he automatically assumed there was a present waiting for him made Tsukiko reconsider her thoughts.

It was time for the couple’s late lunch. They both agreed on nothing fancy since money was a slight concern, especially right after they bought a lot of stuff. Tsukiko recommended a donut shop but as soon as they got there a line had formed that reached the outside. She then took Yamaguchi to her backup plan; an outdoor market area for street vendor food. Since it was still daytime there weren’t too many people crowding around. The two browsed the stalls at first until their noses were captured by an alluring scent. They stopped in front of the source that turned out to be roasted chicken.

“How can I help ya?” inquired the vendor. Their voice snapped the couple out of their daze. Yamaguchi and Tsukiko drooled before responding excitedly, “Two drumsticks please!”

Sitting at a bench after purchasing chicken and drinks, the couple was speechless from just one bite. “It’s so soft on the inside!” Tsukiko commented with Yamaguchi nodding several times in agreement. The chicken had a crispy outer texture but the cooked pinkish meat inside was savory and rich in flavor from the seasoning. Each following bite tasted as good as the first.

“How?” Yamaguchi paused when he felt Tsukiko dab his cheek with a napkin. Having caught her in a girlfriend act made her enter bashful mode.

“S-Sorry! I should’ve—” Before she could finish, Yamaguchi had done the same thing but with his thumb.
“You got some on you too.” he said before licking his finger. They looked at each other for a moment before realizing what happened and then faced in opposite directions. Tsukiko was practically shaking in joy and embarrassment while Yamaguchi was asking himself when did he get bold enough to do what he just did. If a mind reader were in the vicinity all they’d hear from these two is their internal screaming.

Once food was finished they got back on transportation to the main event of their date. The sky had slowly gone dark when they were close to their destination; Tokyo Midtown. Possibly the most famous attraction Tokyo had to offer in the winter were the lights decorating the streets. Tsukiko specifically chose the Starlight Garden to end the date at.

“When we do this again, let's go to the big tree in Odaiba! Oh, and maybe the ferris wheel if we get lucky.” she suggested more ideas to Yamaguchi who was distracted by his girlfriend’s enthusiasm.

When they reached the Starlight Garden they wondered if they got lucky. Usually the site was densely packed with visitors, especially right before Christmas. To their revelation they even managed to find a vacant area to claim for photo ops. Tsukiko took pictures of Yamaguchi first, despite his initial shyness. They then switched places but Yamaguchi was having a hard time taking a clear picture of his attractive girlfriend. It couldn’t be helped with his shaky hands. He kept apologizing and each retake made him worry that she’d find him annoying. Of course, Tsukiko wouldn’t be thinking that. The fact was she had always adored his clumsiness.

“Alright, now together!” she said as she dragged Yamaguchi towards the scenery with her. At first Tsukiko held the phone but due to the height difference she couldn’t find a satisfying angle that’ll fit Yamaguchi in the frame. Puffing angrily at herself she then handed the device over to her much taller boyfriend, only to get more displeased. It wasn’t that his shakiness kept the camera from properly focusing but Tsukiko didn’t like how big her eyes would look when gazing upwards.

“Should we just ask someone else to take it?” Yamaguchi asked her while stroking her head to calm her. His hand eventually trailed down to her side braid. It was his favorite hairstyle on Tsukiko since it was how she did it during their first date. This lead him to realize something.

“Didn’t you wear a similar outfit on our last date? And the first one before that?” he asked her.

Tsukiko inhaled deeply. Her eyes widened and her face became flushed, definitely not because of the cold. “YOU’RE RIGHT!” she shouted abruptly. Looking herself over, she realized she always wore a white dress with a blue top of some sort and then leggings underneath (though this time was thigh high socks but Yamaguchi didn’t know that). But most notably she always had her hair tied in a braid and then swept over her shoulder like the common anime mother’s hairstyle of death.
Yamaguchi covered his mouth as he laughed hard enough that he needed to hold onto his stomach.

“Wh-what?! Is it weird that I'm always dressed this way on our dates?” Tsukiko shuddered at the thought of her unintentional repetition being a bad thing but Yamaguchi assured otherwise. “Oh, no! That’s not it!” he said.

“I like it a lot and it reminds me of how great our first time was!” Suddenly he too started blushing but from this odd choice of words.

“WAIT. I MEAN. THE DATE. OUR FIRST DATE.” he explained.

“Nice save!” Someone nearby shouted out. Tsukiko and Yamaguchi panicked as they looked around to see who it was. Approaching them while snickering was the human tower, Lev Haiba. Beside him was his sister, Alisa. The woman was beautiful as ever like a Persian cat with her odd eyes; Tsukiko always thought. When the siblings were in front of the couple it surprised them to see Alisa was nearly as tall as Yamaguchi. It added to his uneasiness since he has never met a girl at eye level until now.

“Ya-hoo, Kiko~” Alisa greeted the other girl with an affectionate hug. Though Tsukiko never got particularly close to her, she still played nice since Alisa’s bubbly and innocent personality wasn’t such a bad thing. “Are you two on a date?!” Alisa asked. She seemed excited that even her nostrils were flaring.

Tsukiko smiled weakly as she retreated back to Yamaguchi’s side. “Yep, we’re on our Christmas date.” she answered.

Lev covered his ears when his older sister squealed loudly while rapidly clapping her fingertips together. She then stopped to pull Lev by the arm and dragged him away. “We’ll leave you two alone then—have fun!!” she said.

As awkward of an encounter it was, Tsukiko and Yamaguchi were glad it happened since it helped relieve their awkwardness. They looked at each other with soft smiles. Behind them, the lights appeared to have gotten brighter but really the sky had gone completely pitch black. The Starlight Garden illuminated as far as they could see. Hundreds of lights covered the lawn and trees around them. Music started playing in the background and in some areas moving objects were lighting up.
“It’s beautiful,” said the girl as she leaned her head against her boyfriend’s arm. Yamaguchi was awed by the lights but what really captivated his attention was how it all shone in Tsukiko’s eyes, making them sparkle like jewels. He then started moving without thinking again. This time, his hand caressed her warm cheek while gently lifting her face. His heart was racing the more he looked at Tsukiko up close. Knowing where things were heading, Tsukiko instinctively pushed her body upwards with her toes so she could get closer to Yamaguchi’s freckled face. While he was entranced by the lights reflecting in her eyes she was counting the specks on his cheeks, even making out patterns of the constellations. They slowly closed their eyes while leaning towards each other until…

“YEEESSS!!” screamed Alisa from a not-so-far distance.

Lev attempted to cover his sister’s mouth. “Stop! You’re ruining their moment!” he whispered rather loudly.

It was time to return to Yorozu-kan with the date ending on a ruined moment. Tsukiko reached the front door but before she could grab the handle she found herself pulled into Yamaguchi’s warm chest. Through his winter coat she could faintly hear his beating heart. She was sure hers was doing the same.

“Today was great.” Yamaguchi whispered into her hair.

Tsukiko’s lips perked into a grin. “It still is,” she replied as she turned herself around to face him. His face was mostly sad, since it was time for them to separate again. The young man had told himself he wouldn’t cry, and yet, there he went. This happened at the end of their last date too. But also like the last time, Tsukiko wiped away his tears and gave him a reassuring smile.

“We’ll see each other again.” she said before reaching up to plant a chaste kiss on her crying boyfriend’s salty lips. Yamaguchi pressed for another one just for good measure then smiled back.

When they entered the house the couple was greeted by the friends that waited for them, though Tsukiko immediately noticed there were two too many than before. “Hunny! You’re cheating on me?!” gasped Oikawa, his joke earning him a slap on the back by Iwaizumi and Kuroo. Akaashi looked over from the kitchen sink, momentarily pausing from dishwashing to welcome the two back home. Ushijima did the same from the living room where he got up from the kotatsu to take Tsukiko’s coat.
Tsukishima glanced up at his friend, giving the other a frown. “Took you two long enough,” he said as he reluctantly forced himself out of the kotatsu. “But are we seriously taking all of those back home?” he pointed at the shopping bags that were left in the foyer.

“Don’t worry Kiko-chan! We definitely didn’t peek in them!” Bokuto interjected, his words only making him seem more suspicious since the very thought didn’t even reach Tsukiko’s mind.

After individual goodbyes were exchanged, Yamaguchi and Tsukishima made their leave in a taxi heading for the train station. Tsukiko and Bokuto chased them for a bit until they reached the end of the sidewalk. “Come visit again, ‘kay Tsukkiiiiiiii!” cried the owl who then ran back to throw his sobbing self into Akaashi’s arms.

Kuroo stepped up to Tsukiko’s side, leaning forward to notice that her eyes continued to follow the car. “You two have fun?” he asked her with no genuine curiosity. Once he got the girl’s attention he pointed to everyone who were heading back to the house. When Tsukiko was about to start walking to catch up, she felt her phone vibrate in her pocket. She pulled it out and her face lit up from the text she received.

**From: the puppy-face boyfriend**

**To: the great kiko-chan**

> I’ll see you again soon! <3
something I haven't noticed until now, but I realized I call mostly everyone by their surname and I hope this hasn't caused confusion? Personally I address characters by the name they're commonly called so I've been using a mix of first and last names; depending which one is more used to address the character. Off the top of my head, this applies to Tsukiko and Lev since both of them are easier to identify by their first names (though I know Tsukiko and Tsukishima can cause confusion when they're together lol thanks for your patience tho)

p.s. Chapter title is the Boruto ending song that I really like aahhhhhhh

p.s.s LOL THIS CHAPTER "11" GOT POSTED ON 11/11 WOW I DID NOT INTENTIONALLY DO THIS

p.s.s.s. I WISH I POSTED THIS ON YAM'S BDAY THO

AAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

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“Why. Why did you two get that.” Ushijima’s voice was slightly raspy because he was trying to suppress his anger to keep his volume down. The air tensed up even more when Akaashi showed up with a box of decorations. He immediately saw what was in Bokuto’s hands and then dropped the box of decorations in defeat.

The next day was the actual Christmas day and the Yorozu-kan was as quiet as ever in the morning.

Kuroo had woken up earlier than he wanted to, or rather, he didn’t sleep much at all most of the night. He couldn’t figure out why except wonder if school had turned him into an insomniac. Making his way downstairs, he caught Ushijima at the front door. The guy had returned from his morning run. They greeted each other with nods of acknowledgment.

“I’ll go make breakfast now,” said Ushijima as he walked towards the kitchen.

“Yeah,” was all Kuroo could say in response.

The raggedy cat took a seat in the living room under the kotatsu, hoping to fall asleep there. Surprisingly it was doing the trick. Kuroo was slowly drifting away into slumber. While his eyes wavered between opening and closing he was scanning his surroundings to bore himself further. There was the TV remote, the TV itself, the couch seat that Bokuto accidentally tore during the Halloween party, and then a round rug with a hole in its center.

“Wait.” Kuroo jolted awake upon realizing there was something wrong in the room. He stared at the decor in the lonesome corner where the hidden photo albums were kept. “Hey, uh, Ushiwaka,” he called for the cook. “What’s the rug over here for again?” he asked with some hesitation in his voice.

Ushijima paused his work to look up and see what Kuroo was referring to. He answered, “It’s for the Christmas tree.”

It was exactly what Kuroo feared. He and Ushijima looked at each other in utter silence until the
latter had processed the reason for Kuroo’s question. As if in a fit of fury, Ushijima slammed his hands on the counter, making a loud thump that scared even Kuroo. “Wake up everyone, except Tsukiko.” He suddenly said in a tone Kuroo never expected him capable of making except during volleyball games.

“Hurry!” he ushered.

Within half an hour all four Yorozu-kan boys were gathered in the living room to discuss the biggest crisis that ever fell upon their wonderful home. Bokuto was still half asleep and Akaashi also had to rub it out of his own eyes.

“So,” he started. “Why are we awake so early?”

Ushijima, with his arms crossed over his chest, looked more menacing than usual. Seeing how distressed he was, Kuroo took the reigns to speak. “We just discovered something that could potentially put our lives in jeopardy,” he said hesitantly. Akaashi raised a brow, curious as to where this was heading.

“You see, we—”

“FORGOT THE CHRISTMAS TREE!!” hollered Bokuto, who was still apparently asleep.

Akaashi’s eyes widened before his hand went to his face. If he could sigh the world’s heaviest sigh, he would. He pinched the bridge of his nose then rubbed his temples. “And whose job was it to get the tree?” he asked under his breath. Immediately he got his answer from a raised hand. It was the sleep-talking Bokuto.

“How could you forget the most important thing?!!” Kuroo shouted (softly) into the other’s ear while shaking him awake.

Bokuto put his hands up for mercy. “I-I didn’t mean to, I swear!!” he cried back but Kuroo continued to shake his friend.

“YOU DIDN’T MEAN TO FORGET?! AIRHEAD!!” Kuroo hissed.
The importance behind having a Christmas tree was because Tsukiko had mentioned wanting one. Having lived on her own up until now, she never got a Christmas tree in years due to idol work keeping her in Tokyo. After hearing this, the boys planned to get a tree for the girl to make her happy. Obviously, that didn’t happen.

A loud thud came from the table due to Ushijima dropping his heavy fists on it. The other two shrivelled in fear from the raging aura emitting out of the most intimidating guy in the house. Then came Akaashi’s voice of calm reasoning.

“We can fix this, don’t worry.” he assured them. “I have a plan.”

The first step of action was to keep Tsukiko asleep. Akaashi entered the girl’s room, and with stealth, turned off her phone to prevent her alarm from going off. He also made sure she didn’t have an external clock anywhere else. While he did that, Ushijima was to make all of Tsukiko’s favorite breakfast meals: pancakes, waffles, and crepes. In the meantime, Bokuto and Kuroo went out looking for places that were still selling trees.

“Do we get a big one? A really big one?? Wait—is it gonna be a real tree?!” Bokuto asked in a panic as the two passed a lot that sold wild Christmas trees.

Kuroo looked at him, irked by his friend’s absentmindedness. “Of course not you fool!! That’s too messy to put in the house!” he told him.

Bokuto shrieked, feeling his heart waver from being constantly yelled at. Noticing the owl was about to start sulking, Kuroo did exactly what Akaashi instructed him to say to prevent it from happening. “Look, once we get the tree successfully in its place before Tsukiko wakes up, think of the praise she’ll shower you with.” he repeated then turned around to gag. The word ‘praise’ did the trick and Bokuto was beaming with energy. Enthusiasm lit up in his eyes as he stuck his chest out.

“I’LL MAKE MY GIRL HAPPY WITH THE BEST fake TREE EVER!!!” he cheered while sprinting down the street.

Back at the Yorozu-kan, the housemother was still soundly snoozing in her cozy bed with stuffed animals tucked neatly around her. It was thanks to Akaashi arranged them that way. Once he quietly closed the bedroom door behind him he continued down the hallway on his toes. “Where
are the decorations?” he wondered while searching for a storage closet. It made him realize he still didn’t know everything that was around the house, but he knew someone who most likely did.

Akaashi reached the kitchen to find Ushijima in a cooking frenzy, surrounded by bowls of batter and some stacks of pancakes already made. He hastily maneuvered behind the chef to turn on the stove vent so the smell of breakfast wouldn’t reach Tsukiko. “Ushijima-san, do you know where the tree decorations are?” he asked while careful not to disrupt the other’s focus too much.

“Basement.” was all Ushijima said back. Akaashi backed away slowly towards the elevator. He got his answer, at least, and he thought it’d be fine to actually see what was in the underground floor for himself.

Once there, Akaashi jumped when the lights automatically turned on as soon as he stepped into the hall. It was more spacious than he had expected. There was a dance studio and what appeared to be a recording booth. “Damn, he didn’t really specify where it’d be,” he groaned before turning around and then realizing the elevator was between two other rooms; one was, as indicated by a sign, a dressing room and the other was exactly what Akaashi was looking for. He let out a sigh of relief for a moment before entering the labeled storage room.

Again, the lights had switched on automatically for him. Inside were various instruments from the triangle to a harp. It made him wonder if Tsukiko had used any of the items until he noticed the dust collected on them. There were only two things that appeared to be clean and they were a guitar and piano. “So she plays these?” Akaashi caught himself in his distraction and proceeded further into the storage room.

Behind all of the music related items were boxes with faded labels on them. He found one with the Halloween decorations they used months ago but others were left open on the floor. Being the polite guy he was, Akaashi went through the trouble to close and set them aside. He found a box containing children's clothes, which made him chuckle at the thought that they were the clothes a little Tsukiko had worn back when she lived in Yorozu-kan.

Another box caught his eye since it looked newer than any of the others. On one of the flaps it was labeled ‘Ken’ with a blue marker. It was definitely a name but Akaashi couldn’t recall Tsukiko ever mentioning someone named Ken; unless the name belonged to someone in her family. He doubt she had a secret brother either. Curiosity further took Akaashi to examine the contents inside. The first thing he grabbed was a worn-out notebook. On its cover was the symbol he recognized from music sheets; a clef, if he recalled correctly. He opened the book to a random page and inside were hand drawn music sheets. Akaashi couldn’t read it since he hadn’t seen one since elementary school but even then he barely understood it. At the top of the page was the title, “My Dearest,” which gave him the impression that it was a romantic song. If there were lyrics written in, he’d know for sure.
“I’ll ask Tsukiko lat—wait, no, I can’t. Then she’d know I came down here.” Akaashi said to himself as he went back to look for Christmas tree decorations.

Upstairs, the tree-hunting bros had returned but entered the house from the backyard. They were nearly attacked by Ushijima with a whisk with white substance on it. Kuroo playfully swiped a finger on it and was pleased to find it tasted like whipped cream, which it was obviously.

“Where is the tree.” Ushijima said, his urgent tone making his question not sound like one.

Bokuto waved his arm from the back patio. “Right here!” he said with a big grin on his face. Kuroo on the other hand didn’t seem as delighted, which made Ushijima feel worried for once. The tree they had brought home was in fact a tree but not the kind used for Christmas. In seconds, the room was filled with Ushijima’s raging aura. Kuroo couldn’t bring himself to see what face the other was making but he was sure Tsukiko’s would be worse when she finds out about the tree.

“Why. Why did you two get that.” Ushijima’s voice was slightly raspy because he was trying to suppress his anger to keep his volume down. The air tensed up even more when Akaashi showed up with a box of decorations. He immediately saw what was in Bokuto’s hands and then dropped the box of decorations in defeat.

Bokuto blinked, perplexed by everyone’s reaction. “It can still work!” he said with the utmost confidence in his voice. “And besides… Kiko-chan is already awake.” he added, causing the other three to scramble in panic again. The horned owl had noticed Tsukiko’s window curtains were pulled open, which meant she had to be awake. Akaashi stepped outside to confirmed it and then started giving out orders again.

“Bokuto-san! Go stand guard and stall her if she leaves her room before we’re done. Kuroo-san, you and I will decorate this somehow. And Ushijima-san—” Before he could even say anything Ushijima had already begun to finalize breakfast preparations. It was almost strange seeing a grown guy like Ushijima delicately adding cream and fruit on top of pancakes without messing up.

While the boys were in their frenzy, Tsukiko was casually taking her time getting ready for the day. When she woke up, she noticed her stuffed toys crowding around her and wondered how her phone had shut off. She took it as an unfortunate mishap on her part. It only upset her slightly as she had planned to wake up early in order to finish wrapping everyone’s Christmas presents.
The first part of Tsukiko’s daily morning routine: shedding some light into the room. Natural sunlight to her was like morning coffee for other people. Like a plant, she needed sunlight to live. Tsukiko turned to the mess she left on her desk the previous night. Shopping bags remained on the floor while wrapping paper and strings were strewn everywhere. All she had done were handwritten labels to stick on the presents.

“Guess I’ll make this quick,” she sighed. The girl was starting to regret not getting everything wrapped at the store, since the service was an option. Only reason Tsukiko declined was because she wanted to personalize the wrappings herself. In the end, she procrastinated big time but she was eager to zip through quickly. And she did.

Tsukiko stacked the presents in her arms. As soon as she stepped out of her room she heard yelling from the stairs. “They’re all up and didn’t come wake me?!” she huffed while heading for the elevator.

Akaashi’s attention darted from the sound of the elevator working. His habit of messing with his fingers acted up again because he was nervous about Tsukiko arriving to see the disaster they had made. He hoped the food would at least ease the woman’s wrath to come. Once the elevator door opened, the boys gulped.

“Wah! You guys really didn’t wake me up?! Rude!” Tsukiko cried as she made her way towards the living room to put the presents down. However, the smell of her favorite breakfast meals got to her first. Her face glowed with joy. “Waka-papa made all of this?” she purred. It surprised her that Ushijima had learned how to bake skillfully when she only just taught him weeks ago when they made a cake for Akaashi’s birthday.

“See, I told you when you put your mind to it you can do it~” she complimented him.

Approaching the living room, Tsukiko started noticing something was off about the place. First there was the fact that the boys were lined up in a way that looked like they were blocking her from seeing whatever was behind them. Tsukiko gave them a slight glare but she didn’t have to say anything to make them move aside. The boys did that themselves with their heads dropped. Tsukiko’s eyes trailed from the mess on the kotatsu, initially registering it as something to scold them about. But then she saw the empty corner had been occupied with something that wasn’t there before.

“Is that… a bonsai tree with Christmas decorations on it?” she asked curiously. The others kept their eyes low from shame. Kuroo eventually stepped up to speak for the team.
“You see, Kiko-chan,” he started with his hand nervously rubbing the back of his neck. He further explained the situation, beginning from how it all transpired in the early morning. “We thought we could fix this before you woke up but in the end we still messed up. Heck, probably made it worse. Definitely worse.”

“We tried to find a real Christmas tree—just like what you said you wanted.” Bokuto added.

“We really did! But Kuroo and I didn’t have much money so this was the best we could get from one of the neighbors. And besides, if there’s anyone to be mad at it’s me! I said I’d get the tree ages ago and yet...”

Hearing the usually ‘I am the best’ Bokuto admitting to something that was his fault was rather touching. Akaashi felt proud and then went to speak as well. “Please Kiko-chan, this was all an honest mistake and we should’ve—”

“I’m not mad.”

The three males were taken aback to see Tsukiko with a content look on her face. It puzzled them as to why she wasn’t as upset like they had expected. They got even more confused when Tsukiko started smiling at them and handing each of them their presents.

Akaashi’s present was covered in a wrapping that had hands with all five fingers up drawn over it. His lips perked into a grin as he picked up the reference being to his player number from high school.

Bokuto’s was basically the same design, just with only four fingers and an owl sticker attaching the label with his name on it.

Kuroo’s gift was shaped oddly but he had a guess as to what it was and his wrapping was red with black cats on it.

Ushijima’s wrapping however had to be the most extravagant out of everyone’s because it looked exactly like his Shiratorizawa volleyball jersey.
“Favoritism,” Kuroo whispered to Bokuto who nodded in agreement.

Once everyone got a good look of the present wrapping, Tsukiko gave them permission to open their gifts. Since they all liked the wrapping they were careful in removing it without leaving major tears. The glum, shamed faces they previously had went away from seeing the gifts meant for each of them.

Akaashi’s gift was a cream-colored cardigan sweater and an agenda book for the upcoming year. It also came with a set of pens and sticky notes that were designed with volleyball-themed patterns.

Bokuto’s was an owl sweater with matching socks as well as a phone charm version of his favorite “The Wisdom of the Ace” shirt that he bought back in high school.

Kuroo got, as he suspected, a cat-related item. It was a headphone set with cat-ear speakers on top. He doubted he would use the speaker function, but he had a feeling Tsukiko got it with a past argument in mind. Regardless if that were the case, he greatly appreciated the headphones and cat sweater with gloves.

Everyone looked towards Ushijima, wondering when he was going to open his gift. Seconds later they realized he in fact did. Ushijima’s gift was a tank top designed to look exactly like the Shiratorizawa volleyball jersey. It was convincing enough to pass for the real thing.

“Is that even legal…?” Kuroo muttered, to which Tsukiko answered with a finger to her lips. “He’ll just have to not wear it outside.” she chuckled.

With the boys finished opening their gifts, they wanted to express their gratitude but it still bugged them how Tsukiko wasn’t upset about the tree. Noticing the hint of worry on their faces, Tsukiko cleared her throat before explaining herself.

“The reason I’m not angry or anything about the tree is because… I completely forgot about it too.” she admitted while hiding her face in her palms. In an anime the boys would have turned to stone and cracked. Before they could respond, Tsukiko continued herself. “Plus, I think this was sweet of you guys. Sure it didn’t turn out the way you wanted it to be but I am honestly impressed all of you worked together to go this far just for lil me.” If Tsukiko’s smile were any brighter the boys would have gone blind. While the task was stressful in the process, they did feel a sense of enjoyment now that it turned out Tsukiko approved of the mess.
“That’s great! We were so worried you’d kill us!” blurted Bokuto.

Tsukiko’s smile remained but it emitted an entirely different aura. “Am I… that scary to you guys?” she asked menacingly.

Kuroo shuffled in front of her, waving his hands to fan away her flames. “N-No, of course not Kiko-sama!” he said nervously.

Akaashi found himself laughing in the moment. He thought it was funny how he was worrying and panicking over absolutely nothing.

Ushijima immediately put on his gift over his sweater and apron then proceeded to guide Tsukiko to the kitchen to enjoy her now cold breakfast.

“Hey, Aa-kun,” Tsukiko called out to Akaashi in a whisper while they were finishing with putting up decorations in the living room for their party. “What else did you see down there?” she asked him. The question almost made Akaashi drop a glass ornament. He knew exactly what Tsukiko was referring to, since she mentioned knowing the Christmas decorations were in the basement.

Turning the other way hesitantly, Akaashi decided to tell her the truth. “A box labeled ‘Ken’ with a music notebook inside,” he answered honestly. Tsukiko wasn’t looking at him, but Akaashi hoped she wasn’t suddenly mad about invading her privacy. Before he was going to apologize, the girl said, “Don’t worry about it.”

Akaashi held back the urge to pry so he wouldn’t ruin the night for her, in case the ‘Ken’ box was something that Tsukiko wished not to talk about.

Before the night had ended for Yorozu-kan’s Christmas party to close; there was one person who had yet to receive her gifts. All together, everyone of her friends showered her with presents.

From Akaashi, she received a bulk of wool yarn for knitting and crocheting that were hobbies she recently picked up on.
Bokuto gave her a warm hug and a ‘pencil holder’ that he made in a ceramics class he took with some of the neighborhood elderly. It had an odd shape and random spirals carved everywhere, but the more Tsukiko looked at it the more she appreciated the abstract piece of art.

Kuroo acted like he had gotten Tsukiko something inappropriate but to her immense satisfaction it was a Gudetama kigurumi. She was happy enough to immediately put herself in it, which made Kuroo smile softly.

Ushijima’s present was a signed photograph of her favorite baseball player, Miyuki Kazuya. The boys cringed as they watched Tsukiko rub her face against the picture affectionately.

Oikawa and Iwaizumi’s shared gift was a Christmas cake with a small toy figure that supposedly resembled Tsukiko. The piece of chocolate that had the words, “to my hunny,” was tossed away much to Oikawa’s dismay.

Kenma gave the girl a set of five handmade ‘free hugs’ tickets and she used one right away. It almost made him regret his decision on a lazy gift. He also handed her a gift from Yaku, who was spending the night with family elsewhere. It was a ticket to an all-you-can-eat dessert buffet.

Lev was hesitant on giving his present to Tsukiko. It was apparently too much like Ushijima’s. The girl insisted she wouldn’t mind even if it turned out to be the exact same thing. Lev handed the thin box to her and as soon as she opened it she shrieked. It was a signed photograph of her favorite ice skater, Victor Nikiforov, inside a custom made dog-themed frame.

“My baseball boyfriend or my ice skating husband… I can’t choose!” Tsukiko sighed while holding both pictures against her chest.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY KUROOOOOOOOO!!! gah, I love that guy even though I make him such a jerk in the upcoming chapters LOL

alsooooo Miyuki Kazuya is from Daiya no Ace and Victor is from Yuri on Ice

follow me: dA/twitter/instagram @hikariotakuhime
“Happy New Year!!” they cheered.

New Years was an enormous holiday in Japan; everywhere around the world in fact. The country’s traditions regarding the special holiday were important and meaningful. A new year means a new start for everybody. With a clean slate, one could continue prospering more than they had the previous year.

Since the end of Christmas neighbors started putting out the kadomatsu, the pine decoration ornament, in front of their homes. Yorozu-kan had a fairly large one strangely enough. It arrived on Christmas night from Madame with instruction to put it on display immediately, which they clearly did. The size of it matched those found at the temples and they hoped they wouldn’t get accused of having stolen one.

New Years was spent under the Yorozu-kan roof. Despite the cold, Bokuto and Kuroo still wanted to do one thing: mochi pounding. They took lessons from a professional in the shopping district just so they could impress Tsukiko with their new skills and muscles. The two were working in sync between the pounding and the turning of the mochi. While they had their fun, Akaashi was helping Ushijima prepare the traditional meal since he had experience from doing the same with his mother. All they needed to finish with was the mochi the other two were making. Meanwhile, Tsukiko was in the living room writing postcards to send out to family and friends they hadn’t been able to see throughout the year. Since she had finer handwriting than the boys, they requested that she wrote their cards for them. It defeated the purpose of the postcards being personalized but Tsukiko still accepted because she wanted an excuse to keep writing more letters. It was perfect practice for her penmanship too.

“Aa-kun! Waka-papa! I finished both of yours,” she announced to the two in the kitchen. They hollered in response before returning to focus on the meal prep work. Tsukiko prepared to start on Kuroo’s but wondered if she really had to write ‘living with a cute girl’ in his letter to his family. Then she wondered if he even needed to send a card out considering Kuroo didn’t come too far from his family house unlike the others. Bokuto also wanted to mention Tsukiko as ‘a pretty amazing girl friend’ in his letter to his family.

“What is it with you two and your obsession over me?!” Tsukiko shouted over the mochi pounders. They both gave her devious smirks and said together, “because we looove you!”
The young woman rolled her eyes away from them. “Gross,” she spat in disgust.

Passing the kitchen, Tsukiko suddenly got something shoved into her mouth. She bit down on the substance, afraid at first, until realizing it was a piece of broiled fish cake. Ushijima stared down at her, waiting for feedback. She smiled and made an ‘ok’ with her hand. With that being enough for him he turned to Akaashi and made the same hand gesture.

Later on in the day the group watched television together and even played traditional New Year's games; though Kuroo complained about how they were acting like children. “Why are we playing fukuwarai? This is dumb.” he said as he refused to put on the blindfold for the childish game. He then made a sly comment how he’d only wear a blindfold if he were alone with Tsukiko in a bedroom. The girl ignored him then continued to find more games to keep everyone occupied and in the New Year's spirit.

“Hey, hey, hey! If we’re kids does that mean we get money?” Bokuto asked with his eyebrows wiggling suggestively. Akaashi gave him a blank look before correcting him that he’d be getting no such thing.

Tsukiko huffed angrily then crossed her arms over her chest. “Waka-papa! Where’s my New Year’s money?” she said in a childlike voice.

Following the act of pretend, or possibly not, Ushijima pulled out the wallet in his pocket. Kuroo and Bokuto shouted to stop him from actually giving Tsukiko money. Akaashi inhaled deeply to avoid letting out a sigh on New Year’s Eve.

Night had fallen and the sound of a loud bell echoed throughout the quiet night sky. The Yorozu-kan group huddled inside their kotatsu, eating soba while watching the bell ringing on live television. Since it was going to take at least two hours until it finished by midnight, they decided to share their reflection of the year and what they hoped to see in the upcoming one for the time being.

Bokuto went first, stating he enjoyed living with his best friend Akaashi. The latter felt extremely moved that if he were any more sensitive he would have cried.

Kuroo followed with rather sincere words, much to everyone’s surprise. “This year was more fun. I’m glad to have spent it with all of you.” he said with a genuine smile.
“I was nervous about moving out, but I am glad I did it since it meant living with wonderful friends.” Akaashi said with the same sincerity, causing Bokuto to start bawling into his friend’s arms.

Ushijima held his hands together on the table, appearing to be deep in thought. The others weren’t sure if he was capable of expressing his words properly but they were patient with him. Finally, he said, “This was a good year. Thank you, everyone.”

Tsukiko tossed herself onto Ushijima in the same manner Bokuto did to Akaashi. She pretended to sob emotionally before straightening up to give her gratitude.

“I would like to thank all of you too, for a wonderful year. At first we had problems adjusting to our new life together, but together we managed to get through things. I’d like to apologize for what I said the day we moved in. I doubted you guys, especially Kou-tan and Kuroo. You’ve proven me wrong. So again, thank you guys for this year. I look forward to another one with all of you!”

At the stroke of midnight, the five passed a cup of New Year’s sake. Traditionally a family would be sharing the drink but everyone mutually saw each other as family under Yorozu-kan. The first sip went to the youngest person in the group, Akaashi, since his birthday was most recent. After him was Tsukiko, Kuroo, and then Bokuto. The last person to drink from the cup was the oldest of the group, which was Ushijima.

“Happy New Year!!” they cheered.

The following morning had everyone awake as early as possible. They planned to attend the first shrine visit together but before that, they had experienced their first dream of the new year.

Akaashi was the type to not really remember what happened in his dreams but he knew his first dream of the year had something to do with Bokuto. He only hoped it didn’t mean anything bad.

Bokuto was dreaming about barbequed beef being cooked by Tsukiko and Momo, both wearing aprons. Only aprons.
Ushijima apparently doesn’t dream. According to Tsukiko it was because he had no reason to dream when he could obtain whatever he wanted with his own hands in reality. None of the others really believed that.

Kuroo dreamt he was back at Nekoma, experiencing again the stress caused by the match against Nohebi at the Spring High preliminary final. Reliving the memory of how nerve wrecking the intense match was reminded him how much his team was close to completely losing their chance of going to nationals that year. In his dream he watched as Yaku got injured and had to be removed from the court. Though it pained him to see a friend in that condition, he had brushed it off to focus on the game. At that time he couldn’t express it, but he was glad that Tsukiko attended the match to support the team. Normally she wouldn’t go to their games with them under the claim they didn’t need her. But to have her there at the time to tend to Yaku and then later Kuroo with his split nail, proved her value as their manager.

Upon waking up, Kuroo gripped at his bed hair with the anguish caused by the dream still riding in his thoughts. “Dammit.” he cursed under his breath when his first thought after waking up was the realization that he never did thanked the girl for her help.

Tsukiko herself was enjoying her New Year’s dream for the most part. It started off peacefully with her walking down a field with her boyfriend. They held hands while laughing together but out of nowhere the sky darkened and Tsukiko found herself alone. She called out for Yamaguchi several times but there was no answer. The ground had then turned into water, causing her to fall in. Since it was a dream Tsukiko was able to breathe perfectly fine, yet at the same time, she felt she couldn’t. Oxygen continued to escape her, forming bubbles that proceeded to rise to the surface. She attempted to catch them to no avail and slowly allowed her eyes to close.

Tsukiko woke up to gasp for air. She turned onto her back and stared at the ceiling while registering what she could recall of the dream. “Please don’t be a bad omen,” she prayed in a hushed voice. Then it occurred to her that she had yet to text her boyfriend, wishing him a happy new year.

From: the great kiko-chan

To: the puppy-face boyfriend

> Morning! Happy New Year Tada-kuuuun <3 <3 <3

> Did you have your first dream? I did and it was weird Σ(°Д°)

> Come in my next dream to protect me? („‟ „‟)
After hitting send, Tsukiko started rolling frantically on her bed. Embarrassment waved over her as she had second thoughts about the last line she wrote in her message. It was cheesy and sounded like something Kuroo would say. She got a reply back from Yamaguchi rather quickly. Normally he wouldn’t respond as fast when they sent each other something with embarrassing words attached. Tsukiko mentally screamed before reading.

**From: the puppy-face boyfriend**

> Good morning and Happy New Year to you too! <3
> My first dream was weird too, but maybe even weirder than yours?
> I was growing long hair super fast and cutting it was not working!! Σ ( ̄□̄; )

**From: the puppy-face boyfriend**

> Okay. That really was weird please ignore it.
> But what was your dream?
> If you want to share??

Tsukiko raised her arms in the air. For some reason she felt like she couldn’t tell him the truth to her dream. It wasn’t like she believed in prophetic dreams either, but something was giving her an off-putting feeling. Brushing it off, she simply replied that her dream was about her drowning. Amusingly enough, Yamaguchi had replied immediately with crying emoticons. It was cute how much he had adapted to texting like his girlfriend.

A knock at the door and a deep voice came to notify Tsukiko to get ready for the first shrine visit. She responded and then got out of bed in a brighter mood than when she woke up.

Over an hour later, Bokuto and Kuroo started wondering if they could leave without the other three but soon enough they saw Akaashi dashing down the stairs.

“Finally! Now where’s the princess—” Kuroo’s eyes trailed to the colorful silhouette that was following behind Akaashi, who was smirking. Bokuto’s jaw dropped and his hands slapped onto his cheeks. He looked like a certain famous painting of a screaming figure.
Coming down the stairs steadily was Tsukiko decked out in a full New Year’s kimono. Her hair was tied back into a braided bun with elaborate ornaments pinning it in place. On her face was a light amount of makeup that subtly enhanced her natural beauty. What really got to Kuroo however was her exposed nape. There was always something sexually attractive about a girl with her bare neck showing. To his disappointment it ended up getting covered by a faux fur scarf Ushijima had just wrapped around Tsukiko.

“Well then,” Kuroo cleared his throat. He held out a hand to Tsukiko while slightly bent over. “Shall we go, princess?” he said with his typical flirty grin. Thinking for a moment, Tsukiko decided to play along for fun. She accepted his hand and followed him out the front door.

The nearest shrine they chose was at least close enough to walk from the house but when they were barely halfway over there Tsukiko was complaining about her shoes. Akaashi scolded her to not start an attitude on the new year. She merely pouted in response. Ushijima had agreed though, even refusing to carry her when she asked. Kuroo snickered and offered to do it but Tsukiko declined.

“You’re probably gonna touch me weird,” she said in a snotty tone.

It was a long line to ring the shrine bell. Tsukiko tried to stand on the toes of her sandals to see how far they were from the front. Another body brushed against her and she would have fallen face-first onto the pavement if it weren’t for someone catching her.

“Ah! I’m so sorr—” Tsukiko froze when she saw whose arms she was gripping onto.

With a charming smile and twinkling teeth, Oikawa shot her a wink. “No need to thank me, my hunny~” he said to her. From behind, Iwaizumi chopped his hand against the brunette’s head and Tsukiko retreated to Ushijima’s side while hissing at the flirt.

In due time everyone had reached the bell to make their prayer for the new year. They tossed in their donation, clapped their hands, and then made their wishes. Kuroo pestered Tsukiko about what she wished for and she argued that telling him would make it not come true anymore. Bokuto on the other hand casually gave away what he prayed for; “YAKINIKU WITH EVERYONE!” he said with some drool already escaping his mouth.

Before returning home, the group gathered to share their sacred lot results. Akaashi received ‘small blessing’ and so did Iwaizumi. Bokuto got ‘half blessing’ and ‘ending blessing’ was Oikawa’s. Out of everyone, Ushijima had the best luck. He got ‘great blessing’ and chose to keep the paper as the others recommended it would be his charm. The last two, Kuroo and Tsukiko, were both given ‘curse’. They immediately went to one of the trees to tie their paper onto it in hopes of leaving the
“WHY DID I HAVE TO MATCH WITH YOU!?” Tsukiko wailed. “Wait. Maybe it’s your fault. You cursed me!” she pointed at Kuroo who did the same and accused her of cursing him as well.

Ushijima put a hand on both of them to make them stop fighting. Then he said, “You two can feed off of my luck.”

“What are we, parasites?” The cats said together.

With the first shrine visit being done the group of friends returned to Yorozu-kan and took a picture together in front of their kadomatsu. Once Oikawa and Iwaizumi left, Akaashi noticed there were envelopes in the mailbox. It was likely New Year cards from everyone’s family. He took everything inside and found his roommates already relaxing under the warm kotatsu.

“Here’s the mail,” Akaashi announced as he took a seat inside before handing each person their letter. There was one left and it was addressed to the whole group. Tsukiko took the liberty of reading the contents. “Looks like Madame is coming back in March,” she relayed to the boys. According to the letter, their landlady was also going to return with more tenants. Knowing that, everyone wasn’t sure how to feel. They were already used to each other after living together for a year and they had no idea who the new people would be. Having strangers move in could ruin their established system too.

“Well, let’s get along with them when they’re here.” Tsukiko said while undoing her hair.

Time quickly flew by with the transition from winter to spring and the start of another new semester. Much like last year at the Yorozu-kan, they were expecting new additions to fill the empty rooms.

While the boys were relaxed and waiting by the front entrance, their house mother was going back and forth around the main floor in a frenzy. Despite Kuroo having done his job of cleaning the place with help from the others, for some reason, Tsukiko thought the house still looked dirty. She had her messy hair tied back under a bandana and rubber gloves on both hands.

“Kiko-chan, you can stop now. We’ve made the house spotless.” said Akaashi, the voice of
reasoning. He jumped when he was met with Tsukiko’s agitated eye twitches. Slowly he backed away, returning to the other three.

“What’s got her so worked up?” Bokuto wondered. “She’s been on edge for a while now. Oh! The time of the month, right?”

“Airhead, those only last at most a week and she’s been like this longer than that.” Kuroo said while slipping his shoes on. He’d rather wait outside than be indoors around a crazy woman. But in the knick of time, a moving van and the familiar car had finally arrived.

Kuroo approached with caution. Flipping her thick locks behind her shoulder, Madame lowered her shades and gave the handsome fellow a wink. The latter shivered not because it was drafty outside.

“Ahhhhhh I didn’t think there was anyone who could drive like Tanaka-senpai's sister…” groaned a small orange-haired boy as he climbed out of the American convertible. Waking up in the backseat was a raven-haired young man who simply addressed the other as, “idiot.”

“HOOOOOO?!” Bokuto began to holler as she beelined for the person exiting the moving van. “TSUKKIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII
“U-Uh. Hey.” the boy replied nervously while confused on how to react to Bokuto’s desire for a hug as a greeting. Should he hug the former rival? He wasn’t sure since he didn’t expect to see Bokuto or Kuroo.

Ushijima, like last year, was talking to Madame while they were heading for the backyard. Kuroo suspected there would be more secrets only shared with the oldest of the bunch again. He hoped to be mentally prepared if that turned out to be the case later.

As the guys began unloading boxes from the vehicles Tsukiko finally appeared outside to join them. First she noticed Hinata and immediately jumped him. The boy’s face went beat red from the soft sensation of Tsukiko’s skin and mounds on her chest pressing against him.

“SHOOOO-TAN~!!” she shrieked gleefully.


All eyes turned to the two, some showing disgust at the sight of Tsukiko fawning over Hinata. Neither had grown since high school, but it was still noticeable how Hinata was taller than Tsukiko by mere two inches. After she loosened her grip on the nearly unconscious freshman, her attention went to Tsukishima. She approached him with a slight crinkle between her eyebrows.

“Why are you here,” she said as less of a question.

Before Tsukishima could answer, his golden-brown eyes had shifted in the direction behind him. Tsukiko followed his line of sight until she saw the tall figure that got out of the van. Stroking the ponytail behind him, Yamaguchi looked at the ground and then up at the girl in front of him. He gave her a meek smile. “H-Hey,” he greeted her.

Just when Kuroo was about to leave, not wanting to see Tsukiko gush over another guy, he halted from a sudden sound he wasn’t expecting to hear at all.

Everyone witnessed with shock clear in their deer-in-headlights expressions. Tsukiko had just slapped Yamaguchi, her boyfriend of nearly seven years.
I SCREAM YOU SCREAM WE ALL SCREAM????????????

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"When I slapped him earlier it wasn’t really because I was still angry-- maybe? I think-- I don’t know! I just panicked!” she said before hiding her face to keep Akaashi from seeing her cry.

Stacks of boxes filled the foyer for the time being until the meeting with the landlady would end. Madame sat in the single seater while sipping on tea in a new porcelain cup. The air was tense; not because of everyone waiting for Madame to say something, but because they were all curious about what happened earlier. They wondered why Tsukiko slapped the boyfriend she was so fond of. It didn’t seem she hit him hard enough to leave a mark though.

The tap of Madame’s cup to its matching saucer broke their thoughts. “Let’s give a warm welcome to our four new tenants,” she said with her bright lipstick-red smile. The clapping was light and not as enthusiastic as it should have been but everyone put in the best effort they could; minus Tsukiko. She wasn’t in the room to begin with. After what she did to Yamaguchi she had retreated to hide in the basement.

“Excuse me,” Akaashi raised his hand to speak. “Your letter said we’d be gaining only two people. Why is it we have four now?”

“I made no mistake in my letter.” Madame answered swiftly.

“Initially it was only Tobio-chan and Shouyou-chan who would be joining the Yorozu-kan. The other two were last minute additions after I had already sent my letter.” The woman explained, glancing over at Tsukishima and Yamaguchi briefly before taking another sip of her tea. When she finished, she handed the empty cup to Ushijima to take care of.

“Before I leave, I would like to announce that I will be travelling overseas again.”

Kuroo rolled his eyes. He had a feeling the landlady was going to disappear on them again and most likely never show up until the next year.

Madame reached into her purse and pulled out four small keys. Akaashi recognized them to be the
house keys when the woman passed everything over to him, along with a folded note. “I’ll be taking my leave then. Good luck,” she said while rising from the chair.

“Hey, hey, hey!” Bokuto cried out. “What about Kiko-chan!”?

“What about her?” The cold tone in Madame’s voice sent chills down Bokuto’s spine. He wasn’t sure if the woman was being mean or not in regards to the girl that was left in charge of the house.

“W-Well, uh… is she still our house mother or whatever?” he mustered the courage to ask.

Madame smiled. “That’s up to her.”

With the sound of the convertible leaving the driveway the tension in the living room was no more and just about everyone had exhaled a sigh at the same time. They continued to be silent however while shooting glances at one another. Eventually, Tsukishima raised his hand to speak. He had gotten annoyed that nobody would talk, especially the ones particularly known among the group for being blabbermouths.

“Can we get a rundown?” he asked straightforwardly. “Like, a gist of how things work around here.”

Though Ushijima most likely had more knowledge about the house than any of the others, he left Akaashi to do the talking. The latter let out a sigh before standing up in front of everyone.

“First thing’s first, everyone has to do their part in managing the house. When it was just the five of us, we all had chore roles assigned by Madame.” Akaashi paused for a moment to look over the note that Madame have given him. He was disappointed to see it didn’t mention what the new four would be doing around the house. All the note said was ‘ask your house mother’ which made him wonder if Madame was also the scheming type.

“Well, now that we’re a full house we can rotate and share some of those chores. Guess we’ll need a spreadsheet and—”

A beep from the kitchen caught everyone’s attention, especially Akaashi’s, since he knew it was the elevator. Tsukiko walked into the living room with a grouchy look on her face. The hint of redness in her eyes indicated she had to be crying, which made Akaashi concerned. He was about
to ask for her well being but the girl held up a finger as though to hush him from saying a thing.

“Listen up, boys.” Tsukiko switched places with Akaashi at the front of the room. She looked forward, standing with her legs apart and hands on her hips. “I’m the boss around here,” was the next thing she said. Her exertion of dominance seemed to excite Bokuto while Hinata and Kageyama straightened themselves properly. They felt the intense aura Tsukiko emitted to be similar to their previous captains from their time at Karasuno. Tsukishima noticed too and cocked a smirk at them while snickering lightly.

“These are the house rules. Pay attention and remember well!” Tsukiko shouted while pointing at an imaginary whiteboard behind her.

Yorozu-kan house rules:

- Listen to the house mother like you would your actual mother. In her absence, Akaashi and/or Ushijima are the next go-tos.
- Invite no guests without notifying the house mother and other tenants ahead of time.
- Absolutely no hookups will be permitted on the premises; those who break this rule will be punished with blackmail and public humiliation.
- No house parties without permission from the house mother and other tenants.
- Do not go into the basement.

“Ossu!” shouted the quick freak duo. Their fast response put a grin on Tsukiko’s face. Judging by her behavior, Akaashi conclude that Tsukiko chose to brush aside her negative feelings for the time being; for the sake of keeping everyone from worrying too much over her most likely. It didn’t seem right to him. After all, she had hit her boyfriend in front of everyone. The guy himself even kept quiet this whole time.

“Now, allow me to give you a tour of Yorozu-kan and reveal it’s ridiculous secrets.” Tsukiko went on to repeat the exact things she showed to the other boys last year; from the hidden drawers in the wall with photo albums and books to how the elevator worked. All of it amazed Hinata, as well as Bokuto, since he forgot a majority of the house tricks.

By the end of the girl’s explanation, Kageyama raised a question, “Where do we bathe?” he asked. In Yorozu-kan, there were only two half baths that consisted of only a toilet and sink. The one on
the main floor was slightly bigger but only because it attached to the laundry room.

Tsukiko pushed up her glasses, even though she wasn’t wearing them.

“We take our baths—”

“OUTSIDE!” Bokuto interjected. Hinata gasped loudly as he imagined himself getting boiled in a barrel with Kageyama fanning the flames underneath. Kuroo let out his hyena laugh, having a feeling that Hinata was thinking of something outrageous.

“What he meant was, we go outside to a bathhouse that’s nearby.” Tsukiko made the correction while sternly glaring at Bokuto.

Next on the agenda was to decide the new room arrangements. On the second floor were rooms 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6; so far the first three being occupied by Ushijima, Akaashi, and Bokuto respectively. Following the third floor were the rooms 7, 8, 9, and 10; which only had Kuroo and Tsukiko.

Kageyama raised his hand quickly to claim Room 9, stating it was because of his old player number. Hinata gritted his teeth wishing he could do the same, but his number was 10 and the corresponding room was taken by Tsukiko.

“You can room with me Sho-tan~” Tsukiko winked.

“That’s o-okay!! I’ll just take Room 8, so I’m a number higher than Bakageyama!” stated the small boy as he went ahead and took some of his boxes up the stairs to claim the room. Kageyama followed quickly resulting in the two racing to the third floor. They were already gone before Tsukiko could tell them that using the elevator would be easier so they wouldn’t have to constantly run up and down two flights of stairs.

Tsukishima knelt down to find his stuff among the boxes. “I’ll take Room 6 since it’s closest to the stairs on the second floor.” he said, barely being audible to Tsukiko since she was purposely looking away from the two new tenants that remained in the foyer. Akaashi looked at her and then the freckle-faced guy who practically had a cloud glooming over his head.

“I guess this means Yamaguchi-kun gets Room 5,” said Akaashi as he went to help the other take his belongings upstairs.
“Nope.” Kuroo intervened. With his hands in his pockets he tilted his head towards Yamaguchi, giving him a blank stare. “Decided I’ll switch back to Room 5. I don’t want to be stuck rooming next to Chibi-chan for a year.”

To Akaashi, it sounded more like Kuroo was purposely pushing the couple together despite the obvious turmoil between them at the moment. He wasn’t sure what to say though so instead waited to hear what the others thought.

Yamaguchi glanced at Tsukiko then back at the floor. “W-Well,” he couldn’t bring himself to say anything otherwise.

Kuroo dropped one of Yamaguchi’s boxes into his arms while leaning close enough to quickly whisper, “man up already.”

The new living arrangements took up a majority of the day. By the time the group finished it was already dinner. Ushijima had Kageyama and Hinata help him set up the table, since the two insisted on doing so. It was likely they wanted to make an appealing impression on the second person in charge around Yorozu-kan.

Almost everyone was present for dinner. The only person missing was the house mother herself. Initially Akaashi had stood up to go fetch her but then Yamaguchi boldly said he would do it.

“Well, alright. Be safe,” replied Akaashi as he sat back down. His warning was meant to be a joke but Yamaguchi took it to heart.

Reaching Room 10, standing in front of the door silently still, Yamaguchi raised a knuckle but it kept hovering over the door’s surface. His eyes were dropping to the floor instead of where he knew was eye level with Tsukiko.

“Damn. ‘Man up’ he said…”

The repeated words came out under his breath and suddenly the door handle had turned on its own. Yamaguchi panicked and took a step back. Just when Tsukiko had opened her door, all she saw
was her boyfriend’s ponytail before he escaped down the stairs. She pressed her lips together with a grim expression on her face.

In the end, Tsukiko didn’t attend dinner and instead had Akaashi deliver it to her room. He took it as an opportunity to interrogate her too. It was easy to notice how she would only open up about her feelings when directly asked. Akaashi got to her door and knocked. “As your ‘girl’ friend, it’s my job to hear you rant, right?” he said to her in a light-hearted tone, which then granted him access into her room.

Tsukiko took a seat in the confined space between her nightstand and bed while eating the dishes brought to her. It was an odd place to eat, considering she had a desk and chair. Akaashi wasn’t sure how to start the conversation especially because of how she was eating nonchalantly. But to break the silence first was Tsukiko.

“I’m not sure why,” she began. “but I can’t stop feeling upset at him.”

Akaashi sat in front of her with his legs criss-crossed. “What’s got you so mad that you’d slap him in front of everyone?” he asked straight to the point, making Tsukiko shudder and clam for a moment. It was after she had nothing left to stuff her mouth with that she decided to tell Akaashi what she meant to tell him over a week ago.

Tsukiko wanted to surprise Yamaguchi at his graduation ceremony. She ended up going with Kuroo who volunteered as her stand-in bodyguard because apparently she needed one at all times. Since she miscalculated the time it would take to get to Miyagi by train, the two ended up arriving just as the ceremony was basically over. They only saw three familiar faces upon entering through the front gate. Kuroo remained with Tsukishima, Hinata and Kageyama to congratulate them as well as hit on some female high school graduates. Tsukiko had gone ahead to search for her boyfriend; being told that he went to the gym to part with it.

“Ta-da-shii~” she called out in a sing-song way. Since her boyfriend was tall, it didn’t take long for her to spot him in the distance. However, when she approached closer, Tsukiko noticed Yamaguchi wasn’t alone. Standing in front of him was Karasuno’s manager, Hitoka Yachi. Her hair had grown past her shoulders last Tsukiko remembered seeing her. It looked cute on the petite girl, she initially thought until picking up on their conversation.

“I just wanted to admit it, even knowing I had no chance to begin with.” Yachi said with water budding in the corner of her eyes as she gripped the hem of her skirt. Concerned about making the
girl cry, Yamaguchi knelt to her level and gently placed his hand over Yachi’s forehead. This gesture already made Tsukiko’s eyes widen but the next thing he said did more.

“Well, if it makes you feel better Hitoka-chan… I did like you too.” Yamaguchi confessed calmly.

Tsukiko felt a sting in her chest from hearing the last words spoken but she tried not to jump to conclusions just yet and continued to listen to them. Though, her thoughts kept assuming that the context was about romance.

“What? You did?! Even though you— you were dating Kiko-senpai? Why?” stammered Yachi.

Yamaguchi rubbed the back of his neck nervously, some pink developing in his cheeks. “I just— at the time… I wasn’t even sure if we were still dating. She stopped contacting after leaving me behind that I ended up letting my feelings slip.”

The sound of a shoe scraping across the ground caused the two to dart their heads in the direction it came from. Both were equally shocked to see Tsukiko staring back at them with a menacing look in her eyes. She started slowly walking up to them.

“Senpai, this is—”

Before Yachi could explain the situation she let out a high-pitched squeak when Tsukiko suddenly lunged forward at her. Yamaguchi stuck himself between the girls, looking down at Tsukiko with mixed feelings of concern and anger.

“What the hell!” he shouted. “Why would you try to attack Yachi-san!? She didn’t do anything to you!”

Tsukiko remained silent but her expression was frightening. In her head all she could think about was the fact that her boyfriend went from calling the other girl by her first name when he thought they were alone then switched the formalities. It bothered her.

Showing up from around the corner was Kuroo and the rest. “Ahh,” sighed Tsukishima. “I told you there’d be no point confessing to that guy. Now look what’s happened.”
Yamaguchi stared back at his friend with confusion furrowing his brows. “Tsukki, what are you saying?” For a split second he let his guard down, giving Tsukiko the chance to pounce Yachi who let out another fearful shriek. Yamaguchi gripped Tsukiko’s wrist hard enough to force her into letting go of the long blonde ponytail.

“Gahh!” Tsukiko yelped as she backed off both of them. She was breathing heavily with anger that continued to stir up inside of her. The only reason she resisted from further physical conflict was because Kuroo reminded her with a warning that they were on public grounds. After that, the two turned around and left Karasuno High school.

“......Are you serious Tsukiko?!” Akaashi shouted. He raised his voice because he couldn’t believe that the girl in front of him nearly started a fight with a high school graduate. It explained why Tsukiko had been acting more frantically as of late which made him wish he had asked what was wrong earlier than now. Akaashi got up and paced around the room while tugging at his hair. He was thinking about the consequences that would’ve come had Tsukiko done more harm to Yachi. The girl’s idol career would’ve been in jeopardy for one thing. For once, Akaashi was glad Kuroo had been with Tsukiko to pull her back from the situation.

“Still. You, the jealous type? And yet you go around getting clingy on other guys without a second thought.” he started berating her, which made Tsukiko curl up into a tighter ball. She understood where she was wrong but even though Akaashi didn’t outright say it, she felt he was calling her a hypocrite.

’’When I slapped him earlier it wasn’t really because I was still angry— maybe? I think— I don’t know! I just panicked!’’ she said before hiding her face to keep Akaashi from seeing her cry. He knelt on the floor again and gripped her shoulders.

“No excuses! You need to apologize to both of them now!” Akaashi told her firmly but the girl didn’t respond. Feeling frustrated, he got up and left the room to put away the tray of food she finished. The normally level-headed guy discovered everyone was present outside of Tsukiko’s room. He suspected they were eavesdropping and would have scolded them but instead he continued his way downstairs.

Hinata and Kageyama looked up at Yamaguchi, only to find he had gone back inside his room without saying a thing.

Bokuto followed Akaashi to attempt to convince the other he wasn’t eavesdropping at all.
Kuroo on the other hand remained leaning against the wall while looking at the door to Room 7 with a blank stare.

Ushijima peeked inside Tsukiko’s room. He took a step inside but was immediately told to leave. Respecting the girl’s wish, he bowed his head before closing the bedroom door.

“Well. Good night then,” he said in a deep voice.

:"^) so this is what it feels like writing a fanfic to make the characters suffer

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Chasing

Chapter Summary

“Sorry I’m getting to this so late, but now seemed like a good time. Get ready boys! I am taking you all job hunting.”

The following morning was a Sunday. Everyone woke up on time for breakfast, except one. Attentive glances kept hovering over to the empty seat. The boys ate their food in utter silence and then washed up quickly. Akaashi took the chance to go into detail on the chores and how rent payment worked. Regarding the last thing, it reminded him of something that never got brought up since last year.

“Didn’t Tsukiko say she was going to find us jobs?” he directed the question to Ushijima, who was about to take a tray of food to the girl’s room. Ushijima nodded before heading up the stairs, only to stop midway as the little devil made her appearance.

Tsukiko was dressed in a hoodie and shorts with her hair terribly braided back. “Precisely!” she shouted in a cheery tone while pointing at Akaashi with a grin. As he feared, she chose to sweep her rather important problem under the rug.

Bokuto leaped up from the sofa and went, “Ooh!” without knowing exactly what Tsukiko was referring to until she explained herself.

“Sorry I’m getting to this so late, but now seemed like a good time. Get ready boys! I am taking you all job hunting.”

Once everyone got properly dressed in their casual outdoor clothes they set out with confused looks. Tsukiko was leading them opposite of where the bus stop was from the house. Kuroo had raised the question as to where they were going but the girl simply told him, “You’ll see when we get there,” while following the directions on her phone.

The Yorozu-kan group was walking further into their neighborhood, which none of them of them except Ushijima had tread through before. “Big!” Hinata commented about the houses they were passing. It was true that the homes around them were progressively getting larger in size; some possibly rivaling the Yorozu-kan’s.
“This way,” pointed Tsukiko as she walked through a path between two large houses. At the end of the path a park was view. Only Ushijima recognized the area since he usually took his morning runs in every direction possible. “Are we heading for—” he was about to make a guess until Tsukiko stopped him. She gave him a confirming grin then directed everyone’s attention to an establishment nearby. They approached it and the first thing they noticed the line of women that formed outside.

Tsukiko casually stepped up to the open entrance, only to get stopped by one of the women in the line. “Hey!” they called out. “Don’t cut! That’s rude!” they hissed. Tsukiko turned to face them but said nothing, then continued her way inside. The boys stood outside nervously, not wanting to follow Tsukiko after that and enrage more women. Seconds later, Tsukiko returned with someone behind her. He was a tall male and appeared to be foreign based on his blond hair and green eyes.

“Sorry, everyone,” he said to the women outside.

“I know we just opened but we’re going to take a quick break due to unexpected circumstances. Please come back in an hour?”

Suddenly the line broke apart and all of the women gathered around the man. The sight resembled the usual thing that happened whenever the group was with Oikawa. After several minutes were spent politely turning them away, the group was able to go inside. The man leaned against the main counter only to then slouch over and exhaled a heavy sigh. He ran a hand through his hair while giving Tsukiko a tired look.

“You just HAD to choose now of all times to come in,” he groaned.

The girl merely scoffed back. “Hmph! You’re the one that told me to drop by whenever.”

“She’s correct, nii-san.” said another male who looked to be just as tall as Tsukishima. In fact, their appearances were rather similar but it really had to do with them both wearing glasses. Apart from that, the other had dark brown hair and eyes. “Good morning, Yorozu-kan group,” he greeted them politely.

“Welcome to the White Fang. This man here, my older brother, is the owner.”

The foreign-looking man lazily raised his hand while looking the other way. He then straightened up to properly introduce himself. “The name’s Haru. Kaidou, Haru.”
Once the remaining customers had left everyone took seats at the tables and counters. Tsukiko sipped on juice while appearing disappointed.

“What’s wrong?” asked Ushijima. The girl released the straw from her lips and answered, “I don’t see the puppy…” with a rather pouty tone.

Haru groaned again, having caught onto what Tsukiko was referring to. “Like hell I’d let you around him again!” he shouted at the girl who then shot up to argue back.

“You can’t hide him from me forever!! I’ll break into the back to get to your house if I have to!” Tsukiko barked back. The two growled at each other in the same fashion when Tsukiko and Kuroo had their fights.

Akaashi stood up to settle the girl down. He wasn’t exactly sure the relationship she had with the cafe’s owner, but he still didn’t want her to act rude towards a fellow adult. “Can you make an exception and let her see your dog?” he asked Haru.

Haru held his arms up to make an ‘x’ and said, “She’s not talking about our dog.”

His brother, who later mentioned his name to be Shima, then added, “What Tsukiko is referring to is actually the youngest Kaidou sibling.” The moment he said ‘youngest’ it was like a light bulb appeared over everyone’s head. Knowing Tsukiko, they had to be a small boy that she wanted to affectionately smother.

“Enough about my precious little brother,” Haru continued as he sat back down. “So, which one of these are going to work for me?” he asked Tsukiko. “I can’t possibly hire all of them you know; even if it means replacing Ikuyoshi.” The last comment referred to the other waiter that was cleaning glassware behind the counter, who then reacted angrily even if his boss meant what he said as a joke.

Tsukiko simply shrugged while drinking her juice again. “Take your pick.” she told Haru, her reply only irking the man.

“Well, then I guess whoever wants the job most.” he said while leaning back in his seat and waiting for one of the boys to speak up. But since the awkward silence bothered Haru, he ended up randomly selecting one of them anyway. “Fine! This guy!” he exclaimed, pointing at Kuroo. The
latter then pointed to himself, confused, and the rest suddenly clapped their hands for him.

“What the hell?! Kiko-chan!” he yelled at the girl who sipped from her now empty cup. “What?” Tsukiko looked at Kuroo with her arms crossed. “I actually think you’d do great working here,” she said, piquing the other’s curiosity.

“You have a charming face and a way with words when it comes to flirting. Honestly, you’re perfect for the job. Just look at Haru. He’s an ex-host and now a successful business owner; even if his customers are still 100% female.”

Tsukiko snickered with her last comment, making Kuroo have mixed feelings since the things she said included a compliment about him.

“I guess I’ll accept the offer,” he muttered and pretended not to be happy that the girl called him charming.

The group left Kuroo behind at the White Fang to let him have a proper interview. They then set out for the next place on Tsukiko’s list, which turned out to be another cafe just some blocks away. The second they entered the cafe everyone was overwhelmed yet relaxed by the aroma of coffee.

“Welcome to :re, how may I help?” asked a young woman approaching the group from the register. She had short bob-cut hair with bangs that covered the right side of her face, though it didn’t hide the fact she was notably beautiful. Both Hinata and Kageyama stiffened from the woman’s presence because of her resemblance to Karasuno’s former manager and Tsukiko’s cousin, Kiyoko.

“No gawking at Tou-kan!” shouted Tsukiko as she dragged the boys further inside. “She’s taken!”

The woman, Touka, simply chuckled.

In the same manner as before, Touka was left to pick which of the boys would work in her cafe. But like Haru, she couldn’t decide for herself and had to ask for Tsukiko’s recommendation. Tsukiko rolled her eyes then took a sip of her coffee after drowning it with creamer. “Kei,” she said but only to immediately hear, “No way,” from the boy himself. She shot a glare at the four-eyes who avoided making eye contact with her.
“Alright, then Tobi and Sho-chan.” Tsukiko told the other woman.

Touka tilted her head curiously. “Both of them?” she asked.

“Yep. They’re an inseparable pair just like the other two you hired a while back,” Tsukiko added.

“What other two?” Akaashi inquired but Touka quickly answered him. “She means Oikawa-kun and Iwaizumi-kun. They came in some time ago because Kiko-chan recommended them to me.”

Being told the last part made Akaashi and Ushijima give Tsukiko a stern look. The girl did promise them a year ago she would find them part-time jobs when she found some, so they felt slightly betrayed that she had helped Oikawa and Iwaizumi first.

The group was slowly dwindling down as Tsukiko introduced everyone to different places. After leaving Hinata and Kageyama behind, they reached a bakery called Furukawa Bread where Bokuto was instantly hired by one of the owners.

“This bread is so good!!” shouted the owl who was wolfing down on strange, beef-filled bread. The others looked at him with questioning glances.

“Ha, ha, ha! I like this kid!” said the co-owner, a man named Akio. Beside him was his wife, Sanae, who was ecstatic about the positive reaction she was getting over one of her odd creations.

Tsukiko nudged Akaashi while whispering, “watch what happens next.”

The mood changed as Tsukishima made his honest critique about the woman’s bread. “This is pathetic. Over-seasoned beef filling inside bread that doesn’t even compliment the taste of the meat? It makes no sense at all.” he said with a harsh tone.

The next moment, Sanae buried her tearful face into her hands and ran out of the bakery crying, “I’m so sorry for this failure!!” Her husband Akio then crammed beef-filled bread into his mouth while incoherently yelling, “but I love your bread!!!” then proceeded to chase the woman down the street.
Tsukiko held her stomach, laughing hysterically as though she were Kuroo. Bokuto stood confused about what just happened all while enjoying everyone else’s share of the bread.

“Waka-papa,” called Tsukiko as she lead the remainder of the group into the fourth stop. “This one's for you,” she pointed.

Rather than have everyone enter, Tsukiko only took Ushijima into the izakaya. It made sense when Akaashi peeked inside and noticed how busy the place was. While they were alone, Akaashi thought it was the perfect time to talk to Yamaguchi. He had assumed the other kept quiet the entire time because of Tsukiko’s presence.

“Why haven’t you said anything to her?” he asked directly. Yamaguchi was taken aback by how straightforward the question was. He didn’t know how to exactly respond when a serious question was asked without warning.

“I just… I was thinking I’d give her space.” he answered, though it clearly wasn’t what Akaashi wanted to hear.

“What is it with you two and communication? I’d think a long-distance couple of over five years to be masters at communicating.” Akaashi used a colder tone than what Tsukishima would expect coming someone who was usually calm even towards the annoyingly loud Bokuto. Yamaguchi had nothing to say back but simply rubbed the back of his head with his eyes weakly dropping to the ground.

Tsukiko soon returned to them, leaving Ushijima with someone who appeared massively taller than Lev; and obviously bulkier on the muscle meat. “See ya, Tako-kun!” she waved to the guy who then corrected her with his name actually being Takeo.

It wasn’t far from a distance when Tsukiko dropped off Akaashi at a dessert shop called Les Cerises. They were greeted by a petite cheerful girl and an irritated chef hiding behind her.

“Hey, Rin-Rin. Tell the coward to get out here and face me like a man.” Tsukiko said crudely, though the smaller girl responded with laughter.
“You’re so funny Kiko-chan!” The bright aura emitting from her greatly resembled Karasuno’s former manager. Realizing this, Tsukiko clicked her tongue while approaching the counter with the remaining three following behind.

“Hey, cake chef.” Tsukiko glared at the man that was also glaring back. It looked as if sparks were flying; the bad kind when two people that despise each other met eyes. “What do you want from I, the great Ichinose?” he responded with a lofty voice.

The other girl, Rinko, squeaked when Tsukiko suddenly attempted to climb over the counter while holding up a fist.

“A job! I want a job here!” shouted Akaashi, who had his arms wrapped around Tsukiko by her waist to restrain her.

It was a little past lunch time when Tsukiko and the last two boys stopped by a family restaurant to eat. The three were completely silent and didn’t even make eye contact. Tsukiko was looking over her phone while Tsukishima was pretending to listen to music and Yamaguchi was left staring out the window of their booth seat. Several times he hesitated to look over at his girlfriend, worried that the air would become more awkward if their eyes had accidentally met.

“Umm…” All three turned their heads at the child-looking waitress that was waiting to take their order.

“Ah, sorry Poplar-chan,” said Tsukiko as she picked up the menu to scan over. “Actually, the lunch meal set for us.” she decided. Better to order fast, she thought.

The small girl with thick brown hair nodded her head and smiled. “Right! Three sandwiches with a side of fries coming up!” As Poplar took the menu books from them, she leaned towards Tsukiko to whisper, “your boyfriend is just as tall as I imagined~”

Once the waitress was gone, Tsukiko suddenly said, “wanna work here Tsushizushi?”

“No.” the bespectacled blond simply grunted.
It bothered Tsukishima that he knew she was referring to him. Ever since they met in junior high school, the one thing he hated about the girl was her habit of giving people nicknames, most of which sounded like she was purposely mispronouncing their names. The odd way of naming people bothered him so much that at some point Tsukishima said he’d rather Tsukiko call him by his first name. It was short and easy so there was no way for her to butcher it somehow.

Tsukiko let out a sigh as she put her elbow on the table then rested her chin in her hand. “How about you, Tada-kun?” she asked without looking at the other guy. Yamaguchi perked up. He felt content to finally hear her say something to him, even with the bitter undertone. He stretched his clammy hands while trying to find his words carefully.

“Y-Yeah! I’ll work here if th-that’s what you think.” he managed to say but heard nothing back from the girl. Oddly enough he still felt happy.

Everyone reunited at Yorozu-kan later that afternoon to share their experiences. Kuroo had already started his job as a waiter at the White Fang and even bragged to Tsukiko that he got to meet the ‘puppy’ she yearned for while there.

Hinata and Kageyama mentioned looking forward to meeting Oikawa and Iwaizumi again. Kageyama also bluntly asked if their boss, Touka, was taken by the tall man they met later in the cafe.

“No, no, noooo that’s her uncle.” Tsukiko informed.

Bokuto shared more weird bread he brought back from the bakery but only Hinata was willing to try it. However, after just one bite, the small crow beelined for the toilet. Both Kuroo and Tsukiko laughed like hyenas.

Ushijima and Akaashi learned that their coworkers, Takeo and Rinko, were a couple.

“What an interesting coincidence,” said Akaashi until Tsukiko also corrected him. “Nah, I intentionally arranged this.” she said then stuck out her tongue playfully.

“This way you two can cover their shifts so they can go on more dates! Upupu~!”
The last two, Tsukishima and Yamaguchi, had nothing much to share. Unlike everyone else they didn’t get left behind at their new workplace; the family restaurant called Wagnaria.

“The manager there was very laid-back and even told us to go in for work whenever we wanted.” Yamaguchi said to Hinata, who simply responded with excitement.

“Warning,” Tsukiko interjected. “Don’t ever call Kyou-san ‘old’ or whatever unless you want double the amount of shifts necessary. But call her young and she’ll half it—though that also means less pay too...”

Realizing that the couple was talking to each other made Akaashi question their relationship even more. They were supposedly in a rut, and yet, there they were chatting normally unlike the day before. He wasn't sure if it just had to do with Tsukiko’s habit of brushing issues aside or if it was how the two functioned. Regardless, he was sure it wasn’t healthy for them.

After dinner was finished and cleaned it was time for a bath. Each individual grabbed their essentials; their personal shampoo and scrubs as well as a change of clothes.

“Bathhouse!” Both Bokuto and Hinata cheered as they eagerly skipped down the street together. Kuroo snickered at them before telling Tsukiko, “Ya know... I bet we could get the family discount now.” The girl rolled her eyes while pushing Kuroo’s face away from her own as they entered the establishment.

“Oh?” gasped a girl wearing a red sports bra. Standing at the register was Tsukiko’s fellow dance club member. Tsukiko walked up to Momo while some of the boys were busy being entranced by the large set of hoots in their view.

“Did you just get here too, Momo-senpai? Let’s go in together!” Tsukiko grinned.

There weren't any other people in the baths, fortunately. The Yorozu-kan folks pretty much had the place to themselves. Kuroo, Bokuto, and Hinata were pressing their faces against the wall that separated the male and female baths. It was as if they were desperately trying to find a hole to peek through or listen in on the girls.

“Watch out, the perverts are active!” Akaashi hollered to alert the girls on the other side, to which they responded with a cheerful, “Thank you!”
“By the way, Kiko-chan,” began Momo as she leaned close to Tsukiko. “Are you alright knowing that your boyfriend is on the other side? In a way, this is like you’re both taking a bath together, no?”

Even though she had just entered the bath, Tsukiko was flushed red from head to toe. “M-Momo-senpai—! You don’t just bring up private girl talk when there are boys around!” Tsukiko stuttered before sinking neck-deep into the warm water.

The other girl blinked, baffled. “My apologies Kiko-chan!” she replied. “But isn’t the bath where girls usually gossip? And aren’t boys supposed to hear us?”

Tsukiko screeched. “AhhH!! You’ve been reading manga haven’t you!!”

“Yes.” Momo swiftly answered. Tsukiko gritted her teeth, though she was more flustered than angry. Suddenly she leaped forward at Momo, causing the girl to yelp and catch the boys’ attention. Soon they got heated thoughts from the splashing and moaning sounds that followed. “Now, now Momo-senpai~ isn’t the bath where girls usually start touching each other to compare breast sizes? The boys are meant to hear us doing this, just like in manga~” Tsukiko laughed wickedly while she continued to pinch Momo’s earlobes, rather than other areas the boys were imagining from their side.

“Dude, your girlfriend is crazy!” Bokuto said to Yamaguchi, who appeared to be embarrassingly drowning in the water.
series mentioned in this chapter are from the following in order: Super Lovers!, Tokyo Ghoul:re, Clannad, Ore no Monogatari, Working!

p.s. if you haven't looked yet, I posted the first side story in Yorozu-Kan! (sides)

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April has always been a significant month. It marked the beginning of spring, and therefore, the start of something new. Two weeks have passed since the semester began and life at Yorozu-kan went without any problems by far. Ushijima gained two morning run buddies; Hinata and Kageyama. When they heard Ushijima was already offered to join the national team, it made them even more determined to have the same happen to them. They would help Bokuto with maintaining the yard since it provided them a workout too. Laundry has been easier with Tsukishima’s help surprisingly. The guy had a “spoiled rich kid” air about him so Akaashi didn’t expect him to know how to wash clothes.

“By the way,” Tsukiko spoke up during breakfast. “What is everyone’s major?” she asked the boys around her. “Mine is humanities— not music like everyone assumes.” After Tsukiko gave hers, one by one the boys did the same.

Hinata and Kageyama had undecided majors, since they were more focused on playing volleyball in college.

Kuroo stated chemistry then proceeded to use a one-liner on Tsukiko that she wasn’t nerd enough to understand. Something about covalent bonding between them. She could only assume had some sexual innuendo behind it.

Akaashi’s major was family science because he was interested in becoming a preschool teacher like his mother. He was fond of children too, but grown adults acting like children wasn’t what he had in mind.

Tsukishima was majoring in Japanese literature, which Tsukiko commented that it matched him well. “Your name sounds like a poet’s,” she stated while also offering to help her junior if he ever...
needed it; not that he ever will.

Yamaguchi said he decided on sociology for the time being since he had a feeling he would switch over to something else at a later time.

Bokuto had been majoring in mathematics and nobody believed him. He made his reason being because he believes math would help him improve in volleyball. Only Hinata was cheering on the owl.

“Organic urban farming,” said Ushijima. Everyone at the table fell silent and someone had even dropped their chopsticks. Finding out Ushijima’s major turned out to be the most surprising. It was after he explained his decision for it that made it sound less of a shocker. He apparently made it his retirement plan to work on a farm with his family. Who would’ve thought that Ushijima of all people would think about his far future not involving volleyball? If anything, they expected him to become a professional coach.

The day continued on with everyone attending their classes, which aren’t significant enough to mention in this story right now. Come the afternoon, the new Yorozu-kan tenants were meeting with their seniors for volleyball practice. When they arrived at the gym however, a sign was posted on the doors stating all sports club activities were cancelled due to a leaking roof. The weather report did claim a low chance of April showers, but Tokyo was just lucky as usual.

“Noooooo I wanna plaaaaaayy,” whined Hinata as he gripped the door handles with agonizing disappointment in his face. His mood changed almost instantly at the sight of two figures approaching their large group though.

“Ohh, the freak duo is here!” said Oikawa. He started cringing the closer he got to his raven-haired junior who was politely bowing to him in greeting.

Kuroo clicked his tongue. “The hell you doing all the way over here, Shitty-kawa?”

Oikawa let out a high-pitched gasp. He couldn’t believe that someone besides Iwaizumi would dare call him by the crude nickname. “Well! If you must know, it’s because Iwa-chan and I attend this campus now.” he stated with his friend next to him nodding in confirmation.

The university everyone attended had other campus sites around Tokyo based on the courses offered. It was also convenient for students in different areas of the city so they wouldn’t have to
commute somewhere that was far for them. When Oikawa found out he could attend any of the campuses simultaneously he had convinced his roommate to register with him where the Yorozu-kan group attended. It was a slight inconvenience. They were attending a site closer to their apartment the previous semesters. The deal breaker had to be the fact they could play volleyball with the others.

“We’ll be joining your team from now on. After all, it’s only you guys now, right?” Iwaizumi inquired with a smirk. What he said was true. The only members left were the Yorozu-kan boys and a few others who were sticking around to use the volleyball club as a means of exercise. With the addition of Iwaizumi and Oikawa it meant they’d have a solid team to work with at least. However, their practice with the new additions would have to wait another day since the gym was closed due to the rain. There was still one thing they could alternatively do: watch Tsukiko’s dance practice.

Akaashi began to text Tsukiko a warning of their visit. “Is this really okay?” he questioned when realizing how massive the group was. He had doubts they would be allowed inside the dance club’s room then.

“I’m going home,” said Tsukishima as he pulled over his hoodie. Kageyama chose to leave too. He wanted to search for a public gym by himself but was then followed by Hinata. Iwaizumi also took off while dragging Oikawa from behind, the former deciding they could head to work early. The group then dropped down to Akaashi, Bokuto, Kuroo, and Yamaguchi. Ushijima was going to join them later because he had left his and Tsukiko’s umbrellas in his locker.

The remainder of the Yorozu-kan boys found the dance club’s room open. Akaashi poked his head in to make sure Tsukiko was inside before they intruded. “Yoo~!” The very girl called out to him. She wore a large sweater, that was very likely to be Ushijima’s, and form-fitted pants with hot pink accents on the sides. Kuroo and Bokuto barged inside as if it was normal for them to casually walk in.

“HALT!” shouted a booming voice from across the room. A tall, muscular guy with a three-quarters combed hairstyle approached the group. He had on a stern look behind his glasses. “There is a dance practice in session— anyone who is not a member of our club cannot disrupt us!” he said with an uptight attitude. From the way he stiffly gestured with his bulky arms it looked like he was trying to redirect traffic.

Tsukiko got up to save her boys from the wrath of the club’s new captain. “Sorry Iida-senpai. I forgot to mention this after you came back from your leg injuries but when it rains, my friends are likely to show up and watch our practices.” she informed him.
Iida was perplexed. He looked at Tsukiko, the male group, then back at the girl. His voice boomed as he said, “Yamauchi-kun, please forgive me! It is not your fault but my own for jumping to conclusions. I see now that you invite your friends to observe us so we have a live audience to test on!”


The four guests went over to claim the chairs lined against the mirrorless wall. Akaashi noticed there were fewer bags than the last he remembered seeing during the previous visit. “Did you guys lose members?” he asked Tsukiko. She answered that he was correct. The dance club’s member drop was also due to many graduates leaving.

“But most of this has to do with today’s special practice. Notice Momo-senpai isn’t here either. That’s because she and the other seniors are at a different location.” Tsukiko continued to explain how the third years and up had gone to a studio to practice more advanced dances. They wanted the formal training that would be used in the coming show. “Iida-senpai is suppose to be there but he wanted to stay behind a bit and make sure the new members know what they had to do. He’s quite the stickler about keeping things in order.” Tsukiko added with an eye roll.

After a few minutes of club captain Iida’s lecturing, he sped off at an impressive speed. “Fast! Why’s he here and not on track or some real sports club?” Kuroo’s insult earned him a palm slap to the chin, which almost resulted in him biting his own tongue. “Dance IS a sport!” Tsukiko exclaimed before gathering the few members present to the center of the room. Besides herself, there were only five other dancers with her and more than half were boys.

“Okay, like captain said, today we’re going to continue learning our routines for the big show in August. But seeing that we’re missing two idiots… I dunno anymore.” Tsukiko pointed to a red-haired boy. “Eji-kun,” she called him and he dropped his arms with a sigh.

“My name is Eijiro, senpai…” he corrected her but was ignored. Akaashi felt a mutual understanding for the redhead with the pain of getting their name butchered by the girl who loved giving out nicknames.

“Yeah, yeah! Kiri-kun, can you be a dear and go find our missing two?” Tsukiko asked with a sweet facade.

A small girl with a round face raised her hand. “Um, then what will we do, senpai?” she asked.
Tsukiko’s attitude suddenly changed to bubbly when answering. “Aww Occhan you’re so cute when you talk!” As expected, the way Tsukiko would treat cute girls was the same when she’s with small, cute boys.

“How about this— I wanna see where everyone is at with their pair dances for the group number.” she then said with her hands clapped together.

The group dispersed with only two remaining on the dance floor. Tsukiko messed with the music player for a bit, trying to find a certain part of the song she needed. From the bits that the boys could hear they could tell it was a song in English.

“Kiko-chan told me earlier that the show’s theme is American radio hits,” Akaashi mentioned to Yamaguchi. He noticed the other had been quiet the whole time. Yamaguchi hadn’t taken his eyes off of his girlfriend, even though she wasn’t doing anything significant yet.

“Occhan! Deku! You two ready?” Tsukiko called out to the two nervous dancers. Without their verbal confirmation she hit the play button. The music began but the two already messed up the count when they tried to unite for a hold. Tsukiko then paused the music. “C’mon you two, don’t be afraid to touch!” she said while approaching them. The next thing she did made Bokuto and Kuroo almost jumped from their seats.

“K-K-K-KIKO-SENPAI!!” cried out Uraraka’s partner, a geeky-looking boy named Midoriya. Pressing against him was Tsukiko. She was trying to adjust the nervous wrecks posture with her own body.

“Keep your arms at this angle. Pretend you’re about to put up a large picture frame— actually, Occhan is tiny so imagine a cute petite frame instead.” Tsukiko explained while continuing to rearrange Midoriya’s pose until she was satisfied.

Akaashi groaned before turning to Yamaguchi again. “Doesn’t it bother you?” he asked in a whisper. Yamaguchi’s glued gaze on Tsukiko finally broke. He looked at Akaashi then down at the floor, hesitant. “Well, uh, no. She does that to Hinata so… I’m used to seeing it?” he managed to reply back.

“But that’s your girlfriend with her arms around another guy.” Akaashi tried to sound calm but even Kuroo had picked up his almost irate tone. The rooster head stared intensely at Yamaguchi before returning to the front of the room when the music was replaying.
Uraraka and Midoriya managed to do their basic waltz routine with Tsukiko’s help. Even Kuroo, who didn’t know slick about standard dance, could tell they were still at the beginning level. Apparently their part wasn’t very long either, lasting for about half of the song’s chorus. Once Tsukiko gave them her critique a different pair stepped up. The girl was also short but didn’t seem enthusiastic. She had the appearance of someone who belonged in a rock band too. Her partner was an energetic guy that reminded Kuroo of both Bokuto and Hinata. Before the music even started the pair was arguing, mostly the girl.

“Jiiiiiro-chan~” cooed Tsukiko. “I know Denki is a bug but please get along with him since this is a romantic song~” Despite the sweet voice she was using, Kuroo could tell she wanted to straighten them out with a real scolding.

Jirou let out a sigh, abiding by the words of her senior. She reluctantly held up her arms for the other boy, who in turn pulled her close with a flirtatious smirk. “KA-MI-NA-RIIIIII!” she gritted her teeth while trying to bear with the fact her partner forced her into a dip. A very deep one too.

The blond continued to be playful with the dance until his head was grabbed by Tsukiko. “De-n-ki-kuuuun,” she called him while her nails dug into his golden hair. “Please don’t get carried away, otherwise you’ll go off beat.” Kaminari started whining from the pain but it only made Tsukiko grip his head even harder. “And if you go off beat I’ll have to beat it into you.” she threatened him.

Even outside of the house Tsukiko was violent.

Bokuto let out a laugh while clapping his hands. He often found amusement from seeing someone else in pain inflicted by the house mother. Kuroo started snickering at the poor guy’s misery.

“Warning.” Tsukiko muttered; the very word shushing them. After the first several times the Yorozu-kan boys would visit her dance practices, Tsukiko had made it a rule that she would kick them out for being distractions. The rule mostly applied to Bokuto and Kuroo since they hardly kept their mouths shut; literally.

A knock at the entrance moved everyone’s attention to the two new figures. One was Ushijima and the other was a boy with an eccentric appearance. His hair was dyed in two colors and his deadpan expression was much like Ushijima’s.

“Waka-papa!” Tsukiko called out to him. “Ohh, and you found Sho-kun too!” The two-toned boy placed his things against the wall of chairs then approached the girl nervously. “Evening,” he muttered his greeting. Tsukiko reached up and patted his head; something her friends had never seen her do to anyone else. It made Bokuto and Kuroo go into “security” mode with them sending
threatening glares at the new guy.

“Who are—” Before he could even ask Tsukiko had cut the boy off with a whip attack from her ponytail.

“Todoroki-kun,” she called him again. Hearing his name coming from her only made him feel uneasy. “You’re late. Why?” she asked the question he feared to hear. Though Tsukiko’s back was turned on him, Todoroki could feel how upset she was. He straightened himself to give her an honest reply.

“I was… unsure.” he told her.

“About what?”

“About being in the dance club.”

Tsukiko was in her familiar commanding stance. Her legs were slightly apart and she had her hands on her hips. She let out a sigh then faced Todoroki again. “Occhan! Handle the music please.” she said to the other girl who scrambled to the equipment. The other members stepped back, leaning against the walls.

“But I—” Cutting him off again, Tsukiko pushed on Todoroki’s shoulders to force him into sitting on the floor. The next thing she did was lay down beside him with her head just barely on his lap. She could hear Bokuto and Kuroo ready to bark but shot them a glare as a signal for them to keep quiet.

“Play!” she shouted.

The new music began with the vocals going, “We don’t talk anymore,” but the two dancers remained still on the floor. Even as the song was becoming more upbeat, neither were moving. It was until Tsukiko sat up when Uraraka paused the music.

“Look, I get it.” Tsukiko said as she turned to Todoroki, who was avoiding all eye contact. “You’re nervous about performing in front of a crowd. I get it,” she repeated. The girl pointed over at the audience in front of them. They were just five guys she lived with but she wasn’t going to tell that to the freshman.
“All of us were stagefright too— some still are. But when you confidently go out there and succeed, you’ll laugh at yourself for not taking the chance sooner. You told me yourself the other day that you were going to face your fear, so face it.”

Akaashi smiled from hearing Tsukiko help out someone who was in the shoes she used to be in a few months ago. But it also made him wish she followed the exact words she herself said. Realizing that made him want to start lecturing her and Yamaguchi about their confrontation issue. If the couple wouldn’t face each other soon Akaashi was sure he would lose his patience.

“Well. Alright?” Todoroki replied as he hesitantly lifted his gaze to meet Tsukiko’s.

“As long as you’re with me.” His words made the girl wide-eyed and the ‘bodyguards’ jump out of their seats.

“That’s our girl!” cried both Bokuto and Kuroo, causing the others in the room to be confused.

“Second warning!” Tsukiko yelled.

The dancers returned to their starting positions on the floor. This time, they began moving along with the music. From the way the two danced and what the guests could understand with their English knowledge; the song had something to do with conflict between a couple. Some parts of the routine had Tsukiko and Todoroki just inches apart but then they’d push each other away as though they weren’t meant to be near each other. There was one point where Tsukiko had her arms over his shoulders while his hands slowly went up her sides and their faces extremely close together. Bokuto and Kuroo were basically leaning on the edges of their seats. Akaashi could tell they were simply acting jealous but he wasn’t sure about Yamaguchi. All he saw was an awestruck expression in the boyfriend. Then there was Ushijima who was completely blank.

“See?” Tsukiko looked up at her dance partner with a soft smile once their song was finished. “Someone as hot and cold as you will look good on stage. Remember this feeling of dancing for others because then you’ll be able to dance for yourself.” she chuckled.

Hearing Tsukiko’s encouragement suddenly made Todoroki reach out and hold her hand to thank her. This blew the fuse in Bokuto and Kuroo who then were about to step on the dance floor to break them up. Even if it meant getting sent home they didn’t want a new potential rival to be touching their beloved female roommate.
“Hey! Don’t get touchy like that— it’s gross!” Shouted a new voice that came from the door.

Leaning against the frame was another late club member with rather explosive hair and fierce red eyes. He shoved his hands into the pockets of his pants that looked like they needed to be pulled up. Following behind him, and appearing almost out of breath, was the redhead from earlier that Tsukiko sent out to find their missing members.

“Bakugou?! There you are!” Tsukiko broke away from Todoroki to approach the late arrival and scold him about punctuation. Before she could start herself the troublemaker had tossed an arm over her. “H-Hey!” she stuttered while trying to push him away from her.

“Who the hell are these guys?” Bakugou inquired with a mugging look on his face.

Bokuto and Kuroo stood up, the two sending hateful sparks at the guy they easily towered over. “The fuck are these giants? An owl, a rooster head— and the hell is that spot-faced geek over there related to Deku?!”

Tsukiko got the boy’s arm off of her after the last remark. “Don’t be rude to my—” she suddenly stopped herself mid sentence. The fact she did that made Akaashi start thinking things he didn’t want to cross his thoughts. He glanced over at Yamaguchi naturally and saw some shock in his face too.

“Th-They’re our guests. Behave or else I am reporting you to captain Iida!” she said instead, only receiving an attitude from the other.

The air suddenly became tense because of Bakugou's arrival. It was apparent in the finicky Midoriya that the guy wasn’t one to casually mess with. Tsukiko approached Uraraka to have her ponytail fixed. “Kacchan, you do warm up stretches for now. Eji-kun, we’re going to practice our part.”

The redhead, Kirishima, got in his position that was behind Tsukiko then waited for the music to start for them. Their routine went as smoothly and seriously as the one with Todoroki. The two were in great sync from what the Yorozu-kan gang could tell. It would surprise them if they knew Kirishima had learned his routine in only three days.

Once again, Tsukiko’s body was getting very close to another guy and their faces seemed to have
almost brushed against each other. "Damn, if only we could dance like that with Kiko-chan," pouted Bokuto who was both intrigued and jealous.

Yamaguchi watched more intensely than he did before. He was entranced by how well the two were dancing together but he couldn’t lie to himself about his own jealousy too. Even he wished he could be the one to get that close to Tsukiko’s body. “It’s just a dance,” was what he repeatedly told himself.

A certain firecracker was on the floor stretching his legs apart. Bakugou smirked, having found out something interesting he could do when it came his turn to practice.

The song ended and the last pose they were in had Kirishima holding up Tsukiko’s leg. Seeing his hand gripping her thigh made Bokuto and Kuroo boil. The lid on their inner wrath was practically about to pop off but they were doing fairly well in keeping themselves under control. They had two strikes and after Bakugou’s terrible first impression was made they wanted to be able to stay long enough to keep an eye on him.

“My turn!” said Bakugou as he walked up to Tsukiko with confidence emitting in his stride. Tsukiko rolled her shoulders. She had done two dances in a row but she didn’t appear to be tired. It was from improving her stamina in preparation for the upcoming big show.

“Just show me what you got,” Tsukiko said when she took her position.

Bakugou gave her a cocky grin. “Oh, I will.”

As the the next song played the beginning marimba notes registered to the Yorozu-kan group as a familiar tune. They recalled hearing their house mother playing and singing to the exact song some time ago when Kuroo was spying on her through the basement surveillance feed. So far everyone in the house, except for Tsukiko of course, learned about the creepy feature on their TV and chose to keep quiet about it for different reasons. Hinata was afraid of how Tsukiko would react while Kageyama was uninterested. Tsukishima on the other hand saw it as a form of blackmail to use on Kuroo. Then there was Yamaguchi who wasn’t pleased to find out his girlfriend’s privacy was invaded but couldn’t bring himself to say anything to her because things weren’t completely well between them at the moment.

Tsukiko was dancing to a romantic song with her body being touched by yet another guy. There were lots of hip shaking and body rolling and hands being in places that even made Ushijima twitch. The boys started wondering if all of Tsukiko’s routines with partners in the show were just sexual dances. At the end, Bakugou and Tsukiko’s finishing pose was similar to the one she did
with Kirishima; the difference being she had a leg wrapped around Bakugou while her body was leaning against his. Their faces were also extremely close that it really did look like they were kissing.

Before Tsukiko could lift herself off of Bakugou he had leaned forward so that their lips collided. The “accidental” kiss resulted in gasps echoing in the room and chairs falling over. Realizing what was happening, Tsukiko snapped out of shock to push Bakugou away but ended up dropping to the floor with him hovering over her. When she tried to stand back up he had grabbed her wrist to keep her down.

“GET OFF OF HER!!”

The angry voice that caught everyone’s attention came from Yamaguchi. He pushed his way through Bokuto and Kuroo to get to his girlfriend who was shocked to hear him shout.

Bakugou got up, still holding onto the girl’s wrist tightly. “Fcukin’ take her then!” he shouted back at Yamaguchi. The intimidating taunt however caused Yamaguchi to suddenly lose confidence. His frightened eyes wavered to Tsukiko. The girl yanked herself out of Bakugou’s grip thanks to his sweaty palms. She took a few steps back then sprinted past everyone to escape the room. Akaashi and Ushijima were just about to chase her when Kuroo had suddenly kicked his chair. The anger in his eyes, however, seemed to be directed at Yamaguchi instead of Bakugou.

“Go after her.” Kuroo told him.
Another chapter with characters crossing over from another series-- that's right fam! It's finally time for "Quirky" characters to make an appearance!! Everyone introduced here is from Boku no Hero Academia, and obviously they're Quirkless lol ahhhh my bbies~ also this chapter came out pretty long I'm sorry x"D

*follow me: dA/twitter/instagram @hikariatakuhime*
The weather forecast claimed there would be a low chance of rain again, and yet, it happened. Furthermore it was raining even harder by dinner time. Apparently the gloomy weather had a negative effect on food that night. For some reason, Ushijima wasn’t feeling like himself while cooking and even with Akaashi’s help things didn’t turn out quite right. It was like he reverted back to when he first started cooking for the Yorozu-kan.

“Ahh, it’s weird tasting,” Hinata complained.

“Shut up and eat.” Kageyama scolded him. It sounded like they were siblings, which was amusing because Hinata was actually the oldest of the first years; though obviously still the shortest.

Nobody continued to talk, not even Bokuto could bring himself to attempt starting a conversation. But every couple of bites they would exchange glances with each other then at the girl sitting at the end of the table. Tsukiko was in her new kigurumi, the one Kuroo got her so she could be the lazy egg mascot she was very fond of. She had changed into it after returning home drenched by the rain. Yamaguchi was also in different clothes than before. The two sat on opposite ends of the table and both hardly touched the food in front of them.

“I’m done, thanks.” Tsukiko mumbled as she decided to leave ahead of everyone else. She stopped in her tracks when silverware suddenly slammed on the table.

“Just talk to each other,” said Akaashi. He did the best he could to keep his volume at a reasonable level so he wouldn’t come off as too demanding and pissed. Hearing him even spooked Bokuto and the tone wasn’t directed at him. Yamaguchi kept his head low while Tsukiko remained faced away from everyone. Akaashi looked like he was going to get angry enough to flip the table until Tsukiko replied, “We always do.”

In the next hour with dinner cleaned up, everyone except the house mother gathered in the living room. Akaashi paced in front of the television for a bit before settling down to explain why he suddenly started a meeting. “Is anyone else bothered by this?” he asked. From a show of hands, minus the indifferent Tsukishima and silent Yamaguchi, the other tenants were in fact having mixed feelings about the drama brought into their home. Hinata mentioned how it made him feel...
like his energy was being drained and provided irrelevant sound effects.

“This wouldn’t be happening if Yachi didn’t confess,” Tsukishima suddenly blurted out. Everyone was aware of what occurred at Karasuno’s latest graduation ceremony that led to the couple’s confrontation problem. Talking about it felt taboo though.

Yamaguchi lifted his head when he heard his best friend putting fault on an innocent girl. “She’s not to blame!” he exclaimed.

“Yachi-san even said herself that she wasn’t looking for anything beyond friendship. She only wanted to get her feelings off her chest—”

Kuroo started laughing abruptly. However, unlike the usual, his laughter sounded forced and fake. He leaned back on the sofa with his arms crossed and a smug look on his face. “I said the same thing to myself years ago.” Kuroo then leaned forward towards Yamaguchi with the most devilish grin he could make.

“And you know what? Now I’m looking forward to finally rebounding.”

The last remark caused Yamaguchi to shoot up in anger. Kuroo stood too. The height difference was in his favor.

“What? Got something to say, boyfriend-for-now?” Kuroo taunted.

“Bro, that’s not okay,” Bokuto intervened in seriousness that was rare from him. He tried to sit Kuroo back down but only got his hand brushed off. Just as sudden, Tsukishima had begun laughing too and in the same forced manner. Hinata and Kageyama got uncomfortable and confused by what was happening that they excused themselves without saying anything. They wanted no part in potential trouble that didn’t involve them in any way.

“Enough.”

The room hushed when Ushijima finally spoke. His fingers laced together as he took a second to think before speaking again. He looked at the group before him with a composed expression then pulled something out from under the coffee table. To everyone’s surprise, it was a gossip magazine.
“What, you find an ad for marriage consultation?” Kuroo joked but wasn’t expecting Ushijima to reply with, “that too.”

Ushijima explained the things he learned from reading more than just the ads in the gossip magazine that Tsukiko lent him. “There’s an article about how to improve relationships of any kind,” he said. “It says the most important factor is to communicate.”

“Which is exactly the problem here, Ushijima-san.” Akaashi interjected for a moment.

Yamaguchi clenched his fists. He wasn’t fond of being lectured on how his relationship ran but at the same time he wanted help. The way his friends were doing it didn’t feel helpful to him so far though.

Ushijima turned to Yamaguchi who then sat down to listen to what he had to say. “According to the guide here, the first step is to identify the root of the problems. Since Tsukiko isn’t here at the moment, we’ll follow it with just yours answers.” Ushijima instructed. Once he got a confirming nod he began with the first question, “Has something like this happened before where you two barely talked?”

“Yeah,” Yamaguchi answered quickly. “It was after she left for Tokyo in junior high. She… didn’t exactly tell me that she would be moving away, so I didn’t take the news well— and I found out the day she was leaving too.” He pressed the palm of his hand against his cheek as he was reminiscing.

Tsukishima glanced at his friend, also remembering what happened since he was there that day. Though Akaashi was hoping to hear more to the story, Ushijima had moved onto the next question. “How did you two reconcile at that time?” he asked.

“It wasn’t until the summer training camp at Shinzen when we met again.” Yamaguchi looked meekly at Bokuto who had suddenly lit up like a firework. He then started slapping Yamaguchi’s backside while shouting, “I REMEMBER THAT TIME!!”

Kuroo sat with his arms crossed as he was remembering the summer training camp too. He recalled Tsukiko being a pain for the most part. Back then the girl had a much poorer attitude, acting as though she didn’t want to be there. This brought on a memory he wasn’t fond of. “Wait,” Kuroo blurted. “So you two were dating before that?” he asked but Ushijima had stopped Yamaguchi from answering. Tsukishima was about to get up and leave, growing bored of the
conversation, but Akaashi pulled him back on the sofa. The blond clicked his tongue angrily.

“What do you think became the issue that resulted in her slapping you?” Ushijima followed with the next question. However Akaashi was starting to wonder why the guy who normally didn’t talk was suddenly in charge of the discussion. Was he still reading the magazine?

Yamaguchi took a moment to think, but the pressuring stares from everyone made him say the first thing that came to mind. “B-Because she didn’t like seeing me with Yachi,” he said.

Kuroo whistled at the answer. “Oh yeah. It did look like you were confessing to the little girl right in front of your girlfriend.” His comment made Bokuto glare at him.

“Oh yeah. It definitely did.” Tsukishima added, also getting glared at by Akaashi.

“H-Hey! I was only telling the truth too!” Yamaguchi argued in his defense. It was true when he said he developed a crush on Yachi but that was before he reunited with Tsukiko during the training camp. Realizing that, he started thinking about how it was a bad thing. He did technically spawn feelings for another girl without confirming whether he was still in a relationship with Tsukiko. He didn’t think to or had the courage to ask her about it back then.

“Next question: has she told you what is actually making her upset?” Ushijima didn’t even look at the magazine, raising the suspicion he really wasn’t repeating whatever was written in it. Again, Yamaguchi was paused by thoughts that prolonged his answer.

“W-Well… she hasn’t told me anything related to what happened after graduation— but she did tell me why she was upset about earlier. After she stormed off, I found her hiding between the vending machines around the corner of the club room. She told me… she told me she was feeling guilty.”

Akaashi leaned in closer, suddenly intrigued by what he was now hearing. “Guilty for what? Letting that punk kiss her?”

Yamaguchi tilted his head to the side. “Not exactly. It’s just… I guess she’s still hung over about the first accidental kiss.” His answer caused the others to go eye-wide, which then he asked them, “Wait, do you guys not know?”

“Know ‘bout what?!” Bokuto asked since he was getting oddly excited.
With a hesitant finger, Yamaguchi pointed at Kuroo. “He… Kuroo-san also kissed her.”

In a flash, before the rest could fully comprehend what Yamaguchi said, Ushijima already had his hands gripping on Kuroo’s shirt collar. “What the hell did you do to her?!?” he shouted loud enough that the others swore they felt the house shake. Afraid that a fight was about to ensue, Yamaguchi waved his hands to gesture Ushijima to stop or show mercy. “A-All I know is they k-kissed a bit… just that. I don’t know how it happened so—”

Kuroo opened his eyes, remaining calm but clearly ready to brawl if he had to. He began telling his side of the story that Yamaguchi kindly brought up.

About two months prior, exactly on Valentine’s day, it was Tsukiko’s birthday. She turned twenty and therefore was legally allowed to drink. However, because she didn’t consider herself very close to anyone that wasn’t part of the Yorozu-kan circle, the girl didn’t feel like going out to celebrate with other friends. Her club members offered to take her bar hopping but Tsukiko felt birthday celebrations weren’t of great importance. Her male roommates wouldn’t leave her alone without throwing some kind of party at home either. They first tried to share their Valentine candy loot with her, but Tsukiko also wasn’t too comfortable with the idea of eating another girl’s feelings meant for the stomach of her handsome guy friends. They couldn’t invite people over on short notice either; because apparently only Ushijima was aware Tsukiko’s birthday fell on a holiday. In the end, they used Madame’s special shopping perks to order a chocolate cake for Tsukiko. At the very least she was willing to let them sing to her and have her blow out the candles. That was about it for her birthday.

“What’s this?” Kuroo was going through the remainder of his Valentine stash with the birthday girl who had barged into his room out of boredom. They found a solid red heart-shaped box that somehow had gone unnoticed until then. “Open, open!” Tsukiko ushered him. He couldn’t help but grin silly at her adorable behavior.

As expected, the inside of the box was chocolate. It was rather dark chocolate though. There was no other indication as to what kind of chocolates they were too, apart from the hint of a familiar scent. Kuroo got suspicious enough that he planned to toss the whole thing out but then Tsukiko plucked a piece of chocolate and ate it without a second thought. She chewed on it for some time while making different faces.

Kuroo chuckled. “Poison?” he asked her. “Do I need to call 119?”
Tsukiko exhaled once the treat in her mouth was completely gone. Kuroo scrunched his nose when he recognized what the familiar scent lingering from her breath was. Alcohol. The very thing felt dangerous to have but again, Tsukiko stole more chocolate before he could close the box. Seeing that the girl wasn’t bothered by the fact she was eating chocolate with alcohol in it made Kuroo yield. It looked like she was enjoying it so he thought he may as well indulge too. He picked up a piece of his own and the two tapped their chocolates together as if toasting with shot glasses.

To Kuroo’s surprise the alcohol was strong enough for him to consider that it was hard liquor. Since he wasn’t a lightweight he doubt the entire box could make him drunk. Though, he couldn’t be sure about Tsukiko. Before he realized it, the girl had cleared close to half of the box on her own. Kuroo only noticed when seeing her cheeks were fairly flushed.

“Aww, look at you glow,” he cooed while brushing his finger against her warm face. Kuroo flinched when Tsukiko responded by rubbing against his touch as though she were a cat. This only gave him ideas that led to the bad side of his mind. For Tsukiko’s and his own safety, he began to hog the chocolate.

“Noooo~” The girl slapped his back but ever so gently as if she had no strength to begin with. “Give me!” She then demanded with the childish tone he only heard her use with Ushijima. He still wasn’t sure if Tsukiko actually was drunk, or simply pretending to be drunk off the idea that she was. The girl was the type to behave according to her surroundings so it wasn’t far fetched that she could be acting like a drunk. Or perhaps the alcohol had euphoric-inducing effects.

“Noo~” Kuroo responded mockingly as he tried to keep the box out of her reach. The “drunk” behind him had again made him flabbergasted with her next action. He thought Tsukiko would continue trying to hit him as it seemed like a normal thing for her to do, but instead, she began crying. Rather uncontrollably at that too.

Kuroo started to panic while attempting to hush Tsukiko so the guys downstairs wouldn’t hear her wailing. “Do I keep feeding her these or should I trick her into eating normal chocolates?” he asked himself.

“Aah!” Tsukiko opened her mouth. The way she was acting really made Kuroo wonder if this was all on purpose and that she was really messing with him. He leaned close to Tsukiko with a piece of the alcoholic chocolate between his fingers. Though he was about to teasingly pull it away when she would take the bait, the girl continued to leave him dumbfounded. She had chomped on it along with Kuroo’s fingers, even going “homp” like the girls in anime did when biting food. It wasn’t the feeling of her teeth that bothered him but the sensation of her tongue cleaning off the traces of chocolate left on his fingertips.
Kuroo groaned. He felt himself succumbing to defeat by the girl he knew he still liked. “This won’t hurt, I hope.” he muttered before moving in close enough to Tsukiko that he could feel the heat radiate from her face. His hazel eyes stared directly into her dazed ones.

“Can I kiss you?” he asked her politely. Deep down he prayed she would slap him away and leave, treating his advance as a joke like usual. That’s what would normally happen but this time Kuroo heard what he secretly wanted straight from her alluring voice.

“Yeah,” Tsukiko answered with half-closed eyes. Without a second to lose, in case it were a dream about to end, Kuroo went forward to kiss the girl. Her lips were soft as he always imagined. The hint of chocolate enhanced the taste. A simple peck was initially his intention until he heard Tsukiko moan in response. Hearing her make a sound Kuroo thought he’d never hear outside of his own imagination gave him goosebumps.

In the next moment, Kuroo could have sworn he really was having another dream about the unattainable girl he lived with for the past year. Somehow, the two ended up on his bed with her beneath him and their tongues in search for more than chocolate.

“We made out, with tongue, and that was it.” Kuroo confessed while still being pinned to the wall by an angry Ushijima. “That was it. Honest.” he added, holding up hands in defeat.

Akaashi bent over with his face buried in his palms as he tried to process the information he just heard. Tsukishima appeared just as stunned but tried not to let the others see him show the emotion. He shifted his attention to his friend next to him. “How did you know that happened?” he asked Yamaguchi.

Leaning on the edge of the sofa with his hands still balled up into fists, Yamaguchi tried to keep a calm demeanor after listening to the extra details from Kuroo. “She told me. That night, Tsukiko texted me that she did something wrong.” he said while remembering what happened. A worrying text from his beloved girlfriend at something-o’clock at night kept him up the following hours. He remembered reading her words with a sense of puzzling anger but he also felt that the girl on the other end was frantically upset too.

“She cheated on you.” Akaashi uttered. He looked both confused and distressed. “How can you be okay with that?”
It would’ve been a lie if he said he wasn’t mad at Tsukiko for letting it happen. Yamaguchi was definitely angry at the time but deep down he expected something to happen. His girlfriend was living with several guys; one of them being a somewhat untrusting Kuroo. Anyone else would have ended the relationship then and there. However, Yamaguchi didn’t want to break up with Tsukiko.

“Because I’m not going to give up the time we worked on being together for this long,” Yamaguchi admitted before standing up.

“You guys assume we never talk about things when we actually do… when she’s able. Tsukiko told me something that was in every way cheating immediately when it happened. She didn’t keep it a secret or wait until I somehow found out myself. What happened at graduation is something she wants to think about another time and I’m fine with that— but what happened with Kuroo-san was more dire to her. It had enough of an impact to make her afraid and constantly ask if I was going to leave her. Me, the boyfriend who was always afraid that she would be the one leaving me again.”

Exhaling a heavy sigh, Yamaguchi turned around to head for bed. Before he left, he said, “Thanks for the talk you guys.”

The relationship just looked like a complete mess to Akaashi now. He wasn’t sure if he learned something new about them. All he thought was how confusing a committed relationship worked.

“I am not going to date,” he groaned under his breath. Bokuto patted his friend’s back while wearing the same expression and having the same thought.

“I still want to punch you.” Ushijima said to Kuroo, who was still being choked.

Meanwhile, Tsukiko found herself unable to sleep. She wasn’t even thinking about anything, only staring blankly at darkness until she heard footsteps approaching. Assuming it was Akaashi she prepared to get lectured by the real “house mother” of Yorozu-kan. No knock came from her door though but she noticed her phone had lit up from her nightstand. Tsukiko grabbed it and saw that it was a text from Yamaguchi.

From: the puppy-face boyfriend

> Are you still awake?
Tsukiko stared at the screen for a while, wondering whether she should answer or not. She put an arm under her pillow to prop herself up slightly. It was then she noticed the light coming out from under her door included a shadow, which indicates someone was at her door. The girl suspected it was Yamaguchi. Contemplating on answering further prolonged her reply, she wondered if she could pretend to be asleep—but that idea went out the window when Tsukiko’s phone slipped out of her hand and fell on the floor. It luckily went undamaged because of her shock-absorbing phone case but the loud thud stirred the person outside her room.

“Kiko-chan? Are you alright?!” Yamaguchi asked after hearing the sudden noise. He hoped his text didn’t disrupt the girl’s beauty sleep and cause her to fall out of her bed. Seconds later Tsukiko had opened the door, much to his surprise. She was in her kigurumi pajamas and hugging a toy bear he recognized. Seeing it was a birthday gift he once sent her put his shoulders at ease.

Yamaguchi found himself at a loss for words. He had planned to say something to Tsukiko through text message but he really didn’t count on the possibility that Tsukiko would face him directly. The two stared at each other silently. It went on long enough to make Tsukiko impatient and start closing her door.

“W-Wait!” Yamaguchi hollered while putting himself between the door and its frame. He wasn’t sure if he saw right, but before Tsukiko retreated to the dark he thought he saw tears trailing down her face. Believing it was so, Yamaguchi straightened himself out.

“I just wanted to say… good night.”

“Night.” The girl responded quickly but Yamaguchi managed to catch the hint of sobbing in her voice. It only made him feel worse that the reason she had been crying was likely about him. He slowly closed the door and said again;

“Good night... I love you.”

The very next morning, after comments were made about her swollen red eyes, Tsukiko walked up to Yamaguchi while he was in the middle of his breakfast. She stood in front of him for a bit, appearing fidgety. “Um…” she trailed. Everyone watched as the girl seemed to be having difficulty speaking, which was unusual to them.

“Don’t worry,” Yamaguchi got up from his seat while leaning over to put his hand on Tsukiko’s
forehead. The next thing he did surprised everyone around them. He kissed Tsukiko but with his hand placed between their lips.

“Tell me when you’re ready, okay?” he told her before going to the bathroom.

The others exchanged wide-eyed glances, not knowing exactly how to react after what they witnessed.

Tsukiko suddenly fell to her knees and then laid completely flat on the floor all while her hands cupped her red face. She never thought her boyfriend, who was normally timid even during phone calls, would be capable of not only confessing so casually but also tease her in the same fashion she once did in the past. Little did she know that Yamaguchi had his feverish head in the sink under running cold water as an attempt to cool off from the embarrassing stunt he pulled. He wondered to himself when he got so bold.

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CHAPTER 16

SCREEEEEEAAAAAMMMIIIINNNNGGGG-- now going to take a break FOR REALS from this because I've gotta work on my final school projects :";) also the next chapters will be long so they'll take me a while to edit out 3am writing mistakes lmao
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Chapter Summary

“Good news! We’re getting a manager today.” Coach Nekomata announced to the team.

Chapter Notes

I FINISHED /ONE/ OF MY FINAL PROJECTS SO IM POSTING THIS BC THAT'S HOW HAPPY I AM---

Decided to start a flashback arc because it feels like a good time?? We're going all the way back to Nekoma High when Tsukiko was a 2nd year there. This all takes place inline with the series too, which is why the chapters are now gonna be up to 4k words long since I throw in canon details.

I hope you enjoy!!

The new semester only began over a month ago and yet the class was receiving a new student right after golden week. Kenma didn’t look up from the game he was playing under his desk. He didn’t care about an extra body showing up unlike the rest of his classmates. However, their excitement seemed to have diminished after the student introduced herself.

“Just call me Kiko-chan,” she said with a rather poor attitude.

Standing at the front of the class was a girl wearing her uniform in a size too big for her frame. She had thick hair tied in messy braids and wore glasses that made her look like a stereotypical otaku. Whispers started going around with people already expressing their concerns about the new girl’s first impression.

During the break, some people attempted to befriend their new classmate. “Hey, Kiko-chan! Welcome to Nekoma!” They greeted before following up with a series of questions.

“What school did you transfer from?”

“Are you thinking of joining a club?”
“Do you wanna have lunch together later?”

“Can I redo your hair?”

The last question was the last. Tsukiko made it clear that she didn’t want to make friends with anyone. “Don’t touch me,” was what she said when swatting the group away as though they were bugs. After that, everyone in class decided to leave the transfer student alone. Kenma went back to playing his portable game. “Troublesome,” he thought.

“Good news! We’re getting a manager today.” Coach Nekomata announced to the team. The gym was filled with excitement and some of the boys were even nervous. This would be team Nekoma’s first female manager; emphasis on the fact they’re female.

All eyes went to the doors that opened. They expected to get a cute girl that would rival with Karasuno’s but instead they got a geek. Tsukiko approached the team wearing a red tracksuit that was baggy on her. Her hair was still a complete mess as though she had just woken up. What really got to the boys were the glasses she wore.

The coaches said they had paperwork regarding a summer training camp with the Fukurodani group and left the boys to train on their own with the new manager supervising them. Before they could start practice, Tsukiko hollered for their attention and requested they remained lined up. They all stood straight, unsure of what was on their new manager’s agenda.

“Excuse me~” called out the team captain, Kuroo. He put on a smile and waved to the girl but was blatantly ignored.

“I got a list of names here, but I don’t have faces to match. So one-by-one introduce yourselves.” The girl instructed as she made her way to the end of the line where the first years were.

“Shibayama, Yuuki. First year libero!” Shouted the shortest member on the team.

“Yuuki then.” Tsukiko said and wrote on her clipboard.
Shibayama was taken aback. Hearing a girl he just met address him casually by his first name was unexpected. Introductions continued with the next member. His height was the one thing Tsukiko noticed, since the need to adjust her neck was required.

“Haiba, Lev! First year in class 3 and Nekoma’s ace!”

The last comment garnered attention from the upperclassmen who then informed Tsukiko that Lev was only self-proclaiming the title. She didn’t seem to care though as she went on to call the giant by his first name as well.

“Inuoka, Sou! First year middle block—”

“Souka.” The manager interjected.

“Uhh… yeah, really?” Inuoka replied with a confused head tilt.

Tsukiko nodded back. “Souka.” It wasn’t that she was saying ‘really’ in an agreeing context but she had actually combined the boy’s full name into the odd nickname.

The team’s quietest player stared at the spiral in Tsukiko’s glasses, taking notice how it concealed her eyes and expressions. “Fukunaga, Shouhei. Wing spiker.” he finally introduced himself.

“Fuku!” squeaked Tsukiko, her raised voice causing alarm in the guy. It sounded like she sneezed. She quickly went to the next person in line who happened to be her classmate.

“Kenma,” he said apathetically. The partial blond wasn’t interested in properly introducing himself. He also found the whole ordeal a waste of valuable time. Then again, the less time for practice possibly meant the less energy for him to expend.

Tsukiko started snickering when she read off Kenma’s name from the clipboard in her hand. “Kozu,” she said. Hearing her call the team’s prized setter ‘scum’ was startling. Their first impression of Tsukiko was already enough.
“Hey.” Kuroo got out of line and towered the girl. “That’s rude.” he said with a stern look; something the others didn’t expect their captain to look at a girl with.

“What? Calling him small?” Tsukiko asked.

“Ha?” Kuroo dropped his shoulders, letting go of his anger right then.

“Young man. ‘Ko’ as in “small” and ‘zu’ as in “figure,” so as I was saying; ‘kozu’ meaning “small figure,” get it?” Tsukiko grinned behind her spiral lenses. Squashing a full name to make a nickname was one thing, but then to make up a nickname with alternate kanji sounded complicated. Tsukiko let out a sigh, taking notice of the confusion in everyone’s faces. “Ken-Ken,” she said, changing the setter’s nickname. He was tempted to request something new entirely but was afraid what ridiculousness his classmate would think of then.

The next one to introduce himself was the ace. “Listen here, girly, don’t think the amazing Yamamoto, Taketora will let you butcher his great name.” He said to Tsukiko while crossing his arms and glaring down at her with a threatening gaze.

“Tora it is,” she responded with a comical thumbs up but emotionless expression.

Yamamoto growled. “Hey! Didn’t ya just hear me—”

“Your name means fierce tiger,” Tsukiko interrupted him. “And tigers are really cool.” She added with a smile that shot Yamamoto in the chest. The manager wasn’t as attractive as Karasuno’s in his opinion, but he couldn’t be mad after getting a compliment from a girl regardless of how she looked. “O-Oh? Y-Yeah? Th-thanks,” he stuttered bashfully. To have tamed the ace so easily earned Tsukiko some credit.

“Yaku, Morisuke! Third year libero. Nice to meet—”

Tsukiko cut off the next guy’s introduction. “Oh wow, you’re so cute!” she said while pinching Yaku’s cheek. “Pretty small for a guy too; perfect for libero.” After the comment about his height was made about everyone took a step back.

Yaku grabbed Tsukiko’s hand, forcing it away from his face. “You really don’t know respect do you, manager-chan?” he said with a menacing smile.
“Ahh! She called Yaku-senpai short!” shouted Lev who then got kicked to the floor in a flat second.

While Yaku was taking his anger out on the self-proclaimed ace, Tsukiko turned to the last two guys.

“Kai, Nobuyuki. Pleased to make your acquaintance,” said the team’s vice-captain who continued to be calm despite what was happening in the background.

“Best for last, I’m Kuroo the captain. You listen here. Make any more bad remarks about my teammates and I’ll see you terminated from this job.”

Tsukiko didn’t appear fazed by the threat but nodded in response. She then called for everyone’s attention again. “One last thing before I let you guys get back to practice,” she said with her hands on her hips. The stance only made the team wary of what they were going to hear next.

“Take off your shirts.”

The gym filled with screams.

“ALRIGHT. I AM REPORTING YOU FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT.” cried Kuroo, already heading for the exit but Kai stopped him so they could hear Tsukiko’s reason.

“It’s hard to inspect bodies when they’re in movement,” she said, only causing more concern with the captain. She then added; “Oh, I’m not some pervert by the way.” Not that it changed Kuroo’s impression of her anyway.

The only one who did as the manager said was Lev. He didn’t particularly care about stripping for a girl and was curious after Tsukiko explained her purpose for looking at their bodies. Tsukiko supposedly had a knack for noticing physical strain when scanning muscles up close. The ability sounded like something from a sports manga but the girl mentioned it being the reason their coach wanted her around.

“Lev, lay down.” she told the first year. His backside was directly at eye level with the short girl
but he dropped to the floor anyway without question. Tsukiko sat on his back, making the giant gulp and the rest of the team a tad embarrassed by the scene.

“Wh-why are you on me?” Lev asked nervously but the girl just responded with; “because why not.” Without warning, she pulled his right arm back and grabbed his shoulder blade. The first year shrieked but he didn’t exactly feel he was in pain. His body relaxed when Tsukiko started rubbing her thumb against his back.

“You spike with your right arm,” Tsukiko said more as a statement than a question. It surprised Lev that she guessed correctly even though it was logical since most people were right-handed. Tsukiko pulled away then handed Lev back his shirt. “Go hit this,” she said. At first he was going to question about warming up first but then the girl already took a ball from the cart and tossed it towards the net. Nobody expected Lev to hit it in time since Tsukiko had set without warning. Seeing the whip-like spike they recognized proved them wrong.

Tsukiko went over to check on the first year who was staring at his hand. “AMAZING!” Lev shouted before tackling the manager for a hug then lifting her off the floor. “My arm felt really loose! Are you magic or something?!” He said while bouncing around excitedly with Tsukiko still in his arms. The team started laughing at the sight and some were impressed with what their strange new manager had just did to the worst player they had. Inuoka then raised his hand, asking for similar treatment. Yamamoto did the same with a shaky arm because he wasn’t sure how to react knowing that a girl would be touching him.

Some weeks passed and the Tokyo Prefecture Interhigh Preliminaries were over. Nekoma had lost in the quarterfinals. While the defeat wasn’t a major deal for them, there was one thing they wished had happened for their match.

“Ahh, if only Kiko-senpai came,” whined Inuoka during the trip back. Shibayama nudged his friend’s arm as a gesture to keep quiet. They both looked forward to see their captain wasn’t in a good mood. The vice-captain saw this too and went in to see if he could calm Kuroo. Before he said anything though the tomcat spoke first.

“How come she hasn’t come to any of our games?” Kuroo said.

Though Tsukiko was an eccentric character, the way she took care of everyone made them warm up to her. She was like a nagging mother at times but nonetheless her company made a positive difference. They even came to learn about her fondness towards the shorter members of the team; Shibayama, Kenma, and Yaku to be precise. Their overall impression of Tsukiko changed since
then but something the team hadn’t realized until now was the fact Tsukiko was always absent when they had practice matches and now an official game. Coach Nekomata stated it was because Tsukiko had personal affairs to deal with and that the team could function fine without their manager around. Kuroo suspected otherwise. After all, wasn’t Tsukiko hired as their manager because he wanted her to keep an eye on everyone’s physical health?

Team Nekoma arrived in their gym to find a girl in the middle of spiking by herself. She had a familiar small frame and familiar black hair but when the girl turned around she had an unfamiliar face in place of the swirly glasses they were expecting to see. The boys were curious as to why a cute girl was messing around in their gym. If she was on the female volleyball team then why was she not with them? They didn’t recognize the girl being from the female team however.

“DON’T LOOK AT ME!” hollered the familiar voice. It was then that the pieces of the puzzle were put together and the team screamed in response. In front of them, wearing nothing but a t-shirt and shorts, was their manager.

Lev broke away from the group and started chasing Tsukiko with a smile. “OUR MANAGER IS SO CUTE!” he said while trying to grab her for a hug. She turned out to be more agile and nimble than expected since she managed to dodge the attack. They started running around the gym like cat and mouse.

“K-K-K-K-K-K-KI—” Yamamoto’s teeth chattered as he was nervously trying to spew something out of his mouth. Yaku helped by holding his jaw down, which then the other roared, “KIYOKO-SAAAAN!!!” Hearing the name that wasn’t her own made Tsukiko stop in her tracks which got her caught by the behemoth. She glared at the ace; her cold eyes sending a sensual chill throughout Yamamoto’s body. He was more turned on than afraid.

“How do you know my cousin?!” she shouted while Lev held her up in the air like a trophy.

After letting Tsukiko put her tracksuit back on; the team sat down in front of their manager to listen to what she had to say next. Tsukiko cleared her throat and adjusted her glasses that hid her gray eyes. Before she put her glasses on, Kuroo had caught a glimpse of the beauty mark that was below her left eye. It reminded him of Karasuno’s manager, who was apparently related to Tsukiko as she stated earlier.

“You guys are back early. Was interhigh a breeze or something?” she smirked.

Tsukiko’s comment made the boys feel down again and Kuroo was reminded why he was upset.
earlier. He leaned back, looking another direction. “Where were you?” he asked. Everyone suddenly scooted away to avoid getting involved in what was about to happen.

Tsukiko walked up to Kuroo with her arms crossed over her chest. “None of your business,” she replied, returning the harsh tone.

The captain and manager started butting heads, as usual. They often argued like an old married couple when it came to taking care of the team. Kuroo cared for everyone in Nekoma, not just his childhood friend Kenma. He was still unsure how to feel about Tsukiko though. From his perspective the girl was only helpful when she felt like helping. She never joined in cleaning or set up the court and once, when he asked for water, the girl told him to get it himself. In Kuroo’s opinion, their manager was only good for her massages.

“You don’t even watch our practice matches, what’s up with that?! Supporting us from the sidelines is also a manager’s job you know!” Kuroo exclaimed.

Tsukiko just clicked her tongue. “Please, you guys were fine before I even showed up.” she said while standing her ground in front of the captain. Kai got up to step between them but neither broke their agitated gaze.

Kuroo grew more furious at the girl. “Then why are you even still here?” he asked with a scowl.

If it weren’t for the fact their coaches just entered the gym, Tsukiko would have punched Kuroo for getting too close to her face. She instead grabbed her bag and stormed off.

The team scrambled back to gather around their coaches and Kuroo, who reverted to a blank stare. Coach Nekomata exhaled through his nose then put his hands behind his back. He took center stage to go over the lost match with everyone, not asking what went on that resulted in their manager leaving. Then he asked the third years to decide what they planned to do next. The answer was obvious though; they wanted to stay with the team and participate in the Spring Tournament.

The meeting was just about to end until Lev suddenly blurted out, “Kiko-senpai and Kuroo-san fought again!”

Coach Nekomata looked over at the captain, who was avoiding eye contact. The old man sighed again then left coach Naoi to take over the closing statements, which was reminding everyone about the joint practice with the Fukurodani group.
Days later, Nekoma’s team manager was absent during club practices. They continued to act as they did before she joined them, but oddly enough things didn’t feel right. It was until Lev and Yamamoto were notably lacking motivation that something had to be done. For the sake of team morale, Kenma took it upon himself to confront Tsukiko during class.

“Sure,” Tsukiko answered quickly.

During lunch, Kenma asked her to return to the team. He was surprised by how fast she agreed to go back. The contents of her bento box also made him curious. Who eats a crepe for lunch? Whatever. The task was done so Kenma went back to his seat without further discussion. And as promised, Tsukiko showed up to club practice later that day. She and Kuroo exchanged glances but didn’t say anything to each other. The other players welcomed the girl for her return and even Yamamoto was crying tears of joy.

During the next morning practice, coach Nekomata assigned Kenma to practice with Lev, who arrived late. Tsukiko had to supervise them from the sides. Kenma was stuck tossing volleyballs for Lev to improve their synchronization and because the latter simply struggled with the basics. They had been going through the same lessons from what Tsukiko remembered. “Is he just dumb?” she said out loud, causing Lev to mess up. He turned to rebuke but Tsukiko had already walked past him to get to Kenma, who then said, “He doesn’t even understand the basics. It takes forever getting him to really listen too.”

Tsukiko chuckled, which was something the team never heard her do until now. “I think once he pulls it off it’ll start coming naturally to him.” she added before tossing a ball to Lev. He only managed to headbutt it, garnering laughter out of Tsukiko. Again, the team never heard her do that too. What she said also turned out to come true the day team Nekoma had their practice match against another school; though Tsukiko wouldn’t have known since she didn’t attend it.

After grueling weeks of studious training, everyone managed to pass their tests and thus were allowed to attend the summer camp. However, during roll call, the only person missing was the team’s manager. Kai looked at Kuroo who was notably upset about it despite having expected it to happen. Then when Nekoma arrived at Fukurodani’s school, they saw their manager speaking to a certain owl at the gates.

“Hey, hey, heeeeyyy!” Bokuto hollered at the arriving team in their red tracksuits.
Tsukiko turned around, giving her boys a cheeky grin. “Took ya long enough!” she said then laughed in sync with Bokuto. Seeing the two together gave Kuroo an uneasy feeling but he also wondered if they somehow knew each other already. He didn’t have to raise the question since Bokuto suddenly shouted out, “You thieving cats took my little kouhai from me!”

According to what Tsukiko was telling Kenma on the way inside, she lived closer to Fukurodani Academy, which was why she didn’t attend roll call at Nekoma. In addition to what Bokuto previously stated, she mentioned attending the school of owls during her first year.

“Apparently she was in the enka club.” Kenma informed Kuroo, striking shock into the captain. He didn’t take Tsukiko as the traditional music type but it reminded him of his grandmother being a fan of Yoko Nagayama.

Other schools, Shinzen and Ubugawa, arrived after Nekoma did and the training camp began once everyone warmed up. The large gym was filled with the sounds of shoes squeaking against the flooring and volleyballs being smacked around. Those who weren’t regulars on their teams were left to handle the scoreboards or train in the other facilities. The teams that lost their matches were penalized to do a lap of flying falls around the court too.

At some point, Kuroo and Kai had gone out of the gym to pick up another volleyball team that just arrived at the gates. Tsukiko didn’t know who they were until Kenma explained. “Ahh, so they’re the guys you beat before I joined.” she said while stroking her messy hair. Karasuno sounded oddly familiar but the girl couldn’t quite figure out why. She did hear Yamamoto wailing about girls when she stuck her head outside the gym briefly.

“GEH!” Tsukiko gasped as she retreated behind Kenma, who was taller than her by a measly four inches.

“What?” he asked but then quickly figured it out. “That’s right, Karasuno’s manager is your cousin.”

Tsukiko covered his mouth to hush him. She looked over his shoulder, staring at the group of female managers that greeted Kiyoko and a tiny blonde girl. “She can’t know I’m here!” Tsukiko stated as she dashed from Kenma to Nekoma’s bag pile in the far side of the gym. She grabbed her things then covered her face with her braids.

While informing Karasuno’s captain about how the training camp worked, Kuroo noticed his
manager attempting to flee in the corner of his eye. “Excuse me,” he said before gesturing for Kai’s attention and then asking him to take over.

Tsukiko had just reached the exit when Kuroo grabbed the back collar of her jacket to stop her. “Let me go!” she shouted softly as to not gather attention from those around them. Kuroo pulled her closer to himself until their faces were just inches apart. Any normal girl would have gotten flustered from being near the charming captain, but Tsukiko wasn’t a normal girl. She started growling in her throat from seeing Kuroo put on his fake smile. “Where do you think you’re going, kitten?” he asked playfully.

“None of your business,” replied the captive manager. Her response only made Kuroo tug at her collar more to the point he was almost lifting her off the floor. Tsukiko started making irritated cat noises, which only amused the demon captain and tempted him to actually pull her off her feet.

“If you’d just be honest with me then I wouldn’t have to get rough with you,” he said in a soft voice but to Tsukiko it was all a farce.

“She doesn’t want her cousin to know she’s here,” said Kenma arriving to the rescue. After hearing what his friend said Kuroo put Tsukiko down completely but didn’t let her go. He gave her a disapproving look.

“If it means you’re not going to stay then I won’t let you leave. I’m tired of not seeing you supporting us properly.” Kuroo told her with a serious tone.

The girl, still in Kuroo’s grip, grumbled in response since she was stubborn about submitting to the captain. Tsukiko muttered under her breath. “I’ll come back later, I promise.” she replied.

Even though Nekoma had lost a practice match against Fukurodani, Kuroo wasn’t all too upset about it. He had a weird grin on his face while doing the penalty with his team. Seeing it made them uncomfortable and nervous enough that they were purposely moving faster to get away from their captain.

The partially blond setter rolled his eyes. “Stop that, you’re being gross,” he groaned with clear disgust in his voice. Kuroo snapped out of his daze to argue that there wasn’t anything wrong with him. It was after Nekoma finished their penalty and took a water break when Kai asked Kuroo what he was giddy about, which only made his grin even more sickening. Apparently when
Tsukiko promised to return she gave Kuroo a token that she would go back for at all costs. Though Kuroo didn’t specify exactly what it was, Kenma knew.

What Tsukiko gave the captain was an extra pair of her underwear. The very thing was placed secretly in Kuroo’s bag before the girl took off.

“I’m telling you, if she’s bold enough to give you… that… it’s unlikely she’ll come back for it unless it’s the only pair she owns.” Kenma had told Kuroo but the latter wasn’t paying attention, which he would regret soon.

The sky transitioned from blue to orange, signifying the evening had fallen. It was then that Kuroo started getting anxious because Tsukiko had yet to return to Fukurodani. When he heard the gym doors open his attention darted. Disappointment was momentarily on his face from seeing it was only Karasuno’s quick freak duo arriving fashionably late. It wasn’t until the last match of the day when the team noticed Tsukiko was still gone. None of them had her number either so they weren’t sure how to get in contact with the missing manager.

While cleaning up the gym, Yamamoto grabbed his friend Tanaka to say something he forgot to mention. Kenma noticed however and quickly figured out a way to prevent Tsukiko’s apparent secret from being revealed.

“Hey Lev,” Kenma called out to the first year. “What did you say you were going to be on the team?” he asked with fake curiosity.

In that instance, Lev started spouting how he was Nekoma’s ace. Yamamoto heard the giant then angrily went to make it clear that Lev wasn’t going to be the team’s ace with how poor his volleyball skills were.
HHHHRERRGG THANKS FOR ALL THE KUDOS!! THANKS FOR READING IN THE FIRST PLACE AAHHHHH

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“Motivation?!?” Yamaguchi grabbed for Tsukishima’s shirt and shouted into his face, “What more do you need than pride?!”

The next day of the training camp went on and there was still no sign of Tsukiko. Nekoma couldn’t afford to waste time worrying about their manager though. Their focus was on the set against Karasuno. Though they already had two sets over the crows, they still needed to improve themselves; Lev more precisely. Since his encounter with Karasuno’s #10, he got more fired up than usual to the point he was starting to sound even more cocky than usual. Some issues occurred on Karasuno’s side as well, with the same player attempting to steal their ace’s toss. In the end, Nekoma won the match.

Kiyoko blinked, noticing the gym doors were a crack open. Peeking between the narrow space was a girl with silver streaks in her braids. It reminded Kiyoko of a tiger and the imagery was supported when she realized they were wearing Nekoma’s red tracksuit.

“Hello,” Kiyoko approached the stranger who jolted from surprise. “Do you need something?” she asked while tucking her hair behind her ear. Getting a closer look, Kiyoko realized the other girl had a peculiar appearance. From the striped hair to the thick-framed glasses and mask that hid her face; she was quite the character.

“I-I-I.. Uhh…..” Tsukiko’s voice was muffled but she also tried to use a different pitch. She hoped her cousin wouldn’t recognize her despite not having seen each other in several years. There was a sense of familiarity but Kiyoko couldn’t put her finger on it.

“TSUKKI, WATCH OUT!!”

Bokuto hit a spike that Kenma was too afraid to block even though he was in the perfect position to stop it. The ball bounced off the floor and hit the wall where a tall blond nearly crossed paths. He would have gotten impaled by the ball if it weren’t for his friend’s warning.

Kiyoko left the doors to see if the player was unharmed or not, since that was a manager’s job.
Tsukiko stepped further inside the gym. The strap of her bag nearly slid off her shoulder because of how confoundingly shocked she was. There, on the other side of the gym, was a freckled face she never thought to see after leaving him behind over two years ago. Quickly, she retreated to the outside when three of Karasuno’s players were approaching the doors to step out and talk. It was only for a second but Kuroo swore he saw his team manager.

“Hey, hey, hey!”

It wasn’t Bokuto as she expected but her captain with an annoyed frown. Kuroo had caught Tsukiko loitering near the gym while on his way back from eating lunch with Karasuno’s third years.

“Why didn’t you come back like you promised?! And why do you have highlights now? Are you trying to be Bokuto?!” Kuroo berated with his hands on his hips in the same manner Tsukiko would when she was standing up to him.

“I did say I’d come back later, and now is later.” Tsukiko answered with an indifferent attitude. She ended up making Kuroo more mad, which led them to take their conversation elsewhere and out of sight.

Once they were alone, behind the gym, Kuroo held up a balled fist. “Y-You lied to me about this too!” he said before opening his hand to reveal a pink handkerchief. Tsukiko spat out laughter. She found it hilarious that the guy actually believed she had put her underwear in his bag as a bargain chip. Kuroo felt ashamed for not listening to Kenma about it either. He then slammed his hands against the building, pinning the girl between his arms.

Tsukiko stopped laughing then looked up at the captain she pissed off. “Gee, okay, sorry.” she said but the apology was too weak for Kuroo’s liking. He leaned closer until his nose almost touched the thick frames of Tsukiko’s weird glasses. “I’ve been holding back,” he stated with a low voice.

“I’m even trying really hard right now not to seriously do something to get you to listen to me, but I think I’m at my limit.”

Hearing the seriousness in his tone made Tsukiko nervously gulp. She couldn’t break away from the hazel eyes that seemed to be looking past her clouded lenses. It was the next thing Kuroo said that made her body stiffen.
“That’s a nice birthmark you got there,” Kuroo’s spoke with some raspiness in his voice and a devilish smirk to match. His right hand pulled down the medical mask then brushed against Tsukiko’s cheek to push her glasses up so he could see the dot that was just under her left eye. When Kuroo’s tongue peeked out of his lips it made Tsukiko shudder.

“Get off of me…” she only managed to mutter. Kuroo’s hand slithered its way down the girl’s face to the collar of her jacket and she flinched in response out of fear he would take it further downwards. Right as Kuroo’s hand reached her shoulder he backed off from hearing his name being called.

“Kuroo-san! The afternoon games are starting!” shouted Yaku from around the corner.

When Kuroo was about to walk away, he noticed something was stuck between his legs.

“...Seriously?” he looked down at Tsukiko who had one of her legs up. She was clearly planning to kick him in the groin as self-defense. Thankfully Yaku’s call had stopped her too.

The two returned to the gym where Yaku and Kai waited. They noticed the grim look on Tsukiko’s face before they saw her new hair streaks. The libero shot his captain a mean glare. “Did you hurt her?!?” he said while pulling the sullen manager into a comforting hold.

“There, there… the scary man won’t bother you again.” Yaku added as he stroked her head.

Tsukiko feigned sadness, even saying in a hysterical manner, “Woe is me!”

Kuroo shoved his hands into his shorts then walked away. If the girl wanted to keep quiet then he would do the same.

Before Tsukiko could escape again when more people were returning from lunch, Kenma was the one to stop her for a moment. She turned her head nervously then exhaled a huff. The way Kenma was tugging on her jacket sleeve was too adorable, like a child about to ask for candy. It struck her heart more lightly than when Kuroo was mad at her. When Tsukiko asked what he wanted, Kenma held up his phone to her.
“It’s troublesome if we don’t know whether you’re coming or not,” he said while looking away bashfully.

Tsukiko’s eyes lit up as she inhaled deeply. “Y-Yes!” she squeaked while suppressing the urge to hug Kenma.

Two weeks passed and it was finally summer break. This allowed all of the teams to be able to stay overnight for the training camp. Additionally the camp would take place at Shinzen instead of Fukurodani again. The locations rotated among the Fukurodani group every year for the occasion.

“KARASUNO #10 IS HERE!!” cheered Lev as he ran down the Shinzen staircase to greet the arriving crows; specifically the one that was talking with Kenma. The half-Russian immediately asked if Hinata had grown despite it only being two weeks since they last saw each other. According to Lev, he had grown 2mm in that time, which surprised the tiny crow.

All of the players were assembled in the first gymnasium. They did their warm ups then began practicing. One of the first matches was Karasuno vs Fukurodani. The duo freak that everyone talked about didn’t seem all too exciting to Tsukiko. She heard nothing but complaints, albeit praises to some degree, about how Karasuno’s #10 and #9 could pull off a fast quick that was often difficult to bypass. Even Kuroo admitted to finding it troublesome whenever it happened out of nowhere.

The entire Karasuno team appeared to be trying to do crazy things though. Coach Nekomata started chuckling at the failed synchronized attack that wasn’t at all synchronized. Following after was when Karasuno’s small libero attempted to do a jump toss; only to end up jumping too far and missing the ball completely.

“What’s the matter with Karasuno? Are they in bad form today?” Coach Naoi commented. Tsukiko nodded in agreement even though she never saw Karasuno play until now. Coach Nekomata chuckled at them then explained that Karasuno was simply evolving. When the old man said that a middle school memory came in Tsukiko’s mind. She immediately shook it off to return her focus to the game when Bokuto successfully got a spike past Karasuno’s tallest middle blocker.

“He’s still the same… both of them, I think.” Tsukiko muttered to herself before hiding her face with her braids when Karasuno went to do their penalty. It was decided by Shinzen that the losing teams had to dash over the hill outside of the gym. As simple as it sounded, the slope was fairly steep and since it was summer the heat would steadily increase over time. There were also bugs outside, as Kenma complained about before.
Tsukiko’s gaze followed Karasuno until a poke startled her into holding up her clipboard defensively.

“Whoa there, Kiko-chan!” said Fukurodani’s third year manager, Yukie. She continued to pat Tsukiko’s shoulder while informing her that all of the managers were going to go prepare lunch for the teams.

“Ahh… sorry but I don’t cook.” Tsukiko blatantly lied in hopes it would get her out of doing work but her senior wasn’t accepting it. The real reason Tsukiko didn’t want to join the girls was because it meant getting caught by her cousin.

Coach Naoi interrupted as though to rescue Tsukiko. “Sorry, but we need our manager here.” he told Yukie. The girl shrugged and let the other go. Tsukiko sighed and said her thanks to the coach.

“No problem. After all it’s technically the truth, though, I’m sure you’ll get found out eventually.” he added before turning back to discuss things with Nekoma.

The last afternoon match ended with Karasuno’s loss. “They probably enjoy the penalty,” Kenma said jokingly. Tsukiko snorted, finding it amusing how the usually indifferent setter could sometimes be a wisecrack. She followed Nekoma around the gym, seeing how some of the managers were also assisting their teams in the free self-practice. Whenever passing Karasuno she would pull up her jacket collar or braids in an attempt to hide her face.

“You know…” Kenma groaned when he noticed what the manager was doing. “She’s gonna find out tonight. All of the girls are sleeping in the same room, which includes you.” he informed Tsukiko. For some reason that fact didn’t occur to her.

“...Think I could catch a taxi ride home?” Tsukiko asked. Kenma’s eyes narrowed into a stern glare.

Dinnertime was approaching, which meant Tsukiko needed to find a way out of helping the managers. She hid herself between Yaku, Fukunaga, and Inuoka as they were all going to check up on Lev and Kuroo’s private training in the third gym. When the group got there they only saw Lev lying on the floor; possibly dead. Realizing that someone from Karasuno was also inside made Tsukiko pull her steps back and retreat into the darkness outside.
“That was close…!” she sighed while creeping back to the other gyms. Yukie was with Fukurodani in one of them while another had Karasuno and, of course, her cousin Kiyoko. There was basically no place to go back without getting dragged into actual manager work. She clapped her hands together when realizing she could hide in the bathroom. If anyone questioned it, she could claim she was having menstrual cramps. Being a girl made that a good excuse, right?

As Tsukiko turned around to head for the nearest bathroom she almost walked face-first into someone’s chest. “Watch it!” she barked, not noticing who it was until her eyes gazed up at the person’s face. It was Tsukishima. He looked down at Tsukiko with an unreadable expression. The girl couldn’t tell if he recognized her or not, but she was hoping he didn’t. She did go through the trouble to change her hair and she didn’t wear the same glasses from middle school either.

“You watch it,” said the blond finally as he walked around her and continued on his way.

Tsukiko felt herself boil with rage. The boy had always been rude from what she remembered but the attitude in his voice had never ticked her off until now. “Blehhhh!” Tsukiko quietly stuck her tongue out while Tsukishima had his back facing her. When she returned to look for a bathroom some memories were replaying in her head. It wasn’t a particularly bad time. She didn’t like remembering the past because of how naïve she use to be.

“Fool,” she grumbled to herself.

______________________________________________________

Like Kenma predicted, Tsukiko was found out that following night. As soon as Yukie pulled her braids apart and removed the goofy glasses, Kiyoko recognized her cousin. She was surprised but not completely shocked. “I’m just glad,” she started saying.

Tsukiko grabbed a bunch of her black and silver-streaked hair to cover her flustered face. “Glad about what?” she asked curiously.

Kiyoko gave her cousin a soft smile. “I’m glad to see you’re doing better.”

“You two look alike!!” Proclaimed the petite girl that was practically latched onto Kiyoko like a baby hatchling. She introduced herself as Yachi and Karasuno’s newest manager. The girl was cute and definitely the cutest out of the girls in Tsukiko’s opinion.
“W-We do not…” Tsukiko replied while stroking her braids bashfully, making Kiyoko chuckle.

The managers were the first to wake up the next morning. After they cleaned their faces they went to the cafeteria to prepare breakfast for their boys. This time, Tsukiko lent a hand. She had no choice since Yukie threatened to eat her share of breakfast if she didn’t help.

Tsukiko and Kiyoko were filling up rice bowls. Majority of the boys tried to line up in front of Karasuno’s manager so they could get served by the pretty girl. Yamamoto, however, was too shy to approach Kiyoko. He opted for his own manager, who angrily handed him his bowl that only had a single grain of rice in it.

More players from Karasuno followed behind but they were also looking forward to getting served by their manager. Tsukiko grumbled with slight envy. She understood why this was happening. Because of her weird glasses and untidy braids, Tsukiko’s appearance was being outshined by her highly attractive cousin.

“N-E-X-T!” Tsukiko shouted for the boys’ attention as she bitterly held up a bowl of hot rice. When she looked up at the person holding a tray of food, she nearly dropped the bowl from meeting Tsukishima’s golden-brown eyes. He gave her a grouchy look then went on his way to sit down. The nerve of the boy, Tsukiko thought before preparing the next bowl.

“Here!” This time Tsukiko practically slammed the bowl on the next tray, causing the holder to yelp in surprise.

“Th-Thanks,” said the now nervous boy. A wave of nostalgia instantly calmed Tsukiko. She slowly met with the dark brown eyes she hadn’t seen in years. It was at that moment when the realization that she forgot about Yamaguchi hit her.

Tsukiko remained frozen even as the rice paddle slipped out of her hand and into the rice cooker. Those behind the line looked at the two. Kiyoko nudged her cousin with her elbow to snap her back to reality. “Hey, what’s wrong?” she asked with concern when Tsukiko didn’t respond.

Yamaguchi awkwardly looked at the girls before bowing slightly then heading for the tables.

A hard tap at Tsukiko’s forehead woke her up from her daze. She blinked back to realize and saw it was Kuroo who then gestured for her to hand him a bowl of rice. He was half expecting her to puff her cheeks and give him an attitude, but to his surprise the girl did her job without making a
complaint. It almost made him wonder if he tapped her head too hard.

The second day of the training camp was much like the first with Karasuno maintaining a losing streak. Watching them do the penalty was starting to make Tsukiko feel bad. But like coach Nekomata said, it was all part of their learning experience. During a short break the managers served fresh watermelon that was donated to the camp. It was then that Tsukiko started noticing the fatigue growing with one of Karasuno’s members. All of Karasuno were definitely tired since they had been doing the penalty one match after another. Tsukishima could hide his struggle to breath all he wanted but Nekoma’s manager knew otherwise.

“What do you think?” Asked coach Nekomata, who was noticing the same thing as Tsukiko. The girl shifted her neck around to release some pops before stating the obvious. “He’s tired,” she replied which made the coach laugh a bit. He then asked if she had any other thoughts, to which Tsukiko added, “even Kenma puts in more effort than him.”

Tsukiko continued observing the Karasuno team when they went on to their next match after losing to Nekoma. The crows still didn’t look like much of a challenge to her, furthering her understatement towards them. They continued to exhaust themselves, argue on the court, and make more mistakes each set. When the team’s ace spiked a short toss successfully past Ubugawa blockers, Tsukiko couldn’t help but cock a grin from being slightly impressed.

Free practice approached fast once again when the sky darkened. It was only the second day and Tsukiko felt tired from being on her feet the entire time. She didn’t do much besides observing, assisting, and giving the boys their back massages during the breaks. That was possibly the only thing the other teams had to feel envious about towards Nekoma. They still didn’t think Tsukiko was cute but getting massages from a girl was still something to be jealous over. Even Yukie praised Tsukiko for being okay with touching sweaty guys.

“Please, the only one I’m truly willing to do this for is Kenma but he won’t let me.” Tsukiko said in her inner thoughts.

Everyone began to split up for their free practice. Tsukiko watched as Bokuto approached Tsukishima to ask him to do spike practices again. As she expected, the latter turned down the offer. She snickered when the owl moved onto Kuroo, who responded negatively before the question was even raised.

“Have fun you tw—” she was about to walk off but Kuroo grabbed Tsukiko’s jacket in the usual spot. He gave her a look that said she was joining him and Bokuto. She clearly didn’t want to go but Kuroo was suspecting her of running off to hide in the bathroom again. The girl puffed her cheeks then reluctantly followed her seniors to the third gym.
There was a reason why Tsukishima wasn’t as motivated as the rest of the team. It was because of what happened in the past with his older brother. He looked up to his sibling very much until finding out everything his brother told him were lies. Since then, he’s had a firm mindset that working hard wasn’t always rewarding unless you were talented to begin with. That was about the gist of what Tsukiko could remember Yamaguchi telling her back in middle school. A rather sad tale and it was honestly the reason Tsukiko tried to become closer friends with Tsukishima. Obviously her efforts haven’t worked.

“Hey, hey, heyy!” Bokuto started tapping Tsukiko’s forehead to redirect her attention back to him. He ended up pressing too hard that the girl winced in pain.

“AAAAHHH!!!!” he screamed and proceeded to drop to the floor to apologize. Tsukiko realized what was going on and thought it was a good opportunity to get away from the private practice. “I’m gonna go check this out— I think his nail cut me,” she told Kuroo. Knowing how clumsy Bokuto could sometimes be, he believed it and let her go.

Tsukiko happily skipped down the barely lit path of the outdoor hall. She started humming a tune to herself but then nearly tripped over when hearing a familiar nickname being cried out close by. Adjusting for balance back on her feet, she looked around and saw the two guys she was not expecting to bump into at the same time. From what she could tell through the darkness, Yamaguchi had chased Tsukishima down evident by the pauses to catch his breath.

“Since we— haah... were kids…” Yamaguchi started saying.

“You’ve dealt with— everything in such a cool way— that it always left me jealous.”

His last words repeated in Tsukiko’s mind, causing a memory to resurface. The girl gripped a pillar as she pushed her thoughts aside to listen in on the boys. When she heard Tsukishima’s cold response of, “What’s your point?” she wanted to grab him by the neck and swing him around ferociously. Her irritated expression ceased when she heard the next thing Yamaguchi said. Hearing him call his best friend ‘pathetic’ was seriously mind-blowing.

Tsukiko wasn’t sure what to feel exactly and the more she listened to them the more she wondered if she should intervene. From the sound of it, their friendship could be in jeopardy. They were a close pair; that she knew. Hearing Tsukishima go on about how there’d be no point in pushing himself because the next best thing would take over was almost hitting it home with her. Again,
she tried not to think about herself but their conversation was resonating with her.

“Fool, fool, fool!” she muttered to herself while tugging at her hair. She was siding with Tsukishima’s words; motivation could feed you so far until you fall short before reaching your goal. That was something that frightened the girl after she faced reality when she left Miyagi.

“Motivation?!” Yamaguchi grabbed for Tsukishima’s shirt and shouted into his face, “What more do you need than pride?!”

Tsukishima looked at his friend, dumbfounded.

“I never thought I’d see the day…” was all he muttered before taking off.

The exact words escaped Tsukiko’s mouth too. Yamaguchi was always a timid fellow despite his height and the fact he hung out with the pessimistic Tsukishima. People often questioned why and how he was dating someone as bright and outgoing as Tsukiko, but the girl would give them the same answer; an answer she couldn’t recall at the moment.

Yamaguchi jumped in fright when he heard footsteps. He turned around only to see Nekoma’s small manager was standing behind him. Nervously, he rubbed the back of his head. It was embarrassing for him to have a girl overhear and see what just went on with him and his friend.

“ Wait…”

Yamaguchi slowly returned his gaze to Tsukiko. She removed her glasses to reveal tears budding in her eyes. Before Yamaguchi could remember to blink, the girl he thought he would never see again was wrapping her arms around him. Her grip tightened so that her fingertips touched.

As though on instinct, Yamaguchi hugged Tsukiko back and finally exhaled a breath of relief.
I think I'm butchering the events of the Tokyo Expedition arc lol doing my best skimming back on the chapters and anime but I'm also following this handy spreadsheet of the series timeline so bless you person that put it together~

p.s. I still haven't touched my animation final project and it's due next week :")))))))

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Chapter Summary

Kenma gave them both mean looks. “What sort of face is that even?” he asked.

“An excited one,” Kuroo stated.

Chapter Notes

I FINISHED MY FINALS SO POSTING THIS NOOOOWWWW

TITLE IS FROM MY FAV SONG FROM MY FAV GROUP BACK WHEN I WAS ALL DEEP IN KPOP MY BIAS WAS AND STILL IS JO KWON

AAAHHHHHHHH-- when I tell people that they're all like "who's 2AM?" //cries ya too new to kpop fam

Tsukiko pressed her face against Yamaguchi’s warm chest while breathing in the scent that was triggering more memories. Sure he reeked of sweat but it wasn’t bad. It smelled nostalgic. Seconds later, the two let go of each other when realizing what they were doing.

“S-Sorry!!” Tsukiko apologized as she put her glasses back on. Yamaguchi said the same while bowing profoundly. The last they saw each other was after summer break in junior high; before Tsukiko finished her third year and while Yamaguchi was still a second year. It felt like forever ago since then but in reality it had only been two years.

Even though it was still dark out, with only the few building lights illuminated, they could see the changes in each other.

“You… you grew taller.” Tsukiko commented while nervously stroking her braids. She didn’t hear anything back though, likely because Yamaguchi was too shy to utter any words. There was a lot he wanted to say but to have a sudden reunion right after his confrontation with Tsukishima was a bit awkward. He definitely wasn’t prepared for it. Tsukiko had to insist Yamaguchi didn’t need to say anything when he started mumbling incoherently.

To avoid further awkward silence, Tsukiko suggested they go back to the self-practice. Yamaguchi shook his head in agreement but he really wanted to keep staring at her.
Tsukiko ended up going back to third gym where she found Tsukishima dragged into practicing with Bokuto and Kuroo. Fukurodani’s composed setter and vice-captain, Akaashi, spotted her at the door. He walked up to Tsukiko, briefly waving to her. “I see your forehead is fine,” he said in reference to why she ran out earlier. It confused her at first then she remembered what happened.

“Y-Yeah,” she replied hesitantly. Tsukiko turned around to see that Yamaguchi had actually followed her. Their eyes briefly met and, without saying anything, Yamaguchi took his leave.

“Do you know him?” Akaashi asked. He assumed so judging by the way Tsukiko had her hand reaching out to the guy that just left. She didn’t answer the question and instead excused herself to go to the bathroom.

Tsukiko wore a face mask again on the third day of training camp. According to the other managers they woke up to hear her coughing. Despite coach Nekomata’s concerns, the girl didn’t want to rest. “It’s just a summer cold that’ll pass by the end of the day,” she claimed while jotting down notes. The truth; she was feigning illness in hopes she could avoid interaction with anyone. Tsukiko felt emotionally confused after bumping into Yamaguchi last night. It distracted her so much that she knew she wouldn’t be able to focus properly on her manager job.

On another court, Karasuno was once again losing to Fukurodani. When Tsukiko glanced at their scoreboard during their timeout she overheard her cousin explaining a technique to Yachi. It was also new information to Tsukiko, so she wrote that down too. Tsukiko had some knowledge about volleyball but she knew it better when actually playing it. In middle school, she was popular among several clubs for being a stand-in volunteer. Whether sports needed someone to even out their practice teams or arts wanted a model to draw; Tsukiko would help them so long it wasn’t the same day as the club she was actually in.

“Oho!” Coowed the elderly coach, making Tsukiko turn her attention to what he was looking at. She had missed it but coach Naoi relayed how Bokuto went for a feint when he initially meant to spike as normal. Tsukiko tapped the tip of her pencil against her clipboard, pretending to be uninterested. However, underneath her mask she was grinning silly. To force the almighty horned-owl into running away—she had to give the crows some credit for that.

By the afternoon round, it was becoming increasingly hot even inside the gym. Tsukiko wasn’t physically active like the players and yet she was sweating in her tracksuit. “Aren’t you getting feverish under all that?” Yukie asked when she walked over to Tsukiko while fanning herself with her own clipboard.
The masked girl coughed once before answering, “I prefer being hot over cold.”

What she said made the senior manager laugh. “Ah yeah, you’ve always been sensitive to cold temperatures, huh?”

The conversation was cut short when an angry cry came from the court where Nekoma was playing against Karasuno. It appeared a fight between the freak duo was about to start, which Tsukiko was honestly waiting to happen. She knew since the first day that Karasuno was bound to break due to the grueling hours of constant volleyball play and doing the penalty. If it was Nekoma in their situation she would have mentioned something by day two, but it wasn’t any of Tsukiko’s concern to look out for the rival team. As harsh as that sounded, she didn’t want to do anything that she didn’t need to do; much like Kenma on a regular basis.

“Heey~ quick #10~” Tsukiko called out to Hinata who was bothering Kenma during free practice. When she approached the jittery boy he had suddenly stiffened.

“O-Ossu!” he greeted the female manager. Tsukiko snorted under her mask and grabbed Kenma’s shirt to keep him from leaving.

“Instead of Ken-Ken, how about this…”

“When did you become so helpful?” Kenma said while playing a game on his phone as he ate his dinner. Tsukiko sat across from him with her hands against her cheeks. Even with the mask on Kenma could tell she was smirking.

“I just got interested in Shou-tan is all,” she replied with the nickname she gave to Hinata. Earlier she had suggested the boy go to the third gym where he’d find his teammate Tsukishima practicing with the mischievous captains and Akaashi. Her intention was to give Kuroo more work with an additional first year but she did wonder if she actually was trying to help their opponent. The baby crow was growing like her coach said after all.

The Fukurodani group summer training camp was nearing its completion. All of the players continued to work harder each day, even those that weren’t in the regular lineup. Tsukiko’s opinion had changed a bit as well. In the beginning she thought it was natural to be dedicated to club activities because everyone was balls deep into the sport. She didn’t particularly care about her role as a manager either. The reason she accepted the job was to distract herself from something
that happened a while back. It’s been at least three months since Tsukiko became Nekoma’s manager. Though she’s pondered for awhile on whether she regret doing it or not, a smile on her face said she was leaning on the not.

In the evening, Tsukiko didn’t hide in the bathroom again. She assisted Yaku and Kenma in teaching Lev how to receive and block read. In turn, they learned that their manager was rather proficient at spiking. “Ah, I could do better with less clothes on.” she said while rubbing her wrists. The boys blushed in response.

Tsukiko also helped the managers wash jersey bibs. The laundry room reeked of sweaty clothes but only Tsukiko was unfazed. In the middle of cleaning she and Yukie raced to see who could fold the fastest.

Nekoma’s manager participated a lot more than she did the first half of the week. The surprising change of behavior didn’t go unnoticed by Kuroo. He was once again with the usual during free practice. They were being dubbed “the gym three group” because of the fact that’s where they had been the whole week for free practices. Tsukiko passed by their open door while on her way back to Kenma and others with their sport bottles refilled. She arrived in time to hear Kuroo giving Tsukishima advice on blocking.

“We’re enemies,” said Tsukishima as he wiped the sweat off his face. “Why are you going so far as to give us advice?”

Tsukiko was thinking the same thing. Then again she did help Hinata the other day. But she knew that despite how stern Kuroo could be, whether it was towards her attitude or his team, the captain only sought to make sure everyone didn’t come to regret playing volleyball. Hearing Kuroo admit he wanted the famed “battle of the trash heap” to actually happen put a grin on Tsukiko’s face. Was it weird that she wanted to see that now too?

Tsukiko returned to the gym where she thought her pack of felines were but it turned out they moved somewhere else. In their place was Karasuno. Their setter, who introduced himself as Sugawara, had a refreshing air about him. He informed Tsukiko where Kenma and company went but she didn’t leave immediately. The girl stood at the doors watching the crows practice their serves. What she really had her attention on was Yamaguchi though. She was taken aback by how focused he looked with the volleyball in his hands. It clicked; the realization that she hadn’t really seen Yamaguchi play in the camp practice matches.

“Is he not a regular then?” she wondered.
The freckled boy tossed the ball into the air and steadily took some steps forward to the bounding line before leaping. It looked like he didn’t jump high but Tsukiko was sure his reach had to be at least 300 cm high. When he hit the ball she noticed it looked odd from her point of view.

“Over here,” Sugawara gestured for Tsukiko to follow him to the other end of the court. There, she would be able to see Yamaguchi’s serve from another angle. He didn’t seem to notice the girl was watching him since he was completely in his zone. When he served again, this time Tsukiko figured out why the ball was strange. There was little to no spin put to it, resulting in the ball appearing to float forward in the air.

“That’s called a float serve,” she was informed by mister refreshing. He wasn’t sure if Tsukiko knew the term or not and he was used to telling these things to Yachi. “Whaddya think of it?” Sugawara asked. His smile was practically prying Tsukiko to answer. She did say, “it’s really cool,” before leaving. The third year pouted as he went back to his teammates. Karasuno captain Daichi asked who the girl was but was answered by Kiyoko.

“Cousin?!” shouted the parents of Karasuno.

“First we find out Tsukishima has a brother and now Kiyoko-san’s cousin— who is Nekoma’s manager too!” Sugawara stumbled.

“A-Ahh, Yamaguchi-kun? You okay?? Don’t push yourself,” said the nervous ace when saw the freckled boy grovel to his knees with hands covering his red face.

The final day of the camp arrived and the volleyball teams present were excited about putting their newfound experiences to the test. Sneakers squeaked against the gym flooring as the practice matches continued on. Tsukiko and Shibayama approached the rest of Nekoma when they finished a set against Fukurodani.

“We tallied up the results!” said the first year who seemed excited to share the spreadsheet. According to the numbers, Fukurodani had won the most sets in total throughout the training camp. They also had the least amount of losses.

“They’re really the strongest among us,” Yaku commented before turning to Tsukiko. “To think you were on their side before transferring to us too…”
The girl rolled her eyes. “I’d rather be with the runner-ups. The highest spot on the podium is a lonely throne.” Tsukiko said, making Yaku and Kai touch their chests as if they were moved by her words.

Attention redirected to Karasuno as they finished their match. The result, as expected, was their loss. Fortunately for them the coaches decided to change the penalty back to flying falls due to the overbearing heat from outside. It’d be bad if their valuable players got a heat stroke.

“Whoa, that little guy’s flying falls are getting better!” Yaku made the comment about Hinata. Tsukiko was about to interject her agreement but then Lev suddenly blurted out, “Your height isn’t much taller than Hinata’s though!” Also as expected, the libero started kicking the self-proclaimed ace of Nekoma.

After Karasuno finished their penalty they were immediately put into their next match. Realizing who they were up against, Tsukiko couldn’t help but sigh. She mentally prayed for their safety seeing that they were matched with the camp’s leading team, Fukurodani.

The game began with the owls taking the first point. The crows were quick to gain one as well, thanks to the Tsukishima’s new block out skill. And yet, another point was obtained by Fukurodani because of Bokuto’s straight bypassing the blockers. There was an ongoing back-and-forth between the teams.

“Wanna make a bet?” Tsukiko blatantly blurted out, causing Kuroo to nearly spit his water. The two had barely communicated ever since their argument at Fukurodani’s gym, but their relationship seemed to have smoothed recently. For one thing, Tsukiko was doing more manager stuff like Kuroo wanted her to do.

Kuroo cocked a devilish grin as he slung one of his lanky arms around the girl’s neck. “Owls,” he told her and tapped his water bottle against her clipboard.

“Ahh, but I guess it’s not a gamble if we bet on the same tea—”

“Crows.” Tsukiko stated, bringing surprise out of Kuroo. It also made his grin more arched. He accepted the bet. As soon as they shook hands though, the game went momentarily silent. Everyone was left awestruck when Hinata had pulled a feint; a technique none of them expected him or even Lev to be able to pull off.
“Pff, where’d he learn that from?” Tsukiko chuckled, though saw that Kuroo wasn’t laughing either. Apparently the feint was a ‘special move’ that Bokuto taught the little crow. So the blame went to him.

“Can I change my vote?” Kuroo faked a whimper to which Tsukiko retorted with his own words;

“Ahh, but it’s not a gamble if we bet on the same team~”

From the sidelines, Yamaguchi left himself distracted when he should be observing the game. He was looking elsewhere, specifically at Nekoma’s captain fancying an engaging conversation with his manager. Sugawara in mid-cheer caught line of Yamaguchi’s sight.

“Jealous?” he asked, causing the latter to jolt. “Yeah, I feel you… if only we could get that touchy with our cute managers.”

That wasn’t exactly what Yamaguchi was thinking, but he couldn’t correct his senior. He continued to glance back and forth between the game and Tsukiko though.

One point after another, no matter how much Fukurodani tried to take the lead, Karasuno continued to claim match points. It made their game more captivating to watch. Kenma stood with Kuroo and Tsukiko, first to find out what they were scheming. Somehow he wasn’t surprised to learn they reconciled through a wager.

“You know, Shouyou always has something new up his sleeve.” Kenma blurted out suddenly.

Kuroo was interested in what his friend was leading on about. “If chibi-chan were on our side, I’d bet you’d be more motivated.” he said but was told otherwise.

Kenma added how he wouldn’t be able to keep up with a player like Hinata, due to his endless strive for constant improvement. Kuroo smirked, feeling surprised by the setter’s words. “Well, as an opponent THEN you’d be motivated too,” he added.

Tsukiko raised a brow when she registered herself into their conversation.
“When Kenma watches the little guy play, he makes this same face he does when he starts a new game,” Kuroo whispered loudly to the girl. Tsukiko squealed because she found the information to be adorable.

Kenma gave them both mean looks. “What sort of face is that even?” he asked.

“An excited one,” Kuroo stated.

Nekoma’s break soon ended. Their next opponent was Shinzen. Before they started, they caught a glimpse of Karasuno pulling off a synchronized attack. Compared to the first time it was a vast improvement that led them to winning a point. Tsukiko shot Kuroo a mischievous expression much similar to his. From her wicked grin he could tell she was mocking him. The girl nearly distracted him from the game but the cheers from the other side of the gym also caught his attention. Karasuno had taken the lead. Kuroo didn’t have to glance back at Tsukiko to know her face was basically saying, “you wanna forfeit the bet?”

Tsukiko knew Bokuto from her first year at Fukurodani. This meant she was aware of how Bokuto’s clumsiness would heighten when he got riled up during mid-game. How Kuroo forgot that was his mistake.

Unfortunately, the winning team was the camp’s reigning champion; Fukurodani. The team started praising their captain and ace in order to spring him back up. Tsukiko bit the corner of her clipboard, grumbling about losing the gamble she initiated with Kuroo. The game was a close one, and possibly the best that Karasuno did the entire week. As she watched Karasuno receiving feedback from their advisor, something was warm in her chest.

“Proud?” Coach Nekomata looked up at the manager from his chair with his elderly cat-like grin. “They ain’t even your boys, bah!” he laughed.

Tsukiko nervously raised her shoulders to her ears before she collected her thoughts to share. “It’s just more exciting to watch a seed sprout than a tree grow taller.” she said. Hearing her odd analogy made the old man laugh some more to the point he almost choked on saliva.

Shinzen vs Ubugawa was the last game for the training, leaving others to practice on their own until the afternoon. By then those who were free lent their hand in setting up the barbeque that the coaches arranged as a reward. To officially end the training camp, the coaches made their
statements. Coach Nekomata’s speech was full of inspiring and encouraging words. But it was obvious the students had their focus on the food cooking in front of them. The coach cleared his throat before finally allowing them to dive in and fill their stomachs. They all earned it.

Everyone from the players to the managers and coaches was enjoying the well-deserved barbeque. Some stacked their plates as high as they could while others were satisfied with minimal servings.

“Eat more Tsukishima!!” hollered Karasuno’s captain. Daichi handed the blond a plate full of meat and large rice balls. Following him was Nekoma’s captain, who was insisting that Kenma eat more vegetables.

Various scenes went on nearby; one with Yachi being surrounded by the enormous players. Some of the boys were admiring the group of pretty female managers gathered together. There was no objection that Kiyoko was the most attractive of them all. The attention she was receiving made her protection force ward all threats away with a menacing aura however.

Aside from Yachi, there was one other missing among the managers. Kiyoko was about to get up and look for her cousin but then she didn’t have to. Arriving at the scene was Tsukiko with her hair down and glasses removed. Several boys, which included some of Nekoma’s, noticed her and were completely stunned. According to her and Kuroo’s earlier bet, if Tsukiko lost then she had to spend the rest of the evening without her silly getup. She was glad about not having to take off her tracksuit at least. It was hiding some features too. If Kuroo made that one of the conditions then she would have really chickened out.

“WHO IS THAT GIRL THAT LOOKS LIKE KIYOKO-SAN?!?!!” Tanaka and Noya roared with excitement. Yamamoto smirked as he stood behind them with a glow in his aura. “That, master and Ryu, is Nekoma’s own valuable— the unpolished jewel now primed and properly cleaned for this very moment!” he stated, causing the other two to cry on all fours.

Tsukiko couldn’t bring herself to go any further into the crowd. She felt the eyes cast on her because of her face reveal.

Kuroo approached her with an extra plate of food. “Here,” he said with rice stuffed in his cheeks. The girl gave him a weird look at first but accepted the offering nonetheless. In the next moment she was bombarded by her fellow managers. They complimented her hair, stating the silver streaks looked better down than in her sloppy braids. Yachi also took notice of the birthmark under her eye and then made a point about the cousins having similar facial features.

“You should compare our chest,” Tsukiko accidentally said out loud. As crude of a comment it
was, the girls didn’t ridicule her or anything but laughed it off. Even Kiyoko was giggling, which made Tsukiko do the same. Seeing the managers laughing together was blinding the boys.

In the midst of the excitement surrounding Tsukiko, the one who couldn’t take his eyes off her had food hanging out of his mouth. Disgusted, Tsukishima nudged Yamaguchi with his elbow.

“Don’t be weird with her again. Go,” said the blond as he adjusted his glasses. It sounded like Tsukishima was trying to push Yamaguchi into the direction he needed to take. But it would be out of character for him if that were really the case. What were his thoughts about seeing Tsukiko again though? Probably no comment.

Yamaguchi looked at Tsukiko with a face of longing. He wanted to talk to her again. He wanted to be the one laughing beside her again. Preventing him from going up to her now was his inner confusion regarding their relationship.

How should he ask a girl he hasn’t seen in two years if they were still dating?
p.s. slowly coming to a legit writer's block-- like, I know what I want to happen but it's threading things together that I'm having trouble with right now lol xD

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Ordinary

Chapter Summary

For a second, Kenma regret not zoning Tsukiko out during lunch because now he knew another weird thing about his manager. He couldn’t even keep the information to himself and ended up telling Kuroo about it; to which the captain reacted by turning to stone.

“Being in the ‘Top 5’ of the country is amazing!!” squeaked Hinata as he gazed up at Bokuto with his eyes sparkling in admiration. The owl laughed, his egotistical nose growing a few inches.

Kuroo jumped in on their conversation to say, “But that ‘Ushiwaka’ guy from your neck of the woods is in the ‘Top 3’ in the country you know.”

The small crow shuddered from the new information. He knew that Shiratorizawa’s ace was famously strong, but not the fact he stood higher than even his great mentor Bokuto.

Tsukiko managed to sneak away from the girls and overhear the discussion of Japan’s top aces. As she was going to add her comments she realized Tsukishima was also in the group. Seeing him caused her to scurry elsewhere. The girl sat down by the gym doors. When she did, her shoulder bumped into the person that was there before her.

“Ah! Sorry, I didn’t see—”

Much like the previous night, Tsukiko and Yamaguchi fell silent when they met eyes. They stared at each other long enough for Yamaguchi to nearly choke on his food because he forgot to swallow. He turned the other way to cough. Overcome with embarrassment, he couldn’t bring himself to face Tsukiko again and was worried about what she would think. What if he accidentally spat food on her without noticing? The thought made his anxiety worsen.

Tsukiko watched the coughing fit and immediately felt bad. She reached out to tap Yamaguchi but hesitated. They remained facing away from each other in silence until Tsukishima returned with a black cat and horned owl following behind.

“Oho?” hooted Bokuto.
“Oho-ho?” meowed Kuroo. “Is your friend there trying to flirt with my manager, Tsukki?” he asked the blond who became annoyed with his nickname being used by other people.

“Gross,” Tsukishima scoffed and started looking for another spot to sit and eat.

“Shaddup Zukishishi!”

Eyes returned to the girl that was huffing and standing with her hands on her hips. “I swear— your rudeness grew just as much as your height did!” Tsukiko ranted. What she said caused confusion and curiosity with the two captains since it heavily implied that she knew Tsukishima.

“......haaaaah?” Tsukishima turned back around, slightly slouched, and stomped towards the female manager. She could tell she pissed him off, but in all honesty the guy wasn’t as scary as Kuroo. The way Tsukishima towered over her resembled the freak duo when they were fighting on the court. All they’d need for a finishing touch would be if Tsukishima grabbed Tsukiko’s head angrily.

“When did you learn how to talk back like that?” Tsukishima said with a low voice while looking down at the girl.

Tsukiko puffed out her chest. “When will you learn how to respect your upperclassmen?” she said.

“There’s nothing ‘upper class’ about you,” Tsukishima clapped back.

The tension between them started to look black as the burnt meat on the grills. Kuroo patted both in an attempt to mediate them out of starting an actual fight. They scoffed then faced opposite directions like stubborn children.

Yamaguchi was baffled. He never saw Tsukiko act that way before. She was the embodiment of positivity from how he remembered her. Could a person who always smiled and gave him words of encouragement be able to change after two years? It made him worry and wonder what caused Tsukiko to change since he last saw her.
After the barbeque feast was over and cleaned up the first to make their leave was Karasuno; since they had traveled a long way from the Miyagi prefecture. Everyone made their goodbyes with the friends they bonded with throughout the training camp. Yamamoto saluted while in tears towards his fellow members of the “Kiyoko-san protection squad.” Bokuto and Lev were leaping into the air while waving down the team descending Shinzen’s staircase. Yachi started crying too, having grown fond of her first experience at a sports training camp.

Karasuno started getting into their bus. The other teams that sent them off turned around to prepare for their leave too. An odd breeze made Kuroo face back though and he noticed Tsukiko was still watching the crows. He told the rest of Nekoma to continue on ahead while he would check up on their manager. When Kuroo reached her, she appeared to be in a world of her own since waving in front of her eyes didn’t do anything. Following her line of sight, Tsukishima and Yamaguchi were about to step into the bus.

“What? Did you actually flirt with—” Turning his head back to Tsukiko, she had completely vanished from his side. In the next second Kuroo heard shoes skit across concrete, which was Tsukiko nearly slipping from her landing. The girl had leaped all the way to the base of the stairs despite the risk of injury. At first Kuroo was surprised but then he hurried down the stairs to at least make sure the manager didn’t really hurt herself.

Tsukiko started sprinting before she even stood up. “Wait!!” she cried out.

Yamaguchi, Daichi, and Sugawara turned their heads to the source of the call.

“Eh!” Yamaguchi was startled to see Tsukiko chasing after him, yet he couldn’t help but go meet her halfway. Though he was afraid of what the girl wanted something in him was forcing his body to move. When the two were face to face they were both red; Tsukiko’s being because she ran and Yamaguchi’s for another reason. This time they didn’t stare at each other in silence.

Tsukiko pulled her phone out of her pocket. It looked different than what Yamaguchi remembered. There weren’t any charms attached or even a decorative cover.

Tsukiko inhaled deeply before stating, “I couldn’t reach you because I was forced to get a new phone!” The volume of her voice made everyone jump, since she had been mostly quiet the entire week.

“And so… I ended up—hah—losing your contact… And then I wasn’t allowed to text anyone that
wasn’t family…” Tsukiko continued to say, though lowering her tone into soft mumbling all while her eyes trailed down to her feet. Then she shot up to meet Yamaguchi’s eyes again.

“I’m sorry it’s been this long.”

Those words made Yamaguchi’s heart ping and the hair on the back of his neck stand up. It was as if the realization of how much time has passed since they last saw each other had just hit him. His palms felt clammy. He tried to find the words to say.

Tsukiko recognized the nervous tick of his and ended up smiling because of how nostalgic it made her feel. She put her other hand over his forehead, and almost instantly the young man relaxed. Yamaguchi held his phone up to Tsukiko’s to share his contact information. They both kept their heads down out of shyness then stepped away from each other when Daichi urged for his teammate’s return.

Back at the staircase Kuroo was also waiting for his manager. “What’s the relationship between you and Tsukki’s pal?” he asked her curiously.

Tsukiko hid her hands behind her back as she straightened up. She looked at Kuroo, flashing him a smirk. “None of your business~” she said with a playful tone that was unlike the usual sourpuss attitude used when she was rebelling against Kuroo. The face she made, the way her long hair swept behind her back, and the birthmark below her left eye being noticeable under the afternoon sunlight— it made Kuro’s chest feel something he never felt before. He even gripped his shirt to make sure a bug wasn’t crawling on him. As he followed behind Tsukiko he thought to himself, “She looks way better without those dumb glasses.”

“Keeeen-Keeeennn~~” Tsukiko squealed as she added a hop to her step when she approached Kenma. He gave her a questioning look and then cringed when she suddenly wrapped her arms around his neck.

“What are you so happy about?” Kenma asked even though he didn’t want to know the answer. Tsukiko just kept smiling. She started rubbing her head against Kenma’s face, causing him to become even more uncomfortable. The other team members of Nekoma watched, their reactions mixed with laughter and confusion. Kuroo froze, stunned by the girl’s strange behavior that was stranger than usual.

“She’s still a weirdo, that girl. ” he thought with a soft grin.
Several weeks passed with the Spring High Tokyo Representative Playoffs gradually approaching. In the time since the summer training camp ended, Nekoma was faced with a new challenge they never could have seen coming.

“Pleeeassee!!” cried Tsukiko with her hands clapped together. She was pleading to Kenma about letting her give him arm massages but he firmly declined. The girl was expelling crocodile tears when the setter continued to ignore her.

Ever since the training camp ended, Nekoma’s manager had started showing new colors. Tsukiko was acting more affectionate rather than keeping to herself from the team when she wasn’t particularly needed. During Yaku’s birthday some time ago, she made him a bento consisting of stir-fried vegetables arranged to look like a cat face. Her reason behind that was because Yaku’s birthday fell on World Cat Day. Though the third year appreciated the gift, he found it slightly unsettling. For one thing, he never told her when his birthday was or the fact stir-fried vegetables were his favorite.

Another thing that Tsukiko was actively expressing was her desire to hug each of the players she believed were cute.

“I would protect Yuuki at all costs,” was what she said regarding Shibayama.

“FUKU IS THE MOST CAT-LOOKING PERSON HERE— I’VE WANTED TO TOUCH HIM SINCE DAY ONE!” she said about Fukunaga, causing the guy to clam up and shy away even more.

For Yaku: “He is now Yakkyun and none of you can stop me from pinching him— even Yakkyun himself.”

And of course, Kenma; “Ken-Ken is the purin I would eat in a heartbeat.”

The four Nekoma players that were the closest to Tsukiko’s height turned out to be on her ‘haikyuutie’ list. Normally Kuroo would intervene and give the girl some kind of warning but he had notably changed since the summer camp as well. Despite Tsukiko’s antics, Kuroo had developed a soft spot for her. He was occasionally caught trying to get near the manager and sometimes he’d sweet talk to her like he would when charming other girls. Of course, none of it worked on Tsukiko. She still saw him as the jerk that tried to touch her all because she lied to him.
Tsukiko proceeded to continuously bother Kenma even during class time. Everyone would eyeball the transfer student that sat herself in front of the partially blond loner. It struck them as odd to suddenly see the two together right after summer break.

“Let’s have lunch together~!” Tsukiko said with a gleaming smile. Kenma was sure her eyes were sparkling behind her glasses. The girl continued to wear them and went back to tying her hair in braids poorly. She claimed to be disguising herself because she didn’t want the same attention she got on the last day of the training camp. Kenma understood her as he had dyed his hair in his first year for similar reasons.

The boy pushed his chair back. “I didn’t bring a lunch,” he said as he was about to go buy something as an excuse to leave Tsukiko behind. A thud brought his attention back to his desk where Tsukiko had placed a white box. Kenma cautiously sat back down to look inside and his face somehow lit up for only a moment.

“...How did you know?” he asked. Tsukiko leaned against his desk, smirked and schemingly pushing her glasses up.

“I saw your username when you were playing a game the other day.” she told him honestly.

“Fair enough.”

The two ate the small apple pie that Tsukiko brought to bribe Kenma into letting her spend the break with him. He kept focus on leveling up in his portable video game however. Tsukiko didn’t seem to mind as his company was all she wanted. Then the girl started a one-sided conversation. She went on about how she couldn’t wait to get rid of the highlights in her hair, which had started to fade, and then complained about the cold weather coming sooner than expected. The next thing she said made Kenma look up from his screen.

“What?” he looked at her funny as he tried to comprehend what he just heard her say. “Repeat that...”

“Hm? ‘I can’t believe I forgot Waka-papa’s birthday’ is what I said— ah, careful! You’re losing HP there.”

Once Kenma was able to pause his game, he put it down then took another bite of apple pie. Again,
he gave Tsukiko a questioning look. “And who is… that?” he asked with hesitation. Tsukiko was beaming now that she got Kenma to actually talk to her.

“I’m talking about the guy that’s a ‘Top 3’ in the nation; Ushijima, Wakatoshi.” she replied with dazzling confidence.

For a second, Kenma regret not zoning Tsukiko out during lunch because now he knew another weird thing about his manager. He couldn’t even keep the information to himself and ended up telling Kuroo about it, to which the captain reacted by turning to stone.

From: tsukiko-san

> Hey, I heard Karasuno is coming down to join our practice matches with Fukurodani

> You’ll be there right? I wasn’t sure since I don’t know if you’re a regular player (・_・∀

Yamaguchi gripped his phone, staring at it intensely. He had just returned from his shower to find the first text he received from Tsukiko ever since they exchanged numbers again. Countless thoughts ridden with his anxiety were going through his mind. What should he reply back? How should he start his reply? With a greeting like she did? If he replied straightforwardly in short sentences, would she feel like he wasn’t interested in talking to her? Did he need to add kaomijis too?

Seeing the timestamp on Tsukiko’s text made him shriek. She had messaged him almost twenty minutes ago. His thoughts then shifted to whether she still awake or waiting for his reply. In a panic, Yamaguchi sent the quickest thing he could think up on the spot.

From: tada-kun

> Yes’sir!

Tsukiko was just about to get in bed when she finally got a response from Yamaguchi. She opened his message and started chuckling. “He’s still the same,” she said as she flopped onto her bed and hugged her large pillow. Her phone pinged again, which meant she got a new text. It was from Yamaguchi again, this time correcting himself. Tsukiko smiled and held her phone to her chest. “Definitely still the same,” she repeated before replying back;
To: tada-kun

> LOL. See you soon! \(^{\wedge \wedge \wedge} /\)

Meanwhile, Yamaguchi buried his face in his pillow but couldn’t manage to scream his embarrassment out of his system. His mother even walked in, noticed his red ears, and proceeded to worry that her precious son was getting a fever.

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Around the end of August was the joint practice between Nekoma, Fukurodani, and invited guests Karasuno. Bokuto had fired up when he saw Tsukishima enter and immediately asked if he would block for him. To everyone’s surprise, including Tsukiko herself, the latter agreed. It made her wonder what happened the past couple of weeks to make the usually distant french fry willingly practice volleyball. All while it was quite moving to hear. Right when Tsukiko was about to shift her attention to her teammates a tall shadow had reached her. Looking up from her clipboard, a soft smile came to her face and she lifted her glasses onto her head.

“Hey,” Tsukiko greeted Yamaguchi. His lips quivered into a meek smile in return. “Hey there,” he replied.

That was the most the two interacted throughout the practice. Both were still shy from seeing each other again, so they directed their attention back to their teams. Tsukiko kept an eye on her boys and observed their movements. It amazed her how much they kept improving despite already being a strong team from what she’s seen throughout the semester.

Coach Nekomata smirked to himself. “You have the same look that baby crow has when he’s watching others intensely,” he said to Tsukiko, who was too focused to have heard him.

During cleanup, the female managers were gathered and having a conversation. Seeing them all together was a benevolent sight to behold; according to Tanaka and Yamamoto.

“Your birthday is coming up?” Tsukiko said while looking at Yachi, who casually mentioned that the following week would be her day. The girls talked excitedly while asking the small girl if she had plans. “A-Ah no! I’m just—doing manager work is all,” Yachi admitted before changing the subject so it wasn’t focused on her any longer.

“Th-That’s right! Kiko-senpai,” she called out. “Are you model?”
“HOW DID YOU FIND ME OUT?!” Tsukiko spat, only confirming the question was fact.

Yachi started clapping her hands. “I was looking over magazine mockups with my mom and one page had a picture with you on it!” she continued to say. The other managers started getting curious too, until Kiyoko blurted out, “You’ve gone back to training then?”

Tsukiko backed away from the group but then was stopped when she bumped into Kuroo, who had been eavesdropping. He looked down at her with a fake smile.

“Is our manager secretly a mod—” Before Kuroo could finish himself he was forced to bend over. He held onto his gut that Tsukiko jabbed her elbow into.

“IT— IT’S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!!!” Tsukiko wailed while running away to hide.

Two weeks passed in a breeze, much like the Tokyo weather. Tsukiko curled up in a thick blanket she had her parents send over from their home. They insisted on shipping more items, such as a kotatsu because they knew how much their daughter loved the thing. Tsukiko’s parents were good people that cared for her enough to let her live miles away by herself when she asked. Even though they were receiving positive reports about their daughter from coach Nekomata, it had been a while since they heard from the girl herself. So when Tsukiko called to ask for blankets they were practically bawling over the phone. It made her realize how much she closed herself off from people, including her own parents.

“Ahh…” she sighed while rummaging through her blanket to find her phone. The girl sent a text saying she was looking forward to seeing Yamaguchi again. Tsukiko wasn’t expecting an immediate reply so she turned over to sleep. It wasn’t until the following morning when she read the adorable message left by Yamaguchi.

**From**: tada-kun

> See you then! Also…

> I heard it’s really cold in Tokyo.

> Stay warm please! (:‘ᵔᴥᵔ‘:)
CHAPTER 20

get ready fam (° _ 5°)

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Tough & Alone

Chapter Summary

That text never did happen though.

Chapter Notes

I would've posted this sooner but I was hurt by Jonghyun's passing. He's been a star to thousands and now he's among the stars in our sky. Rest in love.

As the days passed and grew colder, the lovebirds were still keeping their conversations via text messages. Even during breaks from joint practices they hardly spoke to each other. It was because neither were brave enough to talk to the other. There was also the fact their teammates were always watching them.

From: tsukiko-san

> Karasuno is improving every time I look over at you guys!
> Great job team!

From: tada-kun

> Thank you.
> Everyone is pretty great, huh?

From: tsukiko-san

> Maybe not as great as my cats LOL
> and hey you’re doing amazing too!
> I saw you were practicing your float serve
> and your libero didn’t receive it, I AM SO PROUD!!

Six minutes later.
From: tada-kun

> Thank you very much.
> That means alot to me!

His heart was pounding even more after sending that last message. The fact he said “thank you” twice in a row wasn’t bothering him either. Yamaguchi couldn’t describe how happy he was at the moment. The feelings he had for Tsukiko were resurfacing. Taking a deep breath to calm himself, he looked back down at his phone. “…I should ask now,” he told himself.

From: tsukiko-san

> By the way, isn’t it Kei’s birthday this weekend?

Suddenly the boy’s expression fell in gloom. Just when he was confident enough to bring up an important question, Tsukiko’s text knocked him down. Yamaguchi bit his lower lip. He couldn’t even reply with a simple ‘yes’ for Tsukiko. Time passed by long enough for him to pretend he fell asleep on her.

To: tsukiko-san

> Hey, this is might be really late to ask but…
> are we still dating?

[ DELETE? Yes / No ]

On October 25th, Karasuno arrived at Sendai Gymnasium for the Spring High Miyagi Representative Playoffs. There was a lot of talk going on about the event, seeing as the participating teams included the powerhouses Aoba Johsai and Shiratorizawa. If the venue wasn’t so far then Tsukiko would have attended to watch. She had her job as Nekoma’s manager but due to the lowering temperatures, the girl could barely move.

“Is that all of them?” Kuroo looked around and his teammates nodded in response.

The boys were surrounding their manager who was buried underneath all of their jackets. Coach
Naoi walked into the gym to see this, but then stepped back out. He didn’t want to ask what the team was doing in a cult-like manner.

Yaku knelt down and lifted one of the jackets that was covering the girl’s face. “Warm yet?” he asked.

Tsukiko grunted and shook her head.

The boys exchanged shrugs as they were unsure what else they could do.

“Maybe if we work reeeaaaalllyy hard we can heat up the room with our energy!” Lev suggested with an optimistic smile. It was honestly adorable enough to coax a soft smile out of Tsukiko.

Everyone went back to start practice, except Kenma who was kneeling down beside the jacket pile-covered manager.

“What’s the matter?” he asked as though knowing something else besides the cold was bothering her.

Tsukiko grunted again, causing Kenma to stand up and ditch her. If she wasn’t going to talk then he wasn’t going to bother; simple as that. From under the jackets she watched Nekoma. Even though they were only practicing their serving and receives, it reminded her how much she wished to be in Sendai.

The team was too focused to notice their manager had snuck off elsewhere in search of warmth. She ended up going inside the clubroom where the boys kept their bags and school uniforms. As tempting as it was to go through their belongings, it was actually the heater that she wanted.

“Haa~” Tsukiko sighed with relief as the heat built up quickly. She made sure to keep the window slightly open so the hot air could escape.

While leaning against the wall, Tsukiko had her phone in her hands. The girl wasn’t sure if Yamaguchi was available. She didn’t know when exactly Karasuno had their matches. Deciding it was best not to disturb him, she looked through her list to find other people to text. Seeing how short it ended made her realize how few contacts she actually had. There was Yamaguchi, Kenma, Kiyoko, Bokuto, Ushijima, and then her parents. After thinking long and hard, she made her
decision to text her parents.

To: kaa-san (mom)

> It’s cold over here.

Hardly a second had passed and already Tsukiko got a reply back from her mother. The women was surprisingly quick when it came to texting.

From: kaa-san (mom)

> KIKOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!
> PAPA AND I ARE IN SENDAI TO SEE KIYOKO-CHAN’S TEAM PLAY
> DID YOU KNOW TADASHI-KUN IS ONE OF THE PLAYERS??!!?!!

Tsukiko jerked. She had no idea her parents even remembered Yamaguchi. In fact, she didn’t remember introducing them at all. She realized she hadn’t met Yamaguchi’s parents either but strangely she has met Tsukishima’s.

“Oh, because of those study sessions,” Tsukiko muttered.

A new message pinged for her attention. It was her mother again but this time with a picture attached of her father’s expression after he was told “Kiko-chan’s boyfriend is playing!” The man had a stoic expression that made his mustache appear as straight as a ruler. Tsukiko could still see the subtle irritation in his face and chuckled.

A new thought came to Tsukiko that never occurred to her.

“Are we still dating?” she asked herself.

The girl had finally realized something important and it made her feel terrible for not noticing sooner. She started thinking deeply about her relationship with Yamaguchi. They started dating in middle school during her second year. It was up until the later half of her third year when Tsukiko left for Tokyo to train and become a high school idol. Remembering the day Yamaguchi saw her off was making her chest ache. It was clear that he didn’t want his girlfriend to leave him behind. What had to have made it worse was the fact Tsukiko didn’t actually warn him about her leaving.
“Why did I not tell him…?” Tsukiko asked herself again with drooping eyelids.

Kuroo entered the clubroom ahead of the team as he went on a hunt for their manager. He found the girl lying close to the heater, asleep. Running a hand through his messy hair, he sighed before squatting down to see about waking Tsukiko up. However, his more conniving thoughts took over.

Kuroo carefully and gently removed Tsukiko’s glasses with his other hand holding up his phone on camera mode. It took some restraint to keep his snickering down as to not wake the girl too early. But when he saw her sleeping face, he was not expecting to see tears. Something in his chest dropped at the poor sight. Then, without realizing it, Kuroo brushed a finger against Tsukiko’s face to rid of the tears.

“Is she in here?” called out Yaku.

The captain jolted when he heard the door open and his teammates walked in to see him.

Kenma was looking at his friend with a disappointing glare.

Yaku’s nose scrunched up and his jaw fell open.

Kai, for once, wasn’t pleased. The rest of the team that peeked inside reacted with gasps.

“H-Hey!” Kuroo dropped his knees as he waved to his teammates. “It’s not what it looks like!” he tried to assure them.

There was a slurping sound emitting from the girl lying in front of Kuroo. She groaned as she propped herself up with her arms.

“Hwa?” Tsukiko wiped her chin with the cuff of her sleeve. When she opened her eyes all she saw were expressions of utter repulsion in the boys’ faces. Apparently, from their perspective, it looked like Tsukiko’s face was in front of Kuroo’s crotch. Hearing her retract her drool and having a flushed face only made their imagination worse.
Tsukiko took a while to understand what was going on, since she had just woken up. It was until she realized her glasses were missing and Kuroo was holding his phone that the girl was overcome with anger and embarrassment.

“DON’T LOOOOOOOK!!” she wailed before jabbing Kuroo with her fist.

Later that night, Tsukiko got a report back from her mother regarding the tournament. She was glad to hear Karasuno advanced to the quarter-finals. Though knowing that, she decided to wait until Yamaguchi told her about it. Surely he would want to inform her of his team’s victory?

That text didn’t happen.

The next day, Tsukiko was doing something completely different than ever.

Kuroo’s eyes shifted restlessly. Others were feeling similar unease. Standing beside them was their manager; outside of her tracksuit and geeky glasses. For the first time since she arrived, Tsukiko was joining their practice.

“Forward! Follow up!” Tsukiko commanded. Dressed in just a plain t-shirt and black leggings with her hair messily tied back, the manager went from off the court to the inside. She had split the boys into teams for a practice match.

Team A: Kuroo, Kai, Yaku, herself and Fukunaga
Team B: Kenma, Yamamoto, Lev, Inuoka, and Shibayama

The reason behind the line up was initially meant to pit the underclassmen against their seniors but what Tsukiko was imagining didn’t translate well in reality. They made due with the current arrangement.

The captain felt smitten from the girl taking charge but also because he got a good look of her legs. When Tsukiko bent over with her hands resting on her knees, the view caused Kuroo to mess up his serve. It was easy enough for Lev to receive it.
“Focus dammit!!” Hearing Tsukiko swear was more odd than her swooning over her ‘haikyuutie’ boys.

The ball ended up back over to Team A, allowing them a chance. Fukunaga backed up slightly to set it. He didn’t know who to send it to since he wasn’t used to setting but the ball ended up going Tsukiko’s way.

On the other side of the net, Yamamoto and Inuoka jumped up to block. They were confident because they didn’t think the girl could jump as high as Hinata, but something else distracted them that caused a delay in their timing. Tsukiko managed to spike over them. As they landed, Yamamoto appeared to be in tears.

“Bounce… bounce…” he muttered eerily.

Points stacked up in Team A’s favor. Kenma let out a sigh and looked at Tsukiko through the net. “I don’t think this was a good idea to begin with,” he said to her.

The girl tilted her head back, her ponytail falling off her shoulder. “I know,” she replied before moving with the rotation.

After practice, while Tsukiko was putting on her tracksuit, she found out her mother sent her a series of text messages. Before she could begin looking them over, the woman herself was calling. Tsukiko fumbled with her phone as she wondered whether to answer or not. She ended up not answering because the boys were outside of the clubroom waiting for her to finish changing. It wasn’t until Tsukiko got home to her apartment when she was able to look things over.

From: kaa-san (mom)
> Karasuno just got the first point!!

From: kaa-san (mom)
> Ahhh the other team keeps catching up!!

From: kaa-san (mom)
> OH NO THE CAPTAIN GOT HURT!!!!!!!!!!!!!
From: kaa-san (mom)

> TADASHI-KUN IS IN THE FRAY.
> I REPEAT HE IS IN THE FRAY.

From: kaa-san (mom)

> AAAAAAAHAAAAAAAAH HIS SERVE HIT THE NET

From: kaa-san (mom)

> DON’T WORRY IT WENT OVER AND THEY GOT A POINT

From: kaa-san (mom)

> HE SERVED AGAIN BUT THIS TIME HE DIDN’T JUMP???

From: kaa-san (mom)

> OH NO THE COACH IS ANGRY AT TADASHI-KUN! WHY?!

From: kaa-san (mom)

> TADASHI-KUN LOOKS SAD.
> WHY IS HE SAD HE JUST WON POINTS DIDN’T HE
> AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

The messages that followed had nothing to do with Yamaguchi specifically, which was what Tsukiko found herself worrying over. She stopped reading and went straight to asking the guy directly.

To: tada-kun

> I heard you got to play today.
> How’d it all go?
What was five minutes grew to fifteen and then an hour. The longer she waited for a reply the more impatient she got. Tsukiko wanted to know what exactly happened and how Yamaguchi felt about his match.

The clock struck midnight but there was still no response. Tsukiko squeezed her phone in her hand and pressed it against her chest, as though begging to hear back from the guy.

That text never came.

Aoba Johsai beat Date Tech, meaning the last fight of the day was a rematch between the former and Karasuno.

“H-Hey, Yachi-san…” Yamaguchi called out to the second manager. His whole body was trembling because of his nerves. He motioned to the girl and asked for something to calm a stomach ache.

Yachi looked back up from her medicine box. She could tell Yamaguchi actually wasn’t having a stomach ache. He was clearly nervous.

“Oh! I’m confident in dealing with anxiety! Just express what’s got you nervous and then you’ll feel better!” she exclaimed happily.

Though it sounded skeptical, Yamaguchi spoke up anyway. He told Yachi how in the last match against Aoba Johsai he missed his serve that could have resulted in a possible win for Karasuno. It was why he tensed up earlier in the match against Wakutani after seeing the ball hit the net. Sure it did fall over but Yamaguchi was worried that he wouldn’t be lucky a second time. That’s why coach Ukai got upset with him. Yamaguchi backed down instead of raising his confidence.

The match against Aoba Johsai was significant for Karasuno. Not only was it a rematch against the strong opponent but it would also determine whether they’d advance to the finals or not. The first set went to Karasuno, though it had to be due to sheer luck when Aoba Johsai’s mad dog stole a spike that ended up going out of bounds.

Following the second set, Aoba Johsai continued to take leading points until Sugawara was switched in to change the gameflow. It earned Karasuno enough points to catch up but then they
lagged behind once more.

By the second timeout called by Karasuno, Yamaguchi faced coach Ukai with a newfound determination. He was practically begging to get on the court to prove himself again.

“Let me in there,” he was saying with balled fists. Unlike before, Yamaguchi stepped onto the court without a nerve shaking inside him. He took a deep breath. When the whistle was blown it didn’t spook him. He tossed the ball into the air and then jumped.

To: moon child (tsukiko)

> HIS SERVE WENT OVER!!!!!!!

“It wasn’t all that surprising.” said Tsukishima to Yamaguchi after he was switched back into the court. His words sounded harsh until he added; “After all, you practiced more than anyone these past five months.”

Hearing his close friend’s encouragement caused Yamaguchi to swell up with joy. He got into his position and boldly faced the enemy.

From: kaa-san (mom)

> HE SCORED ANOTHER PERFECT SERVE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

From: kaa-san (mom)

> HE’S GONNA GET IT A THIRD TIME I JUST KNOW IT

From: kaa-san (mom)

> NOOOO THEY COUNTERED HIS FLOATY MOVE!!!!

From: kaa-san (mom)

> AAAAHHHHH THE BALL HIT TADASHI BUT HE’S OKAY!!!
From: kaa-san (mom)

> KIKO-CHAN YOUR BOYFRIEND IS AMAZING

> HE JUST TIED THE SCORE!!!!

The stinging in Yamaguchi’s chest wasn’t because of physical strain but the weight of his pride. This was the fruit of his hard work that Tsukishima initially didn’t believe in. Once Yamaguchi’s turn on the court was over, his teammates on the side continued to shower him with praise. “You’re the MVP!” they would tell him while slapping his back or shuffling his hair.

“Taaadaaaaashhiii~~!!”

Hearing his name being called from a vaguely familiar voice shifted his attention to the viewing balcony. There, Yamaguchi recognized the couple he hadn’t seen in years either. At that moment he realized he hadn’t texted Tsukiko for days, or possibly weeks. The last message he sent to her was a “thank you” after she wished Karasuno luck in the preliminary. Yamaguchi hadn’t touched his phone ever since. He was afraid but couldn’t pinpoint the exact reason. There was still his anxiety over whether the two were dating or not.

Being in a good mood right now, Yamaguchi felt there was nothing to be afraid of in the first place. Looking up at Tsukiko’s parents, he flashed them a smile and waved.

“ I’ll tell her about everything— this game and my feelings about us! ” he told himself.

That text never did happen though.
Anyways, flashback arc is almost over! I might actually hold off on updating (for reals lol) because I am catching up real close to my backlog chapters

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The Promise we Made That Day

Chapter Summary

“I was-- I just… told him to go to nationals and see me…” Tsukiko mumbled. Her mother laughed in response. “But that’s something you’re supposed to say BEFORE the match so it psyches him up!”

What the woman said was correct and it made Tsukiko even more flustered.

The third day of the Spring High meant the finals. Karasuno defeated their great rival, Aoba Johsai. Having achieved their revenge allowed them to advance. This also meant an even greater foe had to be overcome. Their grand opponent and the tournament’s favorite to win: Shiratorizawa.

“Please let me go!” shouted Nekoma’s manager.

Most of the team had just arrived at the school gates for morning Sunday practice. First they were shocked to see their manager waiting for them. They were even more surprised when Tsukiko started bowing to Kuroo while making a sudden plea. Everyone looked at her and then their captain, awaiting his response.

Kuroo folded his arms across his chest while repeating the question in his head. “Now let me get this straight,” he began to say.

“You’re asking me for permission to let you ditch so you can go watch Karasuno’s match against Ushiwaka?”

Tsukiko nodded her head but remained bent over. Yaku insisted she stand but the girl wouldn’t budge.

Kuroo rubbed his chin. “Why do you even need to ask me? Just go,” he said before turning around to head for the clubroom.

Tsukiko shot up with a gasp. “So easily?!?” she cried out.
“But I thought you hate it when I’m not around?”

Kuroo started laughing. He faced Tsukiko again and with a smile that was possibly the most
genuine kind; which was extremely rare to come from him. “You’ll come back later of course.
Besides… finally getting you to bow before me was satisfying.” he smirked with the last statement.

And with that, Nekoma’s manager ran off in a heartbeat. Kenma looked up at his friend. He was
about to comment how unusual it was for Kuroo to let Tsukiko Dutch practice. But noticing that
Kuroo’s smile had faded, the partial blond kept quiet.

It would be a long train ride from Tokyo to Sendai; and expensive. Tsukiko had told her parents
late last night how she wanted to attend the final match and they happily paid for her fare the
following morning. She was dressed in her school uniform with a large pea coat and red plaid scarf.
Since female uniforms had dreadfully short skirts, she wore thick tights underneath to battle the
cold.

While on the train, Tsukiko’s mother was keeping the girl company through text messages.

From: kaa-san (mom)

> TELL THE TRAIN TO GO FASTER!!

> THE TEAMS WILL BE HERE SOON!

Tsukiko was constantly looking out the window and at the time on her phone. She had doubts she
would make it before the game ended, but she had taken several factors into consideration.

One; the time it would take for the gym to organize itself and open.

Two; the time it would take for both teams to arrive then warm up.

Three; the time it would take to go through procedures such as introducing the teams and their
lineup.

If Tsukiko doesn’t show up by the start then she could still possibly make it to a later point in the
game. From what she learned while studying a guidebook about volleyball games; a final match
would be longer than normal because of there being five sets instead of three. This gave her a bit of hope but what mattered most was that she got there before everything was over.

Luck had to be by her side because Tsukiko arrived in Sendai a couple minutes earlier than expected. As she stepped off the platform her mother had told her that the game was reaching the fifth set.

“Damn! She said Tada-kun was switched in earlier too…” Tsukiko groaned but wasted no time in rushing out of the station. There, her father was waiting for her with a car. Because of the emergency they skipped out on a reunion hug and headed straight for Sendai City Gymnasium.

Traffic was strangely killer on the way over. Even though the gym wasn’t too far from the station their estimated time of arrival had doubled. They ended up arriving just as Tsukiko’s mother reported that the teams were halfway fifteen points in the final set, which meant the game was almost over.

“Go ahead!” said the father who let his daughter practically leap out of the car as he drove past the entrance of the gymnasium.

When Tsukiko got to the doors she was frantically trying to open them but they seemed to be locked. If she had monster strength the handles would have been torn off too.

“Push, not pull.” spoke up a voice.

Tsukiko turned her head to the person that pushed the door open for her. She blinked when meeting with the other’s almost irked expression. “…Haji?” she muttered his name.

Iwaizumi blinked as well and it took him a moment to realize who he was looking at. His face relaxed then.

“Kiko-chan? What are you—”

“Sorry! I’m here on important business,” Tsukiko told him before hurrying inside and looking
around to figure out where she had to go. Iwaizumi tuck his hands into his pockets as he walked in front of her then made a gesture to follow.

When reaching the viewing balcony a wave of heat blew into Tsukiko’s face. One side of the gym was overflowing with Shiratorizawa supporters whose cheers were heard even from the outside. Before she could thank Iwaizumi for his help the guy had already disappeared. It didn’t matter much so Tsukiko went to look for her mother.

“What’s with your hair?! Do city folk get highlights like that?” The woman shrieked. Tsukiko’s mother waved her hands then pointed back to the court. Her daughter followed and much to her relief she showed up in time to catch Yamaguchi inside.

The mother suggested Tsukiko to move to the railing for a better view.

Standing some feet from the neighborhood association that was cheering for Karasuno, Tsukiko stood at the edge of the balcony. The expression on Yamaguchi’s face was probably a first for her to see. His eyes were sharp and focused. It looked like he was planning the course of his float serve; likely in Ushijima’s direction. Seeing Yamaguchi’s serves get countered with overhand receives was expected but Karasuno gained points thanks to him. When his third serve went long Tsukiko really thought the streak was going to end there but then one of Shiratorizawa’s players had missed the ball. And because he touched it, a point was given to Karasuno.

Tension seemed to slide off the girl’s back, allowing Tsukiko’s shoulders to finally fall. However she couldn’t be relieved for more than a second longer. The roaring from the play drew her attention back to the court where she noticed the board was updated. Shiratorizawa was at match point.

Tsukiko unconsciously analyzed some of the players. She noticed Karasuno was especially fatigued, given the fact that this had to be their first ever five-set match. If Tsukiko had her clipboard she would be biting the edge of it now. When did that become a nervous habit of hers?

Her eyes were redirected to the back where a certain tall blond grandly entered. The first thing Tsukiko saw was Tsukishima’s hand wrapped in bandages. “Did he get hurt?” she wondered.

“Kiko-senpai?” called out Yachi who spotted Nekoma’s manager. She went over to Tsukiko and briefed her on what happened with Tsukishima as the other had asked.
Tsukiko did think that Ushijima’s spikes would injure at least one person if they had to block or receive it enough times. What she’s seen with Tsukishima were the large hands and long fingers he had. As ideally as they were for a blocker, if the player wasn’t built to withstand blocking powerful attacks then he’d eventually fall victim to a hand injury.

Ushijima was a freak of nature when it came to volleyball. His immense power and the attention he easily garnered even turned Tsukiko into his fan. However, as she continued to watch the game, she was starting to think Karasuno was full of freaks too. Everyone was playing vigorously despite their clear exhaustion. From the libero’s miracle receive to Tsukishima’s read blocking and then Hinata surviving a shot in the face by Ushijima’s spike. They were all oozing impetuous passion that it was even making Tsukiko itch with excitement. Then finally, the game ended when Karasuno did a synchronized attack and won.

The gym had gone momentarily silent until the referee whistled. Suddenly there was nothing but cheering from all corners. People were screaming in shock and crying from joy.

Tsukiko stood frozen, her hands still gripping the railing. She couldn’t believe everything she just saw, even if it wasn’t the entire play. The team that had the most penalties during the summer training camp had defeated one of the nation’s top players. It wasn’t only that, that was bewildering but this new feeling Tsukiko was having. She wasn’t sure what to call it as she blanked out but her thoughts while watching the awards ceremony were; “will I be as thrilled as them when I see Nekoma succeed?”

“That was A-MA-ZING!” said the mother with an odd English-speaking accent that made her sound like a certain owl. Tsukiko and her parents left the viewing balcony together but then lost each other in the crowd. It was mostly Tsukiko’s doing since she was trying to find out where Karasuno had gone.

When Tsukiko turned a corner she nearly bumped into someone that was a giant compared to her. It was Ushijima. The two gave each other calm stares until the guy broke away to follow the rest of his team out of the gym. “Good to see you again,” were the last words Tsukiko heard before she took off as well.

“NATIONALS!!!” roared a pair of hyperactive second years.

Tsukiko heard voices she recognized and was sure it belonged to those of Karasuno. She stopped herself some distance from them, seeing that they were approaching her direction.

“What do I do?! ” The girl panicked. She came all the way from Tokyo without prior notice so if
they saw her now they would surely question it. Additionally, in a way, her showing up would technically count as spying.

Tsukiko hid herself and watched Karasuno make their way for the exits. Towards the back of the group, walking next to Tsukishima, was the guy she had travelled far to check on in person. On emotional impulse, Tsukiko revealed herself right when Yamaguchi was about to pass her.

One by one, Karasuno came to a halt when they noticed each other turning around to see why the back was lagging behind. It surprised all of them to see Nekoma’s manager appear out of nowhere; especially since their own preliminary matches were tomorrow.

Yamaguchi was the most confused and then started wondering if Tsukiko was upset about him not texting her all this time.

“U-Um! I meant to reply b-but I fell asleep and—”

“Our promise!” Tsukiko interjected while getting closer, making Yamaguchi even more worried about what was to come. The girl held a finger up to his lips. She leaned forward and put her other hand on her hip as her face became pink.

“We made a promise that day. Do you remember?” she asked.

Yamaguchi understood instantly. Two years ago, he had ran to the station to catch up to the girl that was about to leave him without a proper goodbye. Because neither wanted to say it, they decided on a promise instead. Tsukiko had asked for Yamaguchi to keep playing volleyball and then to meet her in Tokyo whenever he was there for practices or official matches. They sealed the deal with a kiss— only, their lips didn’t meet. Tsukiko kissed her own hand that was placed over Yamaguchi’s face.

“*You’ll get a real one the next time you see me,*” she teased before stepping into the train and disappearing.

“But we technically met again at the training camp,” Yamaguchi pointed out. “So doesn’t that mean—”

Tsukiko cut Yamaguchi off by doing the same thing she did back then; kiss Yamaguchi with her
hand between their lips. The rest of Karasuno let out loud gasps, especially Tanaka and Noya because their junior got the closest thing to a kiss before them.

It was strange though. For some reason, Yamaguchi wasn’t wide-eyed with shock. He was completely relieved in fact.

When Tsukiko pulled back, about to explain why she did what she did, the taller boy had suddenly grabbed her hands first.

“Nationals!” Yamaguchi shouted. “Th-That was a promise to see you at nationals, right?” he asked with a red face.

Tsukiko blinked, stunned that he had caught on before she could say anything. It put a smile on her face though. “Yeah. You’ll get it for real when you come to Tokyo. Again.” she answered before turning around to leave but then made one last comment.

“And by the way, we never officially stated we broke up... so you better have me labelled as your girlfriend in your phone~!”

Karasuno’s advisor called for everyone to hurry onto the bus so they could find a place to eat. Attention was on Yamaguchi during the way because his teammates were extremely curious about his relationship with Nekoma’s manager. They even tried to ask Tsukishima but of course he wouldn’t answer.

“ARE YA TWO DATING?!” Tanaka cried with literal tears in his eyes.

“WAS THIS BEFORE OR AFTER THE TRAINING CAMP?!” Noya cried as well.

Sugawara and Daichi snickered to themselves. They did witness the phone number exchange and had their own ideas ever since. Kageyama admitted that he wondered if Yamaguchi was getting close to the manager to obtain information on Nekoma. Hinata and Yachi called him rude for thinking so.

During the drive back to the station, Tsukiko’s mother was rambling on about the final set to her husband since he had missed a majority of it when he went to pick up their daughter. The man only responded with grunts of acknowledgement. Polar opposites was how Tsukiko always described
her parents to be. One was a chatterbox with too much energy and the other hardly spoke out of what was probably shyness.

“Hey, hey, Kiko-chan!” called out the mother as she turned in her seat to face her daughter. “Whaddya runoff to tell Tadashi-kun? Confess again?”

Tsukiko dropped her jaw as her face went red up to her ears. She wasn’t sure what was more embarrassing; the fact her mother picked up a countryside accent or the assumption she made.

“I was— I just… told him to go to nationals and see me…” Tsukiko mumbled. Her mother laughed in response. “But that’s something you’re supposed to say BEFORE the match so it psyches him up!”

What the woman said was correct and it made Tsukiko even more flustered.

Arriving at the station, Tsukiko gave her parents the hugs they had pushed aside due to the initial urgency. Her father almost wouldn’t let go; requiring his wife to pry him off their child.

“Please come visit us more. We’ll pay for your fare each time,” said Tsukiko’s mother as she brushed aside her daughter’s hair to place a kiss on her forehead. Leaning to her ear, the mother then whispered, “Are you sure you don’t want to visit him at the hospital before you go?”

Tsukiko’s eyes dimmed. She was about to say something but no words could escape her.

The mother gave a soft smile. “Alright then. Whenever you’re ready to see him there just let us know,” she added before sending her daughter back to Tokyo.

The father grabbed his wife’s hand and held it tightly with a dissatisfied expression. “She finally comes down here after a year but it’s to patch things up with her boyfriend and not her best friend,” he said with a disgruntled tone.

The mother’s smile lost its luster and became weak from hearing her husband’s cold words of truth. “Our girl just needs to figure out her feelings at her own pace is all…” she said back to him.
The very next day was the preliminary qualifying round for Tokyo’s representative playoff. For once, Nekoma had their manager on the bus with them. Kuroo, who was sitting next to her, leaned over to start some conversation.

“Excited to be in your first official game?” he asked with a sly grin. Honestly he looked like the one that’s most excited.

Tsukiko nodded in response.

Kuroo’s smile perked up since he wasn’t expecting an answer. “Though I gotta say, I’m a bit jealous that Karasuno had you cheering for them the other day. You’re gonna do that for us too, right?” he said next.

Again, Tsukiko nodded.

Something was striking Kuroo as odd. He watched the girl quietly. Without him saying a word, she nodded. Upon further inspection it turned out that Tsukiko was only bobbing her head while asleep. Kuroo grumbled while Kai chuckled at him.

It goes without saying that Nekoma made it into the final four that would then face off later in November.

On the train ride home, Kenma was texting the result to Hinata. But he wasn’t able to ignore Kuroo’s foot thumping. Letting out a sigh, he decided to ask his friend what was wrong.

“Do I need to discipline her again?!” Kuroo answered. He was practically breathing a raging fire.

Kenma rolled his eyes. “She said she was tired, not bored.” he mentioned but it didn’t quell Kuroo’s anger.

As excited as Nekoma was to have their manager finally supporting them from the sidelines, the girl’s attention was hardly present during most of their matches. Tsukiko kept dozing off despite how loud the gym was. Even during timeouts they would have to shake her awake. She explained not having slept the previous night because she stayed up to do homework, which most of the team
understood and forgave her. Kuroo on the other hand was not feeling the same.

“It’s been over five months since she joined us,” Kuroo started to say again.

“She got a little more serious during the camp, which I thought was good progress, and yet she disappoints me again today!”

Kenma was playing a game but kept his ears open to listen to his friend’s rant. While he wasn’t at an important part in his game, he paused so he could ask Kuroo;

“Why are you fixated on whether she’s supporting us directly or not? Even Kiko said herself that we can do fine without her.”

The other rubbed his chin while thinking over what he was told. It was true that all Kuroo really berated Tsukiko about was her amount of dedication to the team. His initial reason was because he didn’t want Nekoma’s first and only manager to do her job improperly. He worried it could bring down the team’s spirit. Nowadays, Kuroo only wanted Tsukiko to pay attention to Nekoma more. Ever since the summer training camp it looked to him that she was more interested in Karasuno; particularly their float serving first year.

Kuroo explained these thoughts to Kenma who then responded with;

“None of us really feel there’s anything wrong with how she does her job as our manager. It’s just you. Honestly, it sounds like you want her attention the most.”

The last thing Kenma said echoed in Kuroo’s mind. Slowly, his eyes widened from the revelation.

“Why are you always right?” Kuroo asked.

“Because you’re easier to read than this final boss.” Kenma remarked.
did my best to draw mama and papa~ tho they just look like an older Tsukiko and Ushijima :D

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No Regrets

Chapter Summary

“We are the blood in our veins. We must flow smoothly and circulate oxygen without stopping so that the mind functions normally.”

Chapter Notes

I kinda felt like tossing in Kuroo x Tsukiko stuff to make things interesting~ and because they're gonna suffer later on ;)

ALSO HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!! AAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH HERE'S TO HOPING 2018 IS A GOOD ONE!!!! T o T

Nekoma had a week before their final match to become Tokyo representatives for nationals. Today, their manager was apparently in a good mood. She wouldn’t stop smiling and yelled at the boys (specifically Lev) less than usual. Not only that but she continued to participate in playing on the court with them.

Coach Nekomata found Tsukiko’s play to be entertaining. He already knew she was fairly good at sports but her game sense turned out better than he expected. Even coach Naoi commented that Tsukiko should’ve joined the female team but the old man told him otherwise.

“If she had done that then the boys wouldn’t be so well behaved like they are now!” he laughed.

Tsukiko wore a large sweater so her chest wouldn’t distract the team’s ace. She was also wearing sports glasses with the same spiral design on the lenses as a way to hide her notably alluring eyes. The boys were able to play without sidetracking over how attractive their manager actually was.

During a break, one of them handed the girl a towel.

“H-Here you go, Kiko-senpai…” stuttered Shibayama. His face became even more red when Tsukiko swallowed him into a hug while stating she would rather use him as a towel instead. This made some of the boys look at the first year with envious glares.
“Grooooooss,” howled Kuroo. The pudding head beside him rolled his eyes before approaching the female manager.

“Why are you in a good mood?” he asked her.

Tsukiko attempted to hug Kenma too but the latter kept backing away. “I’m just happy~” she cooed.

Kenma paused to reconsider if he should ask, “About what?”

“Because it’s my boyfriend’s birthday~” Tsukiko answered swiftly.

It took a couple of seconds for the boys to register what they heard. Most of them gasped from surprise. Yaku stepped up to ask who Tsukiko was dating and she answered honestly that it was Karasuno’s #12. None of them really knew who that was until she described him as “the one with freckles” and how his specialty was a float serve.

Yamamoto started wallowing in sadness on the floor with Fukunaga comforting him by petting his mohawk. Kenma walked away because he didn’t want to hear any more of Tsukiko gushing over her relationship. He did notice the captain look discontent by the information.

On the other side of the gym Kenma was tossing for the first years to practice their serving and receives. Taking his place in the three-on-three match between the third and second years was Tsukiko. She did a simple serve that managed to reach the back where Yaku was. He could tell it wasn’t going to hit out of bounds so he received it. The ball then went to Kai who took the chance to spike it over but Fukunaga managed to block it.

“Tora!” Tsukiko called out as she set the ball up for the ace. Yamamoto roared as he was happy to send a girl’s toss over the net with a cross spike. However, Kai was able to receive it since he predicted the attack.

“Kurooo!” he shouted to the captain when the ball was back in the air. The concentration in Kuroo’s eyes was different than what Kai was used to seeing. In fact, he didn’t look focused at all.

When Kuroo spiked the ball he hit it hard. Then it went past Yamamoto and Fukunaga’s block. They split up mid-jump out of fear of their captain’s spike. But before anyone could see where the ball had gone, it was already too late.
Others turned their attention to the practice match from hearing distressed shouting. Everyone stopped what they were doing when they saw their manager on the ground.

It all happened in a flash. The ball had bounced off the floor and straight into Tsukiko’s abdomen. She’s experienced getting hit in the gut before so she instinctively clenched her stomach to prepare for the impact. Unfortunately it was more powerful than she thought she could handle. The shock went up to her chest, causing a sensation that was painful enough to make her keel over.

Yaku was carefully trying to help the girl up but her agonizing expression made him think he was hurting her even more. The grownups hurried over with coach Naoi telling everyone to step back and give Tsukiko some air.

“Kiko-kun, how bad is it?” asked coach Nekomata when he knelt down as best his old back would let him.

Tsukiko coughed a bit before reporting back. “Nothing’s broken— surprisingly. At most a bruise will form,” she croaked in a raspy voice.

Coach Nekomata insisted the girl stay in the infirmary until her emergency contact could pick her up. Tsukiko listened and slowly made her way out of the gym by herself. Once a couple of feet out the door, she was stopped by Kuroo. His worried face was something Tsukiko didn’t expect him capable of making.

“Who knew you could look like that,” she laughed but the guy remained dead serious.

Kuroo approached the girl and suddenly scooped her off her feet. It clearly caused discomfort in her but Tsukiko couldn’t wiggle herself out of his arms since it would risk her falling and getting hurt.

“Shut up and let me do this,” Kuroo said with a low voice as he started walking.

Tsukiko would have commented that it wasn’t a nice thing to say to an injured person but refrained herself. She pressed her arms against her chest that was still aching. It would go away when she applied pressure but then she felt embarrassed that she was holding her breasts while being carried like a princess by Kuroo. While gazing at him she noticed how sharp his jawline was. From her point of view she could tell Kuroo would make a killer of a model. He just needed to somehow get
rid of his bed hair.

People watched and murmured among themselves when they passed by the volleyball captain carrying his manager down the hallway.

“ Doesn’t this embarrass you?” Tsukiko asked in a whisper.

She was ignored.

“Your fangirls would get the wrong idea you know.” Tsukiko said with her eyes narrowed into a glare.

The silent treatment continued so the girl decided to keep quiet until Kuroo dropped her off at the infirmary. When they got there though the school nurse wasn’t present; coincidentally enough. Kuroo put Tsukiko down on the bed carefully. He watched her settle in before turning around to leave— only he didn’t.

“What’s up?” Tsukiko turned herself towards the door where Kuroo remained standing. It looked like he was contemplating about something.

The guy then retracted his steps back to her and bowed as he shouted, “I’m sorry!”

Tsukiko had been waiting for him to apologize. It was a matter of whether Kuroo was the kind of guy to admit it. Before she could say anything Kuroo continued to speak and it made her even more surprised.

“Let me get this straight,” she began.

“You’re asking me to attend next week’s match despite what you just did to me earlier with that spike?”

The way Tsukiko spoke was meant to mock Kuroo in the same manner he used when she wanted to go to Sendai. Kuroo caught on to this but kept his head down.
“Y-Yeah... please, don’t let my screw-up keep you from coming. The team needs you— I need you...” he said again.

Tsukiko started chuckling but kept it light since it did hurt to laugh.

“Why even ask? I was planning to go to the finals with you guys no matter what.” she told Kuroo, making him straighten up with shock.

Kuroo looked down at the injured girl with a puzzled face.

“I was sure you’d get mad at me and then—”

Tsukiko stopped him there to make one last point.

“Don’t get me wrong! I am still pissed that you brought harm to my delicate nice body, but... seeing you finally bow before me is satisfying enough to make me forgive you,” she ended with a smirk.

Kuroo stepped out of the infirmary and made his way back to the gym to finish practice. The last thing Tsukiko said and the face she had was replaying in his mind.

“Ahh...” he sighed while gripping his shirt.

There it was again; the same throbbing in Kuroo’s chest that he felt when Tsukiko smiled at him at the end of the summer training camp. Despite the signs, Kuroo wouldn’t admit the truth to himself. He didn’t want to believe that he was falling for a taken girl he met six months ago.

Tokyo City, Sumida-ward Gymnasium; Metropolitan Nekoma High’s volleyball team arrives.

“Been awhile since I was last here. Wonder if they upgraded anything.” Tsukiko commented as
she entered the building with her boys.

“What were you here for? This is mainly a sports training facility.” Yaku asked after he failed to keep a tight leash on Lev, who was trying to go ahead of everybody.

“We were practicing in the swimming pool.” Tsukiko answered.

Yaku raised a brow. “Who do you mean by ‘we’?”

“The enka club.”

The libero paused. He was trying to imagine why an enka club would need to use a swimming pool until Tsukiko gave the reasons why. One of them was to do lip trills in order to loosen and warm up the vocal folds.

“You start by taking a full breath and releasing it in the water as if you were blowing bubbles in the pool. You can also concentrate on controlling your breath with your diaphragm and not your lips this way.” she explained.

Tsukiko also mentioned how swimming would help increase one’s lung capacity but then also added that swimming was something she wasn’t very good at to begin with. She suddenly groped herself, causing Yaku to turn pinkish.

“It’s because of these bags that all I do in water is float…” she told him with a resentful expression behind her glasses.

The team gathered in the hall as they waited for the female volleyball matches to finish. Tsukiko noticed the slight tension in everyone’s faces and wondered how nervous each of them they really were. When she was studying for this match she realized that their journey to nationals could end here. It was that realization that made her decide to finally attend and pay attention to Nekoma’s official play.

Ever since watching Karasuno’s battle against Shiratorizawa it gave Tsukiko a better understanding of why she needed to be with her team during this time. She always said she believed Nekoma was strong and her being with them made no difference. What was the point of a team manager besides fetching the boys their towels and water? What purpose did she serve when
she wasn’t exactly on the court with them?

These questions held Tsukiko back from getting further involved with Nekoma more than she intended. But after bonding with them the past half year, it changed her feelings. She wanted to see Nekoma go to nationals and have an official match against Karasuno.

Tsukiko looked up from her feet upon hearing Kuroo and Yamamoto acting petty because of Nohebi’s captain taunting them.

“You know,” Kenma whispered. “There were times when the way you acted reminded Kuroo of Daishou,” he informed the girl.

Tsukiko’s shoulders perked up and suddenly she felt bad for acting the way she did months ago. It was no wonder Kuroo always got upset with her. Listening to Daishou speak with a high-and-mighty tone was irking. Even though Kuroo talked similarly at times it was obvious fun and games. Nohebi’s captain on the other hand was the genuine article of a cunning, scheming snake.

“Hey, who’s that?” Daishou pointed at the girl with unkempt braids and goofy glasses. Looking over Tsukiko’s appearance made him burst into laughter. “How desperate were you guys to have recruited an otaku?!” he said in between chuckles.

Suddenly the whole Nekoma team was lit in a raging fire. They apparently took offense to the jab towards their female manager.

Tsukiko walked up to Daishou, giving him a smile before pulling down her glasses just slightly so the snake could see some of her face. Realizing that she had attracting eyes made him swallow nervously.

“At least they have a girl~” Tsukiko said in a sweet voice.

After the verbal brawl with Nohebi it was time for the team’s first match. Their opponent: Fukurodani. The audience roared when the teams entered the court and Bokuto made a grand entrance by stripping his jacket off in a confident manner. Hearing Fukurodani’s side with overwhelming cheers was almost intimidating. It also made Tsukiko think for a moment that she could have been up there too; had she not transferred to Nekoma this year. Soon enough their side was rivaling in volume. Tsukiko looked up and saw that Nekoma’s cheer squad was being led by a little girl holding a megaphone.
“She’s super adorable!” Tsukiko blurted out, causing Yamamoto to nervously admit it was his little sister. He practically melted when Tsukiko suddenly slapped her hands on his arm while saying, “Please let me hug her some time!!”

The team captains shook hands with each other and then the official warm up began. Tsukiko shuffled to get the volleyballs out from the cart. The boys did their serves and receives, giving the crowd a taste of what Nekoma had in store for them. Yamamoto went on tell Kenma to make noise as a way to keep himself from getting distracted; only to fall for Kenma’s lie that Lev’s sister was watching him, which caused said distraction. The light hearted atmosphere made Tsukiko relax a little more.

It was finally time to start the match officially. Tsukiko joined the boys to discuss the game plan. Kuroo started off with how Karasuno was able to beat Ushijima and then said, “we can’t afford to lose here now!” to which the team responded back in agreement. He went to mention how Bokuto would be difficult to stop once he’d find his groove. Tsukiko nodded to this, having known the way her ex-senpai functioned at the start of a match.

Before the team broke up, they huddled together to begin their tradition of reciting a chant before every game.

“Hey,” Kuroo called out to Tsukiko just as she was going to sit with the coaches on the bench. When she turned around, the boys were grinning at her from their circle that was open.

“Get in here, manager-chan ~”

Tsukiko didn’t expect to be invited into the ritual. She didn’t even know about it until recently, in fact. The girl happily joined and put her hand in the center between Kuroo and Kai.

“We are the blood in our veins. We must flow smoothly and circulate oxygen without stopping so that the mind functions normally.”

It was an odd chant, and yet, Tsukiko felt like it sets the mood perfectly. Once it was over she sat next to coach Naoi, still staring at her hand that she put into the huddle. The coach chuckled. “They always wanted to do that with you,” he told her. After hearing him say that it made Tsukiko wish she had been attending Nekoma’s previous games.
First to take the starting point was Nekoma, but just as quickly as them Bokuto had scored a point too with a spike that sent the ball bouncing up to the viewing balcony. Luckily Yamamoto’s little sister managed to catch it. Following the taken point was Bokuto’s catchphrase;

“HEY HEY HEEEEY!!”

Tsukiko was conflicted between frustration and admiration towards Bokuto. She wondered if he already found his rhythm when the match had only just started. Coach Nekomata didn’t need to look over to see the anxious manager trying to avoid biting her clipboard. The old man chuckled lightly.

“You should know better than anyone that there’s no need to worry over those boys,” he said to her.

The game continued off well on both sides. Neither was giving up the leading point but they were showing awestruckling skills. There was Yaku the highly exceptional libero who managed to receive Bokuto’s cross spike as though it wasn’t special at all. Kenma too was a bit different in an official match. He barely moved around or not at all until it was time for him to set a toss. The way his expressions were unreadable even made it a problem for the blockers as they wouldn’t know where or to who he would send the ball.

“I hate to admit it but Bokuto’s in top form today!” Coach Naoi commented.

Tsukiko didn’t want to agree, but she could tell it was the fact. The girl jumped from her seat when Bokuto shot a straight that sent Kenma flying. She stumbled over her words but coach Nekomata understood what she was trying to say. He signaled for Nekoma’s first timeout.

“Keeeeeeenknkn-Keeeeeeennnnnnnn!!” wailed the manager as she tried to wrap her arms around the setter. Kenma dodged her while stating that Bokuto and Yaku were both in good form. He went on to report what he analyzed about the former.

“Bokuto-san is especially efficient with his straights right now and he’s fully aware of Yaku who’s positioned for his crosses.”

“Should we switch to choking the straights now?” inquired Kai. Tsukiko had the same thought but then Kenma said something else that made her impressed.
“We’ll hold off on that until after we’ve exploited Bokuto-san’s rare habit for spiking straights.”

Returning to the game, things were heating up quickly. It got especially interesting after Kuroo switched places with Kenma in order to block Bokuto’s straight.

Tsukiko shot up again but froze mid-cheer. Coach Naoi looked at her questioningly until she sat back down, flushed in embarrassment. She didn’t think she’d get this excited over someone like Kuroo. Maybe it was because he technically protected one of her ‘haikyuuties’ from getting harmed again? Watching the team play an official match was definitely giving her different feelings than when she watched them during the training camp. Her heart suddenly dropped when she realized the rotation that switched Yaku out with Lev. All kinds of doubtful thoughts went through her mind then until it happened; Lev’s fluke. Tsukiko wanted to shriek and even the coaches were shaking their heads since they expected it to happen.

Another timeout was called.

The first years had to hold back Yaku from pummeling Lev for his screw up. Kai and Kuroo had to do the same for their manager, who also wanted to knock some sense into the kid that had a whole foot over her.

“I’m leaving Lev in your care,” said coach Nekomata to Kenma. The setter cringed, making a unique expression that brought a laugh out of the coach.

Kenma then went over to Lev to discuss what went wrong, why it went wrong, and that he was far from being Hinata’s peer. The last bit was apparently meant to ignite Lev’s passionate rivalry with Karasuno’s smallest and motivate him to do better.

Fukurodani won the first set.

Coach Nekomata gave the boys some encouragement and Tsukiko wished she had something to say too. As a manager she felt now was a good time to boost their positivity. Before she could come up with anything the team already went off to the second set.

“You’ll find your words,” said coach Naoi as though he read Tsukiko’s mind. It was kind of him to help the girl feel better but when the match ended, Tsukiko felt disappointed in herself.
Yooo drawing Kuroo is honestly really hard bc his hair is just???? So every time I draw him I need to stare at official sketches for reference xD tempted to redraw it like I did the last chapter's art buuuut ehh lazy (^: anyways, as abrupt of an ending this was, this chapter is the end of the flashback!! The next chapter is back to the present time!!! Will we get more Kuroo x Tsukiko content? Find out next time on Dragon Ball Z!!

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“I don’t want to be here,” Tsukishima whined softly.

Despite what he just said the blond looked comfortable while leaned back in a large beanbag chair as he toyed with his phone.

Yamaguchi chuckled at his friend before turning his attention back to the girl that was posing in front of a camera.

Previously, at the Yorozu-kan:

“TH-THE-THEY KISSED!! BUT WITH HAND!” shrieked Hinata.

“I KNOW THAT DUMBASS!! I JUST SAW THE SAME THING!” Kageyama hollered back.

“If that’s supposed to be their way of reconciling then I don’t know how dating works at all…” Akaashi sighed.

Bokuto nodded furiously. “Ditto Akaaaa—”

Kuroo clicked his tongue. “Gross.”

Ushijima went, “…”

And now back to the present story.

Some weeks have passed and Tokyo is practically on fire. It’s been dreadful to be in the city that even news reporters have to advise people to be careful and keep hydrated.

The Yorozu-kan residents had no choice but to leave the comfort of their home because their air
conditioning stopped functioning. The repairmen they called for were busy as several others were facing similar issues. It was almost like the whole city was struck with bad luck for the day.

Everyone decided to go their separate ways for the time being. Hinata and Kageyama followed Ushijima to the gym to practice volleyball with him. Kuroo was called in to work at the White Fang because customers were crowding the place to avoid the heat. Akaashi dragged Bokuto with him to the hardware store to find tools so they could try to fix the AC unit themselves.

As for last three; Tsukishima and Yamaguchi ended up joining Tsukiko at her workplace. They were promised free food and cool air there.

“I don’t want to be here,” Tsukishima whined softly.

Despite what he just said the blond looked comfortable while leaned back in a large beanbag chair as he toyed with his phone.

Yamaguchi chuckled at his friend before turning his attention back to the girl that was posing in front of a camera.

Flashes went off every few seconds, simultaneously with loud shutter snaps.

Tsukiko alternated between different poses after each picture taken. The photographer was constantly going “oh!” and “ah!” but at times he would shout “non!” when he didn’t like the way Tsukiko was positioned. When that happened he would instruct the girl on what he wanted from her and then she would deliver just that.

Yamaguchi was entranced by how well Tsukiko could model. Even when it wasn’t for something professional he knew she looked great in any kind of picture. It made him think how lucky he was to be dating someone that was physically attractive and had a variety of skills.

Tsukishima didn’t have to look up from his phone to know his friend was currently swooning over the girl all over again. He mentally rolled his eyes.

“Change!” said the photographer. When he snapped his fingers all of the staff personnel started moving around. The setup was being rearranged and a new outfit was being coordinated.
Tsukiko took the chance to go over to the boys that tagged along.

“How do I look?” she asked while doing a quick spin. Most of her hair was swept to one side with slightly curled ends as she wore an outfit meant for a young working woman. Her top was a white chemise blouse with black accents along the collar edge and cuffs. A black pencil skirt went over it with the hem reaching above her knees. Tsukiko stated her favorite part was the fact it had pockets, which were lined with silver satin. The only jewelry she wore were pearl earrings that stood out when her hair was behind her shoulders and a silver watch on her right wrist.

“I hope the makeup doesn’t make me look too different,” she said while glancing at her boyfriend who was struck speechless.

The next outfit Tsukiko changed into was similar to the last but the blouse had no sleeves and was a robin egg blue. She was given long palazzo pants that were a creamy khaki color and brown open-toed wedge heel shoes.

The photographer examined Tsukiko for a moment before snapping his fingers that summoned the clothing rack. His hand immediately grabbed for a wide-sleeved cashmere cardigan that was a similar shade of brown to the pants. The ensemble was completed with a satchel bag and gold-framed circular glasses. A hairdresser went ahead and tied Tsukiko’s hair up into a single bun to finalize the overall look.

Only ten minutes passed with taking pictures of this one outfit. The photographer was suddenly snapping his fingers angrily. Apparently there was something more he wanted but the man couldn’t quite figure out what it had to be. Looking around the studio for a clue, he quickly found his answer when setting eyes on the two guests behind him.

“I want to go home,” complained Tsukishima.

“If you want to die from sweating then go right ahead,” Tsukiko gritted her teeth under a smile.

The indifferent blond got forced into modelling. He was dressed in a maroon casual suit jacket that had a mandarin collar. His pants were a dark forest green with fake pockets. The shoes were honestly the most upsetting for him because they were a pale yellow. Overall he judged his outfit as tacky and terrible but it was apparently a good look for him according to the photographer. Tsukiko agreed but she was likely just teasing him. Their poses included locking arms and “walking” together while pretending to have a conversation.
Some people that were working offstage were murmuring assumptions that made Yamaguchi feel uneasy. He rubbed his knuckles as he watched his friend have pictures taken with his girlfriend. An old thought he had been trying to get rid of for years was returning.

“Ah… they look good together.”

After the photoshoot ended the three went out in search of something cold to snack on. The immediate choice was ice cream. Unfortunately the nearest shops they could get to were being raided by dozens of people.

“Maybe we should get out of Shibuya,” Tsukiko suggested as she fanned herself.

The boys agreed and followed her to the crowded station that was also a bad place to be stuck in. The train car was full of sweaty passengers. Yamaguchi wasn’t comfortable with letting anyone near Tsukiko too, so he protectively pinned her against the door. It was embarrassing but he did his best to keep some space between himself and the girl. He had doubts he’d be able to keep his cool if they were pressed against each other.

“Don’t fall,” snickered Tsukishima when the train doors were about to open for the stop.

Without really realizing it, the three ended up near their school campus. It was until they found out the cafeteria was serving shaved ice that they decided to head inside. There weren’t a lot of people around because they were either attending lectures or taking shelter from the heat somewhere else like the library.

“Mmm!” Tsukiko squealed over her watermelon flavored ice. After a couple scoops of her own she swiped some off the two boys. Yamaguchi’s was lemon and Tsukishima got cherry. They gave the girl different looks after she stole their ice for herself before continuing to eat in silence that was making Tsukishima irritated.

“Hey,” he called for their attention.

“Do you guys really like each other anymore?” Tsukishima boldly asked.
The dating pair spat out their shaved ice, some of it landing on Tsukishima’s glasses. They were red like the cherry syrup melting into his ice but his question didn’t go unanswered.

“Of course we do! Duh! We-We’re dating after all— duh!” Tsukiko stammered while trying to bring another scoop of ice into her mouth.

Yamaguchi was only able to utter incoherent sounds.

Tsukishima groaned as his annoyance over them grew. “You two don’t even hold hands anymore. Probably not even when alone I bet. How is this even dating?” he grumbled.

Tsukiko argued back, earning a glare from the four-eyes. “What do you even know Kei? You never dated before!” she hissed.

“At least I know how a confession works.” Tsukishima replied with an irked brow. His expression switched to shock when he realized what he had just said and then looked away from the other two. They heard him loud and clear though.

Yamaguchi was dumbfounded for a moment. He gripped his bowl before saying, “I already told Tsukiko my feelings for her.”

The confession really came out of nowhere, causing Tsukiko to nearly spit her ice again. Her cheeks were waved with embarrassment.

Tsukishima gave his friend a blank stare. “So what? Has she replied at all?” he asked with an off-putting curiosity that seemed out of his character.

Yamaguchi glanced at Tsukiko then back to Tsukishima. “I told her to tell me when she’s ready.” he said.

The blond scoffed as he reached the end of his shaved ice. “At least you’ll get a reply…” Tsukishima muttered under his breath low enough to keep the couple from understanding. When he got up to toss his bowl and wash his hands, Tsukiko scooted over to Yamaguchi and nervously tapped his arm.
“Has Kei ever mentioned liking someone?” she asked her boyfriend with blinking curiosity. He didn’t need to think hard to recall if Tsukishima ever mentioned having affections for someone. “Not that I’m aware of,” was all he could answer with a shrug.

Meanwhile in the bathroom, Tsukishima was letting the sink water run down the drain. He stared at it for a while until his glasses nearly slipped off his nose. “Pathetic,” he grunted while washing his hands.

“Wake up already…”

Everyone returned to Yorozu-kan in the late afternoon. The air was naturally becoming cooler but it was still slightly humid even when night was taking over.

Akaashi and Bokuto were working together to fix the main AC unit with video instructions playing on their phones. It sounded like they were managing well but hearing Bokuto get scolded every now and then had to mean otherwise. The two paused their work when Tsukiko handed them vanilla ice cream cups she bought on the way home.

“Thanks,” Akaashi said as he wiped the sweat on his face with a hand towel. Bokuto gave his appreciation by hugging Tsukiko’s legs which earned him a foot in his face.

The group scattered around the main floor; some sitting in the living room watching television and others were in the dining room or on the back patio. The only ones outside though were Tsukiko and Yamaguchi, since nobody wanted to get between the couple. They sat on opposite ends of the concrete while shyly facing away from each other. Seeing them was bothering Akaashi because he just wanted them to go back to being the way they were during Christmas Eve.

“...hey,” Yamaguchi muttered softly.

If he didn’t mean to get Tsukiko’s attention then he should have tried harder at being unheard. The girl turned slightly towards him with a wooden spoon in her mouth. Catching her off guard made Yamaguchi snort and almost lose his composure for a moment. He brought a hand to the back of his neck where his ponytail was while continuing what he wanted to say.
“I meant what I said that night.” he spoke up.

The sincerity in Yamaguchi’s voice felt almost unreal. Tsukiko wasn’t used to hearing him talk this way since her boyfriend had always been timid throughout their years together. At some point she apparently forgot he wasn’t as weak-willed as he initially was when they first started dating.

Tsukiko’s body tightened as she kept eating her ice cream while listening to Yamaguchi.

“Some people might say we’re too young to be saying those words but I don’t think our age should get in the way with expressing what we really feel. I mean— there’s tons of stories out there where people actually married their childhood friend. Or maybe that’s why saying ‘I love you’ at a young age is considered childish?”

Inch by inch, the couple had been scooting closer to each other as if it was natural to do. They only noticed when their shoulders bumped, which startled them both.

Yamaguchi suddenly laughed. “Just like back then!” he said, making Tsukiko curious as to what he was referring to. It quickly occurred to her that it was the summer training camp he was talking about. On the last day when the coaches had arranged a barbeque, Tsukiko accidentally sat next to Yamaguchi and the two were too flustered to really say anything.

“Ahhhh…” Tsukiko sighed from the shameful memory. Before she could dwell back on it, Yamaguchi had kept his side pressed with hers. Their shoulders touched, their knees tapped, and their hands were overlapping on the cold concrete patio. Soon their eyes connected and both felt completely closed off in their own world.

“I love you,” Yamaguchi said without a hint of hesitation.

Despite the intense blush on Tsukiko’s cheeks she didn’t break the eye contact. Her throat was being choked by thoughts like, “why am I not saying the same thing” and “how come it’s hard for me to say it,” which repeated in her mind. Not a sound escaped her gaping lips. The girl continued to stare back into her boyfriend’s soft eyes which reflected her face. Her mouth closed for a moment as she swallowed.

“Tadashi, I—” was all Tsukiko managed to utter right as Bokuto’s cheering rang in everyone’s ears.
The Yorozu-kan’s air conditioning had been successfully restored. A round of applause was given until the rest noticed the couple had stepped back inside into the living room. The redness in both of their faces hinted that something had happened while they had private time together—or it was really *that* hot outside.

Akaashi narrowed his gaze at them, as if trying to telepathically ask what they were talking about in secrecy but neither were going to admit anything.

Kuroo appeared behind the couple and dropped his arms around them both. He also had a flushed complexion but for an entirely different reason.

Tsukiko cringed. “Why are you drinking so early?!” she said while pinching her nose.

The big cat whined over how frustrating it was to work in a busy cafe filled with beautiful, thirsty girls. It didn’t sound like a problem from how Kuroo described it but apparently being surrounded by attractive females wasn’t enough for him to enjoy work. Though Tsukiko said she could find him another job, he acted hurt and refused to leave the cafe even if it were to get closed down.

“Geez… make up your mind.” Tsukishima groaned from the other side of the room.
lmao I'm a fashion student and yet coordinating stylish outfits and drawing them is still hard :")

p.s. HOLYSHEETS IT WAS SO EASY TO DRAW TSUKKI'S HAIR HERE IM LITERALLY CRYING OF JOY

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Dance ‘if you do do’

Chapter Summary

The Yorozu-kan boys imagined it was going to take place in some empty lot in the back of the school. Needless to say they were surprised by the actual location.

Chapter Notes

I'm a funny introducing more BnHA characters as supports :”D this chapter is one of my fantasies that I've been wanting to write and now it's born~!

On the day before the summer break, the boys’ volleyball club was having a practice match with another campus. They apparently came from the one Oikawa and Iwaizumi attended until this semester. In a way, the other team wanted to “take back” the two. Little did they know that they were challenging a dangerous group with players that were previously ranked the best in the nation. Heck, they probably still are.

Team Yorozu-kan’s line-up comprised of mainly seniors; basically everyone minus the first year newbies. However, Tsukishima was needed because of his height for his position as a middle blocker which aggravated Kageyama and Hinata greatly. Yamaguchi was content with watching though. In fact, he would rather be on the sidelines right now so he could properly observe how his old rivals worked together in a real game. They were all famous for being powerful in their own rights that having them together as a team had to be intriguing.

The match ended quickly. It was almost like nothing really happened.

“Damn! Are these guys really college students like us?!” said someone from the other team.

Hinata couldn’t help but feel he heard similar words several times back in high school. It also reminded him how he was still the smallest player in the room.

“Even at the campus gates somebody would stop me and ask if I was a lost junior high student…” Hinata admitted to Yamaguchi, who wasn’t sure if he had to pity his friend or not.
“Good game!” Bokuto shouted as he tried to high five his teammates but was left hanging by all of them. Out of desperation he went over to the visiting team who only returned with wary high fives.

“Boo~” Someone booed from the doors.

Turning their attention, just about everyone was suddenly ecstatic to see who it was.

“My sweet~!!” Oikawa ran over to greet Tsukiko but for some reason he wasn’t moving an inch from where he stood. It turned out that Iwaizumi was firmly holding him back with his usual antagonizing demeanor.

Akaashi jogged over to the girl that was in her dancing clothes. He asked why she wasn’t at her own club and she answered that she was just taking a break.

“Don’t slack off when you guys have important shows soon,” he told Tsukiko but she childishly stuck her tongue out then started heading back to where she was suppose to be.

“Oh, my practice might be a little long so you guys don’t need to wait for me.” Tsukiko informed before she left completely.

Going home without their house mother was something the boys were never going to do. So, once volleyball was over, everyone went straight to the dance club.

“There’s actually one kid that has a similar vibe to Oikawa the second here,” Kuroo smirked. He was talking to Kageyama as the group made their way across campus.

Oikawa himself huffed and puffed because he didn’t enjoy hearing himself get grouped together with his junior. Apprenticeship was something he often denied being a summary of their relationship. He preferred them being called rival setters. The fact that Oikawa got to play in today’s match even had him look down mockingly at Kageyama earlier.

When the boys finally arrived at the dance club’s room, Akaashi had stopped the line from going inside. For one thing, they were too big of a group. If a whole volleyball team were to enter they would be an inconvenience. He didn’t want to get Tsukiko in trouble either.
Because the room door was wide open, everyone heard a voice shouting “FUCK OFF!!!” that was followed by eerie giggling.

A girl with messy buns skipped out of the clubroom. When she flashed the boys a smile their first thoughts were “creepy” because of the crazed look in her eyes. Also leaving the room after her was another girl but she had a softer expression and side ponytail. She dragged a blond boy behind her, who was pointing and laughing at the people inside the room.

“See you there, amateurs!” he said to them.

Once those three had disappeared, the group of males poked their heads inside the room in time to see Tsukiko whack someone on the head. Sitting on his knees with a bump growing through his explosive hair was Bakugou. He was gritting his teeth either from pain or his anger.

“Did you really just do that?!” Tsukiko raised her voice, causing the other members to awkwardly continue their activities.

The club captain, Iida, carefully approached to mediate the situation. His vice-captain, Momo, noticed the familiar faces at the door and decided to fill them in on what happened.

The three people that left earlier were members of the dance club from another campus. Even though they performed together during concerts and such, there was still some rivalry between clubs that were envious of each other’s skills. Tsukiko’s club apparently had the most attention from the directors at the moment too. But the only form of favoritism that Momo could think of was the upgrade to their club room; the new sound system. There was plenty of praise given to them after the show last August, but she didn’t think they received any more than the rest of the performers that night.

“Why is Tsukiko upset with that guy?” Akaashi asked, pointing back at the scene of his house mother berating someone that wasn’t Bokuto and/or Kuroo.

“That’s because Bakugou-kun did something ridiculous,” Momo replied. With a distressed sigh she added, “He fell for Neito-san’s taunts and ended up accepting a challenge without any of our consent.”

From the way Momo described it, it sounded like the dance club had a terrible member that was more troublesome than anyone they knew. Even Iwaizumi wanted to punch the kid and he didn’t
even know him. Though he did see a resemblance between Bakugou and a certain mad dog he
tamed in high school.

“What was the challenge?” Kuroo asked curiously while leaning close towards Momo. The girl
blinked, not being fazed by the advance.

“It’s a dance-off,” she answered swiftly.

Bokuto suddenly burst out laughing. “Who does that in this day and age?!” he said in between his
laughter. It was contagious enough to get Hinata to start and he wasn’t even sure why it was so
funny.

Hearing Tsukiko’s foot stomp the floor made everyone become quiet. She was still glaring down at
Bakugou with her arms crossed under her chest. A heavy sigh escaped her and her hands moved to
rest on her hips.

“Iida-senpai,” she called out to the captain who saluted in response. It made the outside group
wonder who actually ran the club.

“Let’s use Bakacchan’s mess for our next practice.”

The dance-off was taking place the following weekend. In preparation for it, Tsukiko would leave
the house early in the morning and then return in time for dinner. She practiced dancing for long
hours with her club mates. Nobody could believe in the seriousness that was dance since all they
knew was volleyball. But they couldn’t make fun of Tsukiko because of how she was treating the
whole ordeal. Pride for your club was something they all could mutually understand.

Saturday came; the day of the awaited dance-off.

The Yorozu-kan boys imagined it was going to take place in some empty lot in the back of the
school. Needless to say they were surprised by the actual location.

Tsukiko raised her arms and began to say in a gallant tone, “Welcome, my cheerleaders, to the
“THIS IS THE ARCADE. WHY ARE YOU HAVING A DANCE-OFF IN AN ARCADE?!””
Kuroo interjected and got kicked in the back of the knee for cutting Tsukiko off. She pretended to whistle while texting on her phone as the guy hissed at her.

“I bet Hinata would have a field day in here,” Yamaguchi commented in regards to the missing member of their squad. Hinata and Kageyama had gone to work. Bokuto was called in as well unfortunately since his boss wanted his help in creating a new type of bread— whatever abomination it could be.

Ushijima and Akaashi looked around. The arcade didn’t appear too packed even though it was the weekend. They hadn’t been to an arcade in a while either.

“Bye,” said Tsukishima as he went ahead and broke away from the group to check out the games. He wasn’t interested in watching a dance battle in the first place. But seeing how they were in a place meant for entertainment the four-eyes decided to go about on his own.

Tsukiko let him be and extended to the rest of her posse to enjoy themselves while she waited for her club.

Akaashi went with Kuroo and they found the racing games, which they started challenging each other to see who was a better driver.

Ushijima ended up at the crane machines. There were several kinds with a variety of prizes but the one that caught his eye was round, yellow, and had a tired expression on its face. He pulled his wallet out and immediately inserted coins into the game.

Tsukiko and Yamaguchi walked around to explore. The latter had never been in an arcade as massive as this one. It goes to show how his hometown paled in comparison to a city like Tokyo. They soon approached what appeared to be a stage. Upon further inspection it turned out to be a large dancing game. Yamaguchi didn’t have to ask to confirm if that was where Tsukiko and her clubmates were going to have their dance-off on.

In the next hour, two teams of dancers were facing each other with a competitive aura surrounding them. The terms were simple: the team with the most points would get to be the opening number for the next show in August. Akaashi highly doubted that either club had the authoritative power to
The Yorozu-kan boys, minus Tsukishima and Ushijima, were standing in a crowd that seemed to gather out of nowhere. Judging from the chatter going around, this wasn’t the first time the arcade was being used for a minor dance competition.

“First round!” shouted a referee, who was one of the arcade staff. Stepping onto the colorful platform was Tsukiko and the blonde girl with messy hair buns.

“Kya~! I get to fight Kiko-chan first~” squealed the other girl.

“Don’t get wet over me now, Himiko.” said Tsukiko with subtle annoyance in her tone. The two approached the machine to select the song they were going to dance to. From the preview alone Akaashi, Kuroo, and Yamaguchi were bewildered by the choice. They were even more curious when a lot of other people suddenly pulled out glow sticks.

♫ Lovely chance Pettanko-chan~ Lovely chance Pettanko-chan~ ♫

Tsukiko and Himiko were dancing to a magical girl anime song. They both were following the silhouette on the main monitor while stepping on the corresponding arrows with their feet.

The crowd cheered and sang along. Kuroo lowered his head as if ashamed to be surrounded by geeks. The spiral in some of their glasses just reminded him of Tsukiko from high school. The girls finished and seeing their points tied caused an uproar. How such a thing turned out possible was beyond anyone’s understanding. Himiko reached out for a handshake, which Tsukiko returned just to be polite.

The following songs varied in genre, ranging from upbeat pop to calm R&B. After Tsukiko’s match, her teammates weren’t doing as great as her.

Uraraka had lost because most of her steps were too light for the game’s platform to pick up.

Todoroki got stagefright, which made his movements stiff so he lagged.
Others like Iida and Momo had managed to help balance the overall points but the opposing side was still slightly in the lead.

When it came to Bakugou he was the most disappointing of all. He ended up getting kicked out of the arcade entirely.

“Wooow~ good thing we don’t have poorly trained guys like that in our club,” said the mocking blond who instigated the dance-off.

“Please excuse my friend Neito-kun here,” apologized the girl with a side ponytail.

Kuroo clicked his tongue. He couldn’t help but think that guy reminded him of a certain snake. It had him wish he could make a clapback but then Tsukiko did just that.

“At least we don’t show up in someone’s clubroom to taunt them,” she said with a mocking smile.

Due to both teams having an odd number of members present, the final round actually had to have a repeating dancer. Tsukiko was chosen from her side and her opponent was Neito.

“Let the better dancer win,” he said with his hand extended to her. Hesitant at first, she only accepted it for proper sportsmanship. However, her face went completely dark when she looked up at the monitor.

“What the hell is this?!” Tsukiko barked. The referee gave her a warning like they did with Bakugou. Any more and she would be disqualified the same way.

Neito laughed with a hand to his chin. “Oh? Did I forget to mention that we already decided what the last dance will be?” he smirked.

Displaying on the monitor was a song labelled with a warning for explicit lyrics. What bothered Tsukiko more was seeing the difficulty set to hard mode and the fact it needed to be danced to with a partner.

Both Iida and Momo lowered their heads in apology. “Sorry, Yamauchi-kun!” apologized the club
captain. Nobody in their group knew the steps to the chosen song. None of them were even they bold enough to dance to it on the spot.

Tsukiko gripped a railing behind her and bit her lower lip. She knew the easy and medium level steps. The practicing she’s been doing the past week involved learning every song in the game. Mirroring without knowing moves beforehand she could try to manage, but to do it alone would mean losing completely. It’s still a partner song.

Neito continued to laugh obnoxiously and then, without warning, he hit the start button. The crowd was booing and so were the three Yorozu-kan boys watching below. Seeing Tsukiko in distress was upsetting but they couldn’t think of any way to help besides comfort the girl later.

“Don’t just stand there,” said a certain brunette that stepped onto the dancing platform.

Oikawa slipped his hand up Tsukiko’s back, grabbing her by the shoulder and turning her into a dip. This was the starting move as shown on the game.

“Let’s dance, my hunny~” he purred to Tsukiko who in turn gave him a devilish grin.

The two followed the figures on the big screen and the game lit up as they received bonuses for flawless execution.

Neito grunted but he wasn’t giving up. “I’ll lead, Kendo!” he told his partner with the side ponytail.

Both couples were dancing in accordance to the moves displaying on the main monitor. The guys made wide steps and the girls were exceptional in twisting their hips around them. It was both alluring and awkward to watch. Their dancing was great but the song had moaning in the vocals. It was questionable as to why this was even allowed in the game, first of all.

“You played this before?” Tsukiko asked while trailing her hands down Oikawa’s chest. He gave her a charming smirk. “Even if I didn’t, I would still be here.” he said as he lifted her leg straight up.

Akaashi was about to make a comment on how uncomfortable it was to see Oikawa touching Tsukiko. He refrained when realizing he was standing between the boyfriend and the bodyguard;
Yamaguchi and Kuroo. From the death stares on both of their faces he could already tell they wanted to be in Oikawa’s place— as well as possibly murder Oikawa himself.

What was only about three minutes felt longer. At the end of the song the one to grovel to the floor was the loser. Neito fell to his knees when the results finished calculating. Tsukiko and Oikawa had won thanks to the game’s secret feature where bonus points were awarded to players that smile during hard mode.

“Absolutely impossible…” Neito muttered while his partner escorted him off of the game.

Kendo gave Momo a smile and wave. “That was fun! Thanks for a good time,” she said before leading the rest of her dance club out of the arcade.

Tsukiko let out a heavy sigh of relief and wiped her sweat with the towel Uraraka handed to her.

“That was amazing!” shrieked the bubbly girl.

“Indeed, and we thank you for the help too.” Momo said to Oikawa, who proceeded to try flirting with her but to no avail.

Iida was in tears and thanked Oikawa as well as praise Tsukiko for her hard work.

The Yorozu-kan group joined in with Kuroo getting between the king and his self-proclaimed queen.

“How dare you touch her with your filthy hands!” Kuroo growled. The hurtful choice of words made Oikawa gasp loudly and the two started bickering.

Yamaguchi walked up to his girlfriend with a nervous smile. “G-Good job,” he said while dabbing Tsukiko’s neck with the towel.

Akaashi stared for a while before congratulating Tsukiko too. He wasn’t sure if this was really something significant enough to be celebrating over.
When the housemates reached the exit they reunited with the two giants that had been missing the whole time.


In front of them was a strange sight to behold. Ushijima and Tsukishima had their hands full of crane machine prizes; most of which were Gudetama items that the former spent quite a bit on to obtain. All of it was going to be given to Tsukiko, obviously.

“Shut up.” Tsukishima grunted as he shot mean glares at his friends who were laughing.
thank you for sticking this far already!!!

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Another trip to the beach was in order. This time, it took two rental cars to get everyone from Yorozu-kan to their landlady’s private beach. Ushijima drove with Tsukiko, Tsukishima, and Yamaguchi while Kuroo had Akaashi, Bokuto, and the two brats. Just like last year, the rest of their friends took a long bus ride over.

“Ohhh!! Kenma! Lev!” Hinata cawed as he was finally reunited with his two favorite Nekoma pals.

“Oh? No Yakkyun?” sobbed Tsukiko after she was told about Yaku’s last minute drop out. He preferred taking summer trips to the mountains, which was where he was with his family.

There was someone else among the group that wasn’t part of the usual though. He looked like a red-headed monster and appeared to be just as tall as Tsukishima.

“Yo!” greeted Tendou, a former member of Shiratorizawa.

The only girl of the whole group retreated behind Ushijima while glaring at the friend he invited. “You’re not Yakkyun’s replacement or anything!” she said but Tendou just laughed back.

“Your daughter there sure is shy, Wakatoshi-kun,” joked the thin giant.

Everyone else seemed a bit wary with the new guy but they weren’t going to be unfriendly to him. They were mostly astonished that Ushijima kept in contact with his old teammates and it was rather touching to know he did.

After the umbrellas were put up and mats were set down, everyone went off doing whatever they wanted.
Hinata and Kageyama were racing with Lev to see who could swim the farthest and fastest.

Bokuto and Kuroo were having a water gun battle against Oikawa and Iwaizumi.

Ushijima and Tendou were catching up with each other while walking knee-deep into the water.

Akaashi and Tsukishima decided to sit in donut floats and simply relax. To keep them from being taken by the waves their floats were tied to a stake stuck into the shore.

Kenma and Tsukiko had again chosen to remain out of the sun but this time they were accompanied by Yamaguchi who seemed to be red already.

“Did you put on enough sunscreen?” Tsukiko asked her boyfriend.

When she tapped his shoulder he reacted as though her touch stung him, even though it really didn’t. Yamaguchi was actually being shy. It was his first time seeing his girlfriend in a swimsuit after all. Even the one time Karasuno joined Nekoma in a beach training session, Tsukiko still wore her tracksuit but with the jacket and pant sleeves rolled up. The amount of skin she showed then versus now was drastically different.

Tsukiko gave Yamaguchi a worried look since she still assumed he was sunburnt. “I brought aloe vera just in case this happened,” she said and turned around to rummage in her bag for the item. Seeing her exposed legs and the valley of her cleavage only made Yamaguchi more nervous than what was coming for him next.

“Turn around, I’ll apply it.” Tsukiko ordered and Yamaguchi obeyed without complaint.

Yamaguchi shrieked from the cold, jellylike substance that was squirted onto his backside. His body tensed up when Tsukiko’s hand started spreading the gel around. The girl really had a way with her hands and when her nails occasionally brushed against his skin it made him shiver.

Once his back was done Tsukiko spread the aloe further along Yamaguchi’s arms. He had to stop her before she got to his chest so he could take over from there. Tsukiko mentally clicked her tongue. Who could blame her for wanting to get her hands on the rest of her boyfriend’s body?
Volleyball did a great job on the muscles—that she knew well.

“I don’t think you applied enough sunscreen either,” Kenma suddenly commented from the other umbrella he moved himself over to at some point. He had looked up from his game for a split second and noticed that Tsukiko’s back had a patch of pink between her shoulder blades.

“Seriously?! Ahh, I thought my hair would protect me!” The girl whined as she attempted to turn her head back to see how bad the burn was.

“Here, I’ll get it.”

Yamaguchi pulled Tsukiko’s hair off to the side. Then, with some aloe vera gel already in his hand, he smeared it onto the girl’s back. She mewed loudly, instilling shock into both of the young men present.

Kenma mentally sighed. “Did she have to make it sound so sexual?” he thought while looking away from the couple.

“Yo-hoo~” greeted the Guess Monster himself with his head poking between the couple. He snickered at their spooked reactions. The others were gathered on the sand again to assemble a volleyball court. In order to get out of helping, Tendou snuck away as he wanted to tease Tsukiko and Yamaguchi.

“Hrmm~ so this is the guy you’ve been dating, Kiko-chan...” Tendou said as his red eyes scanned Yamaguchi’s face. It would be a lie if he said he didn’t remember seeing the other before. The match against Karasuno was something he couldn’t forget even if he tried.

“Yes, now back off! You’re scaring him!” Tsukiko huffed.

Tendou completely ignored the girl and had practically pushed her aside.

“I don’t know how you do it man,” he said to Yamaguchi. His eerie smile stretched from ear to ear.
“How do you date a girl who doesn’t dote on you?” Tendou asked, earning him a perplexing stare from the couple.

Before Tsukiko could argue something, Yamaguchi gave Tendou a look that was similar to Hinata’s after being provoked by an opponent.

“Don’t go assuming things about her,” he said with a straight but frightening face.

Tendou brought both hands up in defeat. Still grinning, he left the couple behind and walked over to the rest of the group that was setting up a volleyball net.

Tsukiko glanced at her boyfriend nervously. “About what he said—”

“Hey, hey, heeey! Come plaaay!” Bokuto hollered and waved at the two but then Akaashi made him stop. “Let them have some time together,” he whispered.

Akaashi gestured at Tsukiko to stay put. He shouted back that the group decided to play six-against-six. This meant Tsukiko and Yamaguchi didn’t need to join.

While the others were playing volleyball, the couple remained under the umbrella but basking in silence. After what Tendou said the air between them got awkward. Really though, it was Tsukiko who wasn’t sure how to act after that. She wasn’t sure if Yamaguchi got offended.

Tsukiko looked up when noticing that Yamaguchi stood up.

“Wanna walk?” he asked her with a smile and hand extended.

The ocean breeze was gentle on their skin. Their feet stepped over the cooled sand and waves of water that engulfed it. They still weren’t talking even after walking a good distance from their friends.

“It—” Yamaguchi suddenly spoke up.
“...looks good. Your swimsuit,” he managed to say with his focus wavering between Tsukiko’s face and her body.

Tsukiko wasn’t covering up with a romper like last year because now she had a reason to show off. Her new bikini was pastel blue with a gingham plaid pattern. The bottom piece was a two-tier frilled skirt. The scrunchies on her wrists were handmade from the time she took a sewing class at the shopping district near Yorozu-kan too. One thing Tsukiko initially meant to remove was the padding in her bikini top. She decided not to when realizing she could use it to get her boyfriend’s attention. It’s obviously been working, evident by how not-so-subtle Yamaguchi’s olive eyes kept falling down to ogle Tsukiko’s chest.

“Oh, thank you…” Tsukiko replied while bashfully brushing some of her hair behind her ears. She and her boyfriend started walking closer together as if the compliment broke the ice.

Eventually the two reached the large rocks that marked the end of Madame’s private beach. From there, they were far away enough that they couldn’t spot out Hinata in the volleyball game.

“It wasn’t this far last year. I guess she extended it recently,” Tsukiko commented out loud. Her shoulder brushed against Yamaguchi and they both jumped. Skin-to-skin contact was something they weren’t at all use to— in this situation at least.

To distract themselves from further awkwardness, Yamaguchi pointed at the things that washed up on the shore beneath them. There were some stones, seaweed, and a lone starfish. The couple looked at it with amazement. It was their first time seeing the sea creature up close, though Tsukiko had seen a starfish at an aquarium once already. They were both hesitant about touching it even though they wanted to return it to the sea.

“Maybe pull it over with the seaweed?” Tsukiko suggested. Yamaguchi nodded and threw in praise for her intuitive creativity.

Once a wave approached they lifted the starfish just slightly so that the water could carry it back. They watched the starfish disappear and prayed for its safe return. Glancing back to each other, the couple began laughing as they returned to the large rocks behind them.

“Umm… Tada-kun,” called the girl that was fiddling with her fingers in front of her. Seeing her act shy caused Yamaguchi’s chest to swell up. He couldn’t help but think Tsukiko looked cute when she was the sheepish one.
“Are you... really okay with me?” Tsukiko asked with dropped shoulders.

The question almost made Yamaguchi’s heart sink a bit. He leaned against the massive rock while running a hand through his loose hair.

“I never imagined you’d be the one to ask me that,” he said with a meek smile.

Tsukiko wondered if she upset him somehow. Her expression became sullen, making Yamaguchi almost panic.

“Wh-What I mean is— that’s just what I always meant to ask you back then. So it’s like the tables have turned, ya know?” he clarified, which seemed to put the girl somewhat at ease.

In the past, Yamaguchi had several doubts about his relationship with Tsukiko. He could never believe that he managed to date her so easily. There were plenty of other guys that he thought suited her more; Tsukishima being one of them. It didn’t help that others agreed with this and were constantly asking what ‘tricks’ he used to get the girl to go out with him. Even so, Yamaguchi wanted to keep Tsukiko to himself. Selfish as it was, he feared that letting her go would become a regret of his later. Technically, that did happen.

“You were famous for rejecting everyone that confessed to you,” Yamaguchi began.

“When I found that out, I quickly lost hope that I had thought I’d get a chance to be with you. Every time we talked I thought to myself, “what’s the point?” which is as bad as it sounds... but lately I’ve been wondering why I use to be so scared. Even when you told me you’d never break up with me I was still paranoid. Of course, when you left for Tokyo it made me even more afraid but I got over it, I swear! We did see each other again and well, you know the story from there...”

Yamaguchi slowly turned to face the girl next to him. His expression was soft and the sunlight made his eyes glow. He was ready to repeat the three words he’s been saying any chance he had like a broken record.

“I thought it was fate to see you again at the training camp. And I’m so, so glad that we got back together then too.
Tsukiko, I lo—"

The guy froze when he realized his girlfriend was crying in front of him. Tears were pouring out of Tsukiko’s eyes. She felt moved by Yamaguchi but also had her guilt for leaving him behind resurface.

What Tendou said earlier had gotten to Tsukiko too. When it came to boys like Hinata and Kenma she would fawn over them as if they were the best things in the world. It wasn’t apparent but she did have trouble coping with Yamaguchi not being physically around her. Therefore, being affectionate with other guys was her way of dealing with the loneliness. She never realized that was her real reason. But now that Yamaguchi is actually with her, she hasn’t done so much as latch onto his arm or give him the same attention as she did during their Christmas date.

Tsukiko had been distant ever since Yamaguchi moved in and she hardly understood why. The incident with Yacchi was one thing still puzzling her. But that topic wasn’t touched even after Tsukiko apologized to her boyfriend for slapping him weeks after it happened.

It also bothered Tsukiko that Yamaguchi set on his feelings for her despite the makeout session with Kuroo. At the time, Tsukiko really did allow for it to happen. Intoxicated as she was, her decision was mostly swayed by a craving for lust. And yet, Yamaguchi chose not to break up. He still claims to love her and Tsukiko questions why, especially when her feelings haven’t been confirmed to be the same.

“Come on now. I thought crying was my job,” Yamaguchi spoke kindly while using his thumbs to rid his girlfriend’s tears. He poked fun at the fact he was usually the sensitive one in the relationship. As of late, he wasn’t anymore.

“You’re the cool one here,” Yamaguchi added with a serene smile.

Tsukiko’s misty eyes widened from recalling a lost memory. Whenever someone asked why she accepted to date Yamaguchi of all people, she would always give them the same answer. That answer was: because she thought he was cool when he confessed to her.

Tsukiko had forgotten that her favorite thing about Yamaguchi was the face he makes when he isn’t ridden with anxiety or shaking like a mouse— despite how cute that was too.

That night from years ago when Tsukiko overheard Yamaguchi confronting Tsukishima, it made
her heart throb. It was the same when Yamaguchi confessed to her. How she forgot about that may have been due to their disconnection. That very loose string also resulted in Yamaguchi accidentally developing a crush on his volleyball manager. If they never met again in high school, what would’ve been of them?

Yamaguchi tilted his head, having not caught whatever Tsukiko was mumbling under her breath. He leaned down slightly and waited for her to repeat herself.

Something soft pressed onto Yamaguchi’s cheek. Realizing that Tsukiko kissed his face, he also heard a soft, “thank you,” trail from her lips.

Yamaguchi placed his fingers where the sensation still lingered. He wondered if he was blushing madly in front of Tsukiko but the same would go for the girl too.

Tsukiko shifted her gaze down to the sand as she spoke up again.

“I haven’t fulfilled the promise yet so—”

“It’s fine,” Yamaguchi said as he smiled back. He took a step closer to Tsukiko right as a wave of water managed to reach under his feet and cause him to slip on the sand.

The next moment, Tsukiko found herself being pinned between Yamaguchi’s arms and against the rocks. They could see their reflections in each other’s eyes.

Yamaguchi wasn’t sure what to do from the position that filled his head with indecent thoughts. “This is bad,” he gulped as he did his best to resist the urge to look down at Tsukiko’s chest. He glued his focus intensely on her beauty mark but then impulsively kissed it. Tsukiko emitted a squeak in response.

Since kissing on the lips was supposedly prohibited due to their promise, perhaps they could kiss other places? With that in mind, the summer heat wasn’t the only thing making Yamaguchi and Tsukiko feel hot. **
“You’re back. Just in time for watermelon,” said Akaashi as he picked up a piece of the large fruit to hand over to the couple that returned from their stroll. Up close, he saw that Tsukiko had her hair in low twintails. Knowing her odd inability to tie her own hair though he assumed that Yamaguchi had done it.

“Don’t eat with your hair in front of you like—”

Akaashi paused when he reached out to brush Tsukiko’s hair aside. He noticed something that resembled a bruise on the side of her neck. Before he could say anything about it, the couple already confirmed his suspicion by pleading him to keep quiet.

“.................ok.” Akaashi replied emotionlessly. He handed over the watermelon slices then retreated back to the group with a stiff, robotic-like stride.

Tsukiko took a seat next to Kenma under the umbrella. Without even glancing at the girl he said, “You should apply makeup to hide it better.”

Tsukiko nearly choked on watermelon flesh. The pudding head had keen insight so she somewhat anticipated to hear something from him. Unfortunately using her hair was the best Tsukiko could think of doing to keep the rest from seeing her hickey. At least, that’s what she believed until Kageyama of all people removed his beach hoodie and tossed it to her. Did everyone already know what was up but simply remained quiet out of politeness?

After another round of volleyball, some diving in the water, and a sand castle contest; the beach trip was over.

The group decided to end it before night fell. They didn’t have fireworks to light up like last year. It wasn’t that they forgot to buy some but because they agreed to see a big show of it at an upcoming summer festival.

Ushijima glanced at the rearview mirror. He made sure Kuroo was still driving behind him as well as checking on the sleeping couple in the back seats. When Tsukiko’s head bobbed to the side it was in a split second that Ushijima saw the fading blemish. “How did she get that?” he blurted out, causing Tsukishima to snort.

“I thought you were listening to music.” Ushijima said, making the blond’s laughter worsen.
I'm actually the shy type who says "peen" and then feels like I just committed a crime LMAO;;

also if you haven't found out I started writing for BNHA!!! For now it's just reader inserts until I figure out how I wanna start my main fic?

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A package arrived at Yorozu-kan from its landlady. Oftentimes the woman sent gift souvenirs from whatever foreign country she was visiting. This time was different.

Madame had sent her tenants custom-made yukatas to wear for the Tanabata festival they were going to later. How she knew they planned on doing that was a mystery to them.

“How’d she know our sizes?!” Hinata gasped as he received the yukata that was labeled for him. It was pale blue with an orange gradient along the hem and sleeves.

“Idiot. These things are one-size fits all.” Kageyama said when he was given his dark blue yukata that had a silver crescent moon pattern.

Ushijima’s yukata was two-toned; one half being purple and the other a dark gray with purple vertical lines running down it.

Kuroo had a similar design, though his colors were red and gray with white lines.

Bokuto enjoyed the fact his yukata didn’t have sleeves. The color scheme for his yukata matched his own hair too.
Akaashi’s yukata was an earthy brown with translucent koi fish appearing to be swimming from the bottom hem and up to his shoulder.

Tsukishima wasn’t planning to wear a yukata but seeing there weren’t dinosaurs on the one made for him changed his mind. The guy still liked prehistoric creatures but he was tired of people assuming he had some kind of obsession to the point he would wear clothes with dinosaurs on them. He’d rather be caught dead in something lame like that. The yukata arranged for him was dark gold with white fireflies scattered around grass stems on the bottom hem.

“Ooh, nice kikko design!” Yamaguchi’s girlfriend complimented his dark green yukata with its pale yellow hexagonal design that resembled a tortoise shell. His freckled cheeks turned pink when the girl draped the article over his back.

“Yours looks great,” he said with a smile. Tsukiko started blushing too while holding her yukata that was an ocean blue with nami waves on it. The lovey-dovey aura emitting from the couple caused everyone to leave and get dressed before them.

The Yoroizu-kan group arrived at the designated meeting spot where their other friends were waiting. It was the usual; Oikawa, Iwaizumi, Kenma, Lev, Yaku, and now Tendou too. Seeing him didn’t please some people but he wasn’t a completely terrible person in general. He turned out to be a Shonen Jump fan, which then became a reason for Tsukiko to willingly interact with him now. They immediately started talking about the latest One Piece chapter before even entering the festival grounds.

“They finished the cake!!” Tendou screeched.

“I just want everyone back together already!!” Tsukiko cried.

After the two were done with their fan squealing everyone formed a line as they officially entered the festival. The place wasn’t as packed as they were expecting but it was still too early to hope the rest of the evening would stay that way. The group did their best to remain as close together as possible. In case anyone got separated they could still contact someone by phone. Getting lost sounded impossible; considering the fact that a majority of the group stood in the six-foot zone. It was really the smaller people that were of concern.

“Sweetie~ make sure to hold hands with me so we don’t lose you~” Oikawa said to Tsukiko. Even though her boyfriend was right behind them the brunette continued with his flirty antics. It didn’t seem to bother Yamaguchi too much but it was annoying to Kuroo apparently.
“Put a muzzle on your horn-dog!” Kuroo shouted at Iwaizumi who responded with a harsh scowl.

“The grand king got reduced to being a mutt? Ahh, how sad.” Tsukishima said sarcastically with a smug gleam in his eyes.

Leading the pack was Ushijima with Tendou beside him. The latter continued to go on about Shounen Jump even if it wasn’t something the stone-faced Ushijima was knowledgeable about. He still listened though. Behind them were Akaashi and Yaku. Those two were scanning the food stalls to buy from later whenever their group got hungry.

“I am a master of fish scooping!” Bokuto declared while flexing in his sleeveless yukata. Hinata roared and shook with excitement. Lev laughed then stated the same thing while claiming he was better because cats were “by nature” the greatest fishers. Kenma groaned. He was tempted to hide somewhere to play his games since the ones offered at festivals weren’t his forte.

Tsukiko giggled. They had been walking around for a short while and already she was having fun.

Yamaguchi smiled too, only because the cute girl in front of him was. His eyes gradually fell her hands. He had been tempted to hold them ever since they left the house. Tsukiko’s hands were much smaller when compared to his own but most of all they were extremely soft. Yamaguchi also had a feeling that, despite the warm outdoor temperature, her hands were probably cold. Apparently she’s had the problem for as long as she could remember.

Some children ran between the crowd of people and cut through the group. They would’ve bumped into Tsukiko if the guy behind her hadn’t pulled her to a full stop. She turned her head towards Yamaguchi who was still holding onto her shoulders. When he realized he still was, he let go and then bashfully stroked his low ponytail. Tsukiko couldn’t help but curl her lips into a smile from the romantic gesture.

“Don’t get left behind, love birds!” Yaku hollered some distance ahead when he and Akaashi noticed the two lagging behind.

What’s a festival without eating takoyaki?
When the large group found an eating area to claim for themselves a select few were sent to retrieve food. The first snack brought over was fried octopus balls meant to initiate a ‘traditional’ game to see who could down a whole plate without needing water. It was only the stupidly competitive ones in the group that really did this though. Hinata was the first to lose when he couldn’t even handle half a piece of takoyaki. Kageyama appeared to be tearing up as he forced the piping hot food into his mouth. Lev and Bokuto on the other hand were doing fine so they tied.

The Shiratorizawa duo returned with yakisoba and assorted drinks. Ushijima handed the girl a choco banana he got for her on the way back. Needless to say, Tsukiko thanked her ‘papa’ for the treat. Also needless to say that some of the boys were watching her eat the phallic snack.

After snacks came the real games.

Lev and Bokuto had their fish scooping match. Both ended up losing miserably, resulting in them kneeling down in a depressed corner. Yaku and Akaashi went over to take care of the sad kids.

“How did you do it?!” Tsukiko gasped as she witnessed Kageyama managing to catch two goldfish at the same time with only one scoop. Tsukishima made an attempt to play too. His scooper broke the moment it touched the water and Tsukiko cackled obnoxiously at him. He then flicked water in the girl’s face as retaliation.

There was another version of the same game but with character toys in the pool. Yamaguchi was determined to win something for Tsukiko and even rolled back his sleeves as he played. Unfortunately, he got nothing.

“You can have this,” Kenma said softly as he handed Tsukiko a small Pikachu toy he scooped out. The next second he was being smothered with affection.

Yamaguchi twitched out of jealousy.

“Yes, yes, I get it~” whispered Oikawa from behind.

Ushijima, Kuroo, and Iwaizumi were challenging each other at the shooting game. All three of them had their sleeves tied back. Their biceps alone were attracting outside attention.

Kuroo went first and it took him three tries to hit a prize. He wanted to get something cute that he
knew Tsukiko would like, but instead he only managed to win a pack of facial masks.

“Here kitten, a present~” Kuroo purred when he handed the box over to the girl. She looked at it then said with a blank stare.

“You trying to tell me something?” Tsukiko asked with a displeased tone.

“Yeah, I’m telling you you’re not beautiful enough.” Kuroo replied. After that statement was made, it had apparently been awhile since Tsukiko last punched Kuroo.

Ushijima went next. He spent some time focusing his aim until he was ready to shoot. The cork grazed the prize on the shelf but there wasn’t enough force to knock it back. On his second try he got it though. It was a cooking timer in the shape of a chicken.

“This would be useful in the kitchen,” Ushijima said with a deadpan face that was somehow beaming with delight.

Iwaizumi rolled his shoulders and then his neck to loosen up while pushing out all distractions from his mind. He held up the rifle with just one hand and was perfectly still. Everyone around him held their breaths until Iwaizumi made his single shot. After a moment of silence the crowd went wild.

“That was amazing, Hajiii!” Tsukiko cheered.

The guy retrieved his prize; a figurine of Tony Tony Chopper from One Piece. Though the girl next to him was eyeballing the item, it wasn’t given to her. Iwaizumi handed it over to Tendou who accepted it while puzzled.

“Welcome to the group,” Iwaizumi told him.

Both Oikawa and Tsukiko started fake crying while wailing, “THAT’S OUR BIG PURE BOY!!!”
The street was becoming less populated as the sky got darker. This only meant one thing: the fireworks were going to start soon.

Since everyone was caught up in their games and eating again there wasn’t a plan on how to find a spot to watch the show. While they were discussing what to do, a tsunami of people suddenly appeared and split the group apart. The tall ones used their height to pick out their friends among the crowd and regroup.

“Everyone alright?” Akaashi asked as he looked around to see who had all made it out. The freak duo was missing until Kenma had called Hinata to guide him. Lev easily spotted Yaku in the crowd and even lifted him up. Of course this led to the college freshman getting kicked in the back.

Kuroo tucked an arm into the front panel of his yukata. He noticed the only people actually missing was the couple.

“We should find them before they screw behind a tree or something,” he said. The vulgar comment was enough to make Ushijima glare at Kuroo.

Tsukishima let out a sigh while rolling his eyes. The blond suggested they leave the couple alone for the time being, which surprised Akaashi. Everyone then went together in search for a spot to view the fireworks from.

It was both accidental and intentional. They didn’t mean to break away from their friends but finally getting alone time made them want to not go back.

Yamaguchi and Tsukiko locked arms while navigating through the sea of people that were also looking for a place to watch the fireworks.

“What should we do?” Yamaguchi sighed. As tall as he was he couldn’t see open spaces in the fields or hill. He turned to Tsukiko when she tugged at his sleeve. Having his attention, the girl pointed up ahead at the small shrine they were approaching. Behind it were some trees that made the couple worry about getting lost. Neither were particularly afraid of the dark but the unknown was still something to fear.

Rustling in a bush made Yamaguchi jump. He made a face indicating he was thinking it’d be best for them to turn around but Tsukiko continued to walk forward with him in tow. The farther they went the more they were straying away from the lanterns. All they had to light their path was the
Their shoulders relaxed when they found a stone path to properly follow. It led them to a larger shrine.

“We can watch from the steps,” Tsukiko said as she walked up to the torii gate and took a seat at the top level. Yamaguchi joined her but sat one step below. The two leaned back slightly to see above them a clear view of countless stars speckling the night sky.

While they waited for the fireworks to start, Tsukiko scooted down to sit beside Yamaguchi for a conversation.

“Think this counts as a date?” she asked jokingly. She went on to express how much fun she had with everyone. Possibly the highlight of the night for her had to be Iwaizumi’s friendly gesture towards Tendou earlier. Yamaguchi laughed with her. He kept gazing at Tsukiko, thinking how beautiful she looked. It was as if she was meant to bask under the moonlight; considering the meaning of her name.

“Kiko-chan,” Yamaguchi softly called her. “This isn’t the first time we watched fireworks together,” he said.

It really wasn’t now that she thought about it. They had actually attended a summer festival back in middle school with Tsukiko’s club. It was a fond memory that Tsukiko almost forgot about too.

“Some reason I’ve been forgetting about those times,” she admitted while resting her head on her boyfriend’s shoulder.

The world began to fill with color as the first rocket to burst in the sky was a bright red. Soon following it were flashes of gold and orange. The starry sky was mixed with different lights. As simple as fireworks were, there was always something magical about them. It could be because of the anticipation for the sparks or even the transition of colors in those five seconds.

“I love you,” said Yamaguchi as he took his eyes off the sky to look at Tsukiko. She returned with a smile and got closer to him. Their foreheads touched while they were staring into each other’s eyes with awe.

The popping and crackling sounds from the fireworks were being zoned out. Tsukiko felt her hand become warm. She didn’t need to look to confirm that Yamaguchi had entwined his fingers with hers. A sigh left his lips when he did too. He loved the feeling of Tsukiko’s hand. It was small and
delicate, making him want to hold onto it forever. That’s what he wished he had done since the day
they became a couple— and then maybe they wouldn’t have disconnected for two years.

Even though they meant to watch the fireworks show, they weren’t paying much attention to it.

Yamaguchi was pressing his lips against Tsukiko’s head, the corner of her eye, and then her cheek.
He peppered her with some gentle kisses. Just like what happened during the beach trip the other
day, Tsukiko purposely tilted her head back to give her boyfriend access to the same place as
before. There, on her bare neck and under her ear, was another beauty mark that nobody else knew
about. The girl herself would even forget it existed.

When Yamaguchi kissed the spot again it sent a chill down Tsukiko’s body. The two knew they
were acting like teenagers with raging hormones. Sexual intimacy had been mostly absent in their
relationship since both of them were rather pure and innocent at heart. Now that they’re able to be
physically closer together on a daily basis, those desires were forming.

It didn’t help at the moment that Tsukiko wasn’t wearing a bra. She hoped Yamaguchi wouldn’t
notice that her yukata was slipping open either but he did. He definitely did and tried his best to act
like he didn’t see anything. The redness in his face betrayed him though.

♫ SONO CHI NO SADAME— JOOOOOOOJOOO! ♫

Tsukiko’s outrageous ringtone went off. It caused Yamaguchi to nearly hit his girlfriend’s chin
when he pulled away from her collarbone. He apologized and stood up to face away so Tsukiko
could fix her yukata.

The girl took her phone out of her obi belt. She grumbled, seeing the name displaying on it.

“What?” she answered.

Kuroo whistled. “Oh? Am I interrupting something? Were you about to get laid or is he in you
right now?”

Tsukiko got annoyed by the insistence that she was having sex. When asking again why he called,
Kuroo answered that it was time to head home. The couple looked up at the sky. They didn’t
realize the fireworks show had already ended.
Upon returning to Yorozu-kan there was something new on the porch. The children (Hinata, Lev, and Tsukiko to be precise) got excited over the bamboo tree appearing in front of the house all of the sudden. In the pot was a small box with colorful strips of paper and a note from Madame saying, “Make the best of your wishes.”

Pens were being passed around as everyone started writing things down on their colored paper. It was tanabata, so it was only normal to make wishes then tie them onto the bamboo tree.

The first ones to finish were Bokuto and Lev. Bokuto’s wish was the same as his new year’s one: to eat yakiniku with his friends. Lev wrote that he was looking forward to growing another centimeter taller. Others kept theirs simple, like Akaashi who wished for peace and tranquility. Iwaizumi noticed Oikawa wishing for good health but didn’t comment on it.

“Classic Wakatoshi!” Tendou laughed at Ushijima for stating that there was no need for him to wish for anything when “he would obtain it” as he said. However, he did attach his own strip of paper to the tree that said, “May everyone’s wishes come true.”

After half of the group left the Yorozu-kan, the next thing Bokuto brought out was the rice wine that the landlady included in her care package of yukatas. To his dismay, none of his roommates wanted to drink it with him; not even Kuroo.

The owl whined. He went over to Tsukiko and hugged the girl from behind right as she was about to head upstairs to change. Tsukiko rolled her eyes then reluctantly accepted the drink. She wasn’t particularly fond of sake but Bokuto was being a stubborn baby that even Akaashi admitted he was too tired to deal with.

Everyone else went upstairs. Bokuto was looking forward to challenging his favorite girl to a drinking contest. He was confident knowing that Tsukiko was a lightweight.

It took two hours to knock Bokuto out with alcohol and allow Tsukiko her escape. How did she survive the ordeal without getting drunk? Simple. She didn’t drink. Tsukiko only pretend to sip the cup and verbally encouraged—or manipulated—Bokuto into chugging without pause.

Tsukiko couldn’t wait to sleep. While it was easy to remove a yukata, she was undressing herself in a lazy maneuver. If only she could just slide everything off then sleep naked, she thought. When
plugging her phone to charge she found that Yamaguchi had texted her.

**From: the puppy-face boyfriend**

> Good night (・ω・)/♡

Tsukiko proceeded to roll around her bed, squealing over how cute her boyfriend was.

I wanna redraw this chapter's sketch too just to get in those yukata details but still lazy (¬_¬) and idk if this one will have a smut version but I was already getting shy enough from what I did write LOL

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**BIG SHOUT OUT THANK YOU TO DINACHUUSS FOR THIS FANART OF TSUKIKOOOOOOO**
CLICK FOR THE FULL BEAUTY
The following week was Oikawa’s birthday. By the creed of promises and law of obligations; Tsukiko had to repay the guy for the help he provided a while back. It was thanks to him that her dance club won their ridiculous contest and the girl said herself that she owed him something in return. Oikawa had planned to take advantage of that today.

Birthday King’s first decree of the day: birthday breakfast with Tsukiko.

“...are you sure you’re fine with this?” Tsukiko asked when she took a seat across from Oikawa.

Sitting behind their table were Kuroo, Akaashi, Iwaizumi, and then the boyfriend Yamaguchi. They followed the two out of concern for Tsukiko’s safety, most likely.

“It’s okay~ I knew they’d tag along anyways.” Oikawa replied with a cheery smile. “But are you fine with this? You do realize this is technically a date.”

The question was left unanswered since food had arrived. Oikawa chose the popular Mister Donuts to have his breakfast and decided to buy one of everything in the display case. Even though Tsukiko said she could pay for her own share the birthday boy insisted that her presence was worth the price.

Meanwhile, from the table emitting a menacing aura…

“How does this not bother you either?” Akaashi asked Yamaguchi, who was casually enjoying a powdered donut. He cleaned his mouth before answering.

“I gave my approval,” he said.
The others blinked in disbelief then gave Yamaguchi stink eyes. From that, he had an idea of what they were thinking but arguing wasn’t something he wanted to do right now. He went back to watching Tsukiko and Oikawa. They appeared to be having a friendly conversation. It was strange how Yamaguchi wasn’t getting jealous or feeling inferior as he watched Oikawa make his girlfriend smile. He didn’t see Oikawa as a potential threat; unlike with Tsukishima and now Kuroo.

To Yamaguchi, the grand king was what he wanted to strive for in being the best boyfriend for Tsukiko; someone who can make her feel the most comfortable to be around. That’s why he wasn’t bothered with Oikawa continuing to flirt with his girlfriend during the festival. He wanted to learn from the smoothest charmer in the circle.

“How is your idol training going?” Oikawa asked with a soft smile.

Tsukiko put her chin on her hand while playing with the straw in her cup. “Mmm… it’s going,” she said without putting much thought into her reply. The guy picked this up and proceeded to gently pry.

“Something up?” he asked her.

Tsukiko went on to explain her thoughts regarding her job as an idol. It had been over two years since she started training again, but unlike before, she has yet to be given a chance to debut. From what she was told her training could go on for years too. Tsukiko didn’t want to wait long especially when she’s going to be a solo performer.

“Am I just impatient…?” she wondered.

Oikawa assured her that she wasn’t and it was her company being slow. “I can’t believe they’re not letting you debut yesteryear! They obviously don’t see how amazing you already are,” he told her.

With a lofty tone he added, “The world is missing out on the great Suki-Suki~!”

Oikawa’s kind words put a grin on Tsukiko’s face. His flattery was definitely working. Whenever Oikawa was obviously flirting with her, Tsukiko wasn’t as harsh about it as she would be with Kuroo. It mostly had to do with her softening up to Oikawa but she also preferred his technique and methods when it came to the game.
From what shoujo manga had taught Tsukiko, Oikawa was a tactical flirt. During casual conversation like now he would turn the topic on the girl and only talk about himself if she asked first. By doing this his interest would be centered around her since women tend to love that. Then when the spotlight is shifted to himself, Oikawa’s bragging had to be done in a way that wouldn’t come off as too conceited.

Tsukiko turned the tables and asked, “What about you? How are things at the cafe with Haji-kun and my dorky sons?”

“Splendid—ish. Tobio-chan has finally figured out how to brew coffee correctly so it’s only a matter of time until he surpasses me. However! I am not going to let that happen.” Oikawa huffed.

Tsukiko laughed lightly as she broke off a piece of a pon de ring donut and plopped it in her mouth. “I like your coffee anyway,” she said while covering her mouth as she chewed on the soft dough.

“So far you’re the only barista I’ve come across who can get my drinks right.”

Oikawa smirked and took off part of the same donut Tsukiko was eating. “That’s because we’re both sweet talkers,” he winked.

Finishing a satisfying donut breakfast, the two stopped by the arcade. This was Oikawa’s second birthday demand: purikura pictures with Tsukiko. The other guys followed behind but did their best to keep a slight distance without being noticed. What was the point when Oikawa and Tsukiko knew they were being stalked?

“Can I put my hand on your shoulder?” Oikawa asked in a gentlemanly tone.

Tsukiko could see through him but she couldn’t deny that he was good at what he was doing. “Go ahead,” she replied.

Flashes emitted from the photo booth. Kuroo grumbled while leaning against a crane machine that Iwaizumi was playing to distract himself from getting more agitated. Akaashi and Yamaguchi kept watching; the latter still not being as upset as the others were. Little did they know he was actually taking mental notes of Oikawa’s actions.
Minutes later, Oikawa and Tsukiko left the arcade with two strips of photos. Their picture poses ranged from the standard peace sign to playful stances and then eccentric postures from the girl’s favorite series of all time, Jojo’s Bizarre Adventure. It turned out to be more fun to do that than anything else even though Oikawa needed Tsukiko’s guidance on how to do the poses.

Tsukiko turned her head back to check on the four that were still on their tail. She began talking to the brunette next to her. “You know, I’m surprised that Tada-kun let me do this,” she admitted.

Oikawa stuck out his lower lip. “Me too. Maybe he approves of me… Have you two considered a poly relationship, hm~?” he hummed.

“A what?” Tsukiko questioned with a confused gaze.

Oikawa answered. “You know. Polygamy? I tried it out with Iwa-chan and some girl from another school but it was a complete fail—”

“HAJI DID WHAT WITH YOU?!” Tsukiko gasped. She couldn't even begin to imagine how Iwaizumi would be willing to experiment something that meant dating Oikawa.

The birthday boy started laughing. “Kidding~” he said with a tap at the girl’s forehead.

Tsukiko blushed slightly out of embarrassment for believing Oikawa just then. Would it be weird to confess she’s been secretly pairing him with his best friend for a while now? Though, the idea of having multiple people in one relationship was a foreign concept to her. She brought up the harem genre she had seen in anime and asked if it was the same thing, but Oikawa informed her that it was different.

“That’s where multiple people like the same person and act as though obtaining their affections is a competition. In healthy poly relationships, everyone has to be committed to each other and not just a central person. This means if Iwa-chan and I were dating someone together but that person ends up liking me more than him then the relationship wouldn’t work out and Iwa-chan would be so hurt~”

Oikawa explained as they walked. Listening to him had Tsukiko back to believing he actually did try to date someone along with Iwaizumi. But like he pointed out, there could be an issue of unequal affection. Also, wouldn’t dating more than one person make the middle person look
indecisive and greedy? Isn’t keeping more than one person to yourself considered selfish?

Oikawa grinned and patted Tsukiko’s head while saying, “As long as everyone is happy being together. That’s what matters in every relationship, right?”

Tsukiko looked up. She dismissed the fact he was touching her without asking and simply smiled back. Who knew having a mannered conversation with Oikawa was actually enjoyable?

They soon arrived at the Yorozu-kan where Oikawa made his third wish: to spend the rest of the day with Tsukiko and friends. It sounded too honest to be true. This was coming from the grand king of playboys after all. But Tsukiko liked seeing Oikawa be genuinely good for once. For all she knew this could be part of his little game though. Better to put away the doubt for now, she thought.

The only one home was Ushijima, since Bokuto and the crows were at their jobs. When he looked up from the kitchen counter he gave everyone a greeting nod. “Happy birthday Oikawa,” he made sure to say to the special guest.

Tsukiko skipped over to the kitchen and peeked over the high counter. “Is it done yet?” she asked in a whisper.

Ushijima glanced at the girl then jerked his head to the oven behind him.

The four stalkers entered the house next. Two of them immediately approached Ookawa, which startled the guy.

“You’re lucky it’s your day, otherwise I would’ve sock you when you picked her up this morning.” Kuroo growled at the brunette who only snickered back mockingly.

Iwaizumi suddenly brought a fist down on Oikawa's head. “I’d still hit you regardless of the occasion!” he shouted before dropping something into his friend’s hand. It was a small toy of a green alien.
Realizing this was a present had moved Oikawa to tears. “Iwaaa-chan~” he cried as he tried to hug the big guy.

Tsukiko was about to head upstairs to change when she nearly bumped into her boyfriend. They did the awkward “which way are you going to go” maneuver until Yamaguchi let the girl head up the stairs first. He followed afterwards but stopped when he saw Tsukishima exiting his room.

“When did you come home?” Yamaguchi asked but his friend ignored him while heading down to the main floor. He continued to wonder about Tsukishima though. The blond was supposed to be spending a few days with his brother back in Miyagi. Maybe Tsukishima didn’t have a good time and thus came back early?

Nobody was willing to sing the traditional birthday song when it was time for Oikawa’s cake.

“Boo-hoo~ nobody cares about me~” he pouted while feigning sadness.

Tsukiko put her hands on her hips and glared at the other boys. “If none of you will do it then I may as well by myself!” she said with a huff.

Oikawa’s face lit up and he clapped his hands together. “In that case, can you sing to me while playing the piano?” he asked.

The last part was rather specific and made Tsukiko stiffen. She didn’t ask how he knew she could play the piano, since she then remembered telling everyone about her musical prowess some time ago. To have it be the piano of all things was what made her hesitant.

“No can do?” Oikawa asked meekly while rubbing his chin.

Tsukiko snapped back to shake her head. “A-Ah, it’s okay! Just gotta get the thing upstairs is all... Waka-papa. Haji-kun. Come with me please.” She directed the two most muscular guys in the room to help her bring the piano in from the basement.

At this point Tsukiko had been allowing her roommates in there, mostly to retrieve things from the
storage room. It was likely she gave up keeping the whole place a secret after finding out some of them had already gone down to peek whenever she wasn’t home. She would still disable the elevator when practicing though. And out of fear, none of the guys have told her about the surveillance cameras.

It took some time to get the studio piano into the elevator and then out of it. A path had to be cleared to push it into a certain spot in the living room. Once the instrument was in place, Tsukiko took a seat and ran her fingers along the keys. She needed to make sure things were still tuned right. After confirming so, she took a deep breath then started playing a birthday song for Oikawa.

_Happy Birthday to you~_

_Happy Birthday to you~_

_From me to you,_

_A happy, happy birthday to you!_

Tsukiko’s voice was heavenly without having to adjust it for her idol persona. The guys preferred her freely singing like this. Listening to her made everyone feel relaxed. Even Iwaizumi’s normally irked expression had softened. Ushijima would slowly nod his head to the rhythm and Kuroo found himself gently humming along. Yamaguchi of course was smiling widely in contrast to Tsukishima who was pretending to be busy on his phone.

_The greatest gift is that we met,_

_Come on and blow out the candles~_

_From me to you,_

_A happy, happy birthday to you!_

When Tsukiko finished her friends applauded and whistled. Oikawa was the most joyous about getting a birthday song sung by her.

“Thanks for all of this Kiko-chan~” he cheered after blowing the small flames off his cake. He then grabbed the knife and cut the first slice to hand over to Tsukiko.

Soon entering the room were Bokuto, Hinata, and Kageyama. They returned from work. The first two expressed how unfair it was that their friends didn’t wait on them before starting their party. Kageyama went over to his senior and bowed respectfully. Seeing this made Oikawa want a picture for keepsake.
While most of the group was watching television, Yamaguchi and Tsukiko were sharing a plate of cake in the kitchen. Neither were particularly hungry enough to eat their own slices.

“S-So,” Yamaguchi stuttered.

“That was great. Earlier. With you on the piano.” Tsukiko engulfed the piece of cake that her boyfriend was feeding her. The way she did it made Yamaguchi mentally fawn over how adorable she was.

“Sankyuu,” the girl mumbled while still biting down on the fork. She didn’t say any more even after letting go.

Yamaguchi gulped nervously. He waited for her to follow up with something like she did when talking to Oikawa. When she said nothing else he continued to talk instead.

“Yeah, it’s been awhile since I last heard you play. Hmm… since junior high?”

“Mhm.” was Tsukiko’s immediate answer.

Yamaguchi felt his eye twitch at the lackluster response. He couldn’t figure out why the conversation was going downhill so he decided to switch things up.

“That’s right, Tsukki actually knows piano too!” he noted with a raised voice.

Tsukishima nearly choked on cake when hearing his name. Everyone had heard what Yamaguchi said and then got curious. Hinata was especially intrigued by the information and Bokuto started bobbing his head as he wanted to hear the blond play the piano. Others chimed in with eagerness that it looked like Tsukishima was getting bullied. He shot a dirty glare at Yamaguchi, who was awkwardly looking away.

Tsukiko leaned against her boyfriend while muttering, “That’s right… he does, huh?”
For some reason, hearing that made Yamaguchi regret bringing up his friend. He had a feeling now that she was suddenly interested in Tsukishima too. It didn’t help that their friends were still pestering the guy to play something.

The peer pressure got annoying enough to make Tsukishima sit at the piano just to shut them up. He had no idea what to play but he knew if he didn’t do something properly then he was sure going to get lashed with endless booing.

As though answering his call, Tsukishima noticed there was a notebook on the music rack. His agape mouth closed upon recognizing the object. It brought his gaze to Tsukiko. He could tell she was looking at him, but not him exactly.

Tsukishima growled in his throat.

“This is what you get...” he frowned slightly.

Without looking inside the notebook, it was as though Tsukishima knew what song to play. His long fingers brushed against the keyboard and moved naturally. The song began with a couple of flat notes. Nobody recognized the tune except for Tsukiko. Those notes alone triggered something inside her. She had gone eye-wide and slowly stood up from the table.

_The city we called home now ruins..._
_I've waited all this time for you, my dear_
_In my hands, a forget-me-not..._

As Tsukiko continued to sing softly she was steadily making her way to the piano like it was drawing her in with its tune. When she reached Tsukishima she sat down beside him as if the extra space on the chair was meant for her. Towards the end of the song they both had their hands on the piano until Tsukishima hit the last key before Tsukiko could reach it.

Silence.

What happened just then was too surreal to applaud to, even if it was a performance worth praising.
Yamaguchi was the most confused out of everyone though. He had never seen the two do something like this. The questions in his mind got interrupted when the silence broke.

“WHY!?” Tsukiko shouted, abruptly startling everyone. She was glaring intensely at the guy next to her.

“Answer me Kei. Why do you know how to play that song?”

The girl questioned while clearly trying to restrain herself in the seat.

Tsukishima dropped his head and looked down at her. His expression seemed emotionless yet rather grim. Pushing up his glasses with his middle finger, Tsukishima replied in a cold tone, “Because he taught me.”

Everyone gasped when they saw Tsukiko shove the taller male down to the floor. She straddled over him while gripping the collar of his shirt. The anger on her face was intense. Her eyebrows narrowed deeply, forming wrinkles in-between them. It was a scowl the others didn’t think she was capable of making.

Akaashi and Ushijima got up to intervene but they faltered when Tsukiko began yelling again.

“Nobody can learn his music! Nobody is supposed to be able to play his music! He doesn’t teach anyone else his songs but why— WHY YOU?!” she continued to ask with a loud volume.

“I guess that makes me special. Or were you too dumb to learn properly from him?” Tsukishima argued back while trying to sit himself up.

Tsukiko’s glare became worse. She was practically about to explode. “When? WHEN DID HE TEACH YOU THAT SONG?!” she demanded in question.

Tsukishima clenched a fist as he said, “WHEN HE WOKE UP TWO YEARS AGO, YOU FAKE BITCH!”
Silence. Again.

What was more surprising; seeing Tsukiko be the most mad they had ever seen her be or the fact Tsukishima cursed at her with clear resentment?

It wasn’t until she headbutt the guy underneath her when she was finally being pulled away. Ushijima held her by the arms and Akaashi went over to the one still on the floor to check how bad the damage was.

“What the hell…” Kuroo uttered while backing away from the scene. He shifted his hazel eyes to the dining table. Over there, Yamaguchi was standing frozen with a pained, sorrowful look on his pale face.

Oikawa’s bday is 4 days after mine :^) again I WANT TO REDRAW THE SKETCH BUT I ALREADY DID THIS THREE TIMES AHHH IM SORRY IWA-CHAN ;’” but yes, the angst is actually starting (i think??? Imao says me, the writer)
p.s. birthday song from Mayo Chiki and the other one is AmaLee's English lyrics to Bios Delta

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On My Own

Chapter Summary

It just had to be a day when all of the Yorozu-kan residents didn’t have work. Knowing this, Tsukiko wasn’t looking forward to the numerous questions to come when her boys would wake up.

Chapter Notes

hrrrrgggg since it's Tsukiko's birthday today I'm double posting chapters~!

From: hunny <3

> Sorry about what happened last night.
> I hope it didn’t ruin your birthday after all we did...

Oikawa chuckled while reading the text from Tsukiko. He put his phone down momentarily to eat his breakfast and because immediate replies weren’t his thing.

When Iwaizumi sat down he took his roommate’s phone to read the message.

“That was crazy though,” he commented before returning the device.

After the quarrel between Tsukiko and Tsukishima, the girl ran away and locked herself down in the basement. The blond with a red spot forming on his forehead didn’t answer any questions asked later. He immediately went to his room after making a bag of ice for himself.

Attention then went to Yamaguchi who was just as baffled as everyone else. He admitted to having a guess behind the argument but didn’t want to say anything without Tsukiko’s permission.

Iwaizumi cleared his throat after a bite of bacon.
“I’m worried about Tsukiko. Let’s go check on her after work today.” he said before finishing up his meal.

“Yeah, good idea.” Oikawa replied as he was texting Tsukiko back some minutes later.

From: trash emperor

> No worries my dear (φ•ᴗ•)-✧

> It was still the best birthday ever~

Tsukiko exhaled a sigh of relief but she wasn’t completely convinced that Oikawa didn’t mind what happened. She curled up tighter and shivered. Sleeping on a sofa wasn’t comfortable, especially in a cold basement. Tsukiko never returned upstairs after what she did to Tsukishima. She was afraid of facing her roommates, including her boyfriend, but she knew she couldn’t hide from them forever. Her growling stomach said so.

“Maybe I could get Waka-papa to bring me food?”

As if waiting for her to think that, Tsukiko’s phone decided to die. There was no choice but to head upstairs then.

The elevator beeped.

Ushijima’s tired eyes shot open and he nearly fell back. This was the first time he stayed up a whole night without much sleep. He wasn’t the only one that had been waiting either. Pretty much everyone was downstairs for the same reason. They were all worried about their house mother.

After the doors opened, Tsukiko was tackled with a hug.

“SENPAAAI~!!!!” Hinata cried with tears budding in the corners of his sleepy eyes.

Tsukiko was surprised to be greeted this way. She rubbed the boy’s back with a weak smile then
looked at the others. The only one missing was Tsukishima. No way he’d be concerned for her, she thought.

Kageyama followed behind with a very tired expression. It was strange to see him awake, or at least trying to be, since the only things capable of keeping him up was his hunger for food and volleyball training.

“Senpai, are you PMSing?” he suddenly asked.

“You haven’t warned us beforehand so—”

“BAKAGEYAMA!! Y-You don’t ask girls that so casually!!” Hinata hissed.

While the two were somehow squabbling first thing in the morning, Tsukiko stepped towards the kitchen. As she did, another person had gone in and hugged her. It was Yamaguchi. His shoulders shook—his whole body, really.

Tsukiko listened to his apologetic murmuring. She rubbed his back too and assured him that she was alright. Of course, Yamaguchi felt otherwise. What girl would be after fighting with a friend?

“This is all my fault! If I hadn’t brought up Tsukki then that wouldn’t—”

Tsukiko hushed her boyfriend with a quick peck that only reached his chin. She couldn’t find the energy to push herself further upwards and she was still much shorter than him. The girl then wobbled over to the high counter and slid onto the chair.

“I’m hungry...” she groaned.

Ushijima hurried to the kitchen but he lost his balance due to exhaustion. Luckily Bokuto and Kuroo were both alert enough to catch the big guy in time.

“Just go sleep. I’ll manage with this for now.” Tsukiko told everyone as she reached over for a banana from the fruit basket.
Not wanting to leave her in such a state, Ushijima forced himself to move. It only made Tsukiko more upset however.

“JUST GO!” She ended up exerting what little energy she had into yelling at Ushijima; something that she’s never done to him. Guilt waved over her face but she quietly went back to eating the fruit that got squashed in her hand.

“All of you... go get some sleep. Please.”

Akaashi walked over to Tsukiko. He placed the notebook that was previously on the piano in front of her.

“Did this come from that ‘Ken’ box?” he asked calmly.

The girl didn’t look at the book nor did she answer his question.

“Was the person you and Tsukishima were talking about—”

“I told you not to worry about it, didn’t I?” Tsukiko lazily turned her gaze to Akaashi. It was weird seeing eye bags on the pretty setter. She forced a smile that only made him worry more.

Letting out a sigh, Akaashi motioned for everyone to head upstairs with him.

Yamaguchi gave his girlfriend one last look. He obviously didn’t want to leave her alone. He wanted to sit next to her and comfort her. Seeing the light missing in Tsukiko’s eyes was honestly terrifying.

When Yamaguchi followed the rest up the stairs he went straight for his friend’s room. He knocked on Tsukishima’s door but there was no reply.

“Wanna barge in?” asked Kuroo as he stepped back out of his own room.
Bokuto nodded and held up his fists.

Akaashi would’ve intervened if he wasn’t tired but then Ushijima looked like he was about to break the door down too.

“GO. TO. SLEEP.” Tsukiko hollered from downstairs.

As expected of a woman’s intuition, she knew when the boys weren’t doing what they were told.

It just had to be a day when all of the Yorozu-kan residents didn’t have to work.

Knowing this, Tsukiko wasn’t looking forward to the numerous questions to come when her boys would wake up. She ate three bananas and a slice of leftover cake. It gave her enough fuel to sneak out of the house unnoticed.

“What to hide?” she said to herself.

Since Tsukiko didn’t have her wallet with her, she couldn’t take the bus. Walking around the neighborhood seemed like the safest option too but she was afraid of the morning run trio catching her quickly. There was also the problem with her phone; it was still dead.

Tsukiko steadied her breathing and started walking aimlessly down the street.

The first one to wake up and find out the house mother went missing was none other than Ushijima. In his frenzy of searching every part of the house it sounded like Yorozu-kan was getting ransacked.

Kuroo got up to check on the noise and make sure they actually weren’t being robbed. It freaked him out when he saw the biggest guy of their group lift their biggest sofa with ease.

“What’s up…?” Kuroo asked with caution.
Ushijima suddenly ran over and gripped the other’s shoulders firmly. The rabid expression of his was frightening.

“She’s gone!” he shouted without moderation to his volume.

Akaashi and Bokuto soon joined in time to hear about the missing girl. They all started panicking then tried calling for her. None of them could get through by phone though. Seeing Tsukiko’s purse was still present gave them the idea that she couldn’t have gotten too far on foot until they realized they had all been asleep for at least three hours.

“We’ll have to go find her,” said Akaashi as he went upstairs to notify the rest of the residents.

Gathered in front of Yorozu-kan, all of the boys were preparing to begin their search. They decided to split up in pairs and head in different directions.

“Ossu!” shouted Hinata and Kageyama as they sprinted one way together.

Bokuto and Kuroo hurried towards the park where the White Fang cafe was.

Akaashi and Ushijima took off for the local shopping district while also trying to contact others that could possible be sheltering the girl.

Yamaguchi and his friend with a slight bump on his forehead were walking down the street to the bus stop.

“This is dumb,” Tsukishima complained as he pinched the bridge of his nose. He had been woken up without warning and rushed out of the house that he didn’t even have time to wash his face.

The pair arrived at the bus stop and asked a person there if a girl with unkempt hair passed by.

“Nobody like that,” they answered.
Yamaguchi and Tsukishima treaded onwards with the former leading in a frantic march. His pacing increased the more anxious he got.

“She’ll come back eventually. We really shouldn’t bother.” said Tsukishima.

Yamaguchi hated hearing pessimistic talk from him. It was like they were in their first year at Karasuno all over again.

“Can you not be like this? She could be hurt for all we know!” he stopped for a moment to reply.

The blond groaned and adjusted his glasses. “How can you still see her as ‘perfect’ when she’s not even the same as she was back then?” he asked with a sour look.

“Are you really that blind to not see—”

“I know she has flaws.” Yamaguchi interjected. “Everyone does but that doesn’t mean—”

“Then how come you don’t straighten her out?!” Tsukishima stepped forward. He was still taller than Yamaguchi after all these years.

“Remember that time during training camp? When you got in my face for the first time? Why can’t you do that with her, huh?! What ever happened to the cool—”

“Because it’s like you said!” Yamaguchi shouted back. He exhaled a sharp breath before saying, “She’s not the same Tsukiko from middle school…”

After seeing more of Tsukiko over the past couple of months, it’s been clear to him that the girl had faces he wouldn’t know about if they were alone. He had never seen her upset enough to run away. The violent nature she displayed was still shaking him too. What happened to the girl who used to be too nice for her own good?

Meanwhile…
“...Kiko-senpai?”

The runaway girl halted to the call of her name. She turned around hesitantly but then was relieved to see it wasn’t any of her roommates. In fact, she should’ve known that since the voice came from a girl.

“H-Hey, long time no see Akane-chan~” she greeted back.

Tsukiko had managed to walk far enough that she entered another neighborhood entirely. It was there that she bumped into Akane; the younger sister of a certain mohawk tiger.

The small girl excitedly ran over with her pigtails bouncing behind from her skips.

“Senpai, it’s been too long!” Akane squealed.

Tsukiko smiled nervously. “What are you doing out here? Doesn’t Nekoma have practice going on or...?” she asked curiously. Around this time would be the summer training camp with the Fukurodani group but seeing Akane outside had to mean otherwise.

The young girl waved her hands. “I forgot some things so I went back home to get them. Oh! I know! If you’re free, would you like to come watch the team?!”

Seeing how eager Akane was to invite the former Nekoma manager made Tsukiko reluctant to accept.

When the two arrived at Nekoma High’s gym, everyone was curious about who Akane returned with. Coach Naoi though was excited to see a former student, especially an important one.

“Is that how college girls look like these days?” he laughed at Tsukiko’s appearance. Her hair was tousled and her clothes were wrinkled.

“Nah, it’s just me.” she replied with a chuckle.
Some of the team’s senior players approached Tsukiko with shy smiles. It had been a while since they last saw her after all. The previous Nekoma manager inhaled deeply before hugging each of them affectionately. Tsukiko couldn’t help but think like an old aunt and go, “look how much you’ve all grown!”

Nekoma’s practice resumed after they were able to greet Tsukiko.

Akane took her manager role with great passion. She couldn’t participate in the practice like Tsukiko use to do, but the smaller girl was very knowledgeable about the sport.

“Try to go for a rebound when you’re sure you can’t get over the block,” she informed one of the wing spikers.

Tsukiko smiled at the sight. It was definitely nostalgic. Seeing the red tracksuit and practice jerseys made her feel like she was back in high school. She even wondered if she could still fit her uniform.

“Well, what a surprise,” said a new voice that Tsukiko recognized instantly. She turned around and her smile grew wider. Approaching her was a past Nekoma vice-captain with the same shaven buzz cut he had back then.

“Kai~” Tsukiko waved. The guy smiled back and patted her head as she went in to hug him too.

The two former members leaned against a wall while still watching the new Nekoma team practice. They discussed how each player moved and compared them to their old teammates too. Kai then changed the topic to catch up with Tsukiko personally.

“How have you been? I heard from Yaku that all of you went to the festival.” he first asked.

Tsukiko nodded. “Mhm! It was really fun. Did you go?”

“Yes, with my girlfriend.”

Tsukiko gasped then started poking her friend teasingly. She asked about Kai’s significant other
which led to them sharing couple moments they could relate to. Sharing food, bumping shoulders from walking too close to each other, the height difference when kissing...

“That’s amazing you’re still with the same person after all these years. It’s really inspiring,” Kai complimented. His honesty actually made Tsukiko look away.

“Well, not like we’re perfect or anything…” she told him.

“Of course not,” Kai added. “But you two have been working together to get to where you are now. That, is what’s inspiring to me.”

Coach Naoi gathered the team to discuss their practice. Kai and Tsukiko took this chance to take their discussion outside.

Letting out a sigh, Tsukiko sat herself between two vending machines. The guy with her didn’t question it since he was aware of this odd habit of hers.

“What’s the matter?” Kai asked, knowing there was a reason for her gloom.

Tsukiko gave her friend a gist of what happened the previous night. Though that was all she meant to inform him, she ended up rambling and mentioned other things that were weighing her down. She started from what she did with Kuroo, her outburst towards Yachi, and then her hesitation on confessing back to Yamaguchi.

Kai had knelt down to hand Tsukiko a drink he bought while she was talking. He leaned against one of the vending machines before making his response after she was done speaking.

“I don’t know what to tell you about the other stuff, but I know someone who fell for a person that was already in a relationship too.” he said, making Tsukiko look up as she drank the juice given to her.

“My friend didn’t like this girl at first but the more the two interacted the more he found himself liking her. Of course he only realized this after finding out she was dating someone else. You know
what I told him to do?”

Tsukiko tilted her head curiously. “What?” she replied.

Kai smirked. “I told him to tell her how he felt anyways.”

“But she’s taken! You can’t just do that because you’ll get rejected anyways,” Tsukiko said with a confused expression.

Kai simply smiled. “True, but I always thought it was painful for him to keep it a secret. When I’d see the way he looked at her it made me think it hurts more if you don’t express your feelings,” he continued.

“Maybe that’s why that girl wanted to confess her feelings even though she knew she couldn’t be with Yamaguchi-kun as more than a friend. She’s a sweet girl from what I remember, so I’m sure she also meant to express being content with watching him be happy with you.”

What Kai said made Tsukiko even more puzzled. It sounded like a shoujo romance plot and real life wasn’t like that… or was it?

Returning back on track, Tsukiko sipped her drink again. “So… has your friend confessed yet?” she asked curiously.

Kai shook his head. “Nope. He still hasn’t told her but I’m hoping he does sooner rather than later. But neither have you so don’t keep your poor guy waiting,” he chuckled lightly.

The girl sunk her head in her shoulders shamefully. She got up from the tight spot and took some steps forward. Thinking about Kai’s story had her putting Yachi and Yamaguchi in it. Could anyone really be satisfied with not getting their feelings returned? To confess to someone that was already in a relationship had to take a lot of courage, and yet Tsukiko didn’t stop to realize that back then. Instead, she let her ugly emotions take over and acted hastily. What was she even mad at Yachi for? Because she confessed to Yamaguchi? Because Yamaguchi admitted to liking her too? Did he still like Yachi even though he told Tsukiko he loved her a few times already?

“Do I really love Tada-kun too?” Tsukiko blurted out when her lips parted from her finished drink. It pained her to think that but the words rolled off her tongue so easily.
Kai shrugged his shoulders. “You’re on your own there,” he told the girl before messing her hair even more as they returned to the gym.

Practice ended so the team started cleaning up the gym. Tsukiko took her leave after saying her goodbyes to them. She thanked Akane for inviting her and promised coach Naoi to a reunion drink with the rest of the past Nekoma members.

“See ya, assistant coach Kai~” Tsukiko waved to the latter she was sure to see again.

Someone appeared to be waiting at the school gates. They weren’t a student obviously but the updo hairstyle gave away their identity too easily.

Kuroo looked up from the ground when he heard Tsukiko’s approaching footsteps. They looked at each other for a bit before Kuroo explained how he knew where she was. Apparently Kai had texted him at some point.

“I thought about checking here but I didn’t think you’d move your lazy ass this far,” Kuroo said but wasn’t kicked or punched for the last jab.

Tsukiko only smiled and started walking with him. Seeing her like this made Kuroo wonder what happened inside that put her in a good mood.

“Hey,” Tsukiko spoke up some time later. “Kai told me how a friend of his still hasn’t confessed to someone.”

Kuroo’s shoulders tensed. He made a mental note about berating the buzz cut for bringing up something personal and private.

“Is the friend actually…” the girl hummed.

Kuroo gulped. He pushed his hands into his pockets while slouching.
“Y-Yeah… he was talking about—”

“Yakkyun, right?! I always had a feeling he was seriously crushing on Ali-chan but to think even Yakkyun gets afraid of confessing…!”

Tsukiko’s eyes sparkled as she looked up at the confused Kuroo. The guy inhaled and ran a hand through his bed hair.

“Idiot.” Kuroo laughed. He bopped Tsukiko on the head then ran ahead of her. His voice rang with laughter as he got away from the angry girl chasing after him.

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Iwaizumi suddenly took Tsukiko’s arm to lift her up on her feet, which were still regaining feeling.

“That’s it, go get changed. We’ll have to cheer you up with that,” he said.

Tsukiko gulped. “You don’t mean…”

Oh, how the tables have turned.

For once it was Tsukiko sitting in the foyer while someone else stood with their hands on their hips and scolding her. The fact it was Akaashi and Ushijima made it really look like they were parents. Though Ushijima was just glaring the girl down, Akaashi didn’t waste a single breath to chide her sternly.

“You could have at least left us a note that you went out. We have a notepad on the fridge for things like this,” he said with the ‘father’ grunting in agreement.

The rest of the Yorozu-kan residents were watching from the sidelines. There was a mixture of laughter and concern.

“I thought Akaashi-senpai was a calm person…” Hinata swallowed nervously.

Bokuto rubbed his chin. “Weeell he can be quite scary and mean when he has to,” he noted.

“Even Bokuto-san isn’t childish enough to do what you did,” Akaashi finished with a rebuke that struck the very owl in the back.
Tsukiko pouted and lowered her head. All she could do was repeat an apology. She glanced up when a large hand was placed on top of her head, stroking her in a comforting manner. Ushijima had switched to ‘good dad’ as he kindly said, “Please don’t do this to us again.”

Akaashi sighed lightly. “You can get up now,” he told the girl.

Though she was finally permitted to stand, Tsukiko’s legs had gone numb. She ended up relying on Ushijima to carry her to the living room where everyone else was gathered.

The doorbell rang simultaneously with furious banging on the door.

“IS SHE OKAY?!?” cried Oikawa when he pushed his way through the door after Akaashi opened it. Iwaizumi had to hold tightly onto his friend’s collar to keep him from rushing inside without taking his shoes off first.

As planned, the two arrived at the house to check on Tsukiko. They knew about the girl’s disappearance because of Ushijima’s text messages they read after their shift.

“Geez, you guys treat it like I was kidnapped.” Tsukiko whined from the sofa. Some of the boys narrowed their eyes at her in a judgemental manner.

“It was a possibility,” admitted Kageyama.

Oikawa went up to the girl, kneeling down and taking her hands. He had an unsettling look in his chocolate eyes. It appeared genuine enough to make Tsukiko’s chest sink.

“If you ever need a safe place to escape to, just come to me please. I’ll take care of you,” he told her.

Kuroo and Bokuto started barking defensively because the playboy king was touching the Yorozukan queen without permission.
Yamaguchi was also rather upset, not at Oikawa, but with himself. He actually wished he had said the same thing to his girlfriend. It’s like every time Tsukiko had gotten upset it’s not his shoulder she’d cry on.

Tsukiko gave the brunette a reassuring smile. “Thank you very much Tooru,” she said before taking her hands back. Hearing her call him by his name made Oikawa’s heart flutter. It completely took him by surprise that he couldn’t think of what to say back to that.

“Are you really alright though?” Iwaizumi asked as he intervened to pull his stunned roommate away.

Tsukiko tilted her head slightly. She was unsure whether she wanted to be honest or not but her silence was taken as an answer.

Iwaizumi suddenly took Tsukiko’s arm to lift her up on her feet, which were still regaining feeling.

“That’s it, go get changed. We’ll have to cheer you up with that,” he said.

Tsukiko gulped. “You don’t mean…”

Bokuto and Hinata started waving the tamorines excitedly until Akaashi commanded them to stop.

Kageyama slid to the corner of the booth seat with Ushijima next to him. The two looked over a catalog together while everyone else was settling themselves into the room.

“How many people can fit in here?” Tsukishima said out loud.

Yamaguchi then pointed to the sign at the door that stated the maximum capacity.

“Apparently 32 people can fill the room. If we had a couple more with us then we’d be halfway there,” he commented.
Oikawa clapped his hands to gather everyone’s attention. He stood at the front of the room where a stage was.

“Welcome everyone to Suki-Suki’s private concert!” The guy announced while waving jazz hands around the lone girl standing behind him.

Tsukiko freshened up for the occasion. She finally got to brush her hair, fix her makeup, and had changed into a thin keyhole top with knee-length pants.

Her cheeks grudgingly puffed out when Iwaizumi handed her a microphone.

“I can’t believe you still remember this,” she groaned.

Iwaizumi smirked in response and joined the others that were seated.

The group was going to spend the rest of their afternoon doing karaoke. It was suggested by Iwaizumi because karaoke was one way to boost Tsukiko’s spirits. When Akaashi asked how he knew this, Iwaizumi simply stated: “Glasses and freckles weren’t the only ones who knew her back in junior high.” He revealed having a cousin who attended the same school as Tsukiko and was also in the same club. One time he got invited to their karaoke session which was where he first met Tsukiko.

Kuroo looked over the list of songs in the device Ushijima was holding. A scheming grin appeared on his usually scheming face.

“Let’s make her sing this first,” he whispered loudly.

The idol in training was already feeling regret when the music began to play.

“Come on!! It’s been years since I last sang enka!” Tsukiko shouted furiously into the microphone. Despite her complaint she ended up singing anyways.
Everyone’s immediate response ranged from paralyzed shock to suppressing laughs; the last being how Bokuto and Kuroo were reacting. They were all used to hearing Tsukiko sing cute pop songs or soft melodies but enka was an entirely different ballpark. She was pulling it off surprisingly well, though it was likely that the girl was belting out of frustration. In the middle of the song, servers entered the room with the group’s food and drinks. While she was still singing, Tsukiko walked over to the table to grab the soda she ordered and drank it on her way back to the stage. She finished the last note with a long burp that caused the owl and cat to burst into obnoxious cackling.

Tsukiko pointed her microphone at the two imbeciles with a face flushed in anger. “YOUR TURN!!” she demanded but another song was already playing. It was completely on accident by Hinata when he was playing with the input pad.

A rock song was also something Tsukiko was rarely heard singing to, but Tsukishima and Yamaguchi knew otherwise. Having been honorary members of her music club, they occasionally got to listen to the girl sing to a variety of songs. They attended a karaoke session before when Tsukiko and Yamaguchi were dating too.

“Ughhh you’re making me cry Shou-tan~” Tsukiko wailed softly as she wiped away the tears budding in the corner of her eyes.

“It’s been over a decade since I heard from this band!” she sobbed into the microphone, causing an echo of sadness.

The next to go up and sing was Bokuto with Hinata and Kageyama as his backup.

“Good job,” said Yamaguchi when his girlfriend plopped beside him. She suddenly dropped her head to rest on his lap, causing his face to redden.

Oikawa gave him a thumbs up before going back to recording the three goofs on stage.

Ushijima leaned over with a plate of cheese sticks for Tsukiko to take one.
“Sit up when you eat,” he told her.

**Song: “Memeshikute” by Golden Bomber**

Bokuto decided to sing again but this time he dragged Akaashi up to the stage. The song started off too fast for the latter to even read the lyrics on the monitor. He could barely keep up with Bokuto to begin with, especially when the owl began bouncing around and dancing crazily. Hinata cheered while shaking maracas like the loyal disciple he was to Bokuto.

“C’mere princess,” Kuroo said as he tapped three fingers on Tsukiko’s forehead. She rolled her eyes but got up to sing with him anyways.

**Song: “Brave Shine” by Aimer**

Tsukiko wasn’t sure if Kuroo could actually sing. The song wasn’t even meant to be performed in a duet either. She prepared herself to sing the song completely on her own but Kuroo had taken the first line from her. His voice was deep yet smooth. It left Tsukiko dumbfounded for a moment that she almost missed her cue.

As the two sang together their expressions were progressively improving. Both were maintaining an indifferent gaze but by the final chorus they were smiling at each other. Seeing them have this moment made Yamaguchi grip his knees enviously.

After Kuroo went his turn, some of the other guys wanted to sing with Tsukiko too. The microphone was passed to Bokuto first since he would’ve started pouting otherwise. Then it went to Hinata, Oikawa, and surprisingly Ushijima. Everyone had anticipated monotone singing from him. That really did turn out to be the case but Ushijima’s voice worked well with Tsukiko’s for an enka song so it wasn’t completely a bad thing.

Just as Yamaguchi was about to brazenly raise his hand for his turn, the least interested of participants in the group had stood up.

Akaashi hesitantly glanced at Tsukishima and then Tsukiko. He wondered if the bespectacled blond was only standing up to leave, but then the entire room was left speechless.
“One song and then I’m going home.” Tsukishima said as he approached the stage. He stood next to Tsukiko who was purposely avoiding eye contact.

“Right when the atmosphere was good that Stingyshima just had to join in,” Hinata grumbled.

Kageyama turned to Yamaguchi and asked if they should stop the two. Yamaguchi had a bad feeling but he was also curious to see if something positive could actually happen. After all, what harm could Tsukishima cause when he’s willing to sing in front of everyone?

**Song:** "Crybaby Boyfriend" by HoneyWorks

Everyone watched and listened silently as Tsukiko’s angelic voice sang the first half of the song. Hearing Tsukishima when it came to his parts was more astonishing than hearing Ushijima sing. For someone who was fairly quiet and outright rude, Tsukishima actually had a good voice. It was rather mellow and calming.

Yamaguchi managed to pull his attention away and found himself reading the lyrics on the bigger screen. The song’s story was about a couple breaking up. His nostrils flared as several questions were rushing to his head. Why was Tsukishima singing this kind of song with Tsukiko? Why was Tsukiko okay with it in the first place? Why were they looking at each other the same way as the couple in the music video?

*I’m so sorry…*

Tsukiko suddenly bolted out of the room. There was one more line in the song but it was Tsukishima’s part and he didn’t sing it because the girl ran off.

Yamaguchi was the first to get up to go after her. Before he left, he shot a glare at his friend.

“You can go home now,” he said with a bitter tone.

“Well, we tried.” Iwaizumi said as he and the rest of the group exited the building.
Hinata was berating Tsukishima for making a girl cry just when she was feeling better.

Bokuto and Kuroo were upset as well, even joining in to criticize the blond.

**From:** daughter

> Go ahead without us. We’ll meet up at home later.

Akaashi wasn’t sure if he should question why Tsukiko’s contact name in Ushijima’s phone was ‘daughter’ but he hoped it was her doing and not his own.

“Guess we’ll wait for them at home,” he said with a sigh. When he looked at Tsukishima, the glasses avoided contact with anyone.

“I presume you’re not going to talk?” Akaashi asked. He felt like Tsukishima needed a lecturing in the foyer too.

Some blocks down the street, Yamaguchi was following his girlfriend. He had fortunately caught up to her before she could hide between the vending machines that were outside the karaoke parlor. It was actually the first place he thought to look. Second was the bathroom.

“Are you hungry? Thirsty?” Yamaguchi softly asked.

Tsukiko shook her head while still looking down at the ground until her boyfriend held his phone to her. He was gesturing if she preferred to talk to him through texts.

Yamaguchi had suggested this after he sought a classmate in his sociology class for advice. They said that if a girl doesn’t feel like verbally talking then she may be able to communicate through text. Since then, the couple had been using this method a few times. Sure Yamaguchi would rather discuss things verbally with Tsukiko but he also didn’t want to come off as pushy and possibly scare her away. In one of their conversations she did admit that she hasn’t been having her “girl-to-girl” talks with Akaashi. It’s because she felt afraid of being honest with him anymore. The last thing Yamaguchi wanted was to make her run away into the basement too.
From: the great kiko-chan

> I’m sure Aa-kun is going to ask me what that was all about.

From: the puppy-face boyfriend

> Probably everyone will, lol

Yamaguchi would remain casual to make the conversation seem less serious than it is. He thought this way Tsukiko would feel more open to talk to him.

From: the puppy-face boyfriend

> Do any of the others try to talk to you like Akaashi-san does?

> If you tell me Ushijima-san I’m going to need proof of that ( ٠ .selenium ٠ )

From: the great kiko-chan

> Ha. Nope. They all have Aa-kun do it.

From: the puppy-face boyfriend

> Well, then in that case, you can rely on me. I’ll listen to anything that’s on your mind.

> I’m sure I can handle “girl-to-girl” talk just like Akaashi-san did!

Tsukiko paused for a moment. She appreciated her boyfriend’s effort to cheer her up.

Before she could think of what to reply back the two stopped in front of a store. In the top corner of its display window was a disco ball that had caught their attention with its sparkling.

Yamaguchi took this as a chance to get Tsukiko to talk. “Let’s go inside,” he urged with a gentle nudge on her shoulder.

The store had an assorted variety of knickknacks. The walls were dedicated to clothing accessories from scarves to socks while the tables in the center had buckets of jewelry and other trinkets.
Tsukiko approached the pyramid of Disney Tsum Tsum collectible toys. Seeing her glowing reaction put a smile on Yamaguchi’s face.

“Is there one you want?” he asked. As he expected, she answered with, “all of them.”

Continuing to browse through the shop, Yamaguchi came across a set of rings. They looked nice despite being inexpensive but he wasn’t sure if Tsukiko was the type to wear jewelry. As far as he knew the girl only wore earrings, necklaces, and bracelets. Anything else was for her work. He glanced between Tsukiko and the rings before directly asking her, “how about one of these?”

“No.” Tsukiko answered immediately.

It startled Yamaguchi how fast she replied and so sharply at that. He ended up asking her why she wouldn’t want a ring though.

“Madame told me to never accept a ring from a boy unless we’re getting married. It’s bad luck if the ring is for any other reason.” Tsukiko said.

Yamaguchi had learned to become skeptical in regards to anything related to the landlady. He’s heard about promise rings being a popular thing among couples so he thought that Tsukiko would be into that too. His unconvinced expression made Tsukiko explain further.

“My mom got a promise ring from a guy she dated in high school and you know what happened the next day? She caught him cheating on her! And, and— I had a classmate who use to be suuuper lovey-dovey with this one guy and he got her this reeeaally nice promise ring… but weeks later they had a falling out for reasons I will not disclose due to the girl code. Ugh, I warned her too!”

Hearing Tsukiko speak passionately about her superstition with rings was both odd and interesting. Yamaguchi chuckled a bit and the girl puffed her cheeks.

“The little bean friends it is then,” he said as he grabbed a Minnie Mouse Tsum Tsum.

Tsukiko reached over and plucked a Mickey Mouse then held it to Yamaguchi’s face.
“Did you want both?” he asked and Tsukiko nodded with a tinge of pink in her face.

There it was; her coy act that made his heart bubble with joy. Chuckling again, Yamaguchi took both mice characters to the register with him.

The couple finally made their way back home. There were still questions concerning what happened between Tsukiko and Tsukishima during karaoke plus the arguing from other night but Yamaguchi wasn’t going to pry. He didn’t want to ruin the good mood Tsukiko was in again.

“Look,” the girl called for his attention.

Yamaguchi nearly spat from laughter when he saw what she was pointing at. Tsukiko had tucked the Mickey Mouse doll in the opening of her shirt, nestling it in the valley of her breasts.

“It’s you,” she added with a smirk.

There was a long pause before both suddenly looked away from each other.

“WHAT THE HELL DID I JUST SAY?!?!” Tsukiko screamed in her throat while patting her red cheeks.

Yamaguchi was staring up at the orange sky, also hiding his embarrassment.

“Damn! How did she know I wish that was me?!?” he thought with a mad blush on his face.
DO YOU HEAR THE PEOPLE SING? SINGING THE SONGS OF ANGRY MEN? IT IS THE MUSIC OF THE PEOPLE WHO WILL NOT BE SLAVES AGAIN! Imao sorry I just freaking love Les Mis the songs are so damn addicting :") also if you look up Wakapapa's voice actor he's a pretty good singer~ HERE YOU CAN LISTEN TO HIM AND THE OTHER BOYS RIGHT NOW

follow me: dA/twitter/instagram @hikariotakuhime

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MY CHILD

CLICK FOR FULL RES
Happy Birthday

TSUKIKO
YAMAUCHI

2-14

deviantart/twitter/instagram @hikariotakuhime
Tears began to form in Tsukiko’s eyes. It was a good thing she washed off her makeup already. The girl fanned herself with her hands as though to calm herself from actually crying but she was too moved by everyone’s effort.

Captain Iida called for every club member’s attention while they were warming up. Beside him was Momo, who was pushing a cart of boxes into the room.

“Our costumes?!” Tsukiko asked while beaming with excitement.

It was like she said; everyone’s costumes for the show had arrived. Since the dances they came up with had both ballroom and street styles, some people got formal wear while others were in casual clothing. Then there were dancers like Tsukiko who were given both because they performed in different numbers.

Iida clapped his hands together to return focus onto himself.

“Today is a rehearsal in dress! Please put on the designated costume for our first number!” he said with his commanding voice booming throughout the room.

The girls took their time changing. Though they didn’t have to apply their makeup for practice, they were distracted by exchanging compliments. Tsukiko especially was teasing Jirou.

“Our lil rock punk is actually in a skirt~” she snickered at her flushed junior.

Momo tightened the back bow on Tsukiko’s bodice, as if intentionally punishing her for making fun of the other girl.

Once back in the dance room they all started taking pictures of themselves in front of the mirrors. Tsukiko snapped a selfie of herself to send to her boyfriend. There wasn’t volleyball practice so he was currently working at Wagnaria.
To: the puppy-face boyfriend

> Am I cute~? σ(≧ε≦ 0 )

Right as Tsukiko was about to put her phone in her bag it vibrated suddenly. She didn’t expect Yamaguchi to reply quickly, unless he was on a break, but seeing his message made her giddy.

From: the puppy-face boyfriend

> (●♡∀♡) ❤❤❤❤❤

What Iida wanted everyone to start practicing in was the club’s big number that would be their first performance in the upcoming show. It involved dancing in pairs to different standard forms of ballroom dance. The song was “That’s What I Like” by Bruno Mars.

Everyone got into their positions. Those that remained on the side were meant to jump in later in the song. In the center of the floor was Iida and Momo as the main couple. Behind them were other senior members. They kicked things off immediately with their slow foxtrot routine. Before the chorus began they transitioned to a waltz and some of the others joined on their cues.

Uraraka and Midoriya had improved since the beginning of the semester. They spun a bit before switching places with Jirou and Kaminari, who still appeared a bit stiff because of the girl being shy about her dress fluttering with each turn.

Tsukiko smoothly entered the dance with a guy who appeared sleep-deprived.

“We’ll have to put concealer under your eyes, Shi-kun~” she snickered when exiting the floor.

“Better not,” warned her partner Shinsou, a second-year like her and about as tall as Yamaguchi. He had outrageous hair and heavy eye bags, which was why Tsukiko joked about putting makeup on him.

After working on the routine twice it was time to move onto the next ones. Those that needed to change their costumes did so.
Tsukiko, Kaminari, Jirou, and others switched to breakdancing attire. Their costume consisted of parachute pants with long white tees and plaid shirts tied around their hips. Only Tsukiko was wearing a cap which had the title of the song embellished on it. The song they were dancing to was “Closer” by The Chainsmokers featuring Halsey. It happened to be an addictive song that often played at the Yorozu-kan to the point Ushijima would occasionally be heard tapping his foot to it.

Solos and other dances followed next.

Seeing how Tsukiko was in the most partner routines she actually had to change more than anyone else. It sounded like too much work for one person but Tsukiko herself insisted on doing so. She claimed it would help in her practicing quick changes for her idol career. Apparently her goal was also to be as fast as Akaashi when changing clothes.

The first duet Tsukiko had was with Kirishima. Their song was “I Hate U, I Love U” by Gnash. Unlike the preview that half of the Yorozu-kan group got to see months ago, the choreography had changed slightly. This time the two were dancing with a hip-hop and bolero fusion. They mastered their routine just as quickly as the first version. For their costumes it was a mix of formal and casual wear.

Tsukiko’s dance with Todoroki was also changed but to a greater degree that practically called for an entirely new choreography. They were originally doing a contemporary dance until the club’s faculty advisor thought it’d be more interesting for them to do the cha cha instead. It took some effort to get Todoroki comfortable in a new form since his costume would be exposing a tasteful amount of his chest. He only seemed confident when Tsukiko clearly wasn’t bothered with the amount of skin she was showing in hers. Both her back and sides were completely exposed. Parts that were covered had fringes that swung around with even the slightest movement from her body. If Kuroo and Bokuto could see her now their jaw drops would break through the floor.

“Nice,” smirked Bakugou as he approached Tsukiko for their dance. She changed into a shorter dress than the previous one. It was black and dazzled under the lights. Supposedly it was going to appear red and dark purple with the special lighting effects for the actual show. The sides of the dress were accented with white to emphasize Tsukiko’s curved figure.

“Shut up,” the girl scoffed as she began dancing with the walking dynamite.

Yet another song the Yorozu-kan had repeatedly listened to: “Shape of You” by Ed Sheeran.

Tsukiko swung her body in accordance with Bakugou’s bold lead. They were samba dancing and out of all the numbers Tsukiko performed in, this one was the most difficult for her. It really had to
do with the fact that her partner was the cockiest brat she’s ever met. Midoriya claims his friend to be more understanding than he leads on but Tsukiko couldn’t imagine it. So far she’s only had to deal with Bakugou constantly making a point that he was better than everyone. Tsukiko was sure one day she’d hear him say something like, “the only one who can beat me is me.”

By the end of practice Tsukiko was panting for breathes and had emptied her sports bottle. She knew constantly changing costumes and dancing numerous times was going to be exhausting. Momo assured her that the live show will have more time in between the performances so Tsukiko wouldn’t get this tired.

“Enjoy the rest of your day,” Momo waved when the club dispersed.

Tsukiko returned home only to find out nobody was there. She dropped everything in the living room, feeling too exhausted to even take the elevator up to her room. Whipping out her phone, she then sent a message in the Yorozu-kan family group chat.

**House Mother:** Hey hey hey! Where are my boys at?

*Three minutes later.*

**Kuroneko:** We all moved out to escape your abuse.

**Akaashi:** I hope you actually did move out, Kuroo-san.

**Ooowl:** Hey hey hey! Stop taking my catchphrase!

Jokes aside, just about everyone had stated their whereabouts. Some of them were at work, which included Yamaguchi much to Tsukiko’s dismay. Though she wouldn’t be alone for long. Ushijima said he was on his way home with groceries. According to his texts that followed, both Hinata and Kageyama were with him too.

“Those two had been following the guy ever since they moved in,” Tsukiko chuckled as she plopped herself down on the sofa. It was honestly adorable watching two crows chase after the
giant eagle himself. They may as well be like the ducklings that imprinted on Ushijima this one
time he was on his morning run.

Breaking away from the thought, Tsukiko’s eyes shifted to the studio piano that had remained
untouched for over two weeks. She hadn’t asked for the guys to take it back to the basement nor
did any of them question her about what to do with it. As much as she didn’t want to see the thing,
she also didn’t want to completely act like it didn’t exist.

The memory of her fight with Tsukishima replayed in front of her. Recalling it made her realize
something was bugging her about the song he played. Why that one specifically?

“Damn you Kei…” Tsukiko grunted.

It wasn’t long until the three birds arrived home.

Tsukiko greeted them lazily while crunching on salted chips as she was watching television.
Seeing this seemed to have ticked off Ushijima. He set the grocery bags down at the dining table
before standing in front of the girl to block her view.

“Don’t eat while laying down,” he told her with his brows knitted together.

“Kiko-senpaai~!” Hinata squeaked and leaned over with a couple of boxes in his hand.

“Can you make pudding and jelly candies with me?” he asked with a child-like smile that shot an
arrow through Tsukiko’s heart. She got off the sofa and trottered to the kitchen with him.

Kageyama gestured for the girl’s attention as well while holding some yogurt cups in his hands.
“Show me how to make your yogurt drink again,” he said bluntly.

Tsukiko was awed by the demands. As sudden as they were, nonetheless, she was happy to help
them.

From: Ushijima
We have her distracted.

Akaashi exhaled lightly. He looked up at Bokuto and informed him that the plan was set in motion.

“Alright!!” Bokuto cheered as he continued to hammer away.

Kuroo twitched each time the tool came close to his hands. Why he trusted the clumsy dolt with a dangerous job was likely going to be a mistake he’d regret letting happen.

Meanwhile, somewhere else...

“You’re the boyfriend and yet you don’t know the exact color she likes~?” Oikawa put a hand over his lips as he smirked.

Yamaguchi glared at the brunette. “Sometimes I forget this stuff,” he said, causing Iwaizumi to laugh.

The musclehead glanced over at the quiet one in the group. “What color do you think she prefers?” he asked but was met with the silent treatment.

Tsukishima couldn’t escape answering the simple question when Iwaizumi managed to put him in a headlock.

“Just get the rainbow set!” growled the blond.

Exiting the bargain store, Oikawa approached Yamaguchi again.

“Tell me boyfriend; what’s it like to be in love with the best girl in the world?” he asked.

It was a random question to bring up, especially when he wasn’t being called by his name properly. However Yamaguchi wasn’t too concerned with that. He bashfully scratched his cheek while saying, “Makes me feel lucky.”
While those two were conversing about Tsukiko, the others behind them were doing the same. Iwaizumi was frank with Tsukishima. He brought up the quarrel that occurred the night of Oikawa’s birthday and then what ended the karaoke party afterwards.

“It’s nothing,” Tsukishima said but then was threatened with brute force again.

“It’s really nothing that any of you have to get involved with.” he clarified.

“Uh-huh? So why aren’t you taking it privately with her?” Iwaizumi asked then.

Tsukishima paused. “...because Yamaguchi will get the wrong idea.” he admitted.

Iwaizumi’s eyes grew. He really didn’t take Tsukishima as the type to be considerate of others—even with his closest friend. Then again, it had to be the fact that they were together since childhood. Their friendship was likely the kind where the fondness was subtle in their interactions. In a way, it was like Iwaizumi’s abuse towards Oikawa. Hitting him constantly for a plethora of reasons just meant Iwaizumi cared that much about the snobbish king.

“Well, whatever it is you’re trying to say to Tsukiko, I’d prefer if you used a direct approach. She’ll get distraught otherwise.” he sighed.

“I know that.” Tsukishima remarked.

“Idiot! Don’t be a smart ass with me!” Iwaizumi grumbled as he kicked Tsukishima in the back of his knee.

Oikawa and Yamaguchi turned around to see this. They wondered what had led to Tsukishima getting playfully beaten up.

Ushijima tapped Tsukiko on the shoulder.
“Go put your things away,” he decided to tell her after she had finished fulfilling Hinata and Kageyama’s requests.

“Also change. You’re still in your dance clothes.” he added with a slightly stern tone.

The girl rolled her eyes but did as her ‘father’ told her. She grabbed her stuff that she left in the living room and took them upstairs.

Once the coast was clear, Ushijima went to the backyard where Akaashi and company arrived with a wooden box.

Akaashi wiped the sweat off his forehead. He looked around the spacious yard.

“Now we just need—”

As he was about to mention them, Oikawa and the rest entered through the side gate.

Yamaguchi handed the supplies over. “Here is everything,” he said.

“Get it in the box quick,” Kuroo ordered.

In the span of fifteen minutes, Tsukiko had no idea what the boys were doing in the backyard. Her female intuition was telling her to look outside her window but she resisted the urge. The girl switched to capri pants and a large tee shirt that didn’t belong to her. Now that she had her boyfriend living across from her, he became victim to getting his clothes stolen.

Tsukiko pulled the shirt collar up to her nose. Call her a pervert for sniffing Yamaguchi’s clothes and she wouldn’t deny it.

Tsukiko returned downstairs to find the place empty again. She puffed her cheeks and put her hands on her hips while searching for the guys. Upon noticing the whole group was outside she dropped her pout.
Everyone was huddled around a lone box on the grass.

Hinata and Kageyama appeared to be hiding something behind their backs too.

Akaashi also had a suspicious grin on his face.

The entire scene made Tsukiko raise her brow curiously.

“What’s going—”

The girl nearly jumped back when Oikawa and Kuroo released party poppers in front of her, allowing the streamers to land on her head. They moved out of the way for the next duo to reveal the banner in their hands. It read “congratulations” in gold letters. Following after were colorful balloons, confetti, and more streamers shooting out of the wooden box that Bokuto opened.

Tsukiko was extremely confused with what was happening. She was even more puzzled when Yamaguchi hugged her and kissed her head despite the amount of people around them. Normally he wouldn’t be able to do such a thing due to shyness.

Iwaizumi and Tsukishima blew party horns, though the latter was doing it unenthusiastically.

Nothing was making sense until Ushijima and Akaashi held up a cake that explained everything. Written in the frosting was a message saying, “Congrats on your debut!”

Tears began to form in Tsukiko’s eyes. It was a good thing she washed off her makeup already. The girl fanned herself with her hands as though to calm herself from actually crying but she was too moved by everyone’s effort.

“We all saw the billboard,” said Akaashi.

Displaying on one of Tokyo’s many advertisement boards was the announcement of something that will be happening next Spring. It was an event where new musical entertainers were going to make their major debuts. Some of the ads included company names, one of which was the place that Yorozu-kan’s house mother worked for.
Tsukiko had known about this event only a week ago. She planned to tell her friends at a later time when they had a chance to gather together. Obviously, they found out because the promotion began sooner than she anticipated.

Oikawa patted Tsukiko’s back and ushered her to go back in the house. “Let’s go eat this cake~” he said with his charmingly lofty voice.

That afternoon, the Yorozu-kan was filled with laughter once again.

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I realized I haven't drawn Bokuto since.... chapter 11 lmao and just for fun I tallied up who has appeared in a chapter ending sketch so far (discounting chibi heads): Tsukiko - 22(duh?) ... Kuroo - 6 ... Bokuto - 4 ... Ushijima/Oikawa/Iwaizumi - 3

... Akaashi/Hinata/Kageyama/Tsukishima/Yamaguchi - 2 ... and then there's some single others like Kenma pfff but damn why is Kuroo getting so much attention from me?? COULD I ACTUALLY BE MORE BIASED TOWARDS HIM?!
follow me: dA/twitter/instagram @hikariotakuhime
Of all the guys in the house, only Hinata would freak out over the mature content. “THEY’RE TAKING OFF THEIR CLOTHES ON TV!!! IS THIS EVEN LEGAL?!” he would shriek and occasionally shield his eyes or hide behind Kageyama’s arm.

It was that time of year again where everybody was getting too busy for certain responsibilities.

Chores were being forgotten and the kitchen was dominated by takeout boxes. On top of school, everyone had their jobs to deal with too. The ones with the most hours as of late were Ushijima and Tsukiko though. Some nights they would both be missing until past dinner time.

“Welcome home,” Akaashi greeted the two as he was about to head back to his room.

Entering the house was Ushijima with a possibly dead girl on his back. It wasn’t apparent with his deadpan expression but Ushijima was fatigued to some degree too. He nearly dropped Tsukiko when he bent over to take off his shoes. Thankfully Yamaguchi appeared to assist and take a hold of his knocked out girlfriend.

Kuroo poured tea for the late arrivals though his effort was partially for naught.

Ushijima accepted the warm drink.

Tsukiko didn’t. Her eyes fluttered open for a moment as she stated, “I don’t drink tea.”

“Tea is a Japanese essential. How can you NOT drink this stuff?!” Kuroo said then proceeded to threaten dumping the hot water on the girl to wake her up.
Tsukiko glared back at him and the two cats started hissing at each other. It wouldn’t be surprising if they began fighting when both were stressed for their own reasons.

“I’ll make you hot chocolate if that’s what you’d like,” Yamaguchi offered while gently stroking Tsukiko’s hands to soothe her. She leaned over and nuzzled her head into the crook of her boyfriend’s neck.

“Yes please,” she replied with a whimper.

The sudden show of affection was appreciating but now Yamaguchi didn’t want to move from the sofa. If he could cuddle her exhaustion away then he’d rather do that.

“Gross, get a room!” Kuroo snapped as he took his cat-shaped mug of tea upstairs.

Though what Kuroo said being his disgusted response towards the couple, they did end up getting a room for themselves.

Tsukiko curled up in Yamaguchi’s lap, the two having moved to his bedroom. He meant to help the girl to her own across the hallway but she insisted on crashing his. It was a first for Yamaguchi to have a girl in his room. Fortunately he had been keeping the place as tidy as possible, albeit the study materials at his desk.

As much as Yamaguchi would love to work on his sociology report, his inner desires were telling him otherwise. Sitting on his bed with his tired girlfriend in his lap— definitely a scenario he wasn’t expecting to become a reality.

To keep his mind out of the gutter, Yamaguchi started a conversation with Tsukiko.

“You’ve been coming home late often. I hope they’ve been feeding you at work.” he said.

Tsukiko hummed. “Mhm. They treat me like a queen in exchange for my productivity…”
Yamaguchi lightly chuckled. “Ahh, I see. Well I’m sure things will settle down eventually.”

“Probably not until the big day.” his girlfriend replied with a groan.

Tsukiko changed her position to where she was straddling Yamaguchi. It immediately slashed a blush across his freckled face. Before he could utter a response Tsukiko was already closing the gap between them.

“Hey… Tada-kun,” she called to him in a soft, low voice that might as well be her weapon of seduction.

Yamaguchi swallowed his nerves.

“Y-Yeah?”

Tsukiko’s glossy lips parted as she asked, “Do you ever think perverted stuff about me?”

If Yamaguchi were in the middle of drinking something he’d spit it in the face of the girl sitting on him. She had to ask him the exact thing he wanted to avoid thinking about. His eyes darted around the room frantically as he was trying to find a distraction for himself. He also couldn’t decide how to answer the question. Would being truthful make her upset? Or perhaps Tsukiko was hoping that Yamaguchi does in fact harbor deviant desires towards her? What guy wouldn’t when his girlfriend is a straight ten with her looks?

“I—uhh— w-well………. Yeah, I do. A lot in fact.” he admitted.

Yamaguchi was mentally panicking. It felt like smaller versions of himself inside his head were burning the place down. He began to close his eyes while awaiting possible rejection but instead heard Tsukiko let out a sigh of relief.

“That’s good. I was afraid if you didn’t find me sexually attractive,” she said.

Without further explanation, Tsukiko returned to her room to sleep after giving her boyfriend a good night peck on his warm cheek.
For the rest of the night Yamaguchi couldn’t focus on his schoolwork at all. He wasn’t sure if he could sleep either.

“Stop trying to be sexy!”

Tsukiko pressed her lips tightly together as she tried not to argue back. Her instructor spun a finger, indicating that the idol repeat her routine.

Standing with her back slightly arched Tsukiko put her arms up then slowly lowered them while mouthing a song. She hopped onto one foot, switched to the other, then winked. When she put her hand on her hip the instructor groaned again.

“Put that ass back in gear,” they said while pointing at Tsukiko for sticking her rear out.

“Are you trying to tarnish Suki-Suki’s angelic image by flashing her panties?!” they said again before snapping for a redo.

Tsukiko’s body stiffened from annoyance.

When it became lunchtime there wasn’t much progress made, or any that mattered.

“How come I can’t be cute and sexy at the same time?!” Tsukiko shouted. She stubbornly sucked her juice packet dry while the others eating with her were giggling.

“Well you know how the idol image goes,” said a girl with short pink hair and a yellow bow.

The young blonde girl in front of Tsukiko held out her hands. “Have one of my spells calm you~!” she giggled.

“...you two can drop the act with me,” Tsukiko told the two who then let out a heavy sigh in
The girl with a bow leaned back in her chair with a drained expression on her previously cheery face.

Following the transition to being casual the other blonde crossed her arms over her chest and sat with her legs open.

Both girls were fellow adult idols in the same company as Tsukiko. However, they’re both already publicly known since they debuted during their high school years unlike Tsukiko.

“It’s just troublesome if any paparazzi had snuck in and planted recording devices around us. I’d rather be safe than sorry,” said Kanon as she continued to lean further back in her chair to the point she was likely in danger of falling over.

Yusarin, or casually called Misa, slammed a fist into her palm. The color in her eyes glowed like fire. She gritted her teeth while saying, “Anyone that loiters around doin’ that is gonna have to catch these hands!”

Tsukiko nodded in agreement.

Out of all of the entertainers she’s met at work, Kanon and Misa were the only ones closest to her. They were the most “real” personalities despite being just as two-faced as Tsukiko. In a way, they were also like seniors that she could look up to for advice regarding their job. Unfortunately this time they couldn’t offer much help with Tsukiko’s issue. It was undeniably their job as female idols to be pure and innocent. Also, the company president normally dictated how the girls display themselves for work.

Before returning to her job, Kanon grabbed Tsukiko by the shoulder.

“Are you sure you’re eating properly? I know we have a diet to follow but it’s okay to indulge on what they give us here…” she whispered with a concerning voice.

Tsukiko gave her colleague a smile.
Having been in the business of deceit for some years, Kanon already knew this was a farce. The other girl sighed and both parted ways to their respective duties.

Tsukiko was moved to a photoshoot and wore her Suki-Suki idol costume. It had a generic design with frills and bows but fortunately she was going to wear something new for her debut. Tsukiko worked for the camera the same way she always did. After every shutter snap she changed her pose just slightly.

Hugging her body, Tsukiko was purposely pushing her breasts upward then winked. The photographer cheered but the person giving her instruction was not pleased.

“Alright listen up,” they called for Tsukiko’s attention.

“You’re Suki-Suki, the moon child of love. All day you’ve been giving me ‘sexy’ which isn’t what Suki-Suki is supposed to look like.”

“But I’m not JUST a cute little girl anymore!” Tsukiko finally said. She huffed with her hands placed on her hips.

“I know the president said I have to keep up with the personality as my punishment for ditching the training in high school… but if I stay a cutesy ditz then I won’t stand out at all!”

The trainer let out a sigh. “In that case, show me this ‘cute and sexy’ thing you keep pulling.”

They gestured for the photographer’s return. Looking down at Tsukiko, they held a finger up and repeated the motion.

Tsukiko clicked her tongue out loud. She went back to doing her routine from earlier but this time swung her rear out provocatively. It felt much better doing whatever she wanted, until Tsukiko heard her trainer say;

“.............what if the person you like saw you now? Think about that.”

Suddenly Tsukiko’s expression fell. Her cheeks were tinted pink and her bravery was crumbling.
This made her adjust her pose. The thought of Yamaguchi seeing her skirt flip up made her feel embarrassed.

As the photographer went back to taking pictures of Tsukiko she continued to be nervous and shy. It was like she reverted to being a rookie again.

“Ahhh, end me…” she whined.

For the next couple of days Tsukiko was unintentionally avoiding Yamaguchi. Every time they were in the same room she would run away with a red face. It struck him as odd at first until he remembered the night she asked him the strange question. He started panicking, thinking that his honest answer shouldn’t have been shared.

“Wazzup?” Bokuto hooted when he saw Yamaguchi nearly walk into a wall.

The distraught boy with sluggish shoulders lifted his gaze.

“...do you ever have perverted thoughts about Tsukiko?” Yamaguchi asked.

If Bokuto were holding something it would fall out of his hands right there. He spent some time processing the question. Was Yamaguchi testing his friendship?

Then, after looking to see if any of their other roommates were around, Bokuto leaned in to whisper, “Would you be upset if one of us masturbated to Kiko-chan? N-Not that I’ve done that! I’m sure Kuroo has though!”

Speaking the devil’s name made him appear.

Kuroo poked his messy head into the living room just in time to hear Bokuto mention him. He was curious behind the context of the conversation so he decided to join the two and ask what they were talking about.
Yamaguchi, still stunned by his belief that Tsukiko was upset with him, repeated the question to Kuroo.

“Yeah, definitely.” Kuroo said rather nonchalantly, causing Bokuto to screech.

“She’s got a nice body and a nice face— oh, and she’s good with her tongue too. You should try it sometime~”

It may have been Kuroo only teasing but Yamaguchi took him seriously. He slowly looked down in gloom and even his cowlick was drooping. Kuroo’s smirk trembled. Suddenly he felt bad for possibly offending the other guy.

“Hey now, I jest! As the boyfriend you’ve gotten more enjoyment than any of us.” Kuroo reassured.

Yamaguchi paused. “You would think…” he muttered.

Kuroo jerked back with slight confusion. “But you gave her a love bite at the beach right? So you two have definitely crossed—”

“I haven’t even made it to first base yet,” Yamaguchi interjected.

Both Kuroo and Bokuto put their hands on his shoulders. They looked at him with grief in their eyes. To have such a hot girlfriend for several years and still not having touched her breasts? Blasphemy.

Another night, the Yorozu-kan was left with the house mother missing. Tsukiko notified everyone in the group chat that she would be returning home late. Even though she told them not to wait for her the boys planned to stay up the whole night if they had to. The two that acted like parental guardians towards her were especially unkeen with going to bed without making sure their girl did get home safely.

The group of males sat in the living room after taking turns going to the bathhouse. Once everyone was refreshed they chose to spend their time watching television. They watched the late night shows that Tsukiko usually wouldn’t let them see because a majority of them were “too adult for Hinata” as she would say. It was true though. Of all the guys in the house, only Hinata would freak
out over the mature content.

“THEY’RE TAKING OFF THEIR CLOTHES ON TV!!! IS THIS EVEN LEGAL?!” he would shriek and occasionally shield his eyes or hide behind Kageyama’s arm.

Bokuto laughed at his small pupil while ruffling the ginger’s hair.

Kuroo snickered too, even going as far to call Hinata’s reactions as being “typical of a cherry boy.” He swerved his hazel eyes at Yamaguchi then smirked.

“Don’t worry, you’re not the only pure virgin in this house~”

“Kuroo-san is a virgin too?” Hinata retorted.

“No you dumb shrimp I’m—”

Bokuto leapt up with his fingers pointing at Yamaguchi.

“KIKO-CHAN’S BOYFRIEND HASN’T GONE FIRST BASE WITH HER!!” he announced, causing the other to shrivel into the sofa with shame.

“I did not need to know that.” Akaashi stated. His mind flashbacked to the beach hickey and his expression became empty.

Tsukishima scooted away to the other end of the sofa. “I swear if I we start talking about how to get Yamaguchi laid I will move out.” he grumbled.

“Th-That’s not even what I’m worried about!” Yamaguchi jittered his reply. Again, he got comforted by Bokuto. He pulled his shoulder back and the owl was disheartened by the rejection.

Exactly what Tsukishima was afraid of listening to, the group started a discussion on how to get Yamaguchi to the next level in his relationship. Hearing Kuroo taking over was the most surprising though. Normally his apparent jealousy would make him keep quiet and send Yamaguchi nasty
glares. This time Kuroo was actually giving useful pointers while also revealing activities of his sexual life.

“You know you’ve got her good when she’s too wet to stay insi—”

Akaashi threw one of the sofa pillows at Kuroo to cut him off. He pinched the bridge of his nose then turned around to leave. Listening to everything that was mentioned made him feel awkward to be around his friends. At the same time, deep down, Akaashi was hoping it would help Yamaguchi.

Bokuto returned to his optimistic self as he slapped Yamaguchi’s back. “Worry not bud! I believe in you!” he encouraged.

“Y-Yeah! I-I-If you two need privacy j-just let us know and we’ll leave the house!!” Hinata stuttered with red ears.

Ushijima grunted. His straight face hadn’t changed at all throughout the ludicrous conversation but who knew what the guy could actually be thinking.

He later raised his hand to speak up. “How will Yamaguchi be able to do any of that when Tsukiko hasn’t given him an answer?”

“Whaaaat anzer?”

Nearly everyone in the living room jumped out of their skin from Tsukiko making her presence known. She leaned against the wall with a flushed face and drowsy eyes. Upon closer inspection they found the girl to be drunk—enough to have brought home a bottle of alcohol she drank apparently.

Tsukiko licked her lips after taking another swig of her drink then wobbled over to the boys. The drunkard plopped straight down on Yamaguchi’s lap, causing him to squeak. She leaned back, putting her head under his chin.

“Answer whaaaa?” Tsukiko repeated while flailing her arms about.
Kuroo had on his scheming smirk again. He approached the girl with caution though as he said, “Tada-kun wants to sleep with you~”

Bokuto bobbed his head side to side and joined in on the teasing by repeating Kuroo’s words.

Yamaguchi looked at them both nervously. He whined and asked them to stop but the two continued to play around.

When Yamaguchi turned to Ushijima for help his main concern seemed to getting Tsukiko’s shoes off her feet.

Looking to his other friends, Tsukishima seemed to be busy laughing into a pillow while Kageyama was dragging a burnt-out Hinata away.

“D’aww~ Tada wants te sheep wit me?” Tsukiko giggled and hiccuped.

Her head pressed into Yamaguchi’s neck. The more she moved her body the more Yamaguchi could feel her rear rubbing against him. Plenty of thoughts were raging in his mind that he was bound to pass out from overloading like Hinata.

Tsukishima suddenly stood up. He walked over to the group on the other end of the sofa and looked down at the drunk girl.

“Pa-thet-ic~” he said in a snarky tone as he flicked Tsukiko’s forehead.

The girl hissed and tried to retaliate but instead fell over onto the floor.

Kuroo and Bokuto laughed while slamming their palms against the sofa seats. Their cry grew louder after Ushijima politely placed a pillow over Yamaguchi’s lap, as if helping him hide what was growing in his pants.

Ushijima lifted Tsukiko onto his shoulder and proceeded to carry the girl up to her room. Being on the third floor, they could somewhat still hear Kuroo’s hyena laugh and Bokuto’s howling. Eventually they’ll die down since they can finally go to bed.
“You should answer him soon,” Ushijima said after placing Tsukiko on her comforter. He brushed her hair out of her face and settled a bottle of water on her nightstand. For good measure he also put her trash bin close to her bedside.

Tsukiko turned her body and hugged the nearest stuffed animal she had on her bed.

“...yeah, I know.” she moaned.

LMFAO DID I DRAW YAMS TOO SHORT?? BUT HE’S SO CUTE OMG JUST LOOK AT HIM!! also this chapter's character guests are Kanon Nakagawa from The World God Only Knows and Misa/Yusa from Charlotte

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Chapter Summary

Kuroo curiously rose to his feet. His brows perked when he heard a familiar tune and voices singing.

It was a wild Saturday night at the Tokyo Metropolitan Theater with the university’s “Welcome to America!” concert.

From the outside, the event seemed to go smoothly and the audience clearly enjoyed the show. The only ones who knew what really went on backstage were the performers themselves.

As far as anyone was aware, none of the organizers had caught wind of the things that did happen.

First there was a drummer in one of the bands who reeked of cigarettes so he had to be replaced with a clean backup player.

There was also an actress from the drama club who threatened to leave simply because her significant other had yet to show up.

In the massive opening number, someone’s phone fell out of the pocket but it fortunately got played off as being part of the act.

For Tsukiko and her clubmates they nearly had the worst incident of the night. Minutes before the curtains would go up, a fight nearly broke out that almost resulted in someone literally breaking a leg.

“Neito just had to provoke Bakugou of all people… again!” Tsukiko complained while resting her head on Momo’s soft chest. The other girl patted her comfortingly.

Their dance club went to an izakaya when their show ended. This was meant to be a celebratory after-party, but thanks to a certain member’s actions, some were unsure if they should be celebrating at all.
Ushijima and his giant coworker arrived at the table with everyone’s drinks and food on their arms. Iida momentarily stopped his lecturing to thank the two servers for taking care of the large group on short notice.

The beers were last to get passed around but the one meant for Bakugou was confiscated by Midoriya.

“You can chew on the chili peppers while you think about what you did,” he said rather sternly.

Tsukiko cocked a grin after hearing the usually timid kid show some backbone. She reached over to take Bakugou’s beer for herself but Momo stopped her.

“Kiko-chan, you have never once drank beer.” said the vice captain.

“There’s always a first~” Tsukiko retorted playfully. When she tried to take the drink again something else was placed in front of her. It was a glass of orange juice.

The girl looked up to meet eyes with Ushijima. She glared at him while puffing her cheeks. Her ‘father’ apparently rolled his eyes, causing the other dancers at the table to erupt into laughter.

Ushijima had to work until closing.

Yamaguchi and Tsukishima were in the same boat at their workplace.

Bokuto was introducing the two stooges to the college party life with Akaashi supervising them.

The only person available to pick up the drunk girl was Kuroo.

“Tipsy would be an overstatement. You’re totally dry enough to get home on your own!” Kuroo said as he carried Tsukiko on his back from the bus stop.
The girl moaned in response then tightened her grip around his neck in an attempt to choke him but failed. She didn’t seem to have the strength in her.

“Don’t complain when got me boobies against ya~” Tsukiko replied.

Kuroo let out a sigh. He bounced her up once when it felt like she was slipping. It wasn’t because she was heavy; he was more than capable of carrying the girl. Kuroo did notice a significant weight difference compared to the last time he managed to lift Tsukiko off her feet.

“Shes probably on a diet for her training.” he commented to himself.

Once at the Yorozu-kan, Kuroo put Tsukiko down at the entrance. He took a step forward and nearly fell over because his ankle was caught on something. It was Tsukiko stopping him. She was most likely going to whimper and beg him to remove her shoes off for her but Kuroo wasn’t the type to baby her like Ushijima— or so he thought.

“I woulda enjoyed bride style again, like when yer held me in high school...” Tsukiko said in a low voice and with a warm smile.

Kuroo found himself at a loss of words. For one thing, he didn’t think Tsukiko remembered the first time he carried her. His guard had completely dropped. He quietly got rid of Tsukiko’s shoes and coat then lifted her into his arms.

“If she keeps up with this behavior the situation might end up like the night of her birthday.” he believed. Kuroo knew this which was why he was trying hard to ignore his own personal desires. Pampering Tsukiko was honestly not the best distraction especially since she was using his favorite smile of hers. It also didn’t help that she was wearing the same sweet perfume she used on her birthday too.

“Lessgo to the basemeeent~!” Tsukiko squealed as she swung her feet upwards, almost causing Kuroo to lose balance.

The guy sighed again and did as she wanted.

The basement was as spacious as it always had been. It was Kuroo’s second time being down there; the first when he really did get curious and snuck in while Tsukiko was away. At some point he
stopped spying on her from the surveillance cameras too. He actually got busy with work and Tsukiko wasn’t using the basement as often as she use to either.

Kuroo sat down on the dance floor while watching Tsukiko stretch out to make snow angels. Seeing this put a soft grin on his face. He wanted a picture to tease her later but Tsukiko’s constant movement made it blurry.

“Hold still would you?” Kuroo chuckled while continuing to do his best to get a clear shot of the girl. When he finally managed to capture one but it didn’t get sent to the group chat like he intended.

Kuroo stared at the picture. To him, it was the purest smile he had ever seen on Tsukiko. It was the kind of smile he only saw her use on Yamaguchi.

“Why are you so cute?” Kuroo accidentally said out loud. He checked if Tsukiko had heard him but she was laying on her stomach with her head under her arms. The silence had him believing she did catch it but then the girl suddenly got up. She dashed to the speakers in the corner of the room which then emitted clicking sounds.

Kuroo curiously rose to his feet. His brows perked when he heard a familiar tune and voices singing.

> **Song Title:** TOKYO GIRL

> **Artist:** Perfume

“Hmm, hmm, Tokyo Girl~” Tsukiko sang along while dancing as best she could remember of the choreography to the song.

Kuroo was amused enough to start dancing with her. Since the girl wasn’t exactly in the right state of mind, his dancing turned better than her. Or it could be that he knew the moves more than she did. They were in sync for a moment during the final chorus but only because Tsukiko was mirroring Kuroo to get the dance right.

The next song “FLASH” began to play and Tsukiko was acting like a true drunk. She couldn’t stay on her toes for longer than a second that Kuroo had to catch her several times. The two laughed gleefully even more as the much taller guy was puppetting the much smaller girl. Kuroo held
Tsukiko’s arms and waved them where needed. They continued to fool around to Perfume music until Tsukiko couldn’t stand on her own.

“Now how cute was I?” Tsukiko asked, giving away that she did hear Kuroo earlier. He sat close to her than tapped the tip of her nose. The flinching response made his lips curl.

“Really cute,” he answered.

Tsukiko’s eyes softened, dropping halfway to a close. Her smile faded along.

“Remember how Kai was telling me about a friend of his not confessing to a girl?” she asked.

Kuroo’s expression fell too. He had a feeling of where the conversation was about to head but kept it going.

“Yeah,” he replied.

“It wasn’t about Yakkyun…”

“Nope. It wasn’t.”

“…was he talking about you then?” Tsukiko softly asked.

There was a pause before Kuroo responded with a nod. Closing his eyes, he waited to hear Tsukiko obnoxiously cackle and accuse him of joking. That didn’t happen as he was half expecting.

Tsukiko started poking Kuroo’s cheek a couple of times until he opened his eyes and turned to face her. The last poke landed on his nose.

“So you really are smarter than you lead on. That’s quite devilish of you,” Kuroo said without smirking.
Tsukiko didn’t puff her cheeks at this either. Instead she changed positions to sit on her knees then leaned over to put her arms around Kuroo. He pushed her away, rejecting the hug.

Tsukiko sucked on her lower lip while trying not to let herself cry. She put some distance between her and Kuroo for the time being.

“Why won’t you tell me honestly?” she asked.

Kuroo answered swiftly. “There’s no point. You have a boyfriend.” he said.

“Kai thinks it hurts you to keep it in.”

“Seeing you with another guy is what hurts.”

“But you could say it anyway.”

A cough escaped Kuroo as he avoided laughing. “Did I really just hear that from the girl who tried to attack someone for doing the same thing?” he said with a hoarse voice.

Tsukiko gripped her knees when she felt a sharp sting in her chest. The tears started rolling.

What Kuroo said couldn’t be any more true. How could she ask him to confess to her when she didn’t like Yachi doing so to Yamaguchi? Tsukiko wasn’t sure why she was trying to do this either. Claiming it was the alcohol talking would be a poor and rude excuse too. With how coherent her speech was now it definitely meant she was sober.

In the midst of her crying, Tsukiko kept her voice as calm and audible as she could.

“I’ll be honest first then,” she told the guy while looking at him straight on.

“Kei was right to call me a fake bitch. Ever since I began this idol work I turned into a self-centered attention seeker who assumes people are out for me... romantically. From situations like catching someone looking at me more than once or just being given a compliment on the street—
then there’s you; the guy that relentlessly picks on me as his way of flirting. You were a real jackass with that smug grin of yours that I really thought my pisspoor attitude was all it took to ward you off. But I let my guard down that one day when all of you saw me without my glasses.

‘Maybe if I keep distant from then nobody will fall for me’ was what I had hoped for, but Nekoma… all of you turned out to be amazing guys. You especially.”

Kuroo inhaled sharply. He didn’t like what he just heard come out of her mouth. He didn’t like the fact it made him feeling hopeful. If Tsukiko was intentionally baiting him then she was doing a fine job of it.

“I think it was… at the end of the training camp? Sometime around then was when I realized how much closer we got. I was thinking to myself, ‘stop playing hard to get with the captain’ but now look where we are.” Tsukiko said while curled into a ball, bringing her knees to her chest. She attempted to smile again but struggled. Her eyes were spilling tears but she could tell Kuroo was still facing her too. As for where his actual focused was on she wouldn’t know it was her lips he stared at to avoid eye contact with her.

“After what Kai told me my guess felt more correct but that’s just me assuming you have feelings for someone who use to disrespect you and your precious team.”

“Bokuto likes you too,” Kuroo commented in an offhand way.

Tsukiko corrected him that the owl’s feelings were in the past and they were only spontaneous affections.

Akaashi’s name came up next but Tsukiko stated he only saw her as a sister and also that he likes someone else. Both she already knew about for some time, having asked them directly at some point.

“Oikawa is clearly head over heels for you. Did you go on that date just to indulge him?” Kuroo pointed out.

Tsukiko shook her head again
“He already told me on his birthday that he’s satisfied watching me be with Tadashi. Though… he did mention being open for a poly relationship if we wanted to try it.”

“...I’ll pretend I didn’t hear that— but why are you bringing all of this up? Why me?” Kuroo asked with genuine curiosity. He never had heart-to-heart conversations with Tsukiko before. He never had heart-to-heart conversations with anyone, really. Wasn’t this stuff normally reserved for Akaashi?

Tsukiko replied, “besides Keiji and Kozume… I feel like you’re a close friend I can be honest with.”

The answer made Kuroo scoff in response as his immediate concern was about being called a friend.

Kuroo and Tsukiko sat back-to-back against each other for the next half hour in total silence. They were on their phones responding to the group chat. The rest of the Yorozu-kan residents were almost home.

A chill caused Tsukiko to break away which was then followed with a sneeze.

Kuroo suggested they go back upstairs so they could warm up. Their roommates would question where they were too.

“Maybe Tsukki was right to call you fake.” Kuroo blurted out as soon as he got in the elevator. He wanted Tsukiko to slap him for the remark but instead she was misty-eyed again. However, she did pull off a strong smile this time. That’s what Kuroo thought it was until the doors closed between them.

“Where are those two? I thought they were home.” Akaashi wondered as he dragged Bokuto by the ankles from the front door to the kitchen. He didn’t care that the owl’s head was bumping into the walls.

Ushijima followed to lift Bokuto from further harm and then Kageyama entered with Hinata on his back.

Tsukishima made a comment about the missing two while slipping off his shoes.
“They’re probably out on a night walk. Cats tend to do that you know,’’ he said. There was a more crude version that Tsukishima refrained from making for his friend’s sake.

Yamaguchi laughed back at the joke but he was still curious about Tsukiko’s whereabouts. She and Kuroo did say they were at home, waiting.

From: the puppy-face boyfriend

> Where are you? Sleeping?

Tsukiko lifted her face. Instead of going upstairs she went back down and hid in the dressing room to cry some more. She replied to Yamaguchi’s text with a partial lie. Yes, she was in the basement. No, she wasn’t doing a late night practice.

Taking a deep breath, Tsukiko composed a new message to someone.

To: duckbutt hair

> I’m sorry.

Kuroo heard his phone ping twice. He knew it was Tsukiko before checking the contact name. When saw the first line of the second message he decided to ignore it completely. The boiling anger swelling inside got the best of him unfortunately. He dragged the notification to get two options: reply or delete. His thumb pressed delete.

From: that one girl

> I’m sorry. I thought it’d help if we [...]
things get more complicated lmao even I'm confused-- is that bad? :") KUROO'S HAIR IS STILL A MYSTERY TO ME AND YAKU WASN'T EVEN MENTIONED THIS CHAPTER BUT SINCE IT'S PERFUME I DREW THIS AHAHAAAAA the boys are in place of their favorite Perfume member; Kuroo as Kashiyuka and Yaku as Noochi (then Tsukiko as A-chan just bc they're both usually in ponytails)

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“No more silence. I’ll talk.”

Mid-September came in a flash and so did another birthday.

“Hey, hey, heeey!!” shouted Bokuto as he and Kuroo lifted Hinata into the air.

“Sirs, please don’t do that.” Ushijima said.

Of all places to decide having his birthday lunch, Bokuto chose a certain izakaya. Apparently he just wanted the great eagle to serve him his drinks.

Akaashi ran his hands over his face and tried not to release a sigh. If he got paid for every sigh he made throughout the year he would probably have enough to pay his rent.

Tsukiko laughed and raised her glass for Kageyama to clank his with hers.

Yamaguchi tried to pacify his girlfriend but to no avail.

Tsukishima remained to himself on the other end of the table. He was unhappy to be included in the party all because his own birthday was exactly a week after Bokuto’s. It only bothered him that they were lumped together.

The birthday cake arrived with candles in the shape of the numbers “21” and “19” for the two grown boys.

Since Tsukishima wasn’t at all childish enough to blow out the candles Bokuto did it for him. He then revealed what he wished for, which was the obvious, “I wish for barbeque meat!!”
“I wish you’d shut up.” Tsukishima countered.

With the end of Ushijima’s shift came the end of the small party. Everyone moved on to the next birthday activity that was proposed by Bokuto: visiting an owl cafe. It was something he always wanted to do but not on his own. He dragged all of his roommates to the one he had Akaashi reserve for an hour so the entire place was open to them.

The owls ranged in size, one being small enough to fit in Tsukiko’s hands and others were possibly capable of carrying her away—though that was an exaggeration on Kageyama’s part.

Everyone wore a glove on their dominant arms to let an owl perch on them.

Bokuto, as everyone predicted, chose the great horned owl to play with. Oddly enough the two were practically identical twins. Their large gold eyes didn’t break contact even as both were bobbing their heads.

Akaashi’s owl had a white face. It looked asleep at first until Akaashi started stroking its head. He was almost spooked by the owl suddenly becoming thin but apparently that’s just what it does when frightened, as the cafe manager informed him.

Kuroo would’ve preferred being in a cat cafe but he was enjoying the birds.

“Hey look, it’s Tsukki~” he held up a barn owl next to Tsukishima’s face. The owl had a pale gold tint in its feathers and orange eyes surrounded by a black ring.

“It even has your glasses~” Kuroo teased, earning a rather stern glare from Tsukishima and the owl.

Hinata was awed with Ushijima. Several owls were on his bulky arms and shoulders while one nestled on top of his head.

Kageyama had to admit he was impressed too.

“Oh course this wouldn’t bother a strong guy like Ushijima-san,” he commented while hesitantly
holding his gloved arm up to one of the owls. It ticked him off that they were all ignoring him.

Yamaguchi was nervous about touching the small owl on his girlfriend’s arm. He was afraid of hurting it.

Tsukiko giggled and took hold of his hand. She brought his finger to the owl’s head and brushed it gently against the feathers.

“It’s so soft..!” Yamaguchi squealed with a wide smile.

The couple was in their own little corner with what may as well be their baby for the next half hour.

Tsukishima noticed the scorn in Kuroo’s expression.

“Your jealousy came back,” he said mockingly while adjusting his frames.

The tomcat turned back around, trying to focus on the owls again.

“It’s disdain now,” Kuroo replied under his breath.

Exactly a week later came Tsukishima’s actual birthday. His birthday wish: no birthday party. It was a given with how the guy was. Honestly, the rest of his roommates weren’t into the idea of celebrating for him either; save for Yamaguchi, of course.

“Would you be fine with having a cake at least?” Ushijima asked even though Tsukishima technically got one last week. To him the blond had a similar attitude with birthday celebrations like Tsukiko. If he didn’t want to make a big deal out of his birthday then at least a cake of his own seemed fine.

“Strawberry shortcake. It better be the damn best one Tokyo has to offer.” Tsukishima said with a demanding tone. He wasn’t going to pass up on free cake so long nobody was going to put candles
on top and sing to him.

In the next hour the exact cake that was Tsukishima’s favorite was placed in front of him. The home cook had made the cake himself rather than buy one like the birthday boy expected. He cursed under his tongue for not specifying that he preferred one from the store.

“You’re lucky I approve of your culinary skills...” Tsukishima murmured with a strawberry already in his mouth.

Akaashi chuckled softly. He shifted attention back to Hinata and Kageyama who had their noses in textbooks. They asked Akaashi for tutoring help which he didn’t mind doing since it was beneficial for him too. Not that he was complaining but the study session would progress easier if he had Tsukiko helping him.

The girl of the house was currently at work, as per usual lately. Everyone grew used to it over time and it was understandable. She had to prepare for her debut and they couldn’t be more proud for her. Akaashi didn’t think becoming an idol took a lot of work but according to Hinata, based on his anime awareness, idols had it rough.

Yamaguchi sat across from his friend at the dining table. He had a small box in his hands and was excitedly tapping it. Tsukishima noticed it for some time but didn’t want to bring it up until he finished his cake. Once he did, he held out his hand.

“Give it,” he said with his eyes looking the other way.

Yamaguchi beamed with delight and happily gave him a birthday present.

Inside was a box cutter. It definitely wasn’t what Tsukishima had anticipated one bit.

“It’s in your room already.” Yamaguchi rubbed the back of his head with a meek grin in response to the confused frown. He then got up and followed Tsukishima upstairs to his room.

A lone box sat in the middle of Tsukishima’s minimalist room. There wasn’t anything personally decorated, as if the room was left in its vacant form.
Opening the package made Tsukishima go wide-eyed. He pulled out the first thing on top of the pile; a green triceratops. Next was an orange pterodactyl and then a red dracorex. This was beyond what Tsukishima thought Yamaguchi would get him for his birthday. A dinosaur keychain would have sufficed but his entire collection from home? It was too much.

“Did you really ask my mom to ship these over here? I left them behind for a reason.” Tsukishima said. The sharpness in his tone stunned Yamaguchi. He almost shrunk in shame until Tsukishima added, “You better help me set up a shelf to put these on.”

What was a decoration-less room transformed from just an added shelf on the wall next to the desk. Miniature plastic figures of prehistoric creatures were lined up by the date of their estimated existence. Several times Yamaguchi had to be corrected of the time period a certain species came from. Tsukishima’s knowledge made it seem like he had a bigger interest in dinosaurs than he led on.

Once the job was complete the two went back downstairs.

Tsukishima stopped midway from his phone ringing. It was for a moment but Yamaguchi was sure he saw his friend in shock after answering. The only thing he picked on was the caller being Tsukishima’s father. He got even more curious when Tsukishima turned back around to his room.

“He-hey! What’s up??” Yamaguchi asked when the blond returned dressed as though he was preparing to go outside. He had his coat and travel bag on him.

Tsukishima ignored Yamaguchi then went up to Ushijima, who was watching over Akaashi’s students while said tutor was taking a bathroom break.

“I’m heading out.” Tsukishima informed the Yorozu-kan’s appointed second-in-charge.

Ushijima blinked.

“Will you be back in time for dinner?” he asked with arms folded over his chest.

“No. I’ll be back sometime tomorrow, so don’t count me tonight.” Tsukishima replied then took his leave.
It was all too sudden and fast.

Yamaguchi caught up to the bus stop. He grabbed Tsukishima by the shoulder and asked why he was leaving in a hurry. A grim expression formed behind the rectangular glasses. This meant backing off but instead it made Yamaguchi worry. He demanded to know what Tsukishima was doing and threatened to follow him if he kept quiet.

The dark gaze in Tsukishima’s eyes was cold.

“Fine. I’ll tell you, but you have to pass it on to your girlfriend.” he said rather cruelly.

Tsukiko returned home late in the night again. She slumped her body against the wall as she kicked her shoes off. A scolding for not putting them away properly was sure to come but that’ll have to wait until later when she’s had her sleep.

Upon entering the livingroom the only person there was Yamaguchi. Seeing him immediately brightened her mood, however, his approach was rather daunting.

“Tell her that he is awake,”

“...he..he’s awake...” Yamaguchi said to Tsukiko. She raised a brow in response. “Who is?” she asked.

“And if she doesn’t get it immediately don’t you dare give her the answer.”

Yamaguchi felt his stomach turn. He brought his shaky hands to the girl’s shoulders. The air around them felt unsettling.

Tsukiko was sure something was up with her boyfriend. He was acting like he had seen a ghost. If that were the case she would jokingly say it was her grandfather to calm Yamaguchi’s nerves. Or would that make things worse?
“Ah, never mind…” Yamaguchi sighed.

Noise emitted from the front door again. This time it was the rest of the guys returning from a quick stop at the convenience store. All of them were apparently craving meat buns; Hinata and Kageyama mostly. As a reward for their studious work it was Akaashi’s treat for them too.

“Welcome home Kiko-senpaai~!” Hinata greeted the girl with half a bun stuffed in his cheek. He handed another one over to her.

“I saved you this!” he told her.

Tsukiko smiled and happily accepted the meat bun. Though she still had a diet to keep up with, she could never bring herself to turn down a gift from her ‘adopted son’.

Ushijima offered to warm up leftovers. But this, Tsukiko could say no to. Plus she knew there wouldn’t be anything left over if she got her grubby hands on it.

Yamaguchi’s eyes followed Tsukiko going up the stairs to get ready for bed. He watched her all while mentally berating at himself for not saying what he was supposed to say. It has already become too late after the girl closed her door.

“If she still doesn’t get it… then that’s her loss.” Tsukishima had said before getting on the bus bound for the train station to Sendai.

For once, Tsukiko was given a day off. She wanted to sleep in but her ‘father’ wouldn’t let her when the clock hit noon. The girl stubbornly rolled herself into her blanket.

Akaashi snorted while watching Ushijima carry the burrito girl out of her room. Everyone else had a good laugh seeing Tsukiko bundled in her thick blanket; except Yamaguchi. He was still stressing over his failure to inform Tsukiko something important she needed to know.

“Hey, hey, hey where’s Tsukki?” Bokuto asked with his mouth full of lunch. He never noticed the blond’s absence until then.
Tsukiko realized this too and was also curious. If Tsukishima was allowed to sleep in then she would call it unfair. She assumed so at least.

“Tsukki went out yesterday.” Kuroo answered the owl before sipping on his coffee. For a split second he glanced at Tsukiko then went back to his phone. Their interactions had somewhat gone back to normal the past few weeks. It was as if the two made an unspoken agreement to not act any different around each other; otherwise their friends would see something was up.

Akaashi helped the house mother out of her wrap so she could sit properly at the dining table.

“Did he say where he went? Is he coming back home soon?” he gave the question to Ushijima while folding Tsukiko’s blanket.

Ushijima shook his head. He turned to the only person left in the room who had a clue as to what the answer was.

Yamaguchi’s beady eyes darted between his girlfriend and her pretend father. His hesitation was obvious.

Tsukiko tilted her head and angled her eyebrows in concern. “Is something wrong?” she asked.

Soft as her voice was it felt like a jab in Yamaguchi’s side. Taking a moment to breathe, he shifted in his seat and looked down at Tsukiko then said, “Tsukki is… in Sendai. The hospital there, to be exact.”

While the last statement caused confusion in the others, having them believe that Tsukishima got hurt, it meant something else for Tsukiko. Putting together what Yamaguchi was saying last night and Tsukishima’s current whereabouts made something click in her head. Her expression slowly fell into utter gloom. It was similar to the one she had when arguing with Tsukishima months ago but more appalled than angry. This was the exact face Yamaguchi was afraid of Tsukiko making.

“Kiko-chan, please stay calm. I meant to tell you last night but—”

“I AM CALM!” Tsukiko exclaimed. She dropped her jaw when realizing she had raised her voice
at her dear boyfriend. Seeing Yamaguchi shake in fright only worsened her guilt.

The room got quiet after Tsukiko’s outburst. Everyone was expecting her to scurry to the basement and hide as usual but she didn’t do that. Instead she remained seated while tears flooded her eyes. It looked like Yamaguchi was going to start crying too.

The sound of the front door opening alerted everyone’s attention. Their first guess was Tsukishima returning but following the jingling of keys was a king’s call.

“We’re hooome~!” Oikawa announced when entering the room. He immediately lost enthusiasm from setting his eyes on the first thing he saw; a weeping Tsukiko and wounded Yamaguchi. His concern was more focused on the girl however.

Tsukishima and Iwaizumi came in from behind Oikawa, both wondering why the group was quiet.

“Ahh,” groaned the bespectacled blond as he made his way to the sofa.

“You should stop being ignorant and talk already.”

Tsukishima’s words were directed at the crying girl. She began swelling in anger that caused her to shoot up from her seat. Others prepared to stop her from leaping across the room to punch Tsukishima. That wasn’t what she was planning to do, fortunately.

Tsukiko pulled her sleeves over her hands and wiped her tears.

“Fine…” she muttered.

“No more silence. I’ll talk.”
IT IS HAPPENING FAM. I. AM. SCREAMING. Also Kageyama really is easy to draw wtf but
Hinata's hair I still don't understand LOL

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Silence

Chapter Summary

Yamaguchi put a hand over the bottle before saying, “You don’t have to talk if you really don’t want to.” His words were rather late in the game but the others also wouldn’t fault Tsukiko if she backs out now.

Tsukiko leaned against her boyfriend who was rubbing gentle circles on her backside to soothe her. The rest of the guys were either sitting on the sofas or on the floor with the kotatsu. They passed around something that Iwaizumi brought. Whenever Oikawa was going to visit, oftentimes uninvited, his more considerate roommate would make sure to take along some form of offering. In this case it was a pack of ramune.

“Where to begin?” Tsukiko sighed after she chugged down half of her fizzy marble drink.

Yamaguchi put a hand over the bottle before saying, “You don’t have to talk if you really don’t want to.” His words were rather late in the game but the others also wouldn’t fault Tsukiko if she backs out now. Only she could decide when she’s ready to speak up, with or without Tsukishima pressuring her.

Tsukiko gave a reassuring smile then prepared to share her story. It was time for her to fess up. Enough was enough.

The first thing Tsukiko mentioned was the notebook Akaashi had once asked about. It was full of handwritten music that came from a box labeled “Ken” found in the basement. She had Ushijima bring it upstairs so she had things to show and tell about. Besides the notebook left on the piano, inside the box there were reference books on how to read and write music. All of it had “Ken” written as the owner of the books. There was also a CD case which Tsukiko said had samples of songs that the guy named “Ken” composed himself.

“Ken is my friend that I’ve known since we were little,” Tsukiko answered. Friend was an understatement so she corrected herself by saying, “he’s my best friend.”

When Tsukiko moved from the Tokyo prefecture to Miyagi it made her a shy child. Traveling to unknown places was both exciting and frightening for her. The classmates in her new grade school were welcoming though. They wanted to befriend Tsukiko but she was intimidated by their kindness. One day, during music class, the same little girl was starstruck by the boy assigned to
play the piano. He had a soft expression while his small hands were trailing the keys. Tsukiko thought he even made nursery rhymes sound new to her ears.

“I was barely 10-years-old but immediately I knew that kid would be special to me,” Tsukiko described with a serene smile on her face.

“Aww! Was he your first crush?” Bokuto teased.

Tsukiko giggled in response and replied, “I guess it did look like I had a crush on Ken, but it really was his music that I fell for. No lie there.”

Tsukiko’s growing friendship with Ken was what got her playing music in the first place. She started with learning from the violin that belonged to her mother. It didn’t seem to satisfy the girl long enough as she moved onto various other instruments she could somehow access. From her school’s piano, cello, tuba, clarinet, and even a foreigner neighbor’s ukulele— Tsukiko was constantly switching around. What she really wanted to do was perform a duet with Ken. The problem was her inability to stick with one instrument to play. Her curious brain was a sponge that desired to learn all kinds of instruments until her heart was set on the “right” one.

“When we graduated the 6th grade, Ken goes up and tells me that the best instrument for me was… anyone wanna guess?”

Hinata raised his hand eagerly. “Oh! OH!! Your voice!” he yelped.

Tsukiko pointed and winked, signalling it was the correct answer.

“That’s why I started singing when we entered junior high together. This is gonna sound shocking… but I was actually a terrible singer when I started out,” she added with a playful snicker. It was almost hard to imagine Tsukiko being bad at singing, considering where her skill level was at present. Not like any of the guys would fully understand either. For a helpful reference, Tsukiko described herself having gone from Hinata to Kageyama as the analogy of her improvement.

Iwaizumi brought up the music club he remembered Tsukiko being in. She seemed to brighten when going on about how her seniors were harsh yet resourceful mentors. Despite her supposedly rumbustious behavior as a pubescent teen, Tsukiko was given a lot of faith in regards to handling the club activities. She was almost allowed to take lead in some situations because others believed
in her potential.

“I remember your club recruitment performance when Tsukki and I were first years,” Yamaguchi added, his freckled cheeks already becoming a slight pink as he was reminiscing. The story behind what he mentioned would have to wait though.

The topic went back to being about Ken.

Tsukiko skipped forward in her story a bit to bring up the reason she had a box of stuff originally belonging to her childhood friend. The light in her eyes dimmed and her smile weakened.

“So… you know how I was supposed to debut as an idol in high school?” she asked the boys to which they all nodded in response. The girl took a moment to breathe as well as pop another bottle of ramune. It helped her nerves settle but only for a second.

“The reason I ended up not debuting was… it was…” Tsukiko’s lips started to tremble and her eyes were watering. She tightly gripped the glass bottle in her hands.

“Ken was on his way to attend my debut event but… then he... he got in an accident.”

When the tears began pouring again, Yamaguchi pulled Tsukiko to his chest. The others fell to sorrowful expressions. Seeing Tsukiko cry was a painful sight but they had a feeling it was more upsetting for her to recall a memory she didn’t want to think about. She had been avoiding and suppressing the thought for well over five years. The day she was supposed to be on a stage, instead, she ditched the spotlight to visit an emergency room.

Akaashi frantically grabbed a box of tissues and handed it to Tsukiko. From what she just said and the fact she possessed Ken’s belongings it sound like the guy…

Tsukishima took off his glasses to clean them.

“He got involved with a hit and run on top of being nauseated from traveling to Tokyo by himself.”

What the blond said caught everyone by surprise, except for Tsukiko. She was sure Tsukishima
already knew what happened. His father was Ken’s doctor.

Wiping her face with the back of her hands, Tsukiko began speaking up again. “You all probably thought I was going to say he died, huh?” She attempted to lighten the mood but only made herself feel worse.

“Did he… not? From the traffic accident?” bluntly asked the puzzled Kageyama.

Tsukiko shook her head and clarified that Ken survived, somewhat.

“What I remember being told is that Ken was hit at an angle that only badly grazed his head. The doctor said he’d likely have a permanent scar there. But when my parents and I visited… apparently it wasn’t the accident that put him to sleep,” Tsukiko explained, raising questionable looks because it sounded almost unbelievable.

Oikawa asked if Ken fell into a coma but Tsukiko shrugged. She told him the secret she found out during her visit: that Ken had a rare neurological disorder.

***“Kleine-Levin Syndrome, or also known as the ‘Sleeping Beauty’ syndrome.” stated the brunette. The fact Oikawa knew the exact condition that Tsukiko was about to name stunned her. He even asked how many episodes of sleep Ken had experienced prior to the accident or if it started afterwards.

Only Iwaizumi realized Oikawa’s knowledge came from taking different biology classes. Others were told that Oikawa majored in media communications when the truth was it’s actually his minor. Iwaizumi knew that Oikawa was actually studying the human body. Whether it’s for a medical career in mind, he wasn’t sure. There were still things that Oikawa kept hush with his own family and best friend.

Tsukiko scratched her head, running her nails through the roots of her hair.

“I don’t know—or remember well, the whole details. My miserable ass couldn’t pay full attention half the time. I couldn’t bring myself to ask his family if he always had it or not either…” she said with a clear rising frustration. Oikawa pulled back and shifted the gears as to not take a wrong turn in Tsukiko’s mood that was already a mess.
Continuing with the story, Tsukiko described how Ken’s incident resulted in her becoming too depressed for idol work. She couldn’t move well and always spaced out. Many times her thoughts gave the idea of quitting entirely but Tsukiko knew how wrong that would be. Her slacking was a major inconvenience though. Rather than let go of Tsukiko, as to not waste what efforts were already made, she was simply given a hiatus. This led to her idol debut being postponed until she could stand properly on a stage again.

“It felt like they gave me a mourning period, to be honest.” Tsukiko tried to joke again but ended up with a troubled face.

“...does all of that have to do with why you transferred to Nekoma?” Kuroo spoke up.

Tsukiko paused. She opened her mouth and said, “...yeah. I left Fukurodani Academy since I was contracted to debut as a student there. The reason I went to Nekoma was because Madame suggested it. She said it’d serve as a distraction for me—”

Kuroo abruptly slammed a fist on the kotatsu, almost causing other people’s drinks to topple over. He was glaring at Tsukiko with a tormented look in his eyes.

“Was that really why you didn’t care about us when you were our manager? Because the team was meant to be a ‘distraction’ from your slump?” he said with a bitter tone.

Tsukiko couldn’t bring herself to look him in the eyes. She had told Kuroo before that it was because she didn’t want the boys to romantically fall for her. It was the truth—part of it anyways. What better way to divert her attention from something painful by playing a volleyball team manager? That’s why she agreed to the transfer. She thought that way she could get her mind off of Ken.

“I convinced myself that if I wasn’t dreading over Ken, then time would move faster to the day he’s well again. Yeah... I thought of Nekoma as a distraction device, at first. It was fun working with you guys on Nekoma... it stopped being a distraction! Please believe me, Tetsu-kun.”

Hearing her call him by his given name was a first. It was supposed to show how sincere Tsukiko was but Kuroo still felt upset at her. His anger was mixed over different things. There were his romantic feelings for Tsukiko, the confusion from finding out she had been leading him on all these years, and now the reason behind her showing up at Nekoma High making him angry. A bit of guilt had Kuroo wishing he wasn’t so harsh on the girl back then but how was he to know what she was going through? Did the coaches know? What if Kenma, being the keen observer he still is, actually saw through Tsukiko’s facades too?
Kuroo gritted his teeth. “Was I just that dumb?!”

Akaashi nervously picked up his ramune bottle from the table. He was grasping at the new information. It lead his mind to replay what happened the night of Oikawa’s birthday.

“How does Tsukishima-kun relate to all of this?” he asked, though directed the question towards the blond that had remained still on the farthest side of the sofa.

Tsukishima had his elbow on the armrest and his chin in his palm. He was looking away from everyone, well aware that their eyes were on him.

“You’ve been visiting him, haven’t you?” Tsukiko asked with a calmer voice.

The other responded with silence.

Yamaguchi balled his hands into fists. He looked at his friend and said, “Tsukki, please answer her.”

Tsukishima shifted his position. He leaned back and closed his eyes. “Yeah,” he finally replied.

“I visited him sometimes— only because my mom would send me to deliver flowers and fruits.”

“Your dad is also Ken’s doctor,” Tsukiko added the fact.

“...that too.” Tsukishima owned.

“That night,” Ushijima spoke up. Hearing him was always startling since he had been quiet the entire time.

“That night, you two were fighting about someone. Assuming it’s the Ken guy, then Tsukishima mentioned something about him waking up.” he said and made the others awe in realization too.
Oikawa pitched in that Ken’s condition is known for its recurrent periods, meaning he could fall asleep and wake up at unpredictable times. He turned to the blond and asked, “Is he awake?” Tsukishima stated “No,” rather quickly.

“…at least, not right now. He’s still asleep. I wouldn’t have come home otherwise,” Tsukishima added. Hearing that seemed to sting Tsukiko. She was even clutching tightly onto her knees while biting her lips.

Crossing his legs, Oikawa faced the sad girl again.

“Like Ushiwaka pointed out, Tsukki here said ‘two years ago’, which I assume means that was the last time your friend woke up. Two years ago was, hmm… either before or after you graduated from Nekoma,” he said. The way he spoke showed how insightful he actually is. Even Akaashi lagged behind in catching up with the situation.

Tsukiko raised her shoulders once more. She was curious about Tsukishima though. He did rush over to Sendai over a phone call that must’ve been about Ken. Someone unfriendly like himself managed to get close enough to Ken to practice music together too. Knowing this thought was on her mind again, Tsukishima started confessing.

“My father called to tell me that he was possibly waking up from his third episode post-traffic accident.” he said with laced fingers and looked at the girl that started weeping yet again. It disgusted him to see her constantly in tears over someone that’s supposed to be her best friend.

“This is the second time this year he called me… wanna guess when the first?”

Tsukiko sniffed and rubbed her nose.

“…during Tooru’s birthday?” she replied with hesitation but knew it had to be the answer.

And it was.

“That’s why Kei played that song… probably to get back at me for not knowing about Ken that day,” she guessed.
“Is there some way to know what he wakes up?” Akaashi inquired to keep Tsukishima talking. He replied that Ken would make noise of some kind whenever he’s about to wake up. Yesterday specifically, Tsukishima was informed by his father that Ken actually spoke out loud in his sleep.

Hinata slithered out from the kotatsu for a moment to ask, “what’d the guy say?!?”

Tsukishima lowered his head. His eyes turned a menacing brown as he said, “…he called out to Tsukiko.”

Everyone’s attention went to settle on the girl with tear streaks all over her cheeks. They were waiting for Tsukiko to say something back. It wouldn’t surprise them if she tried to run away either. Yamaguchi made sure to hold her down just in case. Ushijima was even sitting in the path to the elevator.

A realization came to Akaashi then. “How come you didn’t know?” he asked Tsukiko directly.

She was too afraid to answer that she couldn’t take her eyes off of the floor. Tsukishima however responded in her place.

“She doesn’t want to be notified on his status,” he said, adding fuel to the growing curiosity in the group.

The girl didn’t object to the statement.

“Why?” Kageyama pitched into the conversation when he reached for an orange on the table.

Hinata kicked him under the kotatsu while mouthing “rude” with his teeth.

Tsukishima again answered for Tsukiko.

“Besides it bringing her back to reality from distraction land… she thinks it’s her fault he ended up like this.”
Yamaguchi suddenly riled up.

“How can it be? It was a coincidence *that* happened to him the same day of her debut. No way she could’ve predicted it,” he said as he tried to comfort Tsukiko with his arms protectively around her.

Tsukiko shook her head and finally spoke. “I can’t help but think it is. There’s just...” Her voice started cracking.

“So many times I— I thought about how things would’ve been different if it weren’t for me. What if I hadn’t invited him? What if I had just made my debut another day later or earlier? What if I went and picked him up personally like I said I would?”

Akaashi relocated to sit on the other side of Tsukiko so he could put a hand on her shoulder. He tried to hush her and keep her body still but the girl continued to over-criticize herself. She shook like a cold, drenched cat that was pulled out of a riverbank. It sounded like Tsukiko was going to hyperventilate too.

“Please Kiko-chan, none of it was your—”

“But my best friend could’ve died because of me!” Tsukiko accidentally raised her voice, spooking Akaashi.

Tsukishima stood and said with a snarky tone, “When did you become so captious? ...pitiful.”

Both Tsukiko and Yamaguchi shot up from the sofa. The girl stepped forward with wrath oozing from her pores.

“You don’t know Ken like I do. You don’t know how important he was to me! He really could’ve died because of me!” she argued.

Tsukishima feigned empathy. “Ah, boo-hoo. Worrying over what could have happened differently is a waste of brain power.”
Tsukiko gripped her hair and yelled at the other to shut up. In case the two were going to brawl again Ushijima and Akaashi were prepared to get between them.

Hinata and Kageyama hid behind Bokuto, who had also retreated behind Kuroo.

Iwaizumi started rolling back his sleeves but Oikawa held an arm up to stop him from joining too.

“Why do you care so much for Ken anyway? I don’t even see you bat an eye when Tadashi is upset!”

“It’s different for Ken because I like him.” Tsukishima argued back.

Bokuto and Hinata gasped loudly. Their jaws dropped as they said, “TSUKKI IS GAY!?”

Kuroo on the other hand was rubbing his chin while going, “that makes sense.”

“Shut up, I am not gay.” Tsukishima sternly corrected them.

Oikawa grinned smugly. “But you just said you like a guy. Though I understand. After all, I like Iwa-chan but not in a romantic way of course~” he said.

If she wasn’t so heated with fury Tsukiko would have mentally clicked her tongue to Oikawa’s statement. But she continued to glare at Tsukishima with her neck becoming progressively sore from having to look up at him.

“A while back you said something like, ‘at least you’ll get a reply’ when Tadashi said he confessed his love to me ...what did you mean by that, Kei?” Tsukiko asked.

“None of your business.” Tsukishima responded. But Tsukiko didn’t settle down.

“You just said you like Ken though! Do you like him romantically? Did you confess to him while he was asleep? Is that what you meant—”
Tsukishima lowered his head while hovering his large hand over Tsukiko’s face, as if trying to intimidate her.

“It just means the next time I visit him I won’t hear an answer to something I asked him when he was awake! Oh, but you wouldn’t understand because you were off ‘distracting’ yourself.” he said with the arrogant tone he would use whenever mocking someone.

“Acting like you’re a victim just because your emotional ass can’t decide shit. You haven’t changed for the better, you fake bitch.”

Tsukiko clenched her teeth. “Neither have you, you… despicable asshole!”

After a few seconds of silence Tsukishima muttered, “That day you showed up to our match against Shiratorizawa… did you even go see him? The hospital was nearby.”

“No. I didn’t.” Tsukiko quickly admitted. Her head dropped when she heard Tsukishima snort chuckle. Without even looking she could tell he was wearing his high and mighty smirk.

“Just one or two hospital visits? And here I thought he meant so much to you so why did you try to forget about him? …You really don’t have the right to call him your best friend.”

Tsukishima stood his ground. His half-closed eyes drew down at the knuckles that barely reached his face.

The angry girl had three guys holding her back; Yamaguchi catching her extended arm, Akaashi wrapped around her waist, and Ushijima grabbing her other arm. Tsukiko’s expression was full of malice, much like when she was attacking Yachi from months ago.

“He’s been waiting for you dammit!” Tsukishima exclaimed.

“I know that!!”
“Then what are you so afraid of?!”

Tsukiko wailed. She dried herself of tears as she slowly descended to the floor.

“........I don’t know anymore.”

**EDIT:** in later chapters I've decided to just refer to Ken's condition as narcolepsy. Only reason I used KLS in the first place was because of the manga Kasane lol but now I'm like hmmm nahh let's just continue with narcolepsy.

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“There was another reason why I stopped contacting you during my training,” she said in a hushed voice. Her eyes became misty, causing Yamaguchi to hold her tighter. “What is it?” he asked calmly.

Everyone returned to their busy school and work lives.

The Yorozu-kan became quiet ever since Tsukiko revealed her secret a week ago; the secret of her past that she’s kept from close friends. Her mood hadn’t brightened. In the mornings she won’t greet anyone unless they did so first. It’s the same when she’s leaving the house. The guys were quick to realize their house mother was eating less too.

Tsukiko would leave the table before anyone else because she specifically requested Ushijima to prepare smaller portions for her. As much as it concerned him whether Tsukiko was actually eating properly or not, he would find himself unable to confront the girl. Akaashi also had difficulty approaching her after several attempts to bring back their “girl-to-girl” talk.

“Is it that time of the month?” Kageyama asked while stuffing rice in his cheeks.

Hinata glared at him for bringing up something inappropriate as they were still eating.

Bokuto rolled his shoulders back and exhaled a sigh. He missed talking to a cheerful girl in the morning. Seeing Tsukiko act depressed was even spreading to him.

“Wahh…” Bokuto moaned. He turned his head to Yamaguchi who was staring at his own phone. The boyfriend had been trying to communicate with Tsukiko via text messages. She wouldn’t answer anything unless he was asking what time she would be home and such.

Even at school everyone could feel how distant their female roommate was being. Nobody ran into Tsukiko as much anymore because she would head straight to work right after her classes.

One day when the boys finished their volleyball practice early they immediately went to the dance
club to check on Tsukiko. They thought they could at least catch her there but…

“She what?!” Akaashi gasped out loud.

The rest of the group was also shocked by the news. As revealed by Momo, apparently Tsukiko had already dropped out of the club. Obviously this was completely unknown to her roommates. While there were still events to perform for, all were supposedly minor enough that it would only take away Tsukiko’s time that could be used to prepare for her debut. The original purpose for Tsukiko being in the dance club was to give her more dance practice anyways.

In addition to Tsukiko no longer attending the dance club, everyone found out she wasn’t going to be home that following night. They only found out through a note left on the fridge that said so. Tsukiko wrote that she would be gone overnight for some work. She didn’t mention where she was exactly so Ushijima and Akaashi attacked her with phone calls to inquire her location.

There was no answer even hours later.

“Ya know, this was just like back then. The way she’d disappear without a word…” Kuroo said out loud. He was drinking beer to relieve some stress that he claims to be from school.

Akaashi threw away the empty cans on the table.

“Are you referring to when she was Nekoma’s manager?” he asked and Kuroo bobbed his head.

Akaashi doubted the other was drunk after three cans of beer. Tsukiko would be, but Kuroo? Nah.

Sighing heavily, Akaashi looked at his phone. His messages were unread and so were Ushijima’s. Even having Hinata call the girl didn’t work.

“You do realize I could let them know you’re here,” said a young man with blond tips in his dark shoulder-length hair.
Kenma tweaked with the joystick and pressed the corresponding buttons for the combos he memorized. The character on his screen was cornering his opponent before dealing the finishing killer blow.

On the other side of the game machine was a girl with her hair tied in sloppy braids. The display of her game’s screen was reflecting off the sunglasses she wore.

“I know you won’t though. They’ll spam your phone if you do.” Tsukiko replied after letting go of her controls. She threw her arms up and sighed in defeat.

The two were at an arcade that was smaller than the one Tsukiko had her dance-off at. It had less people in it which worked better for Kenma since he didn’t like being surrounded by bodies. He peeked over at Tsukiko, taking notice of her bored expression that was much like his own. What she said was true though; the part about getting spam from the overprotective ‘parents’ of Yorozu-kan. Kenma wasn’t actually planning to tell them that Tsukiko was with him anyway.

With it being Kenma’s birthday, he had made arrangements with Tsukiko to celebrate it. They weren’t going to do much since Tsukiko really did have work related things to do. Fortunately the place she needed to be at was a gaming studio where she would be getting details on possibly performing for a project.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, Tsukiko was allowed to invite Kenma for a tour with her. He was only interested in getting a sneak peek on some game productions though.

While waiting in the company building’s lobby Kenma’s subtle excitement faded. His energy was sapped from looking at Tsukiko’s miserable face. It was an expression he wasn’t used to seeing on her. Knowing it wouldn’t do good to ask what was wrong, Kenma kept quiet. Women were a hassle to comfort anyways.

*About two hours later...*

“You having fun?” Tsukiko asked as she reunited with Kenma after her meetings.

From the staff person that had been guiding him around, Tsukiko learned that Kenma had been doing beta tests the entire time— completely ignoring the actual tour. Honestly, she had predicted as much. She sat beside him and observed. There were minor changes in his features when reacting to the game. From the twitch of his brows to murmuring his strategies it was obvious that Kenma
was enjoying himself.

From: waka-papa

> Are you coming home tonight?

From: the pretty setter

> Where did you go for work yesterday?

> Are you still there today?

> Did you sleep somewhere safe?

Tsukiko inhaled slowly as she read the newest text messages from Ushijima and Akaashi. She knew leaving a vague note would make them anxious and yet she still did it.

The barrage of texts and missed calls that came from them was expected too. Normally the girl would clarify better and give her ‘parents’ the answers they want but lately Tsukiko felt replying was too exhausting. Then she would remind herself that she was an independent adult. She could easily take care of herself, so why would she need to tell the guys her every move? Everyone at Yorozu-kan were roommates who happen to be very close friends of hers. They were like family at times, but after recent events, Tsukiko started questioning that.

On the train ride back home Kenma was rather talkative for once. He was giving Tsukiko a rundown of his opinions on the games he tested out earlier. When it came to video games he really did act more passionate. If only he was like that with volleyball too, Tsukiko always thought. Unlike most of his friends, Kenma had stopped playing volleyball after high school. It only became something he would exclusively do with the rest of the group when they were gathered like during their beach trips.

“Alright then,” Kenma turned to Tsukiko, tilting his head slightly that his hair fell over his ears. Now he decided to start talking in a serious manner.

“What’s been up with you? You looked like Bokuto in emo mode most of the day.” he asked straightforwardly.

Tsukiko had braced herself for an interrogation to come at some point. Kenma wasn’t the type to be sympathetic but when he knew he needed to get involved, he doesn’t hesitate to jump the gun. Nothing could really go unnoticed by him.
The girl tossed her head back and stared at the darkening sky through the window. She told Kenma about the recent events that have led to the metaphorical rain cloud over her head. Saved for last, she mentioned her failed attempt of getting Kuroo to confess his feelings for her. This made Kenma roll his eyes.

“Honestly, why even care if Kuroo admits it or not? Not like it’s hindering your relationship or anything.” Kenma replied.

Tsukiko’s eyes dimmed as she squeezed her own hand. She explained how Kai speculated that Kuroo’s suppressed feelings were likely hurting him but Kenma apparently thought otherwise.

“Kuroo is simpler than you think. Like any other guy, he wants to see you be happy. He’s afraid that confessing will damage the friendship you two have had up until now.” Kenma explained.

Tsukiko sighed. She dropped her head to the side, brushing against Kenma’s shoulder.

“I’m pretty sure our friendship is ruined already,” she told him.

“We haven’t really talked like normal lately and he even avoids eye contact with me.”

Kenma huffed and said with a snarky tone, “Well yeah, you did admit to only becoming our volleyball manager to forget about your hospitalized friend.”

Tsukiko felt like curling into a ball. Every time she was reminded of her behavior in high school it always made her feel regret.

The next thing Kenma said struck her in the back too.

“I’ll be blunt. You’re acting selfishly that even I can barely tolerate it right now.”

His words were cold then. It pricked Tsukiko’s skin like needles.
“...but I know you’re confused so… take some breaks like today.” Kenma added before scooting closer to Tsukiko, propping her head up with his shoulder the way he knew she wanted.

This gesture took the girl by surprise. It was rare for Kenma to allow physical contact. If he gave Tsukiko permission to mess with his hair then she would suspect him of being an imposter or was replaced by aliens.

Afterwords, Kenma even walked her all the way home like some kind of gentleman.

Tsukiko asked why he was suddenly being one.

Kenma cocked a grin. “I’m being nice just so you can take me out to do more stuff like earlier. See? I’m leading you on too.” he jokingly said.

Before Tsukiko had completely unlocked the front door she heard thumping on the other side, which meant someone was running over to greet her. It was both Hinata and Yamaguchi.

Ushijima was also at the entrance but in the middle of putting on his shoes. The overprotective ‘father’ had gotten impatient and was about to head to Tsukiko’s workplace to ask them where she was.

“Sorry for not being clear or answering any of your texts. I was really busy.” Tsukiko said as the two younger boys helped her remove her shoes and coat.

Once in the living room where the rest seemed to be waiting, Tsukiko repeated herself and explained where she had been.

Akaashi was only slightly relieved but he couldn’t start scolding the girl right when she got home. Instead he asked if she was hungry or needed a bath; the latter being the answer.

Yamaguchi followed his girlfriend into the elevator.

“I’ll go with you. Everyone else already went except me...” he said alongside the nervous habit of stroking his ponytail. His hair had gotten longer— long enough that it could rest over his shoulders.
Tsukiko was tempted to run her fingers through her boyfriend’s hair or braid it. She liked doing that to guys with long hair.

“O-Okay,” she replied sheepishly while going off to grab things from her room.

The couple set out for the bathhouse together. Since it was near closing time they were the only guests in the baths. The wall between them was tall but they could still talk to each other through it.

Yamaguchi began a conversation by asking Tsukiko how her day was. She remained quiet before admitting the truth that she had slept over at Kenma’s then took him out for his birthday while working. It didn’t seem to bother Yamaguchi however.

“...what’s been weighing you down? Does it have to do with Ken-san?” he asked while submerging himself down to his shoulders in the water.

Tsukiko pressed herself into a corner of the bath with her bare knees poking through the water surface.

“A lot of things are suddenly coming back to me;” she said.

Tsukiko described how she had been suppressing negative emotions ever since the incident with Ken. The possibility of losing him scared her to the point she felt unable to continue smiling; and thus couldn’t focus on making her high school idol debut back then. With memories of her supposed best friend resurfacing, it bothered Tsukiko how she practically forgot that Ken existed.

“It was after the first hospital visit when I met Wakatoshi, by the way. In that awkward moment I forgot how much of an emotional wreck I was then. Interaction with others who weren’t aware of my pain was the distraction I told myself I needed.” she continued to say.

Yamaguchi turned his head to face the wall. Of course he couldn’t see Tsukiko but the connection was still there. He then asked, “Why are— er, were you fixated on being distracted? You’ve said that a lot…”
Tsukiko shrugged in response.

Realizing it was time for them to go home the girl stood up to leave. The splashing from the other side made her halt midway of stepping out of the bath. It was as if Tsukiko could feel Yamaguchi grabbing her by the wrist because he knew she was purposely cutting the conversation short.

“...it’s closing time. Let’s go home.” Tsukiko muttered.

Everyone was in bed but not all were asleep. First there was Kuroo who practically became insomniac from studying for his labs. Then there’s the couple that continued their conversation from earlier. They were both in Yamaguchi’s room.

If it weren’t for the fact they were having a serious talk, Yamaguchi would be ridden with nerves like the first time Tsukiko was on his bed. This time he was calm while holding his girlfriend close with one arm stroking her head and the other wrapped around her waist. He could tell that her body had gotten thinner but made no comment on it.

Tsukiko breathed in the male’s sweet fragrance. It matched the shampoo she got him a while back because its scent was suppose to resemble cinnamon; something she often thought Yamaguchi’s speckled cheeks reminded her of.

“The idol training really did change me,” Tsukiko started to speak again.

Yamaguchi thought for a moment then lightly nodded. “Yeah, you’re a bit different than you were from junior high,” he added.

“As idols we are expected to be these pure angels. One of the things they teach us is to keep smiling no matter what’s happening. Even if we’re shaking someone’s gross, clammy hands we still have to smile. Even if something highly inappropriate is said to us we have to keep smiling until security steps in. We can’t show a hint of discomfort otherwise our fans will riot.”

“Was it hard?” Yamaguchi asked, slightly muffled from pressing his lips against the top of his girl’s head.
“No. It was a piece of cake.” Tsukiko answered with a sarcastic-like tone.

“Smiling to outshine the bad things was something I always excelled in, now that I think back… Do you remember that one time in junior high when a student was going to jump off the roof?”

“Yeah!” Yamaguchi accidentally shouted. He froze and kept quiet to hear if his roommates woke up. Fortunately he was in the clear.

“Y-yeah. I remember thinking how crazy you were handling that situation… who confronts someone by asking to jump with them?!” he said in a hushed voice.

Tsukiko’s shoulders perked up when a chuckle escaped her.

“That was me back then; the crazy girl who smiled and laughed while doing crazy things. That me… is no more.” she said with a fallen gaze.

Yamaguchi raised a brow. He was about to say Tsukiko was still just as wild and impulsive as she was before.

The girl moved her arms up to envelop around Yamaguchi’s neck and her legs tangled with his.

“There was another reason why I stopped contacting you during my training,” she added in a hushed voice. Her eyes became misty, causing Yamaguchi to hold her tighter.

“What is it?” he asked calmly.

Tsukiko paused before exhaling, “…it’s because I didn’t want to lie to you back then.”
AHAHAHAA THAT CLIFFHANGER

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Kiss & Cry

Chapter Summary

“After that, I started to believe the stories about the dark side of the industry were actually true. People only thought of themselves. Those that appeared to lend a hand were doing it to look good. My innocent view of the world was slowly diminishing… for the better, to be honest.” Tsukiko finished explaining.

An entertainment company called GAI-ROKU was holding a training program that would produce up-and-coming first-year high school idols. There were hundreds of young girls that submitted applications but only a few dozen made the cut; one of which was Tsukiko Yamauchi, a girl from the Miyagi prefecture. Her audition tape was a recording of her junior high school festival performance. For something that was supposedly arranged at the last minute, it was well-received and said to be spectacular. That’s why an agent, who happened to see it in person, made a recommendation for Tsukiko.

Returning to Tokyo felt like going home. Tsukiko smiled widely as she breathed in the city air, which was definitely different than the countryside. She honestly had an easier time breathing in Miyagi and grew fond of the untouched nature.

“Your orientation will begin soon,” informed Madame who was walking with Tsukiko into a tall building.

There were at least twenty girls along with Tsukiko. Overhearing this was only one room of new trainees had to mean more were somewhere else.

Everyone hushed when important looking people took center stage at the front of the room. One introduced themselves as an executive producer and the person in charge of the training program.

Tsukiko made sure to listen carefully and memorize faces. She was beaming delightfully at the thought of working with everyone around her.

Once the trainees were free to mingle, Tsukiko took the chance to greet as many as she could by starting with the first person next to her.
“Nice to meet you! I’m Tsukiko, but go ahead and call me Kiko-chan~” she greeted while smiling at the blonde girl with twintails who had a cool heiress-like aura about her. Apparently unfriendly though, since she scoffed and walked away without sharing her name.

“That’s Utau Hoshina. Don’t mind her she’s probably just shy,” said a girl who was possibly the most eye-catching in the room. Her appearance didn’t particularly stand out but Tsukiko couldn’t take her eyes off the girl that introduced herself as Momo Kisaragi.

The next moment Tsukiko was left alone but she didn’t give up on her pursuit of making friends as soon as possible. By the end of the day, Tsukiko had shaken hands with every person she passed by in the building and went home feeling accomplished.

About three months have passed since Tsukiko moved back to Tokyo to become a high school idol. The apartment she settled in was small but perfect for someone living alone. It did disappoint the girl to find out she wouldn’t be living at the Yorozu-kan. The landlord had renovated it into a housing dorm for male college students. Obviously can’t have a high school girl living there.

Come spring, Tsukiko attended the high school she was contracted to debut as a student at; Fukurodani Academy. The first thing she did was introduce herself as an up-and-coming high school idol. Most of her classmates laughed but her optimism had her believing they were cheering her on. It wouldn’t be until later in the semester when Tsukiko learned the truth.

“Excuse me,” called out a pleasant voice.

Catching Tsukiko at the shoe lockers was a boy she recognized from her class. She made sure to give him a smile.

“Hello Aa-kun!” she greeted him.

Akaashi nervously stepped back from the nickname placed on him. It was similar to the way one of his volleyball teammates addressed him but he also didn’t expect it from a girl he was hardly acquainted with.

Returning to what he wanted to say, Akaashi leaned forward and whispered, “This may be rude of me but I don’t think you should hang out with those people anymore.”
From what Akaashi overheard, a group of girls were only being friendly with Tsukiko to abuse the fact she had connections to the entertainment industry. They were hoping to use her to meet celebrities or learn secrets about them. Akaashi also gave Tsukiko a warning about guys that approach her, saying it was dangerous to not suspect them of anything perverse.

None of this seemed to register for Tsukiko. At the time, she didn’t think people could harbor selfish ill-intent towards her when she does nothing but be nice to them.

“*You look like a pushover,*” stated Utau with her hands on her hips as she looked down at Tsukiko during training one day. The words from the blonde were new to Tsukiko. She didn’t understand what the other meant and supposedly made things worse by smiling in response.

The following summer brought a break from school but not with work. Tsukiko’s idol training increased as soon as she gained the free time. It was starting to take a toll on her by then. Out of everything she had been taught, only singing was her best subject.

Tsukiko danced with too much energy that she would fall out of sync with the music. Her acting skills were passionate but in a bad way where it caused her to come off as obnoxious. Modeling was also difficult because Tsukiko would move fast or pose stiffly. She use to be regarded as one of the promising trainees in the beginning. But in a couple of months that passed, the opinion on Tsukiko was changed. She was a complete amateur in everything besides singing.

“*Is she really the same girl in her audition tape?*” questioned one of the mentors.

During lunchtime, Tsukiko would continue practicing alone. She knew she would get in trouble for not properly taking time to rest but the girl wanted to improve as soon as possible. The more she watched herself move in front of the mirror the more her smile faded. Dancing was supposed to be something she loved doing just as much as singing. It was especially fun to do with her friends.

“That’s it!” Tsukiko told herself.

With a huff she jogged to her bag on the other side of the dance room. Tsukiko pulled out her red cellphone that had a number of charms dangling from it. The idea she just came up with was to talk to one of her friends in hopes of hearing their voice would instill excitement back into her.

First were her old clubmates that graduated from her junior high, some of which she last heard were pursuing their own musical careers in high school. Nobody was picking up though so Tsukiko
assumed they were busy. Her eyes lit up when she saw her boyfriend’s name next on the list. As she was going to call him, her phone had suddenly disappeared from her hands.

“No cellphones at work~” cooed a young male that stood behind Tsukiko. She never noticed when the guy entered the room so he did surprise her.

Before she could go through her memory to figure out who he was, Tsukiko was more focused on getting her device back. She asked nicely to which the other teasingly held the phone out but only to then pull it back and hold in the air.

Tsukiko leaped upward with no luck in reaching her phone due to her shorter stature compared to the man.

“Hmm? This is a guy’s name. Were you going to text a guy? A boyfriend, perhaps~?” he asked with a smirk.

Tsukiko nodded while keeping a composed grin. She didn’t want to seem distressed or angry that a stranger wasn’t returning her phone. If it gets confiscated then she would accept the punishment. It wasn’t like it was going to be held from her forever, she thought.

“No, no, nooo good. It’ll be bad if your fans find out you have a boyfriend little miss. Here… I’ll end it for you.”

The malice in the man’s voice was clear.

Eye-wide, Tsukiko started to panic. Was someone really going to do something as cruel as message her boyfriend a breakup text right in front of her? While she had heard about dating being a forbidden practice for idols, Tsukiko wasn’t told otherwise when she signed up for the job and therefore believed it was acceptable in the company.

Once more the girl got up on her toes to stretch for her phone.

“Please, give it back…!” she begged.
Growing desperate, Tsukiko began to jump with more force. It only seemed to entertain the person that was patronizing her.

The second Tsukiko’s fingers brushed against the man’s hand, he suddenly pushed her against the nearest wall. He had a wicked look in his eyes as he pinned the girl back.

Noticing that he was scanning her body caused Tsukiko to freeze. She had never been in this position. As romantic as it looked in shoujo manga, she knew that’s not how it was in her situation.

Without warning, the man grabbed Tsukiko’s shoulders and she emitted a frightened yelp. Her reaction caused him to burst out in laughter that her phone slipped out of his hand and hit the hard floor.

Without apologizing, he left.

Later, when other trainees returned to the practice room, all they found was a stunned Tsukiko staring at the broken phone in her hands.

Tsukiko made sure to report to someone about what happened. It was the proper thing to do since she was told to notify people of anything that made her uncomfortable while at work. What she didn’t expect was to find out the man did it for her.

“Miss Yamauchi, please be careful and don’t overwork yourself. Take your breaks when you have to,” said the person in charge of training her.

The story they received was not exactly what Tsukiko actually went through. They were told that Tsukiko chose not to go on break but to continue practicing and then, while she was going through her bag, she had fallen from exhaustion. The man who passed by approached Tsukiko to help and make sure she was okay but she pushed him away, which accidentally resulted in her dropping her phone too. It clearly wasn’t the truth.

Tsukiko knew she had to expose it, and yet, she kept quiet. Silence wasn’t something she thought she was capable of doing. The rising fear in her stomach was a new sensation to her. It didn’t help when Tsukiko heard a rumor about someone that dropped out of the training. Supposedly the girl was ignored when she reported harassment and was accused of lying about it. Had Tsukiko confessed her side of the real story, would the same happen to her?
Tsukiko continued to keep her lips sealed as her training went on.

Aside from the incident that resulted in her broken phone, she was being bullied by other trainees and even some mentors. The more Tsukiko tried to be positive the more she was being shunned and alienated. Nobody was offering or willing to be a unit with her either when it came to partnering up.

“**You think you’re sooo great,**” they would say.

“**Get off your high horse rookie!**” she would hear.

“**What a kiss-up,**” she got called.

Tsukiko pushed forward believing that none of the discouragement mattered so long she reached her goal… until the news about Ken made it to her moments before she stepped onto a stage.

“After that, I started to believe the stories about the dark side of the industry were actually true. People only thought of themselves. Those that appeared to lend a hand were doing it to look good. My innocent view of the world was slowly diminishing… for the better, to be honest.”

Tsukiko finished explaining. She felt Yamaguchi’s arms on her body tense up. Without looking, she knew he was fuming. The deep breaths blowing into her hair meant so.

Yamaguchi was mad at those who trampled over Tsukiko’s kindness. A part of him was also upset with himself because this happened when he barely kept in touch with Tsukiko. Had he kept in contact with her, could he have helped her get through it all? This same thinking of “what if I did this back then” was exactly how Tsukiko felt towards what happened to Ken. Guilt was a nasty bug.

Yamaguchi was gripping tightly onto the girl that it didn’t occur to him he was possibly hurting her. His mind was clouded with a mix of anger and guilt. All he wanted to do was keep holding Tsukiko and act like all the bad things would go away the longer she remained in his arms.
“I lied…” Tsukiko mumbled with her face pressed against Yamaguchi’s heated chest.

“It actually was hard to keep smiling when I knew I was hurt. I didn’t reach out to you because I didn’t want to lie and say that everything was alright when it really wasn’t. You always saw me as this amazing person who could do anything and I—I didn’t want to shatter that.” she said with water forming in her eyes.

The same was happening to Yamaguchi. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing from Tsukiko. Finding out that she had been hiding so much behind a forced smile was making him feel bad for never realizing anything before.

Yamaguchi lifted Tsukiko’s chin so the two could finally make eye contact. Both were in tears.

“From now on… please, please, please! Please tell me everything that’s weighing you down. I want to know when you’re upset and why so I can help you. Think of me as your safeplace too. Count on me and I’ll do whatever I can to help you, just like how you helped me…!” said the freckled young man.

The only times Tsukiko normally saw Yamaguchi cry were when they had to leave each other after their dates because they lived miles away. Now that they were under the same roof they both had a place to return to together.

Tsukiko moved up so her nose reached Yamaguchi’s while crying with him. In turn he pressed his forehead on hers too.

Yamaguchi could feel his lips close to brushing against Tsukiko’s and the urge to kiss her was extremely overwhelming.

Disregarding their way of keeping promises, Yamaguchi went ahead and kissed Tsukiko anyways. The girl didn’t object to it at all. In fact, she would have done it first if her boyfriend waited a second later.

“I don’t even know why I want to be an idol anymore,” Tsukiko said when the tears ceased. She was cradled in Yamaguchi’s arms again while enveloped by his blankets. With how late it was she didn’t bother going to her own room. Spending a night together would make it easier for the couple to sleep peacefully too.
“You told me it was because you wanted to spread a love for music,” Yamaguchi replied, followed with a slight sniffle.

Tsukiko turned her body so that Yamaguchi could feel more comfortable spooning her from behind. She took his free hand and brought it to her cheek. It was pleasantly warm.

“Hey, Tadashi.”

“Yes Tsukiko?”

“...Do you love me?”

“Of course I do.”

“......can you say it again?”

“I love you.”

After a silent pause, Tsukiko replied in a single breath; “I love you too.”

Yamaguchi’s body relaxed. His eyes closed and his breathing settled. For the rest of the night he was in complete tranquility. There was no need for him dream either because falling asleep with Tsukiko beside him was already his dream come true.
guest characters this chapter were Utau Hoshina from Shugo Chara! and Momo Kisaragi from Kagerou Project

p.s. because I'm a terrible college student I need to prioritize schoolwork right now, which means updates will be delayed and I don't have a lot of chapters to offer either ;") at least right here is a pretty good point to pause~ LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEXT CHAPTERS BECAUSE IT'S ANOTHER FLASHBACK ARC~!!!!!

p.s.s. I started rereading WAT and aside from all the typo mistakes I made, I noticed how much my art style for the ending sketches changed LOL they were so messy back then wow

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It was only middle school. There wasn’t anything special about it—yet.

This is the story of the beginning.

This is how Yamaguchi and Tsukiko met.

From his perspective, it was an encounter he still believes to be a destined one.

It was only middle school. There wasn’t anything special about it—yet.

Yamaguchi walked the way with his friend Tsukishima; the two having come from the same elementary school. He was glad to continue going the next grade up with someone he was already acquainted with at least. Making friends had been a challenge for Yamaguchi. Often it was due to the blemishes on his face because freckles weren’t considered an appealing feature by most. Having been bullied for it caused Yamaguchi to find insecurity in his appearance.

Even as he walked into his new school he told himself, “I’ll probably never get a girlfriend looking like this…”

The boys arrived at their school. Being obvious first years, they were directed to the orientation
site. It went on for an agonizing hour and a half but formalities were traditional.

Yamaguchi looked around. He noticed from his eye level that there were a few people slightly shorter than him. Having grown quite a bit, the boy looked forward to being tall and cool like the friend beside him. Girls like guys with height after all, right?

“The hell is going on?” Tsukishima cursed and would’ve been scolded if his friend wasn’t also thinking the same.

After the opening ceremony, first year students found themselves being attacked by upperclassmen trying to promote them into their clubs. The hallways resembled a shopping market with the way club recruitment was happening.

Yamaguchi blinked nervously when a girl approached him and Tsukishima to join the Art Club. The blond stated a harsh rejection then kept walking with his flustered friend following behind.

They both had already decided on what club they were joining: volleyball. Since they had already experience with the sport it was a given they’d continue playing. Even despite what happened with Tsukishima’s brother, the boy was going to join his school’s volleyball team for the credits. He believed because he already knew how to play it would be an easy club to be in. Plus, with his growing height, he was confident they would accept him on the spot.

Outside of the main building was the courtyard. Its spacious area was filled with booths too. All of it had to do with the various student clubs.

“There’s waaay too many at this school,” Yamaguchi commented and Tsukishima grunted in agreement. They had heard their school was keen on promoting social bonds through its extra curricular activities, but what they were seeing looked rather excessive.

There appeared to be some obscure clubs among the lineup. How laidback would a school have to be to allow a Viking Club?

None of them mattered though. The boys needed to maneuver around the crowd in their search for the school’s volleyball club. As they did, loud music blared through tall speakers that were stationed by the courtyard centerpiece. Around it were students playing instruments. Bouncing with a microphone in hand was their vocalist.
Concrete beating up and down

In a dream, fell awake, hazy days were never ending

Templates follow all around

Same old days, but we just didn't know

The girl was small in stature but she had a strong voice. Though interesting as she was, hardly anybody paid attention to her or her band. In fact, it looked like people were avoiding her club in particular.

Yamaguchi kept following his Tsukishima around the courtyard but he couldn't take his eyes off the singer.

Along with her captivating voice she had a cute face. She wore the uniform jacket around her waist with her blouse not properly tucked into her skirt. The hair on her back was long and looked silky smooth as though she came out from one of those hair product commercials. Her front bangs appeared to have been cut at a crooked angle, adding to her rather unkempt fashion.

Despite all that, Yamaguchi had his sights glued to the girl.

After a couple of lines in the song he watched as she ditched the microphone stand and started walking around the courtyard.

C'mon, batten down your eyes

Don't know where to turn?

Without you, there's nowhere to go

A pair of students were startled when the vocalist ran up to them suddenly. While still singing, she appeared to be giving them a look over. The girl took one of their hands and led them to a booth ran by the Gaming Club. She approached another student and did the same thing.

Repeatedly as she continued to sing and dance, the girl was matching freshmen with the different clubs scattered around the area. Some shyly walked away from the booths they were taken. However, a good majority stayed to chat with the members before being given a registration sheet.
To the kid in the back, with their eyes all swollen red

This blue, more blue

Beyond blue summer skies

If only I could reach you, then you’d see

More and more students were being directed to clubs that seemed to match their outer profile.

A student with a flamboyant appearance was shown to the Drama Club. Another with a visible tan line was given to the Swimming Club.

One with a charm of an anime character on their bag had been fated to meet with the Anime Club.

Yamaguchi and Tsukishima found themselves at the end of the courtyard where there were no more club booths in their view. Seeing as they couldn’t find what they were looking for, they were settled on going back inside the school and just wait until later in the day to sign up for volleyball.

Turning their heels they both jumped from the singing girl appearing to approach them.

“Please wait, I’m here whenever you’re alone,” she said.

The words were part of her song but Yamaguchi felt like she was actually talking to them.

“Just wait— another day will come I’m sure!”

When meeting eyes with the vocalist, Yamaguchi was bewitched by the first thing he noticed; a little beauty mark. Bless the wind just now for blowing her hair out of the way and adding some cherry blossom petals around her. Oh, how he wished he could keep a picture of this scene.

“Be it loneliness, or broken hearts…”

The girl raised a hand while slowly stepping back.
Yamaguchi and Tsukishima watched curiously. She ran between the boys then leapt off the ground, making a pose midair that they recognized.

“I’m here for you, so share your PART!” she sang loudly with a ball appearing where the palm of her hand struck down. It bounced off the ground and back into the arms of the person who tossed it for her.

“Nice kill~!” said the Volleyball Club’s captain. He waved to the girl that returned to the middle of the courtyard so she could finish her song.

“Hi there!” The captain greeted the two boys. He jogged over to them, immediately taken aback by their height when he got close. Were these really middle school freshmen, he thought. A chuckle escaped him too.

“Clearly that’s why she picked you two out for me,” he said.

Yamaguchi raised a brow. Seeing the questioning look on the first year’s face, the upperclassman explained the meaning behind his words then.

“That girl there has a good sense of knowing where people belong. You saw the kid she sent to the Gaming Club earlier? I overheard it was because she noticed he had gamer’s callus. For you two she figured with your heights you’d fit right in with my team. I’m glad she didn’t ship you off to basketball though, haha!”

Yamaguchi was amazed that someone could analyze a person like that in mere seconds all while not messing up her singing in the process.

Tsukishima on the other hand wasn’t as impressed since he wasn’t interested in the first place. He asked for the club registration sheet while his freckled friend was staring in awe at the musical club that finished performing.

“Thank you, thank you!” shouted the vocalist that now had people’s attention.

“We are the Coverist Research Society~! Join us if you’re down to cover cool songs!!” she said
and people applauded with positive cheers.

Yamaguchi too found himself clapping before Tsukishima shoved a sheet of paper into his chest. It was the registration form for volleyball. Ah, that’s right… he’s joining sports.

For the next couple of days Yamaguchi couldn’t stop thinking about the vocalist that helped him find his club. It was the dot under her left eye that really wouldn’t leave his mind. He started wondering if he was developing a crush on someone he didn’t know at all. Would it make him a creep if he actually had a dream about her? Well. Too late.

Ever since the first day of school, Yamaguchi often caught himself pondering on the female vocalist. Not only was she a cutie, but despite having not actually interacted with her, Yamaguchi knew she was a good person. Her smile was kind and her bubbly movement gave her a childish trait.

For a moment Yamaguchi fantasized on the possibility of dating this girl but soon enough his doubts began to flood his mind.

She was attractive— Yamaguchi was not.

She was talented— Yamaguchi was not.

That’s that.

“Don’t crush on her! She’s way out of your league!” he told himself with light slaps to his cheeks.

“Motivating yourself?” asked a girl that came from behind him.

Yamaguchi jolted back and nearly hit the hallway window. He had no idea someone was around him and it happened to be the person he was just thinking about.

“U-Uhh…” he fumbled with his tongue, unsure of what to respond with.
The girl laughed at him. She held up balled fists then said, “Good luck with whatever it is!”

Her kind words were heartwarming, making Yamaguchi feel motivated for nothing in particular.

Seeing her up close again he noticed her eyelashes were long and looked like little fans. It was tempting Yamaguchi to touch them but of course he wouldn’t do it. Then there, under her left eye when she cocked her head slightly to the side, the girl’s beauty mark came out of hiding.

The cute girl properly greeted Yamaguchi as to finally introduce herself.

“Nice to meet you by the way! I’m Yamauchi, Tsukiko a second year. Call me Kiko-chan please~” she said with a cute chipper voice that would have rendered Yamaguchi speechless.

“H-Hi..! My uhh— actually, my name happens to be Yamaguchi…!” he replied and Tsukiko covered her agape mouth from playful shock.

Yamaguchi continued to comment by adding, “My friend’s name is Tsukishima too, so it’s like you’re a mashup of our names!”

The statement made Tsukiko laugh again, which sounded more musically than her singing from before. The boy was genuinely surprised by the coincidence though. Could it possibly mean something? Who meets someone with a name that’s only one character off from their own?

Tsukiko held her arms behind her back, leaning forward.

“Ah yeah! You were with someone that day. Really tall, blond, and glasses right?” she asked.

Suddenly Yamaguchi felt his chest sink. The mention of his more attractive friend always made him feel this way. Why did he think for a moment he could be friendly with this girl? He should’ve known it was Tsukishima that caught her eye first. That had to be why she was talking to him too. Yamaguchi was just a stepping stone to get to Tsukishima, clearly. Girls typically approached him only for that reason.
The school bell rang, indicating break time was over.

Tsukiko waved to Yamaguchi.

“See ya later~” she told him before skipping ahead down the hallway.

A teacher scolded her, saying she needed to walk normally when indoors. Tsukiko’s giggle echoed and reached Yamaguchi’s ears. It made his cheeks flush deeply. His throbbing heart became audible too.

There it was; the first flag signalling the development of a young boy crushing for a girl.

“Please… please stop…” Yamaguchi tried to tell his heart but it continued dancing and singing to the tune of love.

Later that afternoon came time for club activities.

Yamaguchi and Tsukishima made their way to the gym for volleyball practice. Since the usual path was blocked due to cleaning, they had to go another way. The two freshmen passed by a nearby classroom where a familiar voice leaked out of the open door. They stopped for a moment to listen.

Yamaguchi bodly peeked and as he expected, the voice was from Tsukiko. Her hair was tied up in a crooked ponytail and she was singing next to a piano. The way the sun shone through the windows added an angelic glow around her. It really seemed that every time Yamaguchi saw her, she looked like a painting.

The song Tsukiko sang was a calming melody. Her singing was bonding with the light music, becoming what had to be the perfect harmony.

“Let’s hurry,” complained Tsukishima when he realized his plus one was lagging behind from getting distracted.
“Sorry, Tsukki!” Yamaguchi apologized as he gripped the straps of his sports bag. He took one last glance at Tsukiko before sprinting off, continuing to beat himself with negative thinking.

Don’t fall for her, Yamaguchi berated himself.

Back in the classroom, the music soon stopped.

“You said one of the lines wrong,” The boy playing the piano told his vocalist.

Tsukiko dropped her jaw from the revelation then scrambled through the lyrics on her sheet. She groaned to find that her mistake was true.

A third year with a piercing gaze crossed his arms over his chest and shook his head in disappointment.

“Didn’t you tell us you had it perfectly down?” he said.

Another with the same face clapped his hands happily.

“She tried and that’s what counts~” he snickered.

Tsukiko puffed her cheeks in a pout. “Tokiii~! Hatoooo~!” she rolled their names.

Someone of much smaller frame knocked Tsukiko down with a strong kick to her knees.

“If you’re going to be an idol like me then at least be a worthy challenge!” hissed the other girl.

“Sorry Lunacchi…” Tsukiko whined. Her friend at the piano held his hand out to lift her back up.
“Let’s try again Ken, please~!” she begged him.

With half-closed eyes behind thin-framed glasses, the pianist nodded.

“Of course,” Ken replied to Tsukiko with a soft grin.

song: "Daze" ft. MARiA / Jin ... english lyrics by Jubyphonic + annapantsu

I know ~technically~ Daze wouldn't exist in this time but I always imagined this song for the club recruitment scene so I am bending reality space and time to my liking ;3

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“What have you been doing?” Tsukishima asked one day. It was rare to hear him be curious enough to want to know what was going on in someone else’s life. Yamaguchi’s lips perked up. “I uhh… kinda joined another club.”

Unlike normal music clubs, the Coverists Research Society’s goal was to learn how to create music by covering songs already in existence. It was founded two years ago by a music cover junkie and a student council member. The club’s name was only known after Tsukiko joined, meaning last year was by far their best time.

With the founding members having graduated now there were only five others left:

Second year Tsukiko Yamauchi, vocalist and bassist.

Second year Ken Tsubasa, pianist.

Third year Lunar Edomae, vocalist and mixer.

Third year Hayato Ichinose, all-rounder and vice-captain.

Third year Tokiya Ichinose, all-rounder and captain.

Though their club recruiting performance from a month ago turned into a spectacle, CRS actually received no new member applications afterwards.

“I BLAME KIKO-CHAN FOR SCARING THEM ALL AWAY!!” cried Lunar. She chewed angrily on her thumbnail while Hayato laughed at her distress.

“Ahh~ not like it’s too late to recruit though! We can go ask around again and again and again!” he stated enthusiastically. His twin brother was the least amused but still highly upset about having no
new members.

“I told you to not move around,” Tokiya said with a menacing glare directed at Tsukiko.

The girl smiled sheepishly.

“I know buuuut I thought engaging with the audience would make them more interested? Lunacchi taught me that.” Tsukiko replied with her fingers tapping the chair she sat backwards in.

Lunar turned away from Tokiya’s mean face while fake whistling.

“How about the first year over there?” Ken pointed out with a raised hand.

Everyone looked at him with question marks over their heads until shifting attention to the door. There was indeed someone hiding at the entrance of their clubroom.

Yamaguchi’s shoulders shook. He didn’t think anyone would have noticed him after all this time.

“Ohh! It’s Yamu!” shouted the girl that made his heart skip and his stomach churn at the same time.

“You came to peek at CRS again?” Tsukiko asked with an innocent grin.

Yamaguchi felt his soul about to slip away. “I— I uhh… I’m—!” he stuttered terribly. His nerves worsened when his crush standing in front of him took a step closer. He could even see himself as a reflection in her eyes.

“I never realized it until now but you’ve got freckles!” Tsukiko stated with awe.

“Ah! Yes! I do!” Yamaguchi yelped.
“So, who’s the mess? One her fanboys?” Lunar asked Ken who gave the other girl a shrug. He only knew about Yamaguchi from Tsukiko having briefly mentioning him once and that was it.

“Apparently she wanted to recruit him here for his hands.” Ken added with a finger placed at his chin.

Tokiya’s features crinkled with curiosity. “His hands?” he wondered before noticing it himself.

Yamaguchi was shaky. It had to be due to his shyness around a girl but to Tokiya he saw something else too.

“Boy!” he called out.

Yamaguchi squeaked in response. “M-Me?” he asked just to be sure.

Tokiya waved at the large set of instruments in the corner of the room.

“Play for us,” he demanded.

Yamaguchi never felt more nervous about being forced to do something. And with a set of drums of all things. He held the wooden sticks in his pulsing hands.

“But I— I don’t really…” he tried to explain that he had minor experience with drums. However the stern look Tokiya was giving him meant backing out wasn’t an option. Yamaguchi had a feeling he wouldn’t be allowed to live if he didn’t start playing soon.

Tsukiko leaned over with her hands cupped around her mouth. “You got this~” she whispered to him.

The girl smiled before giving Yamaguchi a quick demonstration. She took an extra pair of drumsticks and played a simple tune while leaning next to Yamaguchi. The scent of her hair distracted him that he had to be given the instruction a second time.
Yamaguchi then swallowed his anxiety as best he could and repeated what Tsukiko showed him.

It didn’t sound the same. At. All.

This was it, he thought. This was where he died of shame.

“Great!” Tsukiko clapped.

Hayato chuckled and clapped too, leaving Yamaguchi with confusion.

“Huh? But I—”

“Didn’t get it right at all,” Tokiya stated.

Yamaguchi dropped his olive eyes to the floor. He knew this would happen. It felt as though he got bullied into his situation that resulted in him being an embarrassment in front of a girl he happened to like.

“However, that’s the point.” Tokiya’s added words made Yamaguchi blink.

Tsukiko took the boys arm and lifted it high. Hayato did the same with the other side.

“Make mistakes to learn from them so you can improve~!” they said in unison.

Lunar scoffed. “Well? Are we recruiting the kid or not?!” she shouted.

Yamaguchi was taken aback. He didn’t realize the club needed members. Five people seemed to be enough.

“Oh… but I’m already in volleyball,” he told the group.

“No problem! We’ve got some meetings on days volleyball doesn’t have practice so you can still join us~!” Hayato informed the first year. This gave Yamaguchi a ray of hope because now he had a way to actually interact with Tsukiko more often.

“There wasn’t anything special about his hands, huh?” Tokiya later whispered to Ken who had a fox-like grin on his face.

“Yep. I just made that part up to provoke you,” he told the captain bluntly.

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Like Hayato said, there were times when the CRS had meetings for Yamaguchi to actively attend.

On days the volleyball team didn’t have their practices or couldn’t use the gym, Yamaguchi would find himself inside of the music-filled clubroom instead of peeking into it from the outside hallway. Before he could pick up any instrument he was taught how to read a music sheet first. It wasn’t as difficult as it looked since he had some knowledge from grade school.

When Yamaguchi’s tired mind couldn’t focus on the lessons with Ken though, his attention would drift over to Tsukiko. She would be doing vocal exercises with the third years or discussing their upcoming performance plans. Sometimes he heard her spout random nonsense that, according to Hayato, were anime references.

“Amazing, right?” Ken asked, breaking Yamaguchi’s distraction.

“E-Eh?!?” the boy gasped while looking down bashfully.

Ken gave him a grin. “She is pretty amazing. I can tell you’ve picked that up already,” he clarified himself.
Yamaguchi, knowing that he was blushing madly, hid his face behind papers and kept listening as Ken continued talking about Tsukiko. He went on mentioning how other clubs would ask for her help in their activities. From modeling for the Art Club or being a substitute player in one of the sports; she’d lend them a hand so long it wasn’t when CRS had an important practice.

This heightened Yamaguchi’s impression on Tsukiko. All he could think was how he came to befriend a person with several talents. Lingering in the back of his mind was a thought taking notice to how much Ken was also looking over at Tsukiko with a smile. They’re childhood friends, he learned at some point. However, the way Ken and Tsukiko interacted made them seem more closer than just childhood friends.

“What have you been doing?” Tsukishima asked one day. It was rare to hear him be curious enough to want to know what was going on in someone else’s life.

Yamaguchi’s lips perked up.

“I uhh… kinda joined another club,” he confessed but Tsukishima said nothing in return.

The blond continued to be a surprise. Usually he would go straight home on days off from volleyball but this time he had followed Yamaguchi after school.

The two arrived at the CRS clubroom where its five members had been waiting for the special sixth.

“Ooh! A seventh?!” Hayato began to sparkle from seeing Yamaguchi’s plus one.

Tsukishima shot the third year down immediately. “No way,” he said. His golden eyes surveyed the room until landing on what could be the only reason Yamaguchi decided to get involved with such a club.

Tsukiko approached the first years.

“Hiya there Zukishi!” she greeted Tsukishima.
The room went silent.

Tsukishima couldn’t make sense of what happened. His name got butchered by an upperclassman he didn’t know. Already he was too ticked off to even care about making a correction. He turned back around and started walking away.

“Ah! Tsukki, wait!” Yamaguchi called out to his friend.

“She’s got this weird habit of giving nicknames,” Ken explained to Yamaguchi later. He mentioned it being something Tsukiko did ever since they were children.

“Sometimes I wonder if she actually doesn’t know how to pronounce most names,” he added with a soft chuckle.

Yamaguchi pretended to laugh along. At least he knew why Tsukiko called him by an odd name too.

“Hey, uh… was it really okay that I joined you guys?” Yamaguchi asked while dropping his head.

The boy still worried that there was a problem with him being in the CRS club while simultaneously doing volleyball. He felt everyone, especially Tsukiko, took musical performance seriously. In comparison to his sports team the CRS were much more passionate about their craft. The Volleyball club had yet to do practice matches with other schools and junior high tournaments were closing in. Despite that, there wasn’t any rise in motivation among the team members. As Tsukishima would say in his own uninterested words, it really was only club activities.

Ken put a curled finger to his chin. “That’s up to you to decide,” he answered Yamaguchi before adding, “but in my opinion joining us is a good thing for you.”

The reply gave the first year some reassurance but he wasn’t completely convinced.

“Hey, hey, Yamu!” Tsukiko brought Yamaguchi out of his daze. He met eyes with the girl briefly until shying away to the floor they were cleaning.
“Y-Yeah?” he answered.

“Did I do something to offend your friend?” Tsukiko asked with her face pressing against the stick of the broom.

Yamaguchi waved his hands. “Oh! No! He’s uhh… like that.”

Panic filled his mind as he started thinking that Tsukiko was interested in Tsukishima again. This wasn’t the first time she asked about him so his thoughts wandered to the conclusion.

“Does he play an instrument? Judging by his hands I’d say piano or clarinet suit him!” Tsukiko continued to comment. Little did she know her sudden fixation on Tsukishima was doing some damage to Yamaguchi’s heart.

Things got busy with exams for the end of the first term. Diligent grades were important for the school just as much as the extra curriculars were. While it was only junior high, the pressure for meeting high expectations wasn’t something to make light of. Every student had their personal situations and reasons. Some were lax about their education while others had to keep their heads high for the sake of good marks. However, things can happen to people that become emotionally unstable when they’re overwhelmed by stress.

“H-Hey! On the roof!” someone exclaimed in the middle of a math lecture.

Yamaguchi looked up from his notes and followed everyone’s line of sight out the window. He gasped along with the class when noticing a lone student standing on the very edge of the west wing rooftop. The student was holding onto the railing while trying to muster the rest of their courage in completing their impulsive act. Those that were interested pressed their faces against their classroom window while others who wanted a closer view ran outside despite what the teachers said. Soon enough a good portion of the school had given their attention to the person about to commit suicide.

“Are they really going to do it?” someone murmured.

“Will the teachers make it in time?” someone questioned.
Faculty were in fact on their way but found the key to the rooftop missing. It was likely that the student had stolen it and then locked the rooftop exit to prevent intervention.

From the ground, those who knew the student were trying to talk them out of jumping. Their concerned words were ignored though.

“Shut up! All of you!” said the suicidal student.

“I’m sick and tired of all you fakers! Just leave me alone!!!”

“Sweet, I made it~” came a voice from behind.

Tsukiko climbed over the last step of the ladder, letting out a triumphant huff.

The other student stared at her with their mouth open from shock. They were baffled to not have realized someone would use the fire escape to get to them.

“D-Don’t come any closer… o-or else I’ll— I’ll jump!” cried the student.

Tsukiko blinked as the breeze dragged her loose ponytail around. Putting a finger to her chin, she paused to think for a moment.

Attention went towards the rising volume of instrumentals. The music started off with drums. And then when it came her cue, Tsukiko started singing.

Yamaguchi couldn’t believe what he was seeing. Was that really Tsukiko on the roof too? He asked Tsukishima to double check for him and the blond responded with a surging grunt.

The boy felt his throat choke from the intense fear of the scene happening outside his classroom. Yamaguchi had no idea what Tsukiko was thinking about getting involved in something dangerous. All he could do was watch while frozen in his seat and wait for the situation to be over.
Minutes later he and other classmates exhaled relief. They all saw the student returning to the inside of the rooftop and taking Tsukiko’s hand. It looked like the event had been resolved but what came next had Yamaguchi standing out of his seat.

The dangerous incident that occurred at school brought a commotion that had students talking for days and the school board working to prevent future repetitions.

Yamaguchi still had the scene engraved in his memory. His heart would race whenever he remembered in a slow motion reel of Tsukiko jumping off the roof with the student that attempted to commit suicide. Though she landed unscaved thanks to a safety mat at the ground, Yamaguchi couldn’t help but worry over her afterwards.

Tsukiko succeeded in talking the student out of their dark thoughts but why did she make them jump anyway? And why together? It was only later when Yamaguchi heard the details from Ken. Apparently Tsukiko’s reasoning was for them to see that they would feel better jumping over obstacles rather than falling into a pit. Of course, she had gone and made them do it literally.

If Yamaguchi had known he would crush hard for a girl daring enough to risk her life for another he would have done a better job at stopping himself months ago.

Even so, Yamaguchi couldn’t stop repeating in his head; “She’s too cool…”
guest characters are Tokiya/Hayato Ichinose from Uta no Prince-sama! and Lunar Edomae from Seto no Hanayome. They'll be showing up throughout this arc~

"so is this 'coverist research society' just a group of kids trying to be utaites?" //nervous sweat;;

uuuhhhhhhh. Yes LMAO. THIS FLASHBACK TAKES PLACE IN THE AGE WHEN VOCALOID FANCOVERS WERE ALL THE RAGE ON NICO NICO DOUGA AND YOUTUBE X'D

HEY HEY HEY IT'S KEN! I swear, every iteration I design of Ken he always ALWAYS has the closed/slit eye look lol seriously just look at the Ken in my Boku no Hero Academia fic xD hope you like Ken's character though! He's honestly such a sweet boi ; v ; also the way Tsukiko handled the attempted suicide was based off a similar scene from some Asian drama I saw years ago which is why it's such an unrealistic thing to do please don't actually help someone like this omg;;

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The Me Who Dreamed

Chapter Summary

“One time I was supposed to lock up right? But then I completely forgot the key in the room and left it unlocked the entire time!” Tsukiko laughed. She turned around to keep talking with Yamaguchi, only to find out the boy was no longer in the room. Again, he had chosen to run away silently.

The volleyball team’s summer camp took place when summer vacation began. However there wasn’t much going on with it.

Everyone slept in the gym at night and then worked slightly harder than usual during the day.

Tsukishima was constantly praised for his blocking to which he would say wasn’t worthy of kindness. He went on saying how he just happened to be really tall to brush over the fact he didn’t need to put much effort into his jumps.

As for Yamaguchi, he would get added in every time height was mentioned too. The freckled boy had yet to find something of his own to really work on. Be it a serve or receiving technique, nothing was really bringing out his determination to become part of the main lineup. It looked more like he was tagging along his friend for the ride.

“Hey, it’s her!” shouted a teammate. They pointed at a girl who was talking to the captain.

Yamaguchi missed his practice serve and the ball hit his head.

“K-K-KIKO-SENPAI!” he gasped before covering his mouth.

Eyeballing the scene from the floor, Yamaguchi wondered why Tsukiko showed up at the gym. He hadn’t seen her for several days because she got suspended after her jumping stunt. Did she find out that Yamaguchi had been skipping on CRS meetings?

“I can’t tell her I stopped going because she’s been gone...” Yamaguchi mentally wept.
Something he heard a teammate suddenly whisper got his attention. Apparently the captain used to, or still has a crush on Tsukiko. Now knowing that, Yamaguchi could see the friendly air around the two as something else. His self-doubting thoughts wallowed over how good of a pair they looked.

During a break, the captain had called for Yamaguchi.

“You get to leave early. Aren’t you lucky!” he happily told the confused first year.

Tsukishima overheard and grumbled. He wished he could get out of practice too. It wasn’t all that interesting to begin with.

Yamaguchi wiped his sweaty palms on his shirt. He wished he could have changed into something more appropriate for the occasion but it was a last minute plan. From what the captain told him, Tsukiko was asking permission to let Yamaguchi leave practice early. Why? So he could go to the festival with her.

It wasn’t specifically with just Tsukiko though, much to Yamaguchi’s slight disappointment. The CRS decided to go as a group and they included him. Fortunately, he wasn’t the only person not wearing a yukata; the only other being Tsukiko. That also disappointed him because he was hoping to bask in her yukata beauty. Instead she wore a sleeveless hoodie and cargo shorts with her hair tied to a side braid. Despite the plain casual attire it felt refreshing to see the girl outside of uniform for the first time. Yamaguchi took a moment to thank the heavens for bestowing him this chance to see her regardless.

“What’s a festival without takoyaki~!” hollered Hayato as he shoved a steaming piece of fried food into his mouth. He started fanning his now burnt tongue.

Lunar scolded him for his idiocy before accidentally doing the same thing he did.

Tokiya groaned at both of them.

The third years continued to lead their small pack through the long street. With Tsukiko and Ken being childhood friends, Yamaguchi felt the most out of place. He hadn’t really talked to anybody
since they started walking onto the festival grounds. It mostly had to do with how anxious he was
to be hanging out with his crush outside of school. The bead of sweat running down her neck was
alluring and the sound of her laughter was music to his ears. As nice of a sight Tsukiko was,
Yamaguchi couldn’t help but feel he didn’t belong.

To test something out, Yamaguchi slowed his pace until he came to a complete stop. As he
predicted, everybody kept moving forward.

He turned around to head back to the school but then felt a cold hand grab his arm. When he
looked back it surprised him to see Tsukiko wearing a concerned face. What had him most shocked
was that it was meant for him.

“Is something wrong?” Tsukiko asked but got a silent answer.

“I guess you’re exhausted from practice… here I thought this would’ve relaxed you but seems like
we’re only making you more tired.” she told Yamaguchi who remained paralyzed.

While it was true volleyball training took more of a toll on him than he was used to it didn’t really
drain him. Tsukiko then went on reporting her analysis of the boy’s fatigue, bringing up how his
arm was pulsing and his knees appeared to be shaking. Yamaguchi knew she was observant but
hearing her talk about him in detail like so was making him feel even more insecure. How could
she understand body language so well? Yet, the reality was simply him being discouraged over his
relationship regarding the rest of the club and with Tsukiko.

Why did they invite Yamaguchi to the festival in the first place? Because he was technically a
member? He still didn’t consider himself to be one when he only attended meetings at least one or
twice a week. Plus he wasn’t passionate about music as the rest were.

Yamaguchi couldn’t say any of this to Tsukiko but the pain was apparent on his freckled face.

“Ken told me that you feel unsure about being in CRS,” Tsukiko said.

Hearing her hit the mark made Yamaguchi look away. He waited for the girl to release his arm but
she didn’t budge.

What kind of face was Tsukiko making? Was she upset? No, she was smiling— or at least trying
“Sorry if we actually forced you into joining. I didn’t realize that…” she added. Her soft voice made Yamaguchi weak.

Before he could muster up his reply, a bright yellow hue cast over the girl’s features, lighting up half of her face. Another burst of color appeared in her eyes.

Yamaguchi and Tsukiko turned their heads to see the fireworks show had started.

“It’s beautiful,” he heard the girl say. She was barely audible from the loud crackling that emitted from the sky.

Yamaguchi set his gaze back down on Tsukiko who returned with eye contact. Her smile was brighter than the lights above, he thought.

“Fireworks are pretty amazing you know.” Tsukiko spoke up.

“Actually! Your freckles remind me of fireworks too~” she added with a perky tone.

The compliment didn’t make much sense to Yamaguchi because he was preoccupied with admiring the girl that was still holding his arm.

When their eyes met again he then responded with, “I like you!” in a bold manner that appeared to have left Tsukiko stunned.

“...I confessed.” Yamaguchi whispered to the blond next to him that was trying to sleep.

Tsukishima grumbled. “And? You two a couple now?” he asked without turning over in the sleeping bag. He also didn’t care whatsoever about his friend’s love life but if he didn’t respond he wouldn’t hear the end of Yamaguchi and be unable to sleep.
“That’s the… problem.” replied the sullen boy.

Apparently Tsukiko didn’t hear the confession at all due to the fireworks blocking out Yamaguchi’s voice. Though she asked him to repeat himself he instead said that he agreed with her previous statement about the fireworks.

In the end he didn’t try to correct himself after that and went back to school in utter defeat. He ran away, excusing himself from the group by claiming he was in fact tired and wanted to rest. Seeing Tsukiko smile and waved him off only made his feelings more hurt.

Once the week long training camp was done Yamaguchi wanted nothing more than to go home and drown in self-pity. He remained that way for the rest of the summer break until the new semester.

The first person to greet him was none other than the girl who didn’t realize he professed his feelings to her all those weeks ago.

Tsukiko was acting as normal and nonchalant as usual. Yamaguchi tried to do the same. What happened at the festival wasn’t being brought up either, much to his dismay. He preferred that though, believing it was better to brush it off and keep his current friendship with Tsukiko awkward-free.

The days went on and all of the sudden the girl Yamaguchi wanted for himself was being asked out left and right. It wasn’t even a season for romance, and yet, Tsukiko kept getting confessed to each week—even every other day. A letter would be in her shoe locker or shoved in her desk and she would be invited to the back of a school building or somewhere for other students to witness everything.

“Aw, thank you very much! Buuuuut…”

Tsukiko would politely reject each and every person that approached her for dating.

With the number of times Yamaguchi heard about Tsukiko rejecting somebody it made him more disheartened than cheerful. He thought that his chances of redoing his confession would only lower with each person Tsukiko was turning down. It had to mean she wasn’t interested in a romantic relationship or even worse—she already had someone else in mind.
If so then who could it be? Tsukishima would’ve been an immediate thought if Yamaguchi hadn’t already figured it had to be the person closest to Tsukiko.

Childhood friend Ken Tsubasa; shares the same year and class as Tsukiko. From what Yamaguchi gathered over the past couple of months they were known as an inseparable pair. The more he thought about it, he wondered why he hadn’t realized it sooner. Ken seemed to know everything about Tsukiko from her preferences down to what makes her tic. They were also perfectly in sync when it came to playing music. Wouldn’t someone like that be the most ideal for a significant other?

“I don’t even know what her favorite color is…” Yamaguchi thought miserably to himself.

“Why won’t you try again?” Ken asked. He caught Yamaguchi leaving his classroom and going the opposite direction of the CRS clubroom.

“Wh-What do you mean?” Yamaguchi tried to play things off but then Ken revealed to having heard and seen what happened at the festival.

At first he made a flustered reaction until realizing something that didn’t appear right. How would Ken have heard him back then when Tsukiko didn’t? Did she lie at the time? And if she really did hear Yamaguchi’s confession, was she purposely not bringing it back up as a roundabout way of rejecting him?

The boy’s stiff hands balled into fists while looking down with a dejected expression.

Ken let out a sigh and approached his junior with a shoulder pat.

“I’m sure Kiko-chan did hear you but got confused. To tell you the truth, she doesn’t know how to act in the face of romance.” he informed.

Yamaguchi didn’t lift his chin. He wasn’t sure if he could believe in the guy that was trying to cheer him up. His doubts kept piling in his head that any more would just make him hesitate again.
Ken tilted his frown. The first year that was slightly taller than him continued to be in despair over a girl he clearly wanted to be with the most.

“Ah!” Ken gasped suddenly. He took Yamaguchi’s arm and the two went another direction down the hallway.

“Where are we going?!” asked Yamaguchi as he pulled his collar up in an attempt to hide his face from the people they passed.

After turning a corner the two arrived at the faculty office. They went inside for a brief moment then back out.

“Here,” Ken smiled as he placed a key in Yamaguchi’s hands.

“I’ve got to help prepare for the cultural festival with my class and the committee. You’re in charge of closing the club,” he instructed the boy then quickly made an escape before Yamaguchi could back out of the responsibility.

It was obvious what Ken was doing. He was giving Yamaguchi a chance to be alone with Tsukiko.

Gripping the item in his hand, Yamaguchi hazily tread for the clubroom.

“Nosy,” remarked a bestactled blond leaning against the corner.

Tsukishima pushed himself off the wall to leave after blurting out his comment but nearly fell back when his shirt collar was snagged.

Ken teasingly pulled the other boy down to his level then flung an arm around his shoulders.

“Ahh, c’mon~ let’s cheer for our childhood friends together!” Ken laughed.
Tsukishima rolled his eyes while brushing the lanky guy off himself.

“Cheer by yourself,” he scoffed.

The other guy in glasses took no offense to the freshman’s harsh tone. If Ken had learned anything from someone like his club captain it’s that even the meanest looking people still had some kind of soft spot in them.

Meanwhile in the CRS clubroom Tsukiko was kicking her feet back and forth while balancing a pencil between her nose and upper lip.

Half an hour had passed since the club meeting got cut short. With there being a week until the cultural festival the third year classes were on a tight schedule to perfect their big performance. The CRS was participating as entertainment too but they were well prepared for it. This meant they could devote the extra time into helping their own classes. However, Tsukiko wanted to practice more for her club. She wished they were doing something grand like what they did in her first year. It would be like carrying on the torch the previous graduates left for them.

The girl replayed a video of last year’s festival performance on her phone. It was a major success that even made front page in the school’s news journal.

“Boom, boom, boom dancing through the sky~” Tsukiko sang along. Her body still remembered the dance routine to the hip, energetic song.

When she spun around a familiar face blurred into her vision. At the door watching her was Yamaguchi. With a smile she greeted him and waved happily.

“Were you busy helping prep for the festival too?” she asked him but he made no immediate response.

“I heard that your class will be a cafe serving pancakes and hot chocolate. Sounds like fun! My first year we did—”

Yamaguchi cut the girl off by showing her the room key in his hand. He continued to silently avoid eye contact with her.
Tsukiko was curious at first but retained her smile. “Thanks, Yamu~” she said before going to the other end of the room to grab her bag that was on top of a desk. May as well pack up and leave while she had the key, otherwise Tokiya would scold her.

“One time I was supposed to lock up right? But then I completely forgot the key in the room and left it unlocked the entire time!” Tsukiko laughed.

She turned around to keep talking with Yamaguchi, only to find out the boy was no longer in the room.

Again, he had chosen to run away silently.

---

MY HAIKYUU NENDO COLLECTION GROWS!!!! I got Lev and Yaku recently aaahhhhh but the Yoroizu-kan group is still missing some boys ; v ; only have yams, tsukki, wakapapa, bokuto,
and akaashi... gosh why are Kuroo, Hinata, and Kageyama so expensive on Amazon?! I'm just gonna have to buy them at a convention where they'll be at their normal retail prices ughh

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Some Like it Hot

Chapter Summary

The last day of the school’s cultural festival was in full swing. Guests were greeted by food vendors and character mascots upon entrance. Farther into the courtyard was a stage set up for outdoor performances.

Tsukishima left his house by himself again. Normally Yamaguchi would be the first to meet him at the door or he would already be let inside by his mother. This hasn’t been the case recently though.

It had been over a week since he saw his friend getting set up to redo his love confession. During classes and volleyball practice, Tsukishima noticed how spaced out Yamaguchi became. None of it was Tsukishima’s business but if he cared enough he would guess that either Yamaguchi got rejected or he failed to redo his confession.

“Probably both even,” the blond thought for a moment.

The last day of the school’s cultural festival was in full swing. Guests were greeted by food vendors and character mascots upon entrance. Farther into the courtyard was a stage set up for outdoor performances. It wasn’t the Coverist Research Society’s turn to play yet though. They weren’t the only music-oriented club on campus after all.

“Make sure to be here in two hours. Two. Hours.” said the stern president Tokiya who got waived off by his club members. The group split up to do their own things before it would be time for them to rally onto the stage.

Ken and Tsukiko went inside the school, heading straight for the first year classrooms. A colorful sign directed them to the one the girl was looking for.

“Seems the boys are put in the back to cook,” Ken noticed as he sat down.

Tsukiko on the other hand looked like she wanted to peek into the cafe ‘kitchen’ that was behind a curtain. It was obvious with the way she kept swaying in her seat and didn’t pay attention when a student asked for her order.
“Hey,” Tsukishima tugged on Yamaguchi’s apron. He pushed up his frames then pointed a finger to the outside.

“Your clubmates are here,” he notified the other.

Yamaguchi would have shrieked out loud if he wasn’t already expecting to get a visit from Tsukiko. Knowing she was the type to go after someone who looked like they needed help, he was somewhat prepared. There wasn’t anything Yamaguchi was going to do however. He was intent on using his classroom’s cafe as an excuse to not see her all day again.

An order for a six-stack of pancakes was called. Tsukishima groaned because he had to go help make it.

Yamaguchi was stationed for hot chocolate. All he had to do was pour hot water in a cup and mix it with cocoa powder. He waited until the whole order could be sent out to add the finishing touches of marshmallows and whipped cream.

Moments later Yamaguchi heard a cheerful, “IT’S SO GOOD~!” from the other side of the curtain. He felt his heart thump from hearing Tsukiko’s positive feedback. What did she compliment exactly? It had to be the pancakes Tsukishima made. There was more effort put into making those than something that came out of a packet and mixed under a minute.

Curiosity got the better of Yamaguchi, making him glance outside. He spotted Tsukiko instantly and saw her chowing down on her tall stack of pancakes.

“Thought so…” he sighed before taking one of the kettles to refill it.

“Think they’ll let me take a cup to go?” Tsukiko mumbled with fluffy goodness stuffed in her cheeks.

Ken shrugged and smiled. “Not sure since it’s a hot drink that’ll require a lid for safety reasons,” he told her.

“But is it really that good? You do know it’s just packaged hot chocolate you can get at any cheap
store.” Ken added while sipping from his own cup. When he put his drink down he saw the girl pouting.

“But Yamu brewed it right? Fufu, whatever his solar hands touch makes everything warm my cooooold soul~” she purred before jamming some more syrup-soaked pancakes into her mouth.

Yamaguchi hung around Tsukishima when their shift with the class cafe was over. Neither were interested in checking out any of the other venues but they were hungry.

“I’m not sitting down to eat,” stated the blond when passing classrooms that were doing cafe and restaurant themes as well.

Yamaguchi forced a snicker. “Same,” he replied, then went back to his mental self-wallowing.

He didn’t say hi to Tsukiko or even Ken before they left after eating. It made Yamaguchi feel bad but he couldn’t bring himself to see them after all this time of avoiding the club.

The boys made it outside where the food stalls were crowded by the public guests. At least that explained why the inside wasn’t getting as much attention when it’s already the middle of the day.

Tsukishima and Yamaguchi managed to find a corn dog stand without a line. When they approached it they were startled by the sudden guitar shredding happening on the performing stage closeby. It was probably why nobody was getting a corn dog; the surrounding area was uncomfortably loud.

“Now for our next band: CRS!” shouted the emcee. The audience cheered lightly for the group that walked onto the stage.

Yamaguchi purposely ducked his head down. He didn’t want his clubmates to notice him.

“Why aren’t you up there?” Tsukishima asked after taking a bite of his food.
“Ah… I wasn’t interested in playing.” Yamaguchi responded with clear hesitation.

The last meeting he attended, Tokiya asked if Yamaguchi wanted to play at the festival with them. He declined saying he was still too much of an amateur and that he’d only drag the team down. It was a lame excuse he thought for backing out of their performance that even garnered a scowl from the senior. Yamaguchi’s drumming surely improved the past months but his lack of confidence kept him from truly enjoying it. Surprisingly, the club captain allowed him to back out, even telling him he shouldn’t play if he really didn’t feel like playing.

Feeling curious again, Yamaguchi checked to see who was taking his place. It was Tsukiko. She handled the drums while Lunar covered her position on bass.

The club was covering a song that was upbeat and powerful. Even though Tsukiko wasn’t the main vocalist for it, only the backup, Yamaguchi felt moved.

*Hey! Hey! Samurai heart!*

The crowd hollered with excitement and urged for an encore but that was it.

Yamaguchi drew his brows in confusion. He wondered why they played only one song when he was sure they had more planned out the last he was in a meeting.

“Hm?” Tsukiko’s lips pulled up. She waved her arms at Yamaguchi and Tsukishima as she was stepping off the stage. Neither of them responded back, instead fading out of the scene.

“Pff~ see, Kiko isn’t liked by everyone~” Lunar mocked.

Hayato rubbed the short girl’s head, completely messing up her hair. “Says the little devil queen~” he teased her back.

Tokiya lowered his eyes. “Boy, do something would you? I’m not leaving this club in the hands of an incapable leader…” he said to Ken who nodded from understanding what the third year meant.

Tsukiko walked around the festival after dropping off the club instruments back to their room. She
checked out the attraction by her and Ken’s class. They were running a scavenger hunt.

“Give me one~” she told her classmate who then handed her a folded paper. Ken took one too even though he technically wasn’t supposed to.

“What do you have to look for?” he asked his friend.

Tsukiko was smiling from ear to ear, as if already assured she could find the item to bring back.

Ken managed to catch a glimpse of what was written on the note right before Tsukiko ran off without him.

“Hmm… what object did we hide for ‘freckles’ again?” he asked. Since he helped set up the scavenger hunt game he knew that participants were actually supposed to search for objects hidden around the inside of the school building. They were all placed in rather obvious spots too. Because Tsukiko wasn’t part of setting up the scavenger hunt, she wasn’t aware of this.

“Huh? But Tsubasa-kun, you told us to hand her that if she came.” said the other classmate.

Ken chuckled. “Haha, I know. I’m just teasing. Good job!”

Yamaguchi stared at a painting of a crow. It was drawn well enough that from afar the subject appeared almost lifelike. He stepped up to Tsukishima who was sitting down while trying to figure out a puzzle with a chessboard and shogi pieces. A chuckle almost escaped Yamaguchi when he noticed his friend was unknowingly being drawn by the student artist in front of him. Along with the art gallery students were offering portrait sketches. When they finished their drawing of Tsukishima the blond wasn’t roused in the slightest. He cursed at his sliver of good nature preventing him from tearing the artwork right then and there.

The boys still had time to kill so they went to see one of the main events in the large gym. They arrived in time to see a musical play performed by the entire third year class. The lead role was played by Tokiya. For the majority of the scene Yamaguchi caught him in, he hardly recognized his senior. He had even assumed it was actually Hayato on stage. During curtain call he got his confirmation that the actor was in fact his almighty club president.
“I’m going to be the top actor in the nation,” Tokiya said as his closing statement.

Tsukishima would have rolled his eyes if he gave a damn.

“What a dumbass,” he muttered.

“Now, now~ we all have big dreams we want to aspire,” laughed Ken from a seat behind.

The two boys almost jumped from the fright.

Ken leaned over, wearing his subtly cunning grin. “Don’t either of you have a goal or some?” he inquired with a dreamy sigh.

Tsukishima scoffed but didn’t give an answer.

Yamaguchi had a feeling Ken was trying to make him think about confessing to Tsukiko again. He told himself he wasn’t going to fall for any more tricks even if Ken was only trying to be helpful.

“I do but… I’m working on it.” Yamaguchi replied only to be polite.

Ken rubbed his chin.

“Some advice; try to reach your goals as soon as you can. Who knows what’ll happen if you let your chances slip.” he said before standing up when the theatrical shows were over.

“Work hard enough in volleyball and I’m sure you’ll be an important asset to your team!” Ken added but Yamaguchi wondered if he was using volleyball as a cover for what he was really trying to say.

“Pointless. No matter how hard you try there’s always going to be something better that isn’t you. Things will come crashing down when you least expect it.” Tsukishima said back.
Ken put his hands over the blond’s glasses.

“Then expect the unexpected~” he snickered after swiping the other of his lenses.

“Give it back!” Tsukishima hissed. He reached out to take what was his but Ken began to run away.

“It’s a scavenger hunt~ I have to return with glasses!” he explained which only seemed to further anger the tall boy.

“But you have your own pair dammit!!” Tsukishima shouted while steadily making his way out of the rows of chairs to chase the upperclassman.

By the time Yamaguchi made it out of the gymnasium he already lost sight of the two. “No way they could’ve gone far,” he thought.

Glancing at the school’s clock he saw it was almost time for the festival to close. Unsure of what to do, Yamaguchi decided to head to his classroom. He thought he could help finish catering the last customers and then they’d be able to pack up early.

When he reached the makeshift cafe he noticed several students were hovering outside of the room.

“What’s up?” Yamaguchi questioned a classmate that was supposed to be working. They pointed at a lone girl seated in the table closest to the windows.

Yamaguchi dropped his jaw while wondering why Tsukiko returned.

“Apparently she’s looking for you dude,” whispered another classmate. Now Yamaguchi really felt he couldn’t waltz into the room but the jealous peers forced him to go inside.

“There you are!” Tsukiko’s eyes glittered when she saw Yamaguchi at the door. She patted the vacant seat across from her.
Yamaguchi gulped nervously.

“I uhh… I’m gonna go work.” he mumbled and stiffly made his way to the kitchen. The people on shift glared at him then pointed at the female customer that was still waiting patiently.

Yamaguchi reluctantly went to sit with Tsukiko. His eyes dropped to the high stack of pancakes she had yet to touch.

“You sure like sweets… N-Not that there’s anything wrong with it!!” he blurted out.

Tsukiko nodded and began to eat again. Seeing her squeal from each bite was more than just cute.

Yamaguchi couldn’t find his adjectives as he watched. His mind wandered, telling him that it almost looked like they were on a date. He overheard his classmates saying the same. Their whispering made Yamaguchi want to hide.

“Why did she want him?” they murmured.

“How come he gets to sit with her?” said another.

Possibly making matters worse had to be that a few of his classmates were rejected by Tsukiko already. Getting a target on his back wasn’t Yamaguchi’s intention. He had been avoiding the girl for that reason in fact. If he kept getting close to her then he would only warrant unwanted and rather hateful attention. And this was all for a girl who seemed to really like pancakes.

“Did’ja see our performance?” Tsukiko asked while her mouth was partially full.

Yamaguchi perked up but remained unsure if he could hold a conversation with the girl. It’ll worsen the jealous glares directed at him for one thing. So in response he silently nodded. The way he avoided eye contact didn’t go unnoticed with Tsukiko though. This kind of body language was something she can’t ignore.
Tsukiko continued to smile as she ate her savory meal.

“I’m glad the crowd loved it. But ya know what?” she said.

The boy didn’t reply. He didn’t want to. But he was still curious. Tsukiko’s voice had a way of always luring Yamaguchi out of his shell. For a second he lifted his gaze to meet hers, in which she then said:

“It would’ve been amazing to perform with you.”

Yamaguchi’s chest began to ache. Was it because what Tsukiko just said touched him? Or perhaps it’s guilt for being a letdown…

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song performed in this chapter is "Samurai Heart (Some Like it Hot)" by SPYAIR

Look at my art getting even more inconsistent;; another thing I realized from rereading my drafts for this arc is how little I actually show the CRS club doing it's club activities lol for reals, by the end
of this some of y'all gonna be like "ahh man wish I got to see more of CRS stuff" :'D

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“You’re… you’re the first person to tell me all of that…!” Yamaguchi squeaked with a cracked voice.

Back in the scavenger hunt room Ken was laughing hysterically at the freshman panting down on his knees. The other second year students present were letting out pitiful sighs. They all knew Ken well enough to figure out he’s found a freshman to playfully bully.

“I thought you’d be faster since you play a sport,” Ken poked fun at Tsukishima.

The blond rose up, returning his thick-framed glasses onto the bridge of his nose.

“It’s volleyball— not track and field,” he retorted.

Tsukishima walked over to a water station in the room for a much needed drink after all the running he had to do.

Ken followed behind.

“Stay away from me...” grumbled the sourpuss.

“But I’m curious,” Ken said after a brief chuckle.

“How come you’re not pushing Tadashi-kun? As his friend you—”

“It’s none of my business.” Tsukishima replied swiftly.

“Besides, even if I were to get involved ‘as his friend’ then I’d tell him to give up.”
Ken hummed. “Why is that?” he continued to question his irked junior.

“It’s pointless. He’ll just get even more broken when he realizes things won’t work out.” Tsukishima argued back.

Ken stole his cup of water. “And you’re afraid of that happening?” he asked, causing silence to fall on Tsukishima.

“I’m not afraid. I just know…” The boy grimaced in thought to a foul memory.

Ken turned his head, picking up on Tsukishima’s expression. “Well, if you’re so sure then how about we make a bet?” he suggested.

Tsukishima poured himself another cup of water. While he didn’t want to play any more games with someone as annoying as Ken, he was curious as to what the wager was. Hearing the details wouldn’t hurt at the very least. What would Tsukishima have to lose anyway?

“Alright then… pain-in-the-ass-senpai. What is it? Gonna bet if they date or not?” Tsukishima smirked. He attempted to keep up a cocky front as to not lose face but Ken returned the gesture.

“Actually, no.” he replied, causing Tsukishima to crush the paper cup in his hand.

“Let’s bet on the last color to appear in tonight’s fireworks show,” Ken stated while taking the crushed cup and tossing it into a trash bin.

Tsukishima remained standing dumbfoundedly. He knew there was no good getting involved with the strange guy, and yet he ended up answering, “Blue.”

Ken smiled and leaned over to Tsukishima, whos gold eyes stared back into the second year’s dark green ones.

“Green,” Ken bet.
Attention went to the entrance from a door slamming open.

“I am here~!” announced Tsukiko upon entering the classroom with a blushing boy in tow. She held Yamaguchi by the arm and led him to the front table. When she exchanged her note for a prize she was bewildered to see a set of familiar keys was her reward.

“I see!” Tsukiko gasped then whipped her head around.

“This was all a Ken plot!” she said and the rest of the second year students, including Ken himself, clapped for her.

“Indeed,” he replied.

“I purposely arranged this so you can punish Tadashi-kun for his club inactivity!” Ken cackled.

Tsukiko held up her arms defensively. “Gao! How cunning of you, oh devious Ken!” she gritted her teeth at him.

The way Ken and Tsukiko spoke was dramatic, as though they were pretending to be a hero player confronting the final enemy boss in an RPG. Their classmates had swayed their eyes since they were used to seeing them behave as a comedic duo.

Yamaguchi had no idea what was happening except that Ken was once again giving him alone time with Tsukiko. He couldn’t back out fast enough after the girl saluted to her friend.

“Aye aye my future vice-captain!” she grinned.

The pair went back to the CRS clubroom where the instruments had yet to be properly stored and locked. They would’ve been earlier after the club did their single performance but another musical club needed to borrow their equipment too.

Tsukiko handled the guitar and bass while Yamaguchi packed away the drums and speakers. He
kept glancing at the girl, waiting for his chance to escape when she wasn’t looking again; of course, after he did his part in storing the instruments properly.

Instead of cleaning up, Tsukiko propped herself on one of the desks and ran her hand up the guitar strings. She wasn’t playing anything seriously but Yamaguchi felt entranced.

Guitar strumming echoed off the walls and back to his ears. The afternoon dark orange light filling the room and highlighting Tsukiko’s face made the scene look perfect for an album cover.

“Why?” Yamaguchi said out loud.

Tsukiko opened her eyes. “Why what?” she asked but Yamaguchi clammed his mouth shut.

With the guitar standing between her legs Tsukiko pressed her cheek against its neck. She repeated herself with the same curious tone in her voice.

Yamaguchi didn’t have to look to know the girl was staring at him. He remained sitting on the floor with one of the drums in his arms. The silence continued for what felt like an agonizing hour.

“Oh hey,” Tsukiko finally sounded. She faced the window and pressed her forehead on the cold glass. Outside she could see students finish with setting up the bonfire.

A smile came to her face. “I think this is my favorite part of the school festival,” she told Yamaguchi who actually was still in the room.

“Everybody gathers around a fire, dance, mingle… and then we ogle at fireworks.”

Yamaguchi managed to listen since his mind wasn’t blank for once. He gripped his knees while making a wretched face.

“Can we… can we watch it here? The fireworks, I mean…” he asked.

Tsukiko’s gray eyes blinked. A soft chuckle escaped her glossed lips.
“Great idea!” she replied and moved from the desk to the floor beside Yamaguchi.

The boy didn’t expect her to get close. It made him nervous all over again. Fear almost had him scoot away but Tsukiko’s sweet scent kept him grounded. She smelled just like the pancakes she devoured earlier.

While the fireworks went on Tsukiko was mumbling things to herself.

Yamaguchi could hardly pick out what she was saying by ear until he bravely turned to read her lips.

“Binding together through the dark… both of our tangled beating hearts,” Tsukiko was singing softly.

The lyrics sounded familiar but Yamaguchi quickly figured it out. He recalled the words that were written in Ken’s blue notebook of original songs.

“You and Tsubasa-senpai seem to collaborate a lot,” Yamaguchi mentioned.

Tsukiko stopped and looked at the first year.

“Mhm! Ken and I are a pair,” she told him with a grin. Her word choice only made Yamaguchi think things he didn’t want to until Tsukiko added, “we’re going to be a duet using his songs and my voice!”

“Ever since I discovered my love for music it’s become my goal to spread that love. I think music is the best way for feelings to connect, ya know? So I want to connect with everyone that hears our music. Whether they’re sad or rocking out, I want to be there somehow in their experience.”

Yamaguchi placed a hand over his chest with his lips parting for a moment. The girl beside him had a fascinating ambition, he thought.
“I want to see that happen,” Yamaguchi said in a single breath.

Without realizing it he had finally made eye contact with Tsukiko. She looked just as stunned as him.

“You’re the first person to tell me that,” she smiled faintly.

When Tsukiko leaned closer to Yamaguchi’s face he backed away as an immediate flight response.

“That’s right! I forgot to thank you for helping me with the scavenger hunt. Thanks to you, it was easy as A-I-U-E-O!” Tsukiko said with her arms crossed over her chest.

“Huh? Wh-why was it me?” Yamaguchi meant to ask before. He had wondered what Tsukiko’s clue was that led her to using him.

As he got the answer his eyes were the widest they could go. “Freckles,” she had told him.

The pit of his stomach was churning. Yamaguchi put two and two together; the fact Tsukiko had to return with something related to freckles and that Ken had arranged her prize to be the clubroom keys.

Why was that guy going through the trouble of setting him up to redo his love confession? If being forced into a corner and pressured into doing something was suppose to be encouragement then Yamaguchi had to question why he was still friends with someone like Ken.

“I’ve never seen anybody with freckles,” Tsukiko noted with a finger to her chin.

“So when I saw you I thought you were like an exotic animal or something!” she added, causing Yamaguchi to freeze.

Was that supposed to be a compliment? He wasn’t sure at all but it was definitely something Tsukiko would say. The butterflies ceased their fluttering after Yamaguchi heard the next thing she said;
“It really looks great on you! Reminds me of fireworks dispersing into speckling lights in the sky. And stars. Definitely stars too!”

The room went black after the fireworks ended with a blue light.

Yamaguchi was partially glad they stopped because he didn’t want Tsukiko to notice him blush or tear up. She did catch his sniffling however.

“Hm? What’s up Yamu?”

Even though it was dark, Yamaguchi knew she was tilting her head adorably. That was her typical curious gesture.

Yamaguchi got up and Tsukiko slowly did the same. She was about to search for the light switch until the quiet boy spoke up.

“Senpai…!” Yamaguchi called out to Tsukiko.

“Can I… can we… I…”

Trying to find his words, he clenched his sweaty palms together.

Tsukiko retracted her steps to where she believed Yamaguchi was still standing. A sudden flare of yellow and green illuminated from the window, giving Tsukiko a flash of Yamaguchi’s newfound determined face. In the few seconds she had to see him, he said to her;

“I want to keep watching fireworks with you because… because I really like you!”

There was a silent pause that made Yamaguchi worried. Having said what he deeply wanted, though in a way he thought was odd, the boy prepared himself to hear rejection.
The lights flickered on, showing Tsukiko on the other side of the room with her back facing away from Yamaguchi. Seeing this made his shoulders drop until the girl herself had fallen to the floor in a squat.

“Eh? What’s wrong?!” Yamaguchi hurried over to make sure she didn’t somehow hurt herself from navigating through the dark to turn the lights on. To his surprise he found Tsukiko with her face as red as the strawberry syrup that she drizzled over her pancakes from earlier. Still having doubts, Yamaguchi assumed she was flushed with anger.

“S-Sorry… you must be annoyed of getting confessed to—”

“Does this mean…” Tsukiko cut him off.

“…you like me enough that you’ll be my first boyfriend?”

Yamaguchi froze. He couldn’t figure a response. First off, he was confused about whether he was being rejected or not. Secondly, he questioned how Tsukiko had yet to have a boyfriend if what she said was the truth.

“Wh-what do you… mean?” he stuttered.

Tsukiko shot up straight and fiddled with the sleeves of her sweater that were tied around her hips. Strangely enough, seeing her being bashful had Yamaguchi believing a completely different girl was in front of him.

“And why… why aren’t you turning me down too?” he managed to ask with fading boldness.

Tsukiko threw her head back from shock.

“Why would I? Who in their right mind would reject you?!” she said, making Yamaguchi gasp loudly.

“Besides, you confessed to me differently than everyone else.” Tsukiko explained how previous people only asked her out rather than state they actually liked her.
“Be my girlfriend,” they would say.

“Would look good together,” was another thing.

The “Please go out with me!” demand without a reason was another common confession she heard.

None of the confessions Tsukiko received thus far carried feelings as genuine as Yamaguchi’s. Majority of them were people that she hardly knew too. What Tsukiko wanted was to hear a confession from someone who knew her well enough and had real intention to date her. Yamaguchi now fit the bill.

“So you’re different and that makes you special… y-yeah!” Tsukiko huffed with crossed arms.

Yamaguchi was still unsure even after everything the girl just told him.

“But I’m not special enough for someone to think of me like that…” he muttered his thoughts out loud. It was strange how he was still saying all of this openly. Everything seemed to be rolling off his tongue without hesitation getting in the way.

Tsukiko tugged at the hem of her skirt. She took a deep breath before exhaling,

“Well you are to me! After all you joined CRS and you learned how to play the drums really fast which means you work hard and as earnestly as you can and you’re such a good boy, like, a really good boy! Such a gentleman! You’re growing tall too which is definitely attractive and you have a contagious laugh so of course I would like you back and—”

The girl mumbled the rest of her rant under Yamaguchi’s hand. He was utterly blown away by the ambush of positive words that he had to stop Tsukiko from saying any more. Everything she had said made his ears burn a bright crimson red.

“You’re… you’re the first person to tell me all of that…!” Yamaguchi squeaked with a cracked voice.
Both Tsukiko and Yamaguchi were staring at each other for a long while. They couldn’t escape the maze that was their eyes.

“Sooolllll……..” Tsukiko trailed off after Yamaguchi removed his hand from her mouth. She nervously played with her hair, bringing it in front of her and brushing her chin.

Yamaguchi wasn’t sure what to do next. He confessed his feelings and Tsukiko didn’t reject him. Do they date now? How do people make it official?

Words failed to leave Yamaguchi but Tsukiko felt she could still understand him. She smiled with pink cheeks and took Yamaguchi’s pink fingers.

“I like you too. Sooo… will you date me?” she asked him.

That was a line Yamaguchi never imagined he’d hear being directed at him. He swallowed his nerves and finally spoke.

“I… I meant to ask you that..”
AAAANNNDDDDD THERE'S YOUR CONFESSION SCENE!!! I kept having to go back on older chapters because I thought I briefly described the confession scene previously different but guess not? Also also also, fireworks are such a big deal in this story. It's gonna get brought up so many times okay xD w-well it already has like three times now....... also if it hasn't been obvious already-- I've been intentionally shipping Tsukishima with Ken. Also also, their similar sounding names is a huge coincidence like with Tsukiko's lol y'know.... Kei Tsukishima and Ken Tsubasa...... kekkekek.

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Chapter Summary

Temperatures were slowly dropping with the approaching winter season. Students donned their heavy coats and scarves for the dreadful journey that meant leaving the warmth of their beds in pursuit of higher education. Fortunately most classrooms had heaters to keep everyone comfortable. The downside was it would often put the students to sleep at their desks.

“Tada-kun~!!”

The moment Yamaguchi was addressed by his given name it was made clear what his relationship with Tsukiko had evolved into.

Knowledge of their dating status quickly spread faster than either could have anticipated or even wanted. They had planned to only let their close friends know about them, since dating was a first for both. It made them too shy to show the world they were boyfriend and girlfriend but the secret ended up not being a secret because of how obvious they were.

“When did it start?” someone asked.

“What’s it like dating her??” another inquired.

“How did you do it man?!” a lot demanded.

Yamaguchi hadn’t been surrounded or forced into a corner since elementary school when he was a victim of bullying. At least this time nobody was directly making fun of his face or calling him scrawny.

Before even making it to homeroom he was attacked with questions regarding him dating the rather popular second year. None of the questions were given proper answers since Yamaguchi himself was still confused about the whole ordeal too. It wasn’t like he and Tsukiko changed drastically now that they had titles for each other. After the cultural festival they exchanged contact information and that was pretty much all to it. Then came the next day Tsukiko when gave him a new nickname. Ken and the rest of the club picked up the meaning instantly. It had to be once
Tsukiko started approaching Yamaguchi more frequently during school hours when people also caught on to what was going on between them.

“Ahh yeah, I keep getting bombarded with questions like that too!” Tsukiko said while munching her sandwiches.

The couple ate their lunch in the worst place possible: Yamaguchi’s classroom. He could feel the envious glares of his classmates and the gossiping being made behind his back.

“Why did you leave me Tsukki…” he whimpered when glancing at the blond’s empty seat. If Tsukishima had stuck around then Yamaguchi would feel more at ease—or at least just enough to ignore the daggers being directed at him.

Since Tsukiko was now his girlfriend he found it harder to remain calm around her, as if suddenly he reverted to being the nervous wreck he was when he barely knew her. Yamaguchi came to see more sides to Tsukiko as well. There were some instances when Tsukiko was notably coy, like pawing a curled hand against Yamaguchi to get his attention even though he really doesn’t take his eyes off of her. She acts like a tsundere when given the chance, but definitely acts more lovey-dovey than wishy-washy.

Ken put a hand to his cheek while giggling eerily to himself. The second year had been standing at the first year classroom door. He had his phone out and took pictures of the pair inside.

Tsukishima bit into his croquette bread. For some reason it didn’t taste good but he put the blame on the fact the guy next to him was being a complete creep.

“What are you, her doting mother?” he grumbled.

Ken closed his phone, tapping his chin with it.

“Perhaps~” he replied with a cheeky grin.

Things seem to go exactly how Ken plans it to. The couple wouldn’t be where they were had it not been for his meddling. It did mean pressuring Yamaguchi and tricking Tsukiko, but Ken thought it was all necessary. The guy was pretty glad to have gotten the result he wanted in the end.
Seeing how Tsukishima remained close to the classroom made Ken curious. If the blond really didn’t care about Yamaguchi’s new love life then surely he’d go elsewhere to be a lone wolf.

“So you do care,” Ken awed at the pleasant thought of Tsukishima being proud of Yamaguchi getting the girl he wanted.

Tsukishima kept eating his lunch despite the loss in flavor the longer he listened to Ken. Why he was sticking around baffled him just as much.

At volleyball practice Yamaguchi was suddenly getting more attention, for the worse however. Some jealous upperclassmen in the club were barking at him for not picking up balls fast enough or not hitting serves properly.

The captain did his best to keep Yamaguchi from getting oppressed but had his own duties to deal with that he couldn’t help the boy all the time.

Tsukishima on the other hand was mostly quiet. A few times he would be a wisecrack and make subtly rude remarks but none of it would do Yamaguchi any favor, really.

**From: tsukiko-san**

> you home from practice yet?

No matter how many times Yamaguchi would get a text from his new girlfriend he always had trouble replying to her. He would overthink and make assumptions, then once he’s figured out what to say some time would already have passed.

“*If I reply now she’s probably not at her phone— but then it’d look like I’m ignoring her??*” he thought to himself.

What Yamaguchi had to dislike most would be the fact he never initiated conversations first. It would always fall on Tsukiko and that made him feel bad for taking a long time to respond. Does it make her feel like the relationship is one-sided? Will she get tired of always making the first move?
Possibly making matters worse was the fact Yamaguchi forgot his phone’s wallpaper used a secret 
picture he took of Tsukiko while she was singing during practice. Albeit being a blurry image, 
Tsukiko was still recognizable in it. Did Tsukiko see it when she was inputting her contact 
information? And if so, did it make her reconsider dating someone so weird and creepy? What sane 
girl would be fine about a guy having a private picture of her before they dated?

Yamaguchi wailed into his pillow, striking concern from his mother as she dropped off his clean 
laundry basket at his bedroom door.

Temperatures were slowly dropping with the approaching winter season. Students donned their 
heavy coats and scarves for the dreadful journey that meant leaving the warmth of their beds in 
pursuit of higher education. Fortunately most classrooms had heaters to keep everyone 
comfortable. The downside was it would often put the students to sleep at their desks.

An afternoon off from volleyball meant an afternoon spent with the Coverist Research Society.

Yamaguchi hadn’t seen his girlfriend all day until he got to the clubroom. There, he found her 
sitting in front of a heater. She was also wearing sweatpants under her skirt and her shoulders were 
weighed down by several different coats. The only other person in the room was Ken at the piano. 
He didn’t look as bothered by the cold as Tsukiko was.

“Good evening Tadashi-kun,” Ken greeted the boy.

Realizing that her boyfriend had arrived, Tsukiko jumped up and ran to Yamaguchi for a hug. If 
she were a dog her tail would be wagging joyously over the reunion with her owner.

“Tada-kuuuun~” she whined gleefully.

Yamaguchi’s face became pinkish. He tried to take a step forward but Tsukiko was holding onto 
him like her life depended on it. Since he had incredible body warmth, as she’s stated before, the 
girl yearned being close to him for as long as possible.

“Are you cold?” Yamaguchi asked with a concerning tone. When he touched Tsukiko’s cheek it 
shocked him how her skin felt like tofu fresh out of the refrigerator. He then unwrapped his scarf 
and carefully put it around Tsukiko’s neck.
“Go back to the heater. I don’t want you getting chills,” he told her without breaking his composure.

Ken leaned over the piano keys. He pushed his glasses and the lenses glinted. There were moments where Yamaguchi would be surprisingly calm in front of Tsukiko. This hasn’t gone unnoticed by the sly fox.

“There it is! When Tadashi-kun starts worrying about Kiko-chan he becomes less worried about himself, but in turn, worries a lot about Kiko-chan..! ”

Ken explained to his imaginary audience.

Tsukiko’s smile grew wider from the snug feeling of Yamaguchi’s cozy scarf. His sweet scent lingered in the fibers.

“Tada-kun cares about meeee~” she squealed and the boy was back to blushing madly, which made him heat up even more.

The third year club members entered the room. All three of them had different facial expressions reacting to the couple.

When the club meeting began the first thing captain Tokiya brought up was the upcoming retirement of the senior year members. He quickly made an offhand joke about his brother having to possibly repeat due to his poor grades.

“The three of us will be graduating in a few months,” Tokiya told the group.

The atmosphere became more serious than usual that even Tsukiko looked focused. Yamaguchi had heard the same thing from the third years in the volleyball club so he expected it again from the CRS. However he got worried when realizing there would only be three remaining members after the seniors leave. Those three included himself, Tsukiko, and Ken. They would need two more people to join the club if they want to resume activities for the next year.

Yamaguchi glanced at Tsukiko who appeared to be thinking of a plan. Knowing she was going to
take over the club as the next captain the recruitment responsibility would ultimately fall on her.

“Got any ideas?” he asked Tsukiko but she shook her head.

“None~ I got Ken for stuff like this. He’s my brain after all,” she replied with a silly grin and thumb pointing at her friend that was chuckling from the piano.

Tokiya looked at Ken.

“Do you have a plan to help my incompetent successor?” he asked the pianist who tapped gently on one of the keys.

Ken smiled while shrugging. Whether he actually thought of something or not, the current club president didn’t pry to get the information. Knowing Ken, he would act when he believed it was the right time. Crafty but annoying, thought the captain.

“Let’s get to practicing then,” Tokiya stated as he signaled for everyone to go to their instruments. He picked up his guitar and handed the other one to his twin brother.

Lunar did sound checks while Tsukiko and Yamaguchi layed out the bigger equipment together. Their fingers accidentally brushed against each other, causing both to yelp suddenly.

“S-Sorry!” Yamaguchi said with the jitters.

Tsukiko was also just as flushed. “M-My bad!” she responded with a high pitched voice.

“Gross.” Lunar croaked.

Hayato laughed out loud, intentionally resting an elbow on the shorter girl’s head. “I think it’s cute~” he mewed.

Tokiya hissed at everyone for being too slow.
Once the musicians were in their places they waited for the leader to pick a song to play.

*Strum every chord and sing aloud cause we're alive right now!*

*Look ahead, a brand new journey's waiting to be found!*

It was strange how Yamaguchi felt himself move more freely while playing the drums. There wasn’t as much stress holding him back like before. He played an important instrument that any mistake he made would be caught right away. Often he felt it was his fault whenever the captain called for a do-over.

Yamaguchi noticed this had been happening less and less. He thought he had to thank his girlfriend for it too. His eyes were focused on the large instrument surrounding him while his body followed along the beat with Tsukiko’s bass guitar. Like she told him before, he could understand the rhythm of a song better all by listening to her play. Even with the twins singing, Lunar mixing, and Ken at the keyboard; Yamaguchi could only hear himself and Tsukiko.

The girl turned around to glance at the drummer and flash him her bright smile. It was strange how that didn’t distract Yamaguchi from his playing.

__________________________________________________________

After practicing for an hour the club took their mandatory break.

“Kiko! Sit and rest!” hollered the angry club president.

Tokiya gritted his teeth while glaring down at the girl who wanted to keep moving.

Hayato got between them, patting his brother’s shoulders and calmly asking Tsukiko to at least drink Lunar’s warm tea.

“Ehhhh but I dun like tea,” Tsukiko complained and her shorter upperclassman pulled onto her uniform collar.
“Punk! Are you actually not Japanese or something?!” Lunar growled as she shoved a cup against Tsukiko’s stubborn lips.

Ken sat back, laughing at the scene.

Yamaguchi had gotten fairly used to the way everyone behaved.

“I think I’ll miss seeing this once they’re gone,” he thought with a soft grin.

The closing bell chimed, informing everyone remaining on campus to go home.

Yamaguchi followed the second years out of the clubroom since their seniors said they would lock it up themselves. While changing shoes Ken said, “I bet they’re crying right now.”

Tsukiko swished the air in her puffed cheeks. She couldn’t see the mean Tokiya tearing up unless he was acting on a stage. But Yamaguchi had a feeling that Ken was correct. He actually did see his volleyball captain jerk into a sobbing mess after they lost a tournament qualifier match against a neighboring school recently. It was really the first and last official game they’d play.

Suddenly, Yamaguchi felt a nerve struck when remembering Tsukishima’s words after their loss.

“Three years wasted. They should’ve seen it coming.” said his friend.

“Are you staying with us and the volleyball club?” Tsukiko asked her new boyfriend. He looked down at her with his cheeks already turning pink enough that his freckles appeared to fade.

“U-Umm… yeah. I want to stay with you.” Yamaguchi answered.

Realizing what he said he then corrected himself. “You and the CRS! Y-Yeah!” he stammered.

Tsukiko was elated to hear his answer nonetheless.
“We will still need at least two new people to join,” Ken pointed out, causing Tsukiko to slump. She sprung back up and held a finger straight at Ken’s rectangular glasses.

“Not an issue when the three of us are already amazing!!” She was cheering while skipping forward but then stopped and crouched after a cold breeze hit her.

Yamaguchi hurried behind the girl, again putting his scarf around her neck.

Ken’s smile widened from witnessing the boy’s romantic gesture. Oh how he wished he could document everything.

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song used in this chapter is "Re:member" by FLOW with English lyrics by Black Rage Infinity
is it obvious that I'm rushing my sketches now? lmao but heads up I might skip a week for the next update, key word "might"

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The Whole World is Falling In Love

Chapter Summary

The two were sitting in warm silence for several minutes. Each time one tried to speak up the other happened to as well, making both face away. Yamaguchi picked up the sound of something crinkling. He looked down at the table to see a present was placed in front of him. The light in his eyes shone. “Can I open it?!” Yamaguchi asked with beaming delight. Tsukiko answered he could since it was his birthday gift.

This was it.

This was the fantasy Yamaguchi thought he would never live to experience in his lifetime.

This was going to be his first date.

From: yamaguchi

> WHY DID YOU TELL HER ABOUT MY BIRTHDAY!!??!

From: tsukki

> It was the only way to save my sanity.

Some days ago, while Yamaguchi went to take a bathroom break, his girlfriend suddenly ambushed Tsukishima who was waiting outside.

Tsukiko had been bugging him for a certain piece of information. Having labelled her a pest ever since their first encounter, Tsukishima kept giving her the cold shoulder. Unfortunately he couldn’t keep that up.

After being persistent enough, Tsukiko managed to get what she wanted from him. She had been asking when Yamaguchi’s birthday was since she felt too shy to bring it up to the guy himself. Little did she know that Ken happened to have the information she was seeking. Tsukiko’s mischievous friend seemed to know everything including her body measurements, which Ken has even gone ahead and openly shared with Yamaguchi.
Yamaguchi kept fidgeting with his phone, constantly looking down at the clock stamped on it. He still couldn’t believe he was about to go on a date with a girl but the fact she had to ask him out first made him feel like he already messed things up. No more of that, he told himself. The young boy vowed to start taking the lead after Tsukiko decided on the day of their date as well as the time and meeting spot.

While the date was meant to also be his birthday celebration, Yamaguchi took it upon himself to schedule their activities. It took some extensive research, aka going through internet searches, but what Yamaguchi learned was that he would most likely be taking his first kiss. He was mentally conflicted. Filling his chest were high hopes and deep doubts on whether that would actually happen. That was a struggle of the weak-willed.

The meeting place was in Sendai since cities were the best locations to have a date.

The appointed time was 11am as it was ideal to start a date early in the day but not so early that it would make the girl feel rushed.

Yamaguchi made sure to arrive at least ten minutes beforehand, exactly like what he read in a magazine. He wondered if he looked too formal for the occasion though. His parents went crazy when they learned their son was going on a date with a girl so they picked out his outfit for him and even combined his hair back.

“Nah, not like this!” Yamaguchi whined as he ruffled his hair into its normal state.

In the glass window of a shop he was using for a mirror, he couldn’t help but wonder about the spots on his cheeks. Tsukiko did say she liked his freckles but that didn’t mean Yamaguchi’s insecurity over them would disappear. If he had covered his freckles with makeup would his girlfriend notice? Would that upset her? The one thing he prayed not to happen is seeing Tsukiko unhappy at any point in their date.

“Guess who~?” asked a sweet voice after the light was taken from Yamaguchi’s eyes. He leaned back with knees already growing weak because Tsukiko was doing something really cute. She let go before an answer was made then giggled.

Once Yamaguchi could see again his immediate action was to check out Tsukiko’s outfit. He felt air escape his lungs at the sight.
Tsukiko wore a blue skirt with a blouse that hugged her body much better than the school uniform did, thus showcasing the actual girth of her chest. Her uneven bangs were swept to the side while the rest of her hair had been braided and brought to the front.

The boy kept staring, trying to figure out if Tsukiko was wearing any makeup. It looked like she wasn’t though—not that he hoped she was. He only expected girls to always get dolled up for their dates. Nonetheless, it didn’t change the fact that Yamaguchi was rendered speechless.

Realizing the two had been silent the entire time they both nervously retreated a step backwards. Yamaguchi rubbed his nape while Tsukiko pushed her shoulders up and twiddled her thumbs.

“You look good!” they said at the same time, bringing flushed cheeks onto both of their faces.

Once the awkwardness was brushed over the couple attended their first date activity; brunch at a cafe. And what does Tsukiko order? Pancakes.

The stack was fairly high and really looked like it was going to topple over once syrup was poured over it. Yamaguchi watched his girlfriend squeal excitedly after each bite. Her eyes sparkled then her lips curled and he heard her feet tap the floor. Having already had breakfast beforehand, Yamaguchi was glad he did because it allowed him to admire Tsukiko.

“Ahh~” she moaned while holding out a piece of her food to share.

While hesitant at first Yamaguchi’s beating heart made him jump for it. The pancake tasted sweet after soaking the syrup and had a soft, fluffy texture to where it was melting in his mouth.

“That’s really good!” Yamaguchi stated out loud. Tsukiko giggled much to his slight embarrassment. As he kept watching the girl devour the sugary goodness it eventually hit him that they technically shared an indirect kiss. This wouldn’t be the first time though, as Tsukiko had shared food with Yamaguchi on previous occasions even before they dated.

Next they went to a music shop inside of a mall. It seemed that Tsukiko was familiar with the place hearing how she greeted the cashier.
“CRS often comes here. Researching music is part of our activities after all,” she explained to Yamaguchi.

The two entered a random aisle before making their way to what was labeled as the ‘anime’ section of the store. Tsukiko scanned the cases as though searching for something specific. Yamaguchi waited a bit before approaching a set of headphones. He placed them over his ears to hear what was playing. The song was calming with its slow rhythm and mellow beats. It would have put Yamaguchi in a trance had he not gotten spooked by Tsukiko brushing against him.

“What are you listening to?” she asked curiously.

Yamaguchi faced away to hide his blush. He handed Tsukiko another headset but instead of taking the whole thing she pushed herself onto her toes and leaned some weight onto Yamaguchi for support.

“Ohh, sounds nice~” Tsukiko hummed while listening to the music coming out of the headset.

Yamaguchi froze still but his heart continued to race. He hoped it wasn’t audible from how close Tsukiko was to him.

“What kind of music do you normally listen to?” Tsukiko asked.

For a moment Yamaguchi tried to think of an answer to impress his girlfriend. He knew she liked all genres but had more favoritism towards music that was loud and powerful.

“I uhh… listen to rock.” Yamaguchi said while trying to stand confidently by his answer.

The girl looked with surprise in her awestruck gaze. “Whoa! I always pegged you to be into pop idols, so I definitely didn’t expect that.” Tsukiko confessed with light laughter. Little did she know it was pretty much a lie. Yamaguchi couldn’t bring himself to admit that he enjoyed listening to recordings of Tsukiko’s music playing that Ken had been secretly sharing with him.

Yamaguchi followed Tsukiko’s hand that was trying to reach for something. Being the gentleman he was, he picked the CD out for her. He looked at the case cover that read *BRUSH the SCAR LEMON* by a band called GRANRODEO.
Tsukiko grinned. “You heard of these guys? They’re one of my favorite rock bands. I get so pumped when I hear them perform anime openings!” she said while bringing up one of the album’s songs for Yamaguchi to listen. First he heard what sounded like a horse neighing but then the music began at full blast.

“W-Wow!!” Yamaguchi was startled. Without realizing it he started bobbing his head along to the intense beat.

Tsukiko did the same after she picked up a second headset. “My name is modern strange cowboy~” she sang along at the end while playing an air guitar.

The two looked at each other then busted out laughing together. Needless to say, Yamaguchi had bought his first rock band CD.

The date continued on with Tsukiko and Yamaguchi going through some parts of the mall then walking out to a nearby park. They sat down on a bench to continue small talk.

“By the way, are you not cold?” Yamaguchi asked after he felt a breeze pass by.

Tsukiko jerked in response then bashfully admitted she was in fact cold even with thick tights underneath her skirt. She tried to wrap her braided hair around her neck as a joke to keep warm until Yamaguchi removed the sweater his mother forced him to wear.

“Here. I was feeling stuffy in it anyway.” he told Tsukiko. Her cheeks turned pink as she smiled and accepted the article. She put her arms through the sleeves before her nose picked up a peculiar scent.

“Are you wearing cologne?” Tsukiko asked.

The question made Yamaguchi drop his head as he informed Tsukiko how his parents were the ones behind his outfit consisting of clothes he never owned until the other day.

Tsukiko chuckled while scooting closer to Yamaguchi. “Well, then I look forward to seeing Tada-kun’s own fashion style next time.” she replied.
Next time. Those words rang in Yamaguchi’s mind. By ‘next time’ it had to mean another date was bound to happen. Thinking about it already had him smiling.

“Hey, young folk!” someone called out.

The two looked up to see a stranger holding a polaroid camera. They offered to take a picture, saying it was a hobby for them to capture moments of couples in the park. Yamaguchi was frantically thinking of an excuse to politely decline but Tsukiko ended up agreeing. This made her body lean even closer to Yamaguchi’s. The photographer asked for big smiles but Yamaguchi knew his was stiff and forced.

When the picture was finally taken it was handed to Tsukiko. Her immediate reaction was letting out a cute chuckle.

“Aw, look! You were trying to put your arm around me.” she pointed out. It was Yamaguchi’s attempt to pose properly as a couple. He then hid his face and mad blush. Tsukiko insisted she found his shyness cute but the compliment only made him even more embarrassed.

“Alright, did what ya asked kid so pay up.” said the photographer to a young man with glasses and a rather sly expression.

Ken nodded and handed them some cash.

“What the hell…” Tsukishima grunted after witnessing the exchange and narrowed a glare at his senior, growing more weary of him.

“Why did I agree to a study session with this guy— and all the way out here…” he sighed.

Ken grinned while snickering under his hands.

“Because us bespectacled intellectuals stick together,” he told Tsukishima and earned a dreadful eye roll.
The blond knew from the start that Ken intended to spy on the date between their friends. What compelled Tsukishima to join was the fact he lost a certain wager from weeks ago. He found it pathetic and lame that he actually went forward with making a dumb bet, but backing out of the bargain would be more humiliating.

The date came to an end before the afternoon transitioned into evening.

Yamaguchi followed Tsukiko back to her house from the bus stop. It was his first time seeing where she lived. The front yard was heavily decorated with flora and the house itself appeared much similar to Tsukishima’s. The interiors too.

This was it.

This was another thing Yamaguchi thought he would never live to experience in his lifetime.

This was his first invitation into a girl’s home.

Tsukiko had taken him inside to the living room so that she could give him his birthday present. It also happened that her parents were out shopping. This coincidence stirred ideas that any boy in his adolescence would think of.

Yamaguchi wasn’t mentally prepared whatsoever. He ended up emitting a shrill gasp when Tsukiko sat herself beside him under the kotatsu. What probably could’ve killed him was the new fact she wore glasses.


Tsukiko nodded. “Mhm. I prefer only wearing them at home,” she answered briefly.

The two were sitting in warm silence for several minutes. Each time one tried to speak up the other happened to as well, making both face away.

Yamaguchi picked up the sound of something crinkling. He looked down at the table to see a present was placed in front of him. The light in his eyes shone.
“Can I open it?!” Yamaguchi asked with beaming delight.

Tsukiko answered he could since it was his birthday gift.

After carefully removing the wrapping, Yamaguchi’s features lit up even more. His present was a scarf. Evident by the few knots and holes it was definitely knitted by hand.

“Mmmm… it’s really long now that I see it next to you,” Tsukiko sighed.

Yamaguchi assured her that the length was fine with him. Wrapping the scarf around his neck, it bundled up to where it covered his chin.

Tsukiko snorted a chuckle.

“Okay it’s totally too long. I’ll fix it and give it back later,” she said while unraveling her boyfriend. He stopped Tsukiko halfway and put the rest of the scarf around her so that both of them were in it.

“W-We could wear it like th-this,” Yamaguchi told her with his face completely red.

Tsukiko blinked, noticing the small distance between them. She felt her chest throb as she recognized the romantic situation.

“This is where we kiss… right?” she asked with shifty eyes.

Hearing her say it out loud made Yamaguchi heat up. Should he take initiative and move forward to kiss Tsukiko? He did say he was going to start making first moves, but now that he had the chance it made Yamaguchi tense.

Tsukiko’s lips were right there for him to lock with. However, this would be Yamaguchi’s first kiss and he had no idea how to go about doing it. Then again it would be Tsukiko’s first too unless she already had experience somehow. Did she? If so then could Yamaguchi pull it off at all without
“Ahhhh we don’t have to if you’re not ready. I dunno if I am either~” Tsukiko said with a meek smile. She backed away but Yamaguchi followed. They both forgot they were still connected by the scarf, so when Yamaguchi was tugged he stumbled forward.

Neither reacted in time to avoid collision but at the same time they were glad for the accident.

The warmth they felt exchanged between their lips brought a newfound sensation that had both of them close their eyes.

Tsukiko’s first kiss was with a cute boy who had lips warmer than the summer sun.

Yamaguchi’s first kiss was with a cute girl who had lips softer than fluffy pancakes.
look at fat birb tsukki. love him ken-chan. Y'ALL I WAS NOT EXPECTING TO GET THIS FAR, LIKE, I STRAIGHT UP THOUGHT THIS WOULD ONLY TAKE THIRTY CHAPTERS AT /MOST/ BUT NAH ONCE THIS FLASHBACK ARC IS DONE WE'LL BE ON CHAPTER 50 AND THEN MORE STUFF IS GONNA HAPPEN THAT EVEN I'M JUST ????? SO I THANK YOU VERY VERY MUCH FOR READING THIS FAR!!! This is a story centered on an original character, which isn't too big of a genre on this site, but I'm so glad there are people out there who do enjoy reading this :) y'all the best fam

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Wholeheartedly

Chapter Summary

The end of the term was nearing but before that was Tsukiko’s birthday. It happened to fall on the popular holiday, Valentines Day.

After the first date and sharing their first kiss the romance between Tsukiko and Yamaguchi continued steadily.

They messaged each other more often, even managing to call on some nights. Public displays of affection was kept at a moderate level, especially at school. They had yet to hold hands but Tsukiko would hug her boyfriend when they were alone or only with their clubmates. Yamaguchi actually started addressing her by the nickname she preferred everyone call her too. He had hoped to give her something unique like she did with him but ‘Kiko-chan’ would have to suffice until he could think of a name to give her. They grew close in the passing winter; keeping each other’s hearts warm.

Come the new year, Yamaguchi attended the first shrine visit with the CRS club. Again, he anticipated on seeing Tsukiko wearing traditional attire for the occasion but she showed up in a thick coat and pants. She was extremely pleased to see the scarf she knitted wrapped around Yamaguchi though. It added some bounce to her stride with how ecstatic she felt from her boyfriend wearing something she made.

“It’s the boy who got his glasses stolen by Ken~” laughed the club’s vice-captain.

Hayato pointed his gloved finger at Tsukishima who grumbled into the collar of his sweater.

Tokiya rolled his eyes while following Lunar into the crowd and making sure she didn’t get lost due to her shortness.

Yamaguchi turned to his friend with slight concern. The reason Tsukishima was part of the group had to be because he didn’t want to join his family in the shrine visit. It would mean being around his older brother, who he grew distant from ever since discovering a traumatic truth. Yamaguchi wasn’t sure if Ken somehow knew about the blond’s backstory. But still, it was a good thing that Tsukishima was being social with someone else for once. While his interactions with Ken didn’t come off as friendly they were seen together a few times as of late. This had to mean something, right?
Once the first prayers were made and everyone picked out their fortunes, the group split up.

Yamaguchi followed Tsukiko to take her home but she wanted to stop by a park. Her excuse was to spend more time with him. Ken and Tsukishima joined the two with the former buying hot drinks from a nearby vending machine to share with everyone.

The couple sat at the swingset while the other pair were sitting on the spring rockers. Tsukishima claimed the one shaped like a dinosaur while Ken took the one shaped like a bird. They drank in silence and watched Yamaguchi gently push Tsukiko on the swings.

“Ugh.” Tsukishima groaned in complaint at the scene. As sickening as he felt to be stuck looking at a lovey-dovey couple he would rather do that than hear his brother try to talk to him again.

Ken chuckled then carefully bounced back and forth in his rocking seat. These were meant for children after all. Each time Ken was going to sip from the warm can of coffee his glasses would fog up.

Tsukishima snorted. “You should invest in anti-fog coated lenses, like me.” he said with a cocky grin.

Ken smiled back, taking the boy’s words as genuine advice that definitely wasn’t his intention.

“Good idea! I’ll do that,” Ken replied.

Both of their heads turned to the couple because of the loud laughter Tsukiko was suddenly emitting. She then pointed at Ken while stating, “his glasses aren’t even real!!”

“Wait, what?” Yamaguchi said in genuine shock.

Tsukiko nodded her head. “Haha, yup! Ken just wears fake glasses because it makes him look smart.”
Ken confirmed the truth with his own verbal statement.

Tsukishima felt his eye twitch.

The end of the term was nearing but before that was Tsukiko’s birthday. It happened to fall on the popular holiday, Valentines Day.

Flowery atmosphere filled the halls from students giving each other chocolates; whether obligatory or objective. This was a time when single people dread over receiving any kind of chocolate at all. For Yamaguchi, he felt fortunate to be spending his first Valentine's Day in junior high with a girlfriend. The night before he could hardly contain the excitement of looking forward to homemade chocolate from Tsukiko.

“Oh! It’s today!” Tsukiko gasped as she watched small gift boxes fall out of her shoe locker. The girl had completely forgotten about the holiday and in turn forgot it was even her own birthday.

Ken held back the urge to laugh while he helped Tsukiko pick up the fallen packages of candy. He knew the date would escape her mind so the guy had prepared some tote bags for Tsukiko to carry any presents she would be getting throughout the day. There wasn’t going to be a repeat of last year, he thought, remembering back to all the stuff he had to help Tsukiko carry home.

“So this means you don’t have anything to give to Tadashi-kun, huh?” Ken asked and the girl puffed again. Homeroom was going to start but she left the second year classroom in a hurry after her teacher took attendance call.

Ken didn’t bother looking for Tsukiko during the short breaks in-between classes. It eventually hit lunchtime and he made his way to the first year rooms where he spotted Yamaguchi already standing in the hallway.

The boy was oozing with eagerness. He was obviously waiting for Tsukiko to show up with her homemade affectionate chocolate. Yamaguchi was excited to receive it. When he saw how much Tsukishima got it did make him a tad jealous, but then again, he was the one with a girlfriend. The best chocolates had to come from the person he was dating.

“You look happy,” commented Ken when he approached the freshman.
Yamaguchi jolted and rearranged his stance so that he was leaning against the wall in an attempt to appear he was being natural. His freckles fading into his growing blush gave him away though.

Tsukishima suddenly stepped out of the classroom. His gold eyes narrowed on Ken and he went up to shove a rectangular box into the second year’s chest.

“Hm?” Ken looked curiously at the object given to him.

“Is this to me from you?” he asked with an intrigued air around his grin.

Tsukishima twisted his face to show disgust.

“No. That was given to me by accident.” he stated before pointing at the name written on the tag.

It read Ken Tsubasa and the chocolate itself was part of a promotion held by the Drama Club. They were selling treats a week ago and students could choose to have it delivered to someone of their choosing on the very holiday.

“Our names aren’t even written remotely similar. Whoever delivered it is an idiot.” Tsukishima muttered. He was about to walk away until Ken pulled his uniform collar. When he looked back to bark at Ken, he too was given a box with his name on it.

“I got something of yours too,” Ken said as he let go of Tsukishima who then retorted with, “Gross. More chocolate.”

“It’s chocolate covered strawberries though,” Ken mentioned while admitting to peeking inside the box.

Tsukishima rolled his eyes up. “You tell me that like it changes everything.” he added after nabbing the treat and going back into his classroom.

Yamaguchi kept glancing between the two. He couldn’t help but question how to describe their
relationship. They seemed like friends from his perspective. Tsukiko and Lunar’s interactions were similar— but with more verbal hostility from one side.

Thinking about Tsukiko again, Yamaguchi started wondering where the girl herself was. She was never late in meeting up with him to have lunch together as part of their couple activities. He only hoped she didn’t oversleep or got too sick to come to school. Ken picked up his worrying and assured that Tsukiko was definitely present.

“You’ll probably have to wait until after hours,” Ken said as he casually ate chocolates that Tsukishima handed him.

It came to after school hours, which meant clubs were in session.

“Where’s that thumping coming from?” Lunar asked to nobody specifically. She looked towards the drumset but Yamaguchi wasn’t there.

Hayato pointed at the boy still standing by the classroom door.

“Which do ya think is beating faster— his heart or his foot tapping~?” Hayato laughed before getting his head swatted by Tokiya.

The stern twin gritted his teeth. He put his hands on his hips then hollered at Yamaguchi. “Get over here!”

The command startled the first year but successfully made him stop with the nervous tick. Yamaguchi wallowed to the group circle and sheepishly sat next to Ken, though it was meant to be Tsukiko’s seat.

Panting down the hallways was a girl with her hair sloppily tied up by a blue scrunchie. Her sleeves were rolled back to her elbows and she apparently forgot to remove the apron wrapped around her body.

Tsukiko arrived at the CRS clubroom. Due to having her hands full she used a knee to knock the door and hope that the others inside would let her in.
The door began to slide open but as it did some music could be heard. First to greet Tsukiko at the door was Lunar, surprisingly.

“Oh-oh ohh~” hummed the shorter girl as she slowly stepped backwards while her small fingers gesture for Tsukiko to enter the room.

*Ready? Go! Be forever single-minded*

*Eyes on the prize feel your heartbeat*

*Burning inside from your desire (whoa! whoa!)*

Rapping alongside Lunar were the twins Hayato and Tokiya. The three sang a very fast-paced song that Yamaguchi almost couldn’t comprehend what the lyrics were. Ken bobbed his head as he adjusted the knobs on a mixing board, making sure the instrumentals weren’t overwhelming the singers.

Tsukiko watched the seniors perform energetically. Her smile stretched each second and she felt every fiber in her body harbor a lingering desire to dance with them. She grew curious as to why they were singing until the very end of the performance they pulled out party poppers.

“Happy birthday!!” cheered the whole room.

Streamers sprinkled over Tsukiko, some of which stuck to the chocolate smeared on her face or clung to her hair.

Tsukiko awed in response.

“That was awesome!” she stated with a light jump.

Lunar crossed her arms. “You better be honored to have heard me rap! I don’t do that for just anyone.” she grunted before Hayato engulfed her and Tokiya in his long arms.

“That’s a birthday song from your senpais~!” he grinned.
Tsukiko would clap if she was able to. Her hands were still full, which then made her realize how she could empty them. One by one she placed bags into each club member’s palms.

“Here are my obligatory chocos!” Tsukiko announced with a triumphant tone while listening to wrappers being opened.

Lunar’s chocolate was shaped like a crescent moon.

Hayato’s was a bunny head and Tokiya got a bear.

Ken chuckled fondly over his fox-shaped chocolate.

Yamaguchi however seemed slightly disappointed by the star-shaped chocolate bits. There were two reasons; first he was wondering why he got casual chocolate and not affectionate like he hoped for. Second, he had no idea that Valentine’s Day was also Tsukiko’s birthday.

Guilt took over Yamaguchi, making him feel he had been thinking selfishly for himself.

The club meeting was spent eating sweet dark candy as a group and then ended earlier than normal. This was becoming a frequent occurrence and it likely had to do with the fact that graduation approached in a few weeks.

Again, the third year trio stayed behind while the other three members went home first.

Ken claimed he had errands to do and thus left the couple alone.

Yamaguchi couldn’t bring himself to look at Tsukiko even though her messy ponytail was rather adorable. He felt bad that he never knew it was her birthday and on top of that had no kind of present to give her. Seeing the tote bag she carried with her full of gifts made him feel worse. How many months has it been since they started dating? And yet it’s now Yamaguchi learns about his girlfriend’s birthday. She went through the effort to get the date of his from Tsukishima and then arrange a time to celebrate. Why didn’t Yamaguchi do the same? He kept asking himself situational questions that it completely distracted him from listening to Tsukiko. The girl had to stand in front of her boyfriend to get his attention.
“What’s up Tada-kun?” Tsukiko asked with a head tilt that was to die for.

Yamaguchi gulped and dropped his gaze. “I uhh…” he couldn’t bring himself to admit the truth but Tsukiko seemed to catch on for once.

“That’s right, you probably didn’t know it was my birthday.” she said with a finger at her chin. The reassuring smile she wore only confused Yamaguchi.

“I don’t mind, since it’s also a holiday. Which is… you know… Valentines day.” Tsukiko added. She briefly glanced away then back at Yamaguchi.

Bringing her hands out from behind her back revealed a makeshift box crafted from paper. From the looks of it, it was a bunch of graded test sheets.

“This was all I had left on hand for a wrapping, I’m so sorry!!” Tsukiko nervously explained with a splash of red across her face.

Yamaguchi was even more puzzled until the bits of hope that shattered earlier began to reform. He came closer to realizing what was being handed off to him.

It was the real chocolate that Tsukiko wanted to give her boyfriend. She was just too shy to do it in front of all their friends.

“Ha-Happy Valentines day..!” Tsukiko squeaked. She got on her toes but her lips only managed to brush against Yamaguchi’s chin. The attempted surprise kiss completely caught him off guard that he was sure his heart really did leap out of his chest. His shock caused him to kneel down which Tsukiko then took the chance to retry her attack. However, she still missed. Instead of Yamaguchi’s mouth she had pecked his cheek and barely close enough to his eye that she felt his lashes tickle her skin.

The couple gasped at each other and retreated their steps. They faced away to fiddle with their fingers from immense embarrassment.

“Why are they so cute?” Ken sighed dreamily while spying from afar.
Song used this chapter is "isshinfuran" by Umetora, with English lyrics by Razzyness

Trying to do better with the sketches lol but in the end they're still messy and my style remains inconsistent :T also apologies for the slight delay! meant to post saturday but spent the whole day watching anime/recovering from an 8-hour shift and then AO3 wasn't working every time I tried to get on to update... which is why I'm now gonna go back to updating on the weekdays. The site issues seem to happen the most on weekends and I'd rather it not go whack while I'm updating my fics y'know?

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Days

Chapter Summary

The senior graduation ceremony ended with the traditional Auld Lang Syne for its closing song. Those promoting into high school walked out of the gymnasium; some already shedding their tears and others holding them back.

A month has gone by peacefully. Signified by the blossoming of cherry blossoms, this meant Spring was around the corner.

Ken claimed his usual spot in the school library one afternoon. It was a corner table next to the large window where, no matter what time of day it was, the sunlight remained there. What made things even better was how the only student present in the room was Ken himself. This peace and quiet while basking in warm light had to be the best conditions to work in. To his right were textbooks but stacked in front of him were his worn out notebooks. Each cover had a hand drawn symbol seen in any music sheet. Whether a clef or quaver, they were all sketched onto the books by Tsukiko for fun.

The boy’s eraser rubbed against the paper then tapped below his chin. He was lost in focus on a composition but the ideas seemed to have escaped as soon as he picked up the pencil. His dark green eyes trailed along the framework lines as though he was trying to picture the musical notes that would dance along the staff.

Ken blinked.

The score remained empty.

He blinked again.

Still nothing.

Then his heavy eyelids fell closed. Pressure trickled down his body, making Ken become more relaxed. Had it not been for someone suddenly removing his fake glasses then the second year would have fallen asleep right then and there.
Ken fluttered awake and saw a rectangular box being placed over his notebook. He followed the thin arm connected to it and smiled.

“Hello,” he greeted Tsukishima. The blond kept quiet and didn’t seem to be making eye contact but Ken was used to that. Looking back at the box Ken showed curiosity as to what was inside of it.

“May I open it?” he asked, assuming the object was some kind of gift.

“Mm.” Tsukishima responded.

Ken briefly examined the box before popping it open. His lips parted at the sight. “Pff—” he snorted on accident, causing Tsukishima to squint in displeasure.

The first year stuffed his hands into his pant pockets. “I don’t like being in debt,” he simply stated before walking off without listening to anything Ken was going to say next. With the bespectacled blond gone, the other couldn’t help but smile even more. Inside of the box was a red pen with green polka dots and a brown cap.

“Kinda reminds me of strawberry dipped in chocolate,” Ken said out loud to himself. He propped an elbow onto the table and rested his head in his hand while staring at the pen. It twirled swiftly between his fingers. The tip hit the paper of his notebook and smoothly ran around to draw a g-clef. After the first few notes were added Ken lightly gasped. He huffed softly with an exhaled breath.

Ken looked out the window close to him. “That’s right. It’s White Day and my birthday too,” he chuckled alone.

The senior graduation ceremony ended with the traditional Auld Lang Syne for its closing song. Those promoting into high school walked out of the gymnasium; some already shedding their tears and others holding them back. In the courtyard they were greeted by the underclassmen who looked up to them for the past year or two. For most people they won’t be able to see each other again after this. Families usually move elsewhere when their child goes into high school.
While the day was still warm everyone wasted no time in staying together for the remainder of the graduation day.

“Captain!!” cried every sports team basically. Their third year members kept up strong fronts but weren’t able to resist the group hugs.

Tsukishima grumbled and looked away from the camera as he was dragged into taking a picture with the rest of the volleyball team. He only hoped his face wasn’t clear to see in the shot. Yamaguchi snickered at what he supposed was his friend being embarrassed. The graduating captain approached him unexpectedly with a shoulder grip.

“You make sure that girl never stops smiling,” he told Yamaguchi with a playful wink.

The boy’s face immediately went red. Now that Tsukiko was on his mind he wondered where she was. His first thought was sobbing over having to say goodbye to Lunar, Hayato, and Tokiya. It made him feel a bit sad to see them go too but he was also worried about the future of the CRS club. Yamaguchi had volleyball to fall back on but what about Tsukiko? Would she have to join any of the other music clubs? And won’t that mean they’d be seeing each other less and less?

That last thought made Yamaguchi afraid. If he learned anything from sports manga it’s that keeping a relationship afloat was difficult because club practices take up a lot of one’s time. Breaking up with Tsukiko over lack of bonding time would terribly damage his heart.

“No, no! She’d never…” Yamaguchi assured himself as he began looking for his girlfriend.

Yamaguchi wasn’t sure if he simply knew from the start but his instincts were guiding him to the Coverist Research Society clubroom. Strangely it felt surreal walking down the hallway that led to it. He had been taking the same path for a year and yet now it was like the very first time. Back then he was on his way to volleyball until a charming voice captivated him.

“Hm?” Yamaguchi approached the slightly ajar door. He heard what had to be Ken on the piano and Tsukiko singing along while playing the guitar. Careful as to not disturb what was going on inside, he entered quietly and slowly.

_Time will pass; it never stops, there’s nothing we can do_

_No matter how much I wish to pause it..._
Tsukiko’s singing was calm yet had hints of struggle. It was the first Yamaguchi heard her like this. When the chorus hit he then noticed the tears dripping down the vocalist’s face.

*I don’t want to live in a future without you*

*I don’t want unbearable days to linger and stay*

*I wish for these days to last forever where we can be together*

“Without you how will I live through my days?” Tsukiko finished. Her hands slid off the microphone as she threw her head back to inhale deeply. When she pulled her bangs back she then realized that Yamaguchi was in the room too. Humility waved over and she turned to Ken, begging to use his handkerchief so that she could clean her face.

“Very well,” Tokiya spoke up as he rose out of a chair. The ends of lips curled subtly. His brother cheered profoundly for the performance.

“Bravo!” chanted Hayato as he clapped.

Lunar also appeared to be grinning.

As Yamaguchi approached Ken and Tsukiko, he didn’t ask what was going on. He guessed it after his girlfriend finished singing. Much like last month when the seniors did a birthday improv performance for Tsukiko, the same was given to them in return. This was a graduation song to them from her.

After a moment of silence the club captain took center stage.

“I now pronounce the successor of CRS to be… Yamauchi, Tsukiko.” he stated and everyone applauded for the girl pretending to be bashful.

Lunar slapped Tsukiko’s back, pushing her towards Tokiya. The junior high graduate stood in his usual firm demeanor until he put a hand on the new captain’s shoulder.

“It’s yours now,” Tokiya said in a hushed voice.
Tsukiko beamed. She nodded once then replied, “Thank you very much! I won’t let you or our previous captain down!”

The third years wanted one last moment alone to themselves in the clubroom so the other three left.

“Guess I won the bet,” Ken stated once in the hallway. Upon saying it he got his payment quickly.

Tsukiko blew up her cheeks as she gave her friend a juice carton. The two had made a wager. They were betting was whether Tsukiko would cry during her farewell performance. She then argued that it was a given she would cry from having to say goodbye to the people she’s worked with since her first year. A smirk later came to her features.

“But I did also bet that Toki would smile. He totally did it! I’m pretty sure he smiled~” Tsukiko added.

Ken shrugged but went along with the agreement anyway. He handed Tsukiko one of his notebooks as well as a pen. Before she began terrorizing its cover with a sketch of a music symbol, Tsukiko realized the pen given was brand new. She had gone through Ken’s bag enough times to steal pencils that she would easily recognize something she hasn’t seen before.

Tsukiko chuckled. “It kinda looks like a strawberry dipped in chocolate!” she said and Ken nodded.

Yamaguchi looked closely then was amazed. He recalled seeing Tsukishima buy the exact pen some time ago.

“Did Tsukki give you that?” he asked and Ken nodded again before mentioning that it was given to him as a birthday gift.


Ken explained how the box of chocolate-covered strawberries he gave to Tsukishima during Valentines Day were actually from him, not part of a delivery mix-up. He also mentioned that the
chocolate meant for himself were purposely sent to Tsukishima too.

“I knew Tsukishima-kun wouldn’t accept friendship chocolate from me so I purposely staged the mix-up to get him to trade with me. Kiko-chan went and told him the truth later. You informed him that it would be my birthday too then?” Ken said.

Tsukiko pretended to laugh like a high noble person. “I applaud your keen senses,” she hooted.

Yamaguchi was thinking that it seemed as though Ken took pleasure in toying with Tsukishima. He had faith that Ken wasn’t genuinely bullying him but was simply pulling pranks to become friends with the antisocial blond. It might have worked too, not that Yamaguchi could be entirely sure.

Speaking of Tsukishima, he suddenly appeared.

“Hey,” he called out to the group.

Yamaguchi began to sweat, thinking that his friend overhead them and was upset. That didn’t seem to be the case, fortunately. Tsukishima approached Tsukiko, his gold eyes staring her down while she looked up like an innocent child awaiting instruction.

“I’m joining your weird music club. You got a registration sheet on hand?” he asked.

The other three were quiet for a few seconds before gasping from shock together. None of them had expected to hear Tsukishima of all people asking to join CRS. The question was why though. They tried to ask but Tsukishima wasn’t going to answer his reason. No way was he going to tell them it’s because his older brother would be taking a break from college and therefore be home almost every day for a whole semester.

After signing the paper that Tsukiko really did carry around with her, Tsukishima put his headphones back on. He wrinkled his brows at how intensely Tsukiko was staring at his name.

“What? Trying to read it?” He suspected she wasn’t able to read the kanji in his first name. Not a lot of people did.
Tsukiko began to shake. She held tightly onto a sheet of paper with Tsukishima’s request to join the club; her club. It excited her that they were then one person close to being approved for continuous activity.

“AH YEAH!!” the girl roared, going as far as to show her joy by raising the paper up and waving it around.

Ken laughed at Tsukiko and couldn’t bring himself to stop her. He liked seeing how exhilarated she was over Tsukishima being their fourth member.

Yamaguchi was pretty happy too, albeit some curiosity as to why his friend was doing it. Could Tsukishima play an instrument? Nothing in particular triggered a memory as to whether he did or not. Yamaguchi thought he’d have to try asking his friend another time. His attention went back to Tsukiko, the girlfriend he agreed to walk home with. While nobody was looking, the couple managed to hold pinky fingers as they walked. It was still an embarrassment for them to completely hold hands.

During the Spring break, Yamaguchi dreadfully missed Tsukiko. She was with her family in Tokyo however. Feeling bored but mostly sad that it would be another week until he saw her again, the freckled boy went over to Tsukishima’s house. There, he meant to wallow in his friend’s room but was instead tossing and receiving a volleyball with the older brother Akiteru in the backyard.

Tsukishima was still avoiding his brother. It’s been that way for well over a year. He remained in the living room watching television by himself. When his name was being called though, Tsukishima put no effort into hiding the fact he didn’t want to be around Akiteru.

Tsukishima got up to return to his room. Before heading upstairs he passed by his father who was getting ready to leave the house.

“Work called you in?” the boy asked just so he wasn’t rudely ignoring his parent either. His father nodded then let out a sigh.

“Yeah. One of my usuals showed up so they need me to look him over,” answered the man that fuzzed with his shoelaces.
Tsukishima began to go up the stairs but before taking the first step he heard his father mutter, “that poor Ken boy.”

Meanwhile, in the backyard, Akiteru sat down on the porch with a tired Yamaguchi. The first year college student leaned back and gazed at the sky. A gentle breeze made the wind chime ornament play its tune among the silence.

“Hey,” Akiteru finally spoke up. “Has Kei made any other friends?” he asked with genuine curiosity.

Yamaguchi lifted his head. The boy made a face showing he was deep in thought and Akiteru laughed. “You have to think about it?!” He slapped his knee hysterically. Yamaguchi rubbed his nose and chuckled as well.

“Actually, Tsukki has been talking to someone else. A senpai of ours.” he told the older brother who then widened his eyes from shock.

Akiteru begged for more information and Yamaguchi reluctantly told him what he could. He ended up mentioning Tsukiko to which Akiteru started teasing the boy for managing to snag a girlfriend before him or Tsukishima.
Song used this chapter is "Days" by Jin ft. Lia with English lyrics by TYErecords

When your art style is so inconsistent that you're not even sure if you were the artist lmao but also I find it really weird to draw Ken with open eyes?? I've only drawn him and his BnHA version like twice and both times Ken had his eyes closed AND GOSH THEY LOOK KINDA EVIL WITH OPEN EYES WHICH IS A BIT FUNNY SINCE KEN IS SUPPOSED TO COME OFF AS A SCHEMER??? ASDFGHJ;; HE'S NOT A BAD GUY I PROMISE;;;;; also this flashback arc ends in like 4 chapters we almost there fam!!

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Monologue

Chapter Summary

Upon returning to school Yamaguchi was first greeted by his forever-smiling girlfriend. Seeing her being optimistic every day hardly did any healing to his weary mind.

The new school year began the first week of April.

Much like the last Spring, Yamaguchi was walking under a path of cherry blossom trees on the way to school with his friend Tsukishima. At the end of it they reached sight of the school gate. Standing there were two familiar faces.

Tsukiko turned her head when a petal brushed against her cheek, as though it was telling her to look the other way. A smile erupted on her face and she started dashing towards Yamaguchi. The boy wasn’t at all prepared to get jumped onto that he nearly fell back because of his girlfriend.

“Morning!” Tsukiko greeted Yamaguchi. Having noticed he grew taller, Tsukiko thought it would be fun to hang off the boy. She kept her arms tightly around his neck and her feet brushed against the ground.

With a flushed face Yamaguchi hesitantly put his hands around Tsukiko’s waist to support her.

“Mo-Mo-Mor—” he tried to answer back but was too ridden by shyness mixed with immense joy.

There were some changes in Tsukiko’s appearance as well. She was still a small girl but Yamaguchi noticed her ears were pierced and wondered if she got it done in Tokyo like she once said she wanted. Her bangs have also been cut evenly too.

Tsukishima went ahead of the couple, not wanting to be near their lovey-dovey aura. He passed Ken who tried to greet him too but was ignored. Ken didn’t seem to mind this since he mostly expected the cold shoulder. It didn’t stop him from approaching Tsukishima anyways and giving him a gentle bump against his junior’s arm.
The opening ceremony did its usual and as with last year the club recruitment was going on all over campus.

In the courtyard were eager clubs calling out for new members. Since the Coverist Research Society only had four people and not the required minimum of five, they weren’t allowed to have their instruments out like before. Tsukiko kept begging the student council since she personally knew half of them in it but they wouldn’t budge for her.

“We’ll have to make due with the simple method,” Ken said as he split a stack of registration forms between himself and the other three. They then took off in different directions to promote the CRS as pairs.

Tsukiko went from one student to another. “Like covering music? Join us!” she would say with enthusiasm oozing from her pores.

Yamaguchi could hardly keep up with her. As determined as he was to help, his nerves tied his tongue.

“P-P-Ple—a—” he stuttered.

Some people took pity and accepted the paper but Yamaguchi doubted they were going to sign up for CRS. The cowlick on top of Yamaguchi’s head seemed to twitch when he noticed Tsukiko was almost too far for his comfort.

Ken and Tsukishima went inside the school while the couple was hitting the courtyard.

“Can’t we lie and put someone randomly on this?” groaned the bespectacled blond.

The one with false lenses next to him chuckled. Ken waved to a passing student and asked if they were interested in joining the CRS. Unfortunately, the person was already planning to sign up for a normal music club.

Tsukishima rolled his eyes. He started to think it was pointless to have joined seeing how Tsukiko’s precious club was very likely going to be forced to disband. An elbow pressed against his arm took his attention.
“Use your charming good looks to get somebody to join,” Ken suggested jokingly.

Though his persisting comments that followed implied he was serious.

Tsukishima clicked his tongue. “So another Yamaguchi?” he replied without realizing he threw in a joke too.

Ken had to prop himself against a wall as he laughed hard.

It’s been a month since the first term began. There was only a week until the midterm exams and in order for students to focus on their studies all club activities would be cancelled.

Both Yamaguchi and Tsukishima were partially glad to not have volleyball practice for a couple of days. The upperclassman that took over as team captain was much more strict and hellbent on entering official tournaments.

For Tsukishima it irritated him because he kept getting scolded for not putting much effort into the training. Yamaguchi on the other hand was still getting some mistreatment due to his ongoing relationship with Tsukiko. By this point he didn’t care about the jealousy of his seniors. In fact he was more concerned about what the new freshmen were thinking about him.

Yamaguchi messed up several serves and receives. The only redeemable thing he pulled off were blocks but even then most of the credit was given to his friend. Volleyball wasn’t as fun as being in the CRS clubroom. Too bad he’ll never get to show Tsukishima how exciting it is to play music with Tsukiko and Ken.

They never were able to recruit a fifth member.

From: kiko-chan

> TA DA KUUUUUN~~~!! (neapolis)*¬ ¬*

> done with practice yet? Hmm? HMMM??
> I wanted to walk home together so I waited

> but a teacher shooed me away (>•_•<)

“Too cute.” Yamaguchi said out loud. He already made it to his house when he saw the text from Tsukiko. Based on the timestamp he was in fact still having volleyball practice when she sent it. Luckily it’s the last one before study cramming hell.

Before taking his bath the boy made sure to send a reply. When he got back he had to do a double take at Tsukiko’s follow-up message. In a panic, Yamaguchi scurried around his room to start preparing.

The next morning was a Saturday that Tsukishima had planned to spend locked up in his own room.

Alone.

In studious solitude.

Tsukishima ended up going through the opposite. He wasn’t in his bedroom but instead chained downstairs in the living room. Sitting on the other sides of the square table were Ken, Tsukiko, and Yamaguchi. The couple in particular were chatting away about mathematics.

“Why did it have to be here.” Tsukishima grunted.

The third year next to him laughed softly. Ken was at least keeping conversation to a minimum—until Akiteru barged in on the study session. He first approached Tsukiko just to embarrass Yamaguchi then he greeted Ken who was formal in response.

“Gosh Kei, you sure have some interesting new friends!” Akiteru commented with a grin.

Tsukishima said nothing in return, only going back to his English notes.

“Does Zushima-kun not like his bro?” whispered Tsukiko to her boyfriend.
Yamaguchi hesitated before answering, “it’s complicated..”

The study group got together more than once; not just on the weekend but throughout the rest of the club-free week. It all took place at Tsukishima’s house because his was supposedly the biggest out of everyone else’s.

“Nah, Ken’s place is pretty much the same size I think.” Tsukiko stated the following day when she had lunch with the two second year boys in their classroom. Finding out this fact ticked Tsukishima off. He made a mental note to turn down future study sessions taking place at his home. If anything he’d rather be out of the house and hit the books elsewhere with the group.

“S-So…” Yamaguchi bashfully scratched his freckled cheek.

Tsukiko’s shoulders perked up in response as she waited to hear what Yamaguchi wanted. He swallowed his nerves and asked, “D-D-Do you wanna walk home t-today?”

“Ah. Can’t.” Tsukiko answered too fast that Yamaguchi’s fragile heart couldn’t prepare for the swift impact. He slumped over with a pout that didn’t go unnoticed by his girlfriend. She leaned towards him and moved his hair to place a hand on his forehead. It was a comforting touch that repaired the damage to his heart.

With a lifted gaze Yamaguchi sheepishly smiled at Tsukiko in return. Still, he wanted to find any excuse to spend more time with the girl. So despite being turned down he decided to surprise Tsukiko on his next volleyball-free day by waiting for her to finish with her club activities.

The Coverist Research Society was forced to disband due to not meeting the required minimum of five members.

Yamaguchi never thought to ask how Tsukiko felt about losing the club before she could really do anything with it. The smile she wore when relaying the unfortunate news had no hint of disappointment so Yamaguchi assumed she wasn’t discouraged either.

As an alternative, both Ken and Tsukiko joined the Traditional Music Society together. It was another music club that focused on studying and practicing classical Japanese music and dance. Admittedly it happened to be Tsukiko’s original choice had she not been won over by the CRS in her freshman year. Ken followed her simply because he knew some of the members already and
they had been constantly asking for his help since he knew how to play traditional instruments.

“Slow down! You’re way too fast!” Hollered a high-pitched voice from inside the clubroom.

Yamaguchi halted in the hallway. He became concerned after picking up Tsukiko’s voice responding with an apology afterwards. The door was slightly ajar so curiosity made him peek inside. There, he saw Tsukiko wearing a focused expression that looked more tense than he was used to seeing back in CRS. She wore a kimono top with long sleeves that twisted around with each spinning movement. Tsukiko appeared to be practicing a fan dance. To Yamaguchi she looked absolutely stunning, though his biased opinion was usually skewed that way.

A short girl with light blonde twintails wearing an orange kimono huffed and puffed angrily.

“No, no, no! Do you even understand what elegance means?!” shouted Hiyoko Saionji, third year student and leader of the Traditional Music Society. She flapped her arms but Tsukiko confessed to finding the girl too cute to take seriously.

“FLATTERY WON’T GET YOU ANYWHERE PUNK.” Hiyoko’s voice suddenly deepened. Her crude attitude reminded Yamaguchi of Lunar but in a genuinely hostile way.

Throughout the entire practice it was only Tsukiko who kept getting berated and scolded. It was uncomfortable for Yamaguchi to watch his girlfriend get singled-out when she was only trying her best to meet the president’s standard. What was Tsukiko even doing wrong, if at all?

“Saionji-san actually hated the CRS,” said Ken when Yamaguchi approached him during lunch the next day. He meant to pick up Tsukiko to go eat somewhere on campus but found out she went to the clubroom for extra training.

Ken continued to explain how Saionji was being tougher on Tsukiko because of her distaste towards a club that had done nothing to pose a threat. The truth was not the club itself that Saionji disliked but one of the founding members from two years previously.

“Our senpai back then was very good at enka and traditional dance. She beat Saionji in local competitions numerous times.” Ken informed.

Yamaguchi balled his fists. It wasn’t right to mistreat Tsukiko who wasn’t involved in Saionji’s
personal issue towards a person that’s long gone, he thought.

“Why does she stay in that club then? What’s the point when—”

Ken shook his head, putting a hand on Yamaguchi’s shoulder to stop him from finishing his sentence. He looked at his junior straight in the eyes and said, “Don’t start talking like Kei-kun.”

His words instilled shock in Yamaguchi. It was the first he heard the usually caring Ken speak coldly. However he couldn’t help but feel there was truth in what was said. Applying it to himself instead, Yamaguchi could ask himself the same thing. Why was he still in the volleyball club? The senior captain bullies him and Yamaguchi hasn’t done anything remarkable or worth acknowledgment. Like Tsukishima he had height, yet that wasn’t enough, apparently.

---

**From: kiko-chan**

> great job with the sports festival!
> heard your class won second place~ ✌️(＾▽＾）

**From: tada-kyun**

> yeah, thank you.
> congrats on the relay race too.

**From: kiko-chan**

> umu~ thank kyu~! (^•_•^)

---

**From: kiko-chan**

> any plans for summer vacation?
> don’t forget to do your homework!! (´ `)
From: tada-kyun

> nothing on my end since my parents might be busy
> how about you? going to visit tokyo again?

From: kiko-chan

> yep yep! (ancellor)♡ (ancellor)♡
> tempted to get my hair dyed over there
> whaddya think boyfriend of mine?!

From: tada-kyun

> whoa! That’ll be something…
> but won’t you get in trouble?

From: kiko-chan

> hhmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
> probably LOL WWWW

From: kiko-chan

> good luck with volleyball training camp hell, LOL~! \(‘ V‘) /

From: tada-kyun

> thank you.
> see you later.

- - -

From: kiko-chan
> gaahhhhh Tokyo is so hot!!! ~(>_<=o  ) \n
> if I perish here, just know…

> you’re gonna be haunted by me LOL

---

**From:** kiko-chan

> SUMMER BREAK IS ALREADY OVER?!?!?! щ(゜ロ゜щ)

> SEE YOU TOMORROOOOWWW TADA-KUN~!!

---

The second term began with the end of an uneventful summer. There was no beach trip, festival outing, or even a monster attack.

Yamaguchi did begin to notice something dangerous though. He hadn’t been responding to most of Tsukiko’s text messages due to volleyball practice. It would leave him too exhausted some nights to even bother checking his phone. When Yamaguchi had the chance to relay an apology for lack of communication his growing fear prevented him from pressing the send button.

Upon returning to school Yamaguchi was first greeted by his forever-smiling girlfriend. Seeing her being optimistic every day hardly did any healing to his weary mind. He was afraid that underneath Tsukiko’s smile she actually felt lonely and sad.

Ken had once told him that she was the type to hide her feelings as to keep others from worrying over her.

Every time that Yamaguchi was met face-to-face with Tsukiko’s glow it only made the shadow behind him become intensely darker. What were her thoughts on the matter? Had she notice the declining amount of communication too?

Tsukiko never mentioned anything so Yamaguchi thought he might as well not start up a discussion either.
what I tell people who ask me for relationship advice: COMMUNICATION IS KEY, but even I admit I don't always tell my boyfriend things when I really should ;;oops

p.s. guest character Hiyoko Saionji is from Danganronpa 2

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Instrumentals blared out from the surrounding speakers that somehow weren’t overpowering the musical instruments being played on the stage. As the loud, powerful song progressed Tsukiko’s hair became tousled and her kimono loosened enough to show the tank and shorts she wore underneath. Yamaguchi watched from the bottom of the stage. The feeling he had was the same as when he first saw Tsukiko.

Posting this chapter early because next week (7/16) is my birthday! I’ll be gone all next week thus why I’m updating early lol

Come late October, the annual cultural festival was in full swing once more.

One of the second year classes were running a haunted cafe. Everyone had an assigned monster character with Yamaguchi being a mummy and Tsukishima a vampire. Within an hour of opening, dozens of girls were flocking around the classroom all requesting to be served by the blond wearing a black and red cape.

“If anyone’s soul is getting sucked here it's mine.” Tsukishima complained when he entered the makeshift kitchen where Yamaguchi was pouring juice. The boy with wrappings around his torso and limbs handed the drinks to his vampiric friend.

“Haha, good luck out there Tsukki,” he replied with a forced laugh.

By noon the boys were allowed a break, despite some classmates urging Tsukishima to keep working because his charm was attracting customers. They hurried out of the building in search of food to replenish their energy. The vendor that won them over was the yakisoba stand being run by another sports club.

“What are the other two doing?” Tsukishima asked after sitting down with Yamaguchi. The latter thought for a moment, recalling what Tsukiko told him in a text the previous night. She said that the TMS would be performing in the gymnasium with the rest of the main events. Yamaguchi just
wasn’t sure at what time it happened because he didn’t follow up with a reply to ask.

A passing student in a mascot costume happened to hand Yamaguchi a pamphlet containing the festival’s schedule. It was like they read his mind or something. Looking over the schedule, it listed the TMS performance was going to start in half an hour.

“There’s plenty of time for us to go find a seat now,” Yamaguchi suggested out loud. He turned to Tsukishima and nearly choked on yakisoba due to laughter. The mascot person was having a slap fight with his friend. Apparently they were trying to steal Tsukishima’s glasses, and of course he wasn’t going to let that happen to him a second time.

The gymnasium was fairly packed but people would leave before and after some acts. This then allowed Yamaguchi and Tsukishima to find a place to sit fairly close to the stage.

“Wake me up when it’s over.” Tsukishima grumbled as he crossed his arms and allowed his head to fall forward with closed eyes.

Yamaguchi wasn’t sure if he was seriously intending on sleeping throughout the entire show. His olive eyes looked up at the stage lights that seemed to be getting brighter alongside his growing anticipation. He wondered what Tsukiko would be doing in the performance. Singing sounded like a given but considering the club leader’s dislike towards her, Yamaguchi had hoped Tsukiko wasn’t forced into a minor role— or even worse, pulled out entirely. Worried that may be the case he got up and snuck to the back of the stage as to make sure his suspicions weren’t correct.

“Hm? Tada-kun?” Tsukiko turned around to see her boyfriend standing in the faint darkness behind her.

A sigh of relief escaped Yamaguchi. He claimed to having wanted to cheer the girl before she got on stage. He couldn’t find his words as he was rendered speechless when taking a closer look at Tsukiko’s outfit. She wore a stylized kimono and elaborate makeup that Yamaguchi was surprised he managed to recognize her at first sight. Realizing that he had never seen her in an outfit like this caused Tsukiko to blush too.

“Th-thank you…” she said despite Yamaguchi having not uttered a thing. It was written all over his face, really.

Once it was time for the Traditional Music Society’s turn to perform, Yamaguchi made his way
returning to the audience seats. However, he was stopped by a certain mascot character blocking his path.

“U-Um, excuse me?” Yamaguchi tried to go one way only for the person to mirror him. They kept at this for a while until Yamaguchi was almost successful in escaping.

“Wait,” said a muffled by familiar voice.


Ken removed the mascot head to reveal his face. He really did look different without glasses. Aside from that, Yamaguchi realized something else.

“Why aren’t you ready for the show? You guys are going on right now!” he said in a hushed voice before Ken pointed to chairs below. Taking up the front row was Saionji and a few other members of TMS. The tiny girl appeared to be snickering into her sleeves.

Yamaguchi’s expression fell. How come Tsukiko was the only person ready and positioned on stage? She looked ridiculous being alone in a traditional garb and surrounded by instruments people only saw in museums or their grandparents houses.

“I let my guard down.” Ken muttered with gritting teeth as he was furiously ripping off the mascot costume. Yamaguchi helped him and asked what he meant. Ken brought up that a schedule change was done last minute. The TMS switched time slots with another club to perform on the second day of the festival instead of the first, like the pamphlet Yamaguchi read had stated. However, Ken found out moments ago from a committee member that the other club wasn’t going to show up anyways and therefore an intermission would be taking place instead.

“Then… Tsukiko is there by herself for no reason?!?” Yamaguchi gasped. He turned around and saw Tsukiko was still on stage. She was shaking a bit, since her starting position was to crouch. There wasn’t much of an audience left but those that were seated stared at her with confusion. Yamaguchi was sure he heard some ridiculing comments towards Tsukiko.

“We gotta go get her out of there!” he urged but didn’t do so much as budge from where he stood.

Ken shook his head. “Hell no. I’m not letting that tiny demonspawn win one over us.”
Hearing him swear was rather shocking that Yamaguchi needed to do a double take. Before he could say anything else, Ken took hold of Yamaguchi’s hands and placed something in them.

“Take this to the sound booth right now. Tell them to play it as soon as Tsukiko starts singing,” he instructed with urgency in his tone. Without really thinking at this point Yamaguchi did as told and scurried off.

“What’s going on? When are we starting?” Tsukiko thought to herself. Her grey eyes tried to keep focused straight ahead but they bounced from person to person in the small crowd below. One guy was sleeping, a group was murmuring to each other, and another was pointing while giggling.

Tsukiko’s weary eyes set sight of Saionji and the rest of the crew sitting front row in the dim area. “Why aren’t the others and Saioncchi up here? Am I too early??” she kept wondering until a figure appeared in the corner of her vision. Seeing Ken literally threw Tsukiko off balance and she collapsed onto the floor. When she did the few people below cracked out laughter.

Ken walked up to Tsukiko and handed her a microphone. Once she grabbed it, he set up a stand to place a koto on top of.

“Hey!” Saionji hollered roughly. “The hell you doing?!” she hissed but drew back after getting pierced by Ken’s icy glare. He returned his gaze to the confused Tsukiko, giving her his usual soft smile.

“Senbonzakura,” he said in a single breath.

Excitement suddenly exploded in Tsukiko’s features. She understood immediately what Ken meant. Grinning widely, the girl pushed herself up while also picking up a shamisen. With the microphone attached to a stand, Tsukiko started playing a couple rapid notes before letting out a roar that began the song.

_Thousands of cherry blossoms dwindling in the light_
_Though I can't hear your voice, keep what I say in mind_
_In the sky of red and black, there's no use coming back_
_Just give up, my love, come, shoot me with your gun_
Instrumentals blared out from the surrounding speakers that somehow weren’t overpowering the musical instruments being played on the stage. As the loud, powerful song progressed, Tsukiko’s hair became tousled and her kimono loosened enough to show the tank and shorts she wore underneath. The way she bounced around the stage with high energy made the crowd cheer.

Yamaguchi watched from the bottom of the stage. The feeling he had was the same as when he first saw Tsukiko. Being able to pull of an improvised performance on the spot was an impressive feat. Her voice was strong and she danced passionately with the rhythm. Yamaguchi only wished he was up there playing the drums so that he was more involved in helping his girlfriend.

On the second day of the school festival there was a much bigger audience attending the main events hall than previously. Word spread of what Tsukiko and Ken did— their act being credited towards the Coverist Research Society name. People were apparently looking forward to seeing a modern interpretation of traditional Japanese music again. This obviously was not pleasing to Saionji but she surprisingly didn’t do anything about the two that were technically members of her club. She kept them in the performance, continuing with what they practiced all year for. However, she nearly lost her cool onstage from the chatter she heard among the audience.

“Why is this not like yesterday’s performance?”

“How come they’re not rocking out?”

“Kinda boring.”

After the Traditional Music Society finished their act there was nothing else to do. The gremlin of a captain needed to relieve her anger out of everyone’s sight.

Ken and Tsukiko visited the second year class for their two favorite second year boys. They requested to be served by the mummy and vampire, much to Tsukishima’s dismay.

“You’re sooooo cute!” Tsukiko squealed while attacking her boyfriend with snaps from her phone in camera mode. Yamaguchi blushed intensely and put his wrapped arms over his partially covered face.
The monsters served their guests mixed blood of forbidden fruit, aka a juice blend. They weren’t making food like they did with their pancake cafe last year but instead arranged interactive activities. Ken had coaxed Tsukishima into yet another wager: whoever loses in jenga first has to have the next study session at their house. Unfortunately the game fell to a draw because Tsukiko accidentally shook the table with her excitement from winning the memory card game she played with Yamaguchi.

“See you later my mummy~” Tsukiko waved to her boyfriend who shyly hid again. She continued walking around the school with Ken. They visited every other classroom and participated in their games or ate their food. Making it back outside, the two arrived in time to see a crossdressing beauty contest going on.

“Remember when Toki won first place? He was sooo gorgeous!” Tsukiko laughed, wiping away a tearbud from recalling the memory of her first year.

Ken chuckled too. He put a curled finger to his chin, mentioning that he intended to enter the contest too but kept forgetting. His female friend gasped. “Ken as a girl… Kenko!” she spouted.

The pair stopped in their tracks when a stranger suddenly approached them. He introduced himself as a talent agent and he wanted to scout Tsukiko.

“After your bravo performance since yesterday I was floored! So I showed footage to my president and—”

“Sir, video recording without permission is illegal.” Ken stated but the random fact only made Tsukiko think he was joking around.

A short plump woman appeared beside the talent scout. It was Madame, a family friend of Tsukiko’s. She greeted the children who then returned with politeness.

“Kiko-chan,” she called to the young girl. “You can become an idol in high school if you accept this man’s offer.” Madame said and Tsukiko responded with glee.

Ken wasn’t wearing the same optimistic face. However, he couldn’t say otherwise to Tsukiko’s eagerness.
“Well, if that’s what you want to do then I support it.” he told her with a gentle smile.

The school festival neared its conclusion, which was going to be the traditional bonfire and fireworks show. Tsukiko went off with Yamaguchi to enjoy the evening together. She wanted to reminisce on the anniversary of their confession. Ken and Tsukishima were left alone much like last year too. They sat outside with the large fire lighting their surroundings.

“Now that’s a face you’ve definitely never made,” commented Tsukishima as he leaned back.

Ken blinked. He touched his face a bit, trying to figure out his own features. The junior beside him rolled his eyes. Tsukishima could tell something was off about Ken. He had endured the guy’s normally playful antics enough to notice the change.

“Does it have something to do with the idiot girl?” he asked and Ken was again surprised. His lips perked up slightly.

“When is it never about Tsukiko? She’s practically the center of my universe…” Ken replied with a light sigh at the end.

Light shot into the sky, illuminating various colors and explosive shapes. At the same time a freckled boy received a touching kiss from the girl he opened his feelings to, in the same scene. They held hands and repeated their affections that haven’t changed in the passing year.

“So you do have a crush on her,” said Tsukishima but Ken was quick to object. Just because a boy and girl were very close friends doesn’t always have to mean they romantically like each other. Ken genuinely saw Tsukiko as a dear friend. That’s it.

“I just want to see her obtain what she wants.” Ken stated.

Tsukishima sighed through his nose then laid himself down. “Now you sound like a parent to her again…”

Ken chuckled and dropped to his back too.
The two glasses boys remained silent for the rest of the fireworks show. It was nearing the end seeing how dozens were being launched all at once.

When Tsukishima turned over to his side he was nearly spooked to see Ken staring at him, and without his fake glasses on too.

“What?” the blond grunted.

Ken leaned in closer to which Tsukishima reacted by moving backwards.

“Do you find volleyball fun?” Ken asked. The boy in front of him didn’t hesitate and bluntly answered, “It’s just a club.”

Without even realizing it, Ken had moved close enough for Tsukishima to see himself reflected in the other’s dark green eyes.

“I’m sure you’ll come to enjoy it once you meet the right people. That’s how it was for all of us,” said Ken in a hushed voice.

Feeling the other guy’s breath freaked out Tsukishima. He scrambled to sit up and faced away from the upperclassman. Taking quiet deep breathes, Tsukishima calmed his panicked heart. Anger rushed in his veins as Ken’s words reminded him of things he wanted to forget.

“Shut up. It’s never gonna happen to me.” Tsukishima growled before standing on his feet and leaving.

Ken kept still on the grass, a finger tapping his fake glasses beside him.

“Let’s enjoy another year together, Tadashi.” Tsukiko whispered into Yamaguchi’s warm chest that was beating rhythmically on the surface.

Yamaguchi buried his nose into the girl’s soft hair, inhaling the scent he had grown rather fond of.
It helped him relax and feel at peace. He really did love this feeling.

Song used this chapter is "Senbonzakura" with English lyrics by Kran and Razzyness

The version by Wagakki Band gave inspiration for the performance scene~ AND YET THE TITLE OF THIS CHAPTER IS "BAD APPLE" which I originally did wanted to use but I liked Wagakki Band's rendition of Senbonzakura more u v u ~~~ and lol at the ending sketch xD honestly wanted an excuse to draw Saeko-neesan because she's so amazing aahhh I was blown away when she arrived with her taiko team to cheer for Karasuno at nationals! ; o ; also if ya can't tell (bc I kinda can't lmao) that's Tsukiko in the kimono Tu T

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Chapter Summary

Tsukishima answered with his chin tucked into his scarf. “...Winter came early.”

Chapter Notes

regular weekly updates is back after taking a break because I was celebrating my birthday (July 16) last week~

Yamaguchi was nervous the entire practice match. He knew the captain put him in the game to ridicule the boy in front of their live audience, which included Tsukiko. It was her first time watching Yamaguchi play so she was very excited; like a child at an amusement park. The girl cheered from the balcony above for both her boyfriend and his grumpy friend. Ken watched too with his usual grin. Seeing how fired up Tsukiko was he felt he had to keep a literal leash on her so she won’t jump over the railing.

When the game ended it wasn’t on a good note. Yamaguchi’s team was completely obliterated. In the final set, a lot of mistakes were made ranging from a flubbed serve to a broken receive. As everyone feared, the captain started barking at them. He complained that nobody was being serious and accused Yamaguchi of getting distracted throughout the game because of his girlfriend being present.

“Hey!” Tsukiko shouted with her hands cupped around her mouth. “A leader doesn’t put down his teammates! He’s supposed to lift them up!!” she continued to say before Ken had to hold her back.

The younger members felt a spike of courage after what Tsukiko said. Those that were tired of hearing their captain say nothing but negative things to them finally spoke up. They argued and retaliated. Tsukishima stepped away to the side of the gym with his ears covered because of how loud everybody suddenly became. Yamaguchi got worried too and also retreated.

“Geez! When did he become such a meanie? I remember your captain being one of those cool dudes when he tried to grow a pompadour our first year,” Tsukiko huffed. She was gritting her teeth before noticing Yamaguchi’s sullen expression.

“Don’t let anything he’s said get to you,” she told her boyfriend with a more serious tone that
somewhat took him by surprise.

Yamaguchi didn’t feel completely reassured but he sucked it up and put on a smile for his girlfriend. He still appreciated her comforting efforts.

For once, the couple was able to walk home together. They had achieved being together for over a year but due to schedule conflicts they haven’t been able to go on another date. Getting alone time like now could only satisfy them by so much.

Tsukiko took the bold initiative and laced her fingers with Yamaguchi’s. This was probably the most PDA they’ve done in a long while. The two walked close enough for them to share the long knitted scarf Tsukiko made last year.

“I’ll give you a new one for your birthday in a few weeks!” she expressed with flushed cheeks. Realizing she revealed what Yamaguchi’s present would be Tsukiko tried to take it back and the boy only found her clumsiness cuter than anything. He gave her hand a squeeze and bent down to kiss her. However, Yamaguchi still wasn’t brave so he settled for a simple peck on the head. Tsukiko was thrilled nonetheless, emitting hearts and flowers from her aura.

Come the following days, Tsukiko was notably growing more openly affectionate with Yamaguchi. She always had her arm locked with his when people were around. Sometimes they held hands, which started with Tsukiko. “Tada-kuuun~” she would call out his name every time they passed by in the hallway. Even during lunch Tsukiko would insist on feeding her beloved boyfriend. Though as suspicious her behavior clearly was, Yamaguchi honestly enjoyed the attention. He always wanted to act lovey-dovey with a cute girlfriend and Tsukiko was doing just that.

Thinking it was only right for him to return the favor, Yamaguchi tried to do things he thought would make Tsukiko’s heart race as much as his did. From studying shoujo manga, he first attempted the kabadon technique. Yamaguchi wasn’t sure if he succeeded at all but felt the reaction from a kabadon got reversed. When he blocked Tsukiko’s path and then used both arms to pin her in place, he had no idea what to do next. Tsukiko didn’t appear flustered by the action one bit and took advantage of the moment to tap noses with Yamaguchi. Needless to say his own heart nearly popped right out of his chest then and there.

For his second attempt, Yamaguchi was going to flirt. That ended up failing since he couldn’t bring himself to say a single word. Even thinking about a corny pick-up line made him flustered and tongue-tied.

Third time’s the charm? Another day he had Ken’s help. The plan was for a ‘devious criminal’ to
do something to Tsukiko and so then Yamaguchi would dive in to save her. What Yamaguchi didn’t anticipate was for Ken to lift Tsukiko’s skirt and take a picture. He was utterly shocked by how nonchalant Tsukiko responded to Ken doing this. She shrugged it off due to the fact she wore shorts and therefore had no reason to feel ashamed from a skirt lift.

Tsukishima was enjoying lunch alone as per usual up until Ken and Yamaguchi joined him. The blond narrowed glares at them since he felt his break ruined by their presence. He had also been a witness to their mess from earlier.

“What the hell have you been doing?” he questioned Yamaguchi, who only let out a heavy sigh.

Ken laughed and explained the truth much to Yamaguchi’s embarrassment. He definitely could feel the disgust and disappointment coming from his friend’s face.

Life was as normal as it could be. Everybody lived their youth happily together for the most part.

When it came around to Yamaguchi’s birthday he was taken out to karaoke with his girlfriend, childhood friend, mentor, and the three upperclassmen he hadn’t seen since March. Though he would have rather gone on another date with Tsukiko he couldn’t turn down her suggestion of getting the gang back together. It amazed Yamaguchi that she even managed to drag Tsukishima into the party. A group of musical enthusiasts singing karaoke together definitely wasn’t the place to catch Tsukishima with. Some reason Yamaguchi speculated that Ken did something to bring the blond over.

“First song for birthday boy from your Hayato-senpaai~” hollered Hayato as he twirled the microphone in his hand. He sang one of the Doraemon theme songs to Yamaguchi, which had him laughing. Seeing her freckled boyfriend having a blast right off the bat made Tsukiko happy.

Next to go was Lunar with a pop idol song. After her, Tokiya shifted the mood with a metal song. According to his twin, the former president of CRS was bitter over how the club ended up disbanding when Tsukiko took over.

Ken tried to get Tsukishima to sing with him but he only moved his lips without making a sound. Hearing Ken sing was a new experience for Yamaguchi. The guy had refreshing vocals that even made Yamaguchi wish that Ken did singing a little more often.
Saving the best for last, Tsukiko took a moment to settle on what song to sing for her boyfriend. She looked nervous at first. Yamaguchi saw a hint of it when she kept messing with her hair braided to the side. Once she finally started singing there were parts where her voice croaked. Everyone believed in her excuse being that she was shy, but the face Ken made meant he was thinking otherwise. He wasn’t going to bring it up though—at least not around their friends.

“What are you on about?” asked Ken to Tsukiko over the phone later that night. The girl was silent long enough that Ken had to check and make sure she didn’t actually hang up on him. Upon hearing a sigh from the other end he could already envision the forced smile on Tsukiko’s face.

“Thanks for helping me,” she told him.

Ken was taken by surprise. He also had no idea what Tsukiko was referring to. Is she thanking him for helping her arrange the karaoke party? Getting together with Yamaguchi? Some clarification would be nice but Ken knew prying details out of Tsukiko was a challenge, even for him at times. She would tell him when she felt ready. That’s how she’s been since they were children.

Ken sighed though as he said, “I’ll always be there for you.”

There was another silent pause then he heard Tsukiko inhale sharply.

“Do you remember what you called our friendship when we were kids?” Ken asked and Tsukiko was quick to answer.

“Of course! You’re the pianist, I’m your piano. That’s why we’re always together and always will be,” she responded.

After Ken ended the call with Tsukiko he stood outside onto the veranda of his room. Scattered specs of stars shone brightly in contrast to the dark night sky. The chilly air made his breath visible. Ken pressed his thumb against the corner of his fake glasses then he brought his other hand to the ponytail growing behind him.

“Been a while since she last messed with it,” he muttered while stroking his hair. Both his ponytail and fake glasses existed all because of Tsukiko. She was the one who said Ken looked better wearing glasses. For his hair, Ken had been growing it out because Tsukiko wanted to practice braiding and tying on someone else since she’s oddly incapable of doing her own. There were a lot of things belonging to Ken that all had to do with Tsukiko’s involvement. His notebooks with
symbols on the cover being drawn by her were included.

Ken asked himself once before why Tsukiko was an important part in his life. That was something he knew from the get go too.

Tsukiko was his piano. Without her, he’s no pianist.

“Now she’s going to become a pianist herself, huh?” Ken said before turning around to go back inside.

Yamaguchi fiddled with his fingers on his lap. He watched the scenery change quickly after entering the urban city. Beside him was a tired Tsukishima listening to his music and sitting across from them was Ken. Something appeared to be off with the senior. For one thing, he wasn’t wearing his fake glasses and his hair wasn’t tied back like normal either. He almost looked completely different. Of course the most off putting part was how urgent Ken was about getting the two boys to follow him.

Tsukishima had business in Sendai anyways; his mother having requested him to deliver some of his father’s work that the man accidentally forgot at home. As for Yamaguchi, he had no idea why he was dragged out a week after his birthday passed. Ken said there was something important for Yamaguchi to do but what was it? And why in the city?

“Hey, uhh… why are we going to the city with Tsukki?” Yamaguchi finally asked.

Ken turned his head, displaying a blank expression that was honestly intimidating to Yamaguchi. He gulped and felt like he shouldn’t have questioned anything until feeling Ken patted his shoulder. There it was, Ken’s usual soft grin. It would have made Yamaguchi smile back. But the next thing that came out of Ken’s mouth turned out not to be a joke.

The bus reached the stop closest to Sendai station. Yamaguchi stumbled his way off, nearly colliding into the person that was in front of him. Tsukishima and Ken followed but with less of a hurried pace.

“And what exactly is your plan?” Tsukishima asked while lagging slightly behind the other guy.
Ken balled his hands into fists. “At this point I’m just winging it.” he answered, which seemed to have surprised Tsukishima.

When the two reached the station they found Yamaguchi stuck at the gate. He was in a frenzied panic that he wasn’t realizing he had his pass facing the wrong way from the scanner. Once all three of them got through, Yamaguchi again took off first.

At the boarding platform was a girl in a thick winter coat with her long hair tucked underneath it. Beside her was a rolling suitcase and a large purse adorned by decorative charms. Tsukiko puffed her warm breath into her bare palms that were as pink as her cheeks. Despite what she was wearing, the girl still felt cold. It was only late November too.

When checking the clock on her phone Tsukiko saw a new message notification. It was from Ken. Though her lips curled up her eyes fell down.

“There he goes, helping me again…” she murmured into the collar of her coat before slowly turning around. Just a few meters away was Tsukiko’s boyfriend. His eyes were wide open from an appalled expression and his cheeks were heavily flushed.

“Kiko-chan….” Yamaguchi lowly called out to his girlfriend.

Tsukiko remained standing by the yellow line with a smile on her face. “Tada-kun,” she greeted him back.

The announcement for an arriving train was made. “Bound for Tokyo,” it stated.

Yamaguchi felt his body bolt forward and next thing he realized was that he had wrapped his arms around Tsukiko.

“Why are you leaving?!” he said into her ear but was given no response.

Ken and Tsukishima watched the couple from a distance. The former looked as pained as Yamaguchi however.
“Did you think she would change her mind if Yamaguchi came after her?” Tsukishima suggested his first guess and Ken returned with nothing.

Tsukiko patted Yamaguchi’s shaking back. His whole body was shivering not due to the cold but because this was where he had to let go of his girlfriend.

“Sorry I didn’t say anything,” Tsukiko said as she tried to break away from Yamaguchi. His grip only tightened.

“Why?” Yamaguchi repeated himself. He asked again and again all while hearing the train getting closer and closer. His nerves heightened the more he was subconsciously anticipating the train’s arrival for Tsukiko’s departure. That all went away when it came.

This was it.

This was where Yamaguchi had to say goodbye to his first and possibly last girlfriend.

“I’m going to become an idol in Tokyo,” Tsukiko finally told Yamaguchi as she felt his arms drop from her body. She looked up at the freckled face full of disbelief. He was definitely on the verge of tears with doubts of this being reality keeping it in.

Yamaguchi blinked his eyes when a cold hand was placed on his cheek. He returned eye contact with Tsukiko right as she kissed him… but with her hand between their lips.

Tsukiko giggled. “You’ll get the real one when you come to Tokyo~” she said with a teasing tone. She picked up her luggage and stepped into the train. Without looking back, she finished giving her a final thoughts to Yamaguchi by saying;

“Keep playing volleyball! I’ll definitely come watch your official games!”

The doors closed between the loving couple.
The bell rang indicating others to step back as the train was departing. The build up was slow but quick to zoom off out of the station.

Yamaguchi remained standing behind the yellow line. Ken inhaled deeply before going over to help the stunned boy move again.


Tsukishima glanced over to his frozen friend. As he thought, Yamaguchi had heavy droplets falling out of his eyes while covering his face.

“What?” Tsukishima responded.

Yamaguchi sniffled before continuing. “Is it raining? Snowing? I c-can’t… I can’t tell at all…. ” he said.

Tsukishima answered with his chin tucked into his scarf. “...Winter came early.”

Ken looked back and forth between the boys then the train that was already far off in the distance. Normally he would have something to say in any given situation. Normally he would give Yamaguchi an empathetic shoulder pat then flash a smile, indicting things were fine.

This time, however, Ken kept quiet and wondered what Tsukiko would do. But oddly enough he couldn’t think of an answer.
//LOUDLY SCREAMS:;;;;;;;;
AAAAAAHNNHHNNHHNNHHNNHHNNHHNNHHNNHHNNHHNNHHNNHH
THERE IT IIIIIISSSSSSSSSSSSSSS THE SCENE OF WHEN THEY
LEEEFFFFFTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT
AAAAAHNNHHNNHHNNHHNNH-- I'm sorry Yams
for hurting you like this pls forgive me.

follow me: dA/twitter/instagram @hikariotakuhime
Chapter Summary

Winter rolled in with the temperature not being the only thing to drop. Yamaguchi hadn’t recovered since saying goodbye to his girlfriend two weeks ago.

Chapter Notes

FFFFUUUUUUUUUUUUU DECIDED TO DOUBLE UPDATE JUST BECAUSE I FELT LIKE IT LMAO here is the final chapter for this flashback arc! Go past the ending sketch for some bonus content~

Winter rolled in with the temperature not being the only thing to drop.

Yamaguchi hadn’t recovered since saying goodbye to his girlfriend two weeks ago. At least his grades weren’t slipping and he wasn’t flunking volleyball practice either. If anything, school work was keeping him distracted enough. A few times Yamaguchi would come across something that triggered memories of Tsukiko; such as when he passes the old CRS clubroom. Some days he’d realize he was eating lunch alone. Each time Yamaguchi felt the tears well up he hid in the bathroom.

Ken also stopped interacting with Yamaguchi and Tsukishima for a bit. He was afraid that his presence would upset the former.

Things were quiet in the senior classroom too. Usually Tsukiko’s giggly voice would fill the room and put a smile on everyone’s face.

“Tsubasa-kun,” someone called out to Ken. The way his classmates talked to him was transparent sympathy. They all knew that without Tsukiko around they wouldn’t be able to have a solid conversation with Ken. He became reserved and had a cold expression. It reminded some of how Ken use to be during grade school, before Tsukiko moved in from Tokyo. Ken was fully aware of this and he tried his best to socialize. In the end he kept thinking, “what can I do without her?”

Time went by fast but the world felt like it moved slowly. Yamaguchi received his first text from Tsukiko on New Year’s Eve. It made him more sad than joyful but he was sure to hide that in his reply. They exchanged messages a few times later. Most of it was Tsukiko talking about how
excited she was to start her idol training.

“I’m glad you’re going to achieve your dream,” Yamaguchi wrote with a sullen face. The tone behind his texts was upbeat. It showed no sign of his true feelings. Tsukiko fell for all of it too.

Come Valentine’s Day, also Tsukiko’s birthday, her classmates were gathering gifts to send to the girl they dearly missed. Ken was helping by being the one to drop everything off to the Yamauchi household. Tsukiko’s parents would be handling the shipment since only they knew the address of where Tsukiko was boarded.

Ken looked up at the sign for a second year classroom. He inhaled deeply before boldly entering.

“Hey, TsukkiYama!” The senior addressed his juniors.

Yamaguchi and Tsukishima looked up from their lunchboxes. They were confused by the mashup of their names, but Yamaguchi had a feeling Ken said it in place of Tsukiko’s habit for nicknames.

The awkward silence was unsettling for a trio that had been friends for two years. Ken swallowed then put on a bright grin. He informed the boys about the gifts his classmates had prepared.

“...and that’s why I’m here to recruit you both in helping me!” Ken finished in a pose, standing confidently with his arms up. It was highly obvious how much he was trying to keep things feeling normal by acting like Tsukiko.

Yamaguchi put up a smile in response to Ken’s efforts. “Alright,” he replied before glancing at Tsukishima. The stoic blond didn’t say anything.

“Any of it too heavy?” Ken asked Yamaguchi after stacking another box into his arms. The boy shook his head. Truthfully he was having some difficulties but the heaviness had more to do with his heart.

After school the two was heading to Tsukiko’s house. Of course, she wouldn’t be there. She was gone. This made the journey over a tad awkward with more silence. Normally Ken would be
running his mouth about something to Yamaguchi. That wasn’t happening now and they both knew why— they were hung up over Tsukiko’s absence.

The closer they got to the Yamauchi household the more Yamaguchi could feel his chest ache. He could see the decorative flowers in the yard, which already had him remembering the end of his first date with Tsukiko.

“Maybe I shouldn’t be here…” Yamaguchi told himself. He thought it was best to leave for the sake of his hurt feelings. Before he could leave the boxes with Ken however the front door began opening.

“Ohh! Is that who I think it is?!” said a woman with shoulder-length hair and long bangs covering half of her face. Her appearance was strikingly similar to Tsukiko’s that Yamaguchi almost thought it was the girl herself.

Ken lowered his head politely.

“Good evening Yoruko-san,” he greeted Tsukiko’s mother. Even her laughter sounded close to her own daughter’s.

“It’s been a while Ken-chan~ C’mon inside! Tada-kun too!” Yoruko waved to both boys, causing the latter to be confused.

The interiors haven’t changed since Yamaguchi’s last visit. He recognized Tsukiko’s shoes that were left out front. Pictures of her still hung in the hallway and in the living room was the same kotatsu.

“I’m pretty sure we’re done with kotatsu season,” Ken laughed.

Yoruko lightly pushed his shoulder. “Nonsense! Besides, Papa has the same cold blood issue as Kiko-chan. I mean just look at this man!” She pointed at her husband who was seated under the kotatsu with his eyes glued on the television ahead of him. Realizing there were more people in the room he peeled his attention away and turned to see who entered his home. He knew Ken, obviously, but the freckle-faced boy was new.

“Who’s this?” he asked his wife. Yoruko giggled while bashfully putting her hands at her warm
cheeks. “It’s Tada-kun~ our daughter’s boyfriend~~!” she hooted.

The man’s eye twitched. He took off his glasses, rubbed the lenses with his shirt, then put them back on.

Yamaguchi gulped. This was his first time actually meeting Tsukiko’s parents. So far he felt his first impression to them wasn’t good, especially with the father.

“He-Hello… I’m Ya-Yamaguchi Tadashi…” He did his best to introduce himself properly to them but accidentally dropped some of Tsukiko’s gifts that were still in his arms. While picking them back up, Yamaguchi swore he heard Tsukiko’s father grunt with disapproval.

“Haha, no need to be nervous!” Ken said as he helped. The two then took the boxes of presents to the dining table. With the job done, Yamaguchi attempted to make his escape but Yoruko got incredibly close all of the sudden. The mother leaned in, examining Yamaguchi’s features and humming to herself.

“Such adorable freckles~!” she squealed while pinching Yamaguchi’s cheeks. He stood stiff in place, allowing Yoruko to do what she wanted since he was use to older ladies playing with his face.

Ken eased himself into the kotatsu but pulled out a second later. “You sure like it hot, Eichi-san.” he commented.

Tsukiko’s father looked away with a huff.

“Informal as always…” Eichi groaned. His wife and daughter’s friend were more than aware that the man was actually shy. If Yamaguchi weren’t intimidated by his deadpan looks and menacing mustache, he would have realized how much Tsukiko took after her father’s tough act. At the moment he could only see a majority of her social butterfly personality came from her mother, who then spoke up once more.

“Ohh, we haven’t been properly introduced! Nice to finally meet you Tadashi-kun. I’m Tsukiko’s mama, Yoruko! You can call me Ruko-chan~ and the mean scary sweetheart on the floor is Tsukiko’s papa, Eichi. Go ahead and call him Chi-chan~”
“Please don’t…” Eichi interjected with a raised hand and dropped head.

Yamaguchi intended to only stick around for as long as he was needed to help deliver the presents. He didn’t plan on having dinner with his girlfriend’s parents while she wasn’t around. Despite having Ken with him it didn’t quite settle the boy’s anxiety.

“You’re a growing man Tada-kun! Eat lots of veggies,” encouraged Yoruko with a plate of thick meat slices being offered to Yamaguchi. He hesitantly accepted the food while thinking how much Yoruko was reminding him of Tsukiko. What else could Yamaguchi do in his situation? Making him the most nervous had to be the anticipation of questions. This being his first meeting with the parents it was likely they wanted to get to know the boy who took their daughter’s first kiss. Did they know about that? God forbid if they did, Yamaguchi prayed.

“How is volleyball?” Eichi asked without looking away from his bowl of rice. The question was clearly directed at Yamaguchi. How he knew what sport the boy did must’ve been information relayed by his daughter.

“U-Uh… fine.” Yamaguchi answered.

Eichi’s face didn’t change but he was stunned. “Volleyball is fine? Do you enjoy it at all?”

“Of course he does Papa! Kiko-chan told us all the time how hard Tada-kun trains,” Yoruko stated with bloated cheeks.

Eichi turned to his wife with an unmoved expression. “Well, I guess…” he submitted.

“Question! Question from me~!” Yoruko waved her free arm.

“Have Tada-kun and Kiko-chan kissed yet~?” she asked, causing all of the males at the table to practically spit from shock.

Eichi put his plate and utensils down. “M-M-M-Mama! Th-That’s—” he stuttered.

Ken had to duck his head down while suppressing laughter.
Yamaguchi was beat red that his freckles faded into his blush.

Ken bowed to Tsukiko’s parents, thanking them for the dinner meal. Staying any longer would have Yoruko suggesting the boys spend the night. Eichi had to hold her back from actually proposing it.

“They’re always a riot,” Ken chuckled while walking down the street with Yamaguchi. The latter relieved a sigh in agreement.

“Definitely… but I still enjoyed it. Thanks,” he told his senior.

Ken raised a brow. “What’re thanking me for?” he asked.

Yamaguchi was also confused. “Didn’t you purposely invite me over to cheer me up?” he asked back.

The two paused under a streetlight. They exchanged wide grins and laughed together.

“Well, that certainly would have been my reason for this.” Ken said while wiping away a tear. He continued following Yamaguchi to his house, despite the other saying it wasn’t necessary. Before Ken took his leave he tossed something to Yamaguchi. The box was small and square.

“What is it?” Yamaguchi inquired but Ken had already disappeared into the night.

From: tada-kyun

> THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THE MITTENS!!

Tsukiko had just finished a bath when she received her first text from Yamaguchi in a month. She had been waiting for a birthday message but instead he was thanking her for the late present from her to him. It was the most enthusiastic she’s heard him through text too. To match the long scarf,
Tsukiko knitted gloves for her boyfriend.

“I hope they fit?” she replied. Tsukiko ruffled her hair with a towel while staring at her phone. The next message she got was a picture of Yamaguchi’s hand with the article that was too loose on him. It could be an easy fix for him but then he thought how Tsukiko could probably fit her small hand in it with his. The image made him go back to dreadfully missing the girl.

From: tada-kyun

> I miss you by the way.

From: kiko-chan

> Awwww-! I miss you too!
> Let’s both work hard so we can meet up
> here in Tooookyyooo~!!!!

From: tada-kyun

> Yup! I’ll be on a team that goes to nationals
> So you better be the top idol when I get there!

From: kiko-chan

> Oh-hoooo? What’s this?!
> My Tada-kun challenging me?

A week later, Tsukiko received a large shipment of presents from her friends and family. However there was only one in particular she wanted to open first.

“There ya are!” she grinned when locating the gift with Yamaguchi’s name on it. After tearing the wrapping to shreds she nearly dropped the box and what was inside. Tsukiko held up the small phone charm to her eyes. A beaming smile took over her features. She attached it to her phone immediately and watched it dangle. The charm was a pink heart with specs of glitter inside of it.

“Reminds me of your adorable freckles~” she chimed.
The following month came graduation day. As per usual, students were crying and hugging their senior friends goodbye.

Ken took pictures with those that asked. He managed to force a smile to keep them happy. Some handed him gifts, some encouraged to keep in contact with him, and then the tears came when people said they wished Tsukiko was still around.

While the heartful festivities were going on, Ken slithered past people and returned inside the school building. There was only one place he wanted to be on his last day of middle school; the old Coverist Research Society’s clubroom. What he didn’t expect was seeing other bodies in there before him.

Ken gawked at Yamaguchi, who was surrounded by the drumset, and then Tsukishima. The bespectacled blond had taken the piano seat.

Yamaguchi held up his drumsticks. “Ken-senpai!” he smiled.

Tsukishima pushed his glasses up then lifted a fist with no enthusiasm.

Ken’s lips curled upward. He stepped into the room and took a seat on an empty desk.

“Well? Play me my graduation song.” he said but both boys remained still.

“Uhhh…” Yamaguchi pretended to whistle.

Tsukishima groaned. “We don’t know what to play. Neither of us have practiced a thing,” he confessed.

Ken cocked a grin. “Thought so,” he chuckled before standing back up. Ken pulled out a blue notebook from his bag with a clef drawn on the cover. Without much thought he opened it to a specific page that was already in his mind. He held it in front of his juniors so they could look at
“Do you really expect us to learn this right now?” Tsukishima scoffed.

Ken swiped him of his glasses like once before. “No, but I hope you two will in time.” he answered.

Yamaguchi stared at the music sheet until noticing the title of the song.

“Isn’t this what Kiko-chan sang that one day she jumped off the roof with someone?” he asked and Ken snapped his fingers.

“Correct, Tada-kun! It’s is an important song. I’ll make sure you two have it down so you can play it in your sleep, haha!”

There was about a week until April; the season of a blossoming new start. Before every beginning is the end of a prequel however.

This was the last day for Ken to be a third year student in middle school.

This would also be the last time that Yamaguchi saw Ken.
HEY LOOK WE'VE HIT 50 CHAPTERS AAAAAAAHHH WILL THIS MAKE IT TO 100??
FIND OUT, LIKE, NEXT YEAR LMAO

*follow me: dA/twitter/instagram @hikariotakuhime*

**BONUS CONTENT**

Let's meet Tsukiko's parents; Mama and Papa Yamaugchi, aka Yoruko and Eichi~!! These two showed up in chapter... 21? 22? around there lol but they didn't have names back then, just faces as seen in one of the ending sketches. They probably won't show up again until the important Ken confrontation story arrives sooo here's bonus content about them that I thought y'all would like!
And also because I need to keep track of their information too lmao

**Name:** Yoruko Yamauchi

- likes to go by a nickname like her daughter which is "Ruko-chan"
- Yoruko (夜子) means "night child" and is apparently a rare name to have
- in Tsukiko's contacts, she's labeled as "kaa-san" which comes from okaa-san/母(haha) meaning "mother"

**Details:**
• Tsukiko's mother. She's around similar height to her daughter-- in fact, they both look almost identical!
• Very bubbly and likes to talk. A lot. Quite the chatterbox to be honest but Yoruko would never reveal secrets.
• Also, in case you forgot, Yoruko is technically Kyoko Shimizu's aunt~ being the sister of her mother.
• After moving to Miyagi she works at a market but does flower arrangement and bakes for side business.

**Name:** Eichi Yamauchi

- to match his wife and daughter he's given the nickname "Chi-chan"
- Eichi (英知) means "wisdom" but in another form it could mean "bright stars"
- in Tsukiko's contacts, he's labeled as "too-san" which comes from otoo-san/父(chichi) meaning "father"

**Details:**

- Tsukiko's father. He's not a very tall man, standing about 5'6" and bears striking resemblance to Ushijima!
- Very quiet and rarely talks. Paired with a stoic face he ends up looking intimidating but really Eichi is just shy.
- When he first saw Yoruko during high school it was love at first sight. Poor guy fell down the stairs for her.
- He works as a news editor and is secretly looking forward to writing about Tsukiko when she becomes an idol~

> "If not Yamaguchi, who do you think would be your daughter's boyfriend instead?"

**Yoruko:** no boyfriend! only boyfriends! MY GIRL GETS THE HAREM ENDING! <3

**Eichi:** no boyfriend. period.

> "Tsukiko accidentally calls Ushijima 'Waka-papa' in front of you. What's your reaction?"

**Yoruko:** ohhh she always loved playing house as a kid~ it's cute she still does it now :3c

**Eichi:** (/EXTREMELY CONCERNED ABOUT THESE "KINKS" THE MODERN DAY YOUTH ARE INTO)
Nostalgic Rainfall

Chapter Summary

Normally couples shared an umbrella—oh wait, they are a couple.

Chapter Notes

WHOOPS ALMOST FORGOT TO UPDATE OHNO AHAHAHA HAAAA a week goes by way too fast;;
we are back to present time~ if you forgot what previously happened check the end of ch. 37
also check end notes below the chapter sketch!

“Senpaaaaa~!” Hinata wailed.

Knocking didn’t receive a response so he decided to call out to Tsukiko. Hinata was trying to wake her because she requested it. He had to be her extra alarm clock before he and Kageyama left for their morning runs. On days when Tsukiko still wouldn’t answer though, Hinata had to report it to Ushijima and have him take over. He was the only one who could bravely barge into Tsukiko’s room and face her morning wrath. Much to his surprise the girl wasn’t in her bed. It was empty.

Before Ushijima could jump on the assumption that Tsukiko ran away again his attention turned to a different door opening.

“Morning...” Tsukiko yawned.

Both Hinata and Ushijima gave her shocked glances. It wasn’t that they were surprised to see her come out of Yamaguchi’s room but seeing the very guy still latched onto her was what startled them.

Kageyama stuck his head into the hallway and blinked. “Did you sleep together?” he bluntly asked.

Tsukiko tilted her head, confused. The girl’s eyes trailed to the arms around her waist and then her
boyfriend that was standing, asleep, behind her. She turned red with embarrassment and pushed Yamaguchi back to his bed; only to fall with him because his hold remained locked. Ushijima shielded Hinata’s eyes from the position the couple fell into, deeming it too inappropriate for the ginger.

The rest of the morning was as usual as it had been lately but somewhat leaning back to how things used to be. Tsukiko looked notably less depressed compared to the past several weeks. For one thing, her face had more color. She even asked for a second serving of rice to eat. It made Akaashi wonder what had put her in a pleasant enough mood. Or maybe it’s just that time of the month for mood swings? At least he’s grown used to those but every now and then it still bothered the guy.

Ushijima watched as Tsukiko ate her second bowl of rice. He looked at her as if he waited to see if she would ask for a third. He only wanted Tsukiko to go back to being the big eater she was. What happened to his little angel who could eat an entire pizza pie on her own? Not that Ushijima wanted her to do that again, heavens no. Pizza is unhealthy.

Kuroo opened his mouth wide to release a big yawn. He reached out to grab the bottle of soy sauce but it was instead handed to him by Tsukiko. Something was definitely wrong, he thought. But what? Why was she suddenly a tad more upbeat this morning? The rooster head narrowed his eyes at the girl with suspicion.

As for Bokuto, he was busy chomping away like a horse.

The first to leave the table again was Tsukiko. She needed to hurry to her morning class. While putting on her shoes, Akaashi carefully approached her. The two stared at each other for a bit until Tsukiko said she needed to rush out.

“Ah!” Akaashi gasped.

Tsukiko turned back. The ends of her lips curled as she said, “You look pretty as usual, Aa-kun.”

That had to be the most off-putting part of the morning. Akaashi was not at all prepared for the compliment. He didn’t expect it one bit. When Yamaguchi passed by, he saw Akaashi sitting at the front entrance with hands covering his blushing face.

Everyone left the house for school. The freak duo sprinted to their English lecture while Bokuto walked with Kuroo to the science department.
“Shrimpy told everyone that you two did it,” Tsukishima suddenly said. He didn’t show it with his face but he was amused by Yamaguchi’s choked reaction. The two were in a lecture hall together where the professor was running late.

Yamaguchi lowered his head and covered his flushed face. “We just slept! That’s it! Sleeping!” he whispered roughly to his friend who didn’t act convinced.

“Wait… by everyone, do you mean…?”

Tsukishima nodded. After Tsukiko left the house first, the breakfast table had gone silent until Hinata cried out, “KIKO-SENPAI AND YAMAGUCHI SLEPT TOGETHER!!!” The way he said it was like a confession to a crime. It seemed to lighten the mood in the room though. And the only reason Yamaguchi didn’t know about this was because he had left to walk with Tsukiko to the bus stop.

“Did you two really only sleep and not sleep together?” Tsukishima asked again with emphasis on the assumption that the couple had gone to homebase. As odd as it was to hear the blond act interested in the topic, Yamaguchi didn’t mind this. He disliked how Tsukishima was behaving lately regarding Tsukiko and Ken so it was rather refreshing in the moment. It gave him hope that life at the Yorozu-kan would be returning to normal—normal as in, nobody was fighting.

To prevent jinxing himself Yamaguchi gentle knocked on the wooden desk; a superstitious method he learned from his girlfriend.

How strange. How sudden… but once again, the gym was closed due to an unforeseen chance of rain.

Hinata groaned in agony.

“It’s like some outside force keeps intentionally cancelling volleyball practice for conventional plot reasons!!” he cried out.

Oikawa rubbed his chin and nodded, feeling as though the ginger was onto something. Maybe there
really is something, or someone, that’s constantly messing with their training? Iwaizumi knocked the very thoughts right out of Oikawa’s head. He didn’t want to hear about aliens being the culprit.

Yamaguchi chuckled before looking up at the gray sky. “I hope it clears up when Kiko-chan finishes work,” he muttered out loud. The large figure of Ushijima took back his attention. In the guy’s hand was a clear umbrella with a firework motif around it. He gave the umbrella to Yamaguchi.

“Here,” Ushijima said, confusing the other until he explained with, “I forgot to give it to her before she left.”

After a confirming nod, Yamaguchi used Tsukiko’s umbrella and made his way to the bus station.

Akaashi stepped forward. “That’s rare for you to forget things. I guess you can be human,” he jokingly stated.

Ushijima shook his head. “Nope. I intentionally forgot.” he replied and made Akaashi really surprised. Did Ushijima purposely set up a chance for the couple to be alone? For Ushijima of all people to think of something considerate like that may as well be a sign that the world was ending. Or maybe it’s because of those gossip magazines he keeps reading…

Meanwhile several things were going on around the GAI-ROKU company building. One floor had agents hollering on the phone. Another was where song recordings took place. As for Tsukiko, she was assigned to the studio for a casual commercial shoot. She ended up going overtime with her permitted break, since she was staring out the large windows. The rain distracted her, among other thoughts, but it still got her a scolding.

“Sorry,” the girl apologized before going back to work.

Assistants buzzed, fixing the set staged and the model’s clothes. “It’s finally fitting you better!” one of them exclaimed.

Tsukiko felt her eye twitch at the comment. She forced an agreeing answer and giggle. Inside she was groaning about how hard it’s been for her to lose weight just to fit into her idol costume. It was a silver dress with a fluttering pleated skirt and blue accents. On her earlobes were crescent moon earrings and on her neck was a blue ribbon choker with a gold heart charm. The assistant was specifically making their earlier comment towards Tsukiko’s legs though. When wearing thigh
high socks they squeezed tightly on the girl, resulting in some thigh bulge. Tsukiko personally thought it was a tasteful feature in her sexiness but like the higher ups have been telling her; she can’t be sexy. It wasn’t part of Suki-Suki’s image.

The recording was cut short due to the rain preventing something from arriving at the studio. It was great that Tsukiko was allowed to leave early but she couldn’t be relieved yet. A delay always meant more work to be done later. She only hoped nobody would find her at fault for whatever reason. Once Tsukiko changed back into her civilian clothes she stopped by a few places to greet her idol friends. Then she was ready to head home before the rain got heavier.

When Tsukiko was leaving the company building she saw a familiar umbrella outside the entrance. “Tada-kun?” she called out.

Yamaguchi turned around. He smiled and greeted his girlfriend before explaining why he showed up at her workplace. “W-Well, I wasn’t sure when you got off and the front desk wouldn’t tell me or even let me contact your manager, which was understandable. So I just waited out here…” Yamaguchi sheepishly stated.

Tsukiko coughed into her hand, catching herself from laughing. She thought how ridiculous it would’ve been if Yamaguchi ended up waiting hours for her. He honestly would have too. Nonetheless, it was still thoughtful and sweet of him to show up. Seeing him definitely improved her mood tenfold.

Tsukiko walked beside Yamaguchi underneath her umbrella. They had to share it since Yamaguchi didn’t have his own. Neither minded though but both were embarrassed. Normally couples shared an umbrella—oh wait, they are a couple. The last time they’ve done this was back in middle school so it still made them shy to do it.

“Watch out!” Yamaguchi alerted Tsukiko when a car drove by. He made sure the umbrella remained over her head but used himself to shield her from a splash of water.

Tsukiko gasped. “You’re soaked now!” she pointed out. Chivalry was nice and all but it made Tsukiko feel bad. If Yamaguchi catches a cold later she’d feel even more so.

Yamaguchi reassured the girl with a grin. “As long as you’re not,” he told her before placing a kiss on her head. Tsukiko lowered her face while blushing deeply.
The heavy rain was causing delays in public transportation. The couple couldn’t take a cab or bus home since traffic appeared tightly packed. To kill time they decided to warm up in a nearby Starbucks.

Yamaguchi got hot tea while Tsukiko ordered a mocha frappuccino. Seeing this made Yamaguchi snicker. “You sure love your cold drinks even when it’s cold outside,” he teased. Tsukiko stuck her tongue out playfully. She licked the whip cream off her straw, unintentionally putting thoughts in Yamaguchi’s head. For the sake of maintaining his sanity he deliberately turned away.

While having their drinks they also took out their homework. Might as well get some cramming done in a quiet cafe as they wait for the rain to stop.

“Gosh, you’re so smart.” Tsukiko said after taking a peek of Yamaguchi’s notes. They were clean and detailed. She found the colored highlighting interesting though. It didn’t seem like something Yamaguchi would do and she certainly didn’t recall him doing it in middle school either.

“Ah, this? Yacchi-san taught me how to organize notes this way. It definitely helps.” Yamaguchi answered. He paused for a moment then slowly realized what he mentioned. Tsukiko stared back with a stunned look on her face. She finally blinked and quietly went back to her work.

Yamaguchi mentally sighed. “Guess it’s still not the time to clear up the thing with Hitoka-chan…”

Once it was clear that the rain began to lighten, the couple packed their stuff again and set foot back outside. Yamaguchi saw just a crack of sunlight piercing through the gray clouds off in the distance. He wanted to point it out to Tsukiko but her mind was somewhere else. Not wanting to lose progress of her returning smile, Yamaguchi tried to think of how to raise her mood up again. Some ideas came to mind but he wasn’t sure what would work. He decided to go with the option he was least likely expected to do.

“Hey,” Yamaguchi called out as he stopped walking.

Tsukiko lifted her head slightly but not enough to make eye contact. Something warm touched her forehead. It was Yamaguchi’s. “H-Huh? I’m not sick…” she mumbled nervously.
“I know.” Yamaguchi replied quickly. He opened his eyes and was glad to see he was looking into Tsukiko’s own pair. Feeling Yamaguchi tilted his head, Tsukiko prepared herself for a spontaneous kiss on the lips. She waited and waited and waited. When opening her eyes again after Yamaguchi pulled away she saw him smirking.

“Weren’t you going to k-kiss me?!” she asked with pink cheeks.

Yamaguchi pretended not to understand. “Hm? Did you want me to kiss you?” he asked her back.

Tsukiko was baffled. This had to be the first time her boyfriend was teasing her. He was doing a rather good job too. Did he learn from Kuroo? Oikawa? Normally she wouldn’t use a tsundere act with Yamaguchi but now was a first time for anything.

“Hmph!” Tsukiko huffed with her arms crossed.

Yamaguchi let out laughter. He switched the umbrella in his hands, using the one closer to Tsukiko to wrap around her waist. “Did you want me to kiss you?” he asked again but Tsukiko only grunted back. She puffed her cheeks and started walking away.

Yamaguchi followed, still holding onto his small girlfriend. When they stopped at a crosswalk his hand slithered up Tsukiko’s arm. The sensation sort of tickled. She turned to Yamaguchi and was going to complain but seeing his freckled face rendered her speechless. Thanks to the walk sign beeping loudly and her own throbbing heart, Tsukiko almost didn’t hear Yamaguchi boldly express he loved her with the very words they said the previous night.

“When did you become assertive?” Tsukiko grumbled after she and Yamaguchi finally managed to get on a bus bound for Yorozu-kan. She was still huffing and puffing adorably. Despite that, she sat closely next to Yamaguchi as if they were glued together. He tapped noggins with her as he happily said, “I’m still the same nervous train wreck from eight years ago.”

Once home the two found only Bokuto present. He was brooding in the entranceway because he felt lonely. Seeing the couple arrived made the owl turn into a dog. He wagged his figurative tail and rejoiced. “You’re both hooooome~” Bokuto whined.

Tsukiko sighed as she patted the grown man’s head to comfort him. “Where is everybody?” Yamaguchi asked him after shaking rainwater off the umbrella.
Bokuto wheezed and explained angrily the whereabouts of the rest of their roommates. Akaashi went to work, Ushijima and the two boys were at a gym, Tsukishima went shopping for personal items, and Kuroo was hanging out with another circle.

“They all just abandoned meee!!” Bokuto started crying again as he crawled under the kotatsu with Tsukiko and Yamaguchi. They both sighed at him.

Nothing much was playing on television. A commercial advertisement for an upcoming idol debut concert showed up though. The boys looked at Tsukiko with glittering eyes. She faced away from them as she ate some oranges.

“It’s still a few months ahead, no need to get hyped.” she told them but it didn’t stop their glow of pride.

Bokuto leaned upward. “We’re all gonna cheer for you!!” he expressed happily.

Yamaguchi nodded in agreement. “You’ve been working so hard towards this. We can’t wait to see the fruit of your labor;” he added with a sincere tone.

Tsukiko could feel herself slowly grinning. She wondered how long it’s been since she last had herself open to hear her friends encouraging her. With how moody she was as of late, it felt like a long time since.

Much like the morning, dinner had improved too. Tsukiko conversed with her friends. Things were turning back to the normal peaceful days before Yorozu-kan became ridden with dramatic angst.

A knock came from Tsukiko’s door before she was about to turn off the lights for sleep. She opened and was surprised to see Akaashi. Though hesitant, she let him into her room anyway. Akaashi took his usual seat next to Tsukiko on her bed. The girl hugged her large Gudetama plush that Ushijima won for her a while back. There could only be one reason why Akaashi of all people would show up in the middle of the night to Tsukiko’s room. She knew he was going to start a ‘girl’ talk again. It was bound to happen at some point, she thought.

“Look, I—”
“Thanks.” Akaashi interrupted.

Tsukiko raised a brow, unsure what was being referenced.

The gentle expression of the pretty setter softened into a smile. “Thanks for the compliment from this morning,” he clarified before taking his leave.

Tsukiko nuzzled her chin into her toy. Was that all Akaashi wanted to say? What about asking why her mood had been swinging? If Akaashi really wasn’t going to interrogate her then maybe the girl was feeling afraid for nothing.

by the way, I’ve gone and fixed previous chapters (only to ch. 20 lol) no major changes were made so don’t worry about needing to go reread everything but you are more than welcome to do so! I... I often reread from the beginning to find mistakes I keep missing LMAO but I only really fixed typos and maybe added minor sentences here and there. You'll notice that I did figure out how to center align images too fufufufu~~~
guess I'll mention now......... updates will be held off until maaaybe end of August :'D makes me sad too LOL it's because I am going on a weekend vacation and as soon as I get back I have art commissions to work on, and I return to school soon T T but another reason I'm pausing updates is because during my chapter fixing journey, I found out my chapters might have gotten shorter lately... at first they were 2.5-4k words but the recent ones have been as little as 2.2k and while I think I did say that's my preferred minimum, I've reflected and found I might not be writing as much as I should be, if that makes sense?

So in between commission work and preparing for school I'll be polishing past chapters some more(the junior high flashback arc that JUST finished might be the only thing you'll have to reread?? I'll let you know if that ends up being the case later). I really do love this story, it's my self-insert fantasy after all XD and seeing how others find it enjoyable I want to keep it appealing to all of you too~ without you readers who else am I going to scream about Kuroo x Tsukiko uhh I mean, Yamaguchi x Tsukiko with hmmm? >u>;;;

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Shibuya Shuffle

Chapter Summary

The Halloween fashion showcase event continued the following day. This time, Tsukiko was almost having difficulty keeping up her idol personality because several of her friends decided to show up.

With the end of October meant the approaching date of Halloween. It’s a popular western holiday revolving around jack-o-lanterns, monsters, and passing out candy. In Japan, the holiday is more used as a marketing stunt to sell products.

In the fashion district of Tokyo, one cannot not cross paths with somebody either in costume or fully dressed spiritedly for the occasion. At the center of Shibuya was an event for these folks to showcase their scariest but still stylish ensembles.

For promotional purposes, Tsukiko’s job this time was to be a model for a lolita fashion brand. Dressing in lolita wasn’t really Tsukiko’s style. If it were herself from middle school however, then she’d be more on board. The design was frilly, cute, and decked out in desserts.

“How come I have to be the sugary one?” Tsukiko pouted with her pastel-colored lips.

Also working with her were Kanon and Yusarin, both dressed up in guro lolita and punk lolita respectively.

“Aww, you’re so cute Suki-Suki~!” Yusarin squealed as she admired Tsukiko’s sweet lolita dress. “Not that I’m interested in switching~” she added with her voice deepened plus a menacing grin.

Tsukiko rolled her eyes. “There goes the Misa personality… ” she continued to pout.

The three girls followed their given instructions and began to work. All they really had to do was stand around and be pretty in addition to promoting the clothing they wore.

Tsukiko pushed her shoulders forward and tilted her head for a tight pose. Her outfit consists of a soft color palette with pink, baby blue, and white. Attendees commented positively on the dress
and its icecream and cupcake-themed design. The blouse had puffy sleeves with a ruffled collar that tucked into a fluffy skirt. There was especially a lot of feedback over Tsukiko’s purse that was shaped like a sundae split. Tsukiko wondered if she would be allowed to keep it afterwards since she quickly grew a liking to it as well.

The only real complaint Tsukiko had about her assigned outfit was the wig. Suki-Suki is supposed to have black hair with a silver undertone, but she still hasn’t gotten the dye treatment for it. Even if she did, it wouldn’t match her outfit for the job. Tsukiko was thus forced to wear a wavy white and pink wig. She didn’t like how it made her scalp itch and the fact she’s not allowed to satisfy her desire to scratch was unbearable.

Lunch break neared and Tsukiko wished time could go faster for it. None of the girls had eaten all day because they were told not to. It had to do with possibly bloating, which would result in them not being able to fit their assigned dresses. They did get to nibble on snacks such as Pocky when requested by some photographers.

“Oh look, it’s Kanon~!” cried out a fan of the idol.

Tsukiko witnessed this happen to her coworkers every few minutes. She felt slightly envious of the two since they were already established performers with very big followings. Her own debut was still several months away. The only attention of fame Tsukiko has gotten by far were from people recognizing her in magazines or television segments. Other than that, nobody knew she was an idol — not yet anyway.

“Is that Kiko-chan over there?!” hollered a familiar voice.

Hearing her own name startled Tsukiko. She slowly turned around and almost broke character upon seeing who was behind her. Seconds later the girl was engulfed by the lanky arms that came from the behemoth Lev Haiba. Soon joining the hug was his sister Alisa. They were later asked to release the model by security and were about to be told to leave the premises until Tsukiko mentioned knowing them.

Alisa was vibrating with glee as she scanned Tsukiko’s appearance with her mismatched eyes. “YOU’RE SO CUUUTE~!!” she shrieked.

Lev rubbed his pointy chin and snickered. “Hnn~ This what senpai’s into?” The tall boy teased.
Tsukiko kept up a fake smile despite the underlying urge to punch the guy in his stomach.

“What are you two doing here?” she asked with false sweetness in her voice.

Lev crouched down and popped the collar of his jacket. He informed it was going to be his birthday soon and because of that, he and Alisa decided to do some shopping in Shibuya. If Tsukiko didn’t have to put up her idol mask she would’ve jokingly pretended to have forgotten about her junior’s birthday just to make him cry.

Come break time, Tsukiko was allowed to remove her makeup and wig. It would take too long to switch into her own clothes so she wore a long coat on top of her given lolita dress instead. She was going with Alisa and Lev to grab lunch but not until inviting Kanon and Misa too.

The group relieved themselves in a restaurant with a private booth, since they had two celebrities among themselves. Neither Alisa nor her brother minded the real personalities of the idols they happened to be fans of.

“We’re use to Suki-Suki turning into Kiko-chan so it’s alright!” Lev assured them. He suddenly yelped when his leg was struck under the table. Tsukiko crossed her arms and huffed angrily.

For the next half hour the mostly female group was chatting away. They discussed girly topics such as fashion, makeup, and then love.

Kanon revealed there was a guy she admired but dating him would be impossible because he was a hardcore gamer with eyes only for his virtual wives.

Misa spat at the talk. She didn’t admit to being interested in a person but Alisa managed to get her to confess there use to be someone she liked.

When inquiring Alisa of her romantic status, she grinned widely then lifted a hand that revealed one of her fingers donning a ring.

Tsukiko gasped loudly. “No way! Who is it?!” she asked but the answer almost came immediately
“Yaku-senpai is gonna be my brother-in-law soon!” Lev cheered happily while the other girls were congratulating his sister, ultimately ignoring the soon-to-be birthday boy.

“I’m so glad for you two! And I better be invited to the wedding— so long as it’s not to hire me as entertainment…” Tsukiko jokingly grinned. She continued staring at Alisa’s engagement ring. It was simple in design. There were no carvings or a gem on it but Alisa expressed that not mattering to her.

“In the end, a ring is a ring. What really matters is the bond we developed,” she said.

Tsukiko found it almost odd to hear Alisa sound mature and collected when she was normally high off of beaming energy.

“Marriage, huh…” Tsukiko softly mumbled.

“Is your boyfriend going to propose to you too?” Alisa blinked as she looked at Tsukiko who went wide-eyed. Her face was quick to turn red up to her ears.

“WH-WHAT?!” Tsukiko stammered while fiddling with the straw in her drink. The thought of marriage had never crossed her mind since she only turned twenty this year. With her focus being set on school and her idol career, Tsukiko felt it was way too early for her to consider settling down with a partner. Yamaguchi started working this year too and she doubts he had been secretly plotting to propose. Then again, she did say she’d only accept a ring from him if it meant marriage.

“Neither of us are ready for that kind of commitment, really…” Tsukiko replied sheepishly.

Alisa puckered her lips in wonder. “Sure? You two have been dating for pretty much a decade so may as well tie the knot, ya~?”

There it was; the helpless romantic talk that Tsukiko honestly didn’t like hearing during serious conversations. Heat rose to her face as she said,
“Well, to be the realist here, neither of us have a completely stable job. We both live in a dorm with friends and we’re attending school too. Getting married, especially at our young age and in this economy, is waaaay too risky. People who marry early on are just drunk on love to realize it in my opinion!”

The table went silent as did Alisa’s expression fell sullen.

Kanon looked nervous as she reached out to Tsukiko. “H-Hey, I don’t think that’s what you should say in front of your friend right now…” she whispered.

Realizing how damaging her words were, Tsukiko quickly apologized to Alisa.

“Oh no, I’m not offended.” Alisa responded with a wave of her hand.

“Kiko-chan is completely right. Morisuke-kun and I are still in our early twenties,” she added before going on to mention how they were both also working part-time while attending school and still lived with their families. The young woman glanced at her ring and finished with, “Who says we have to reach a certain age to say ‘I love you’ to each other?”

That last statement echoed in Tsukiko’s mind all throughout the rest of her shift and even while she made her way home. Something about what Alisa said felt almost moving. And yet, Tsukiko still had lingering frustration within her.

“Tada-kun said something similar,” Tsukiko muttered out loud while brushing her teeth that night.

Yamaguchi poked his head into the open bathroom. “What about me saying something?” he asked before catching a hairbrush thrown at him by his embarrassed girlfriend. Nice receive, he would jokingly say to himself. Thanks to volleyball his reflexes had grown sharp.

Tsukiko rinsed her mouth out before turning to her boyfriend. Thinking again what Alisa said earlier, it had Tsukiko wanting to know Yamaguchi’s thoughts. She could only assume that Yamaguchi would agree with the “we can say ‘I love you’ regardless of our age” part. But then would he get upset knowing that Tsukiko has a negative impression towards marriage at a young age? And what if he actually is planning to propose to her soon? She hasn’t seen Yamaguchi splurge money on personal items… unless it’s for Tsukiko.
Yamaguchi reached out and put a hand over Tsukiko’s forehead. He caught on her to distressed expression. “Hm? What’s up?” he asked her with a head tilt.

“N-Nothing… just admiring how handsome you are.” Tsukiko spouted with puckered lips and flushed cheeks.

The compliment caused Yamaguchi to go red in the face. Even though he’s been getting rather bold and flirty with Tsukiko, it’s like he goes back to being the shy one in these situations.

“Th-Th-Th-Thanksyou!” Yamaguchi stuttered bashfully.

The Halloween fashion showcase event continued the following day. This time, Tsukiko was almost having difficulty keeping up her idol personality because several of her friends decided to show up.

“At least they’re dressed appropriately to be here…” she mentally sighed.

Lev returned, wearing a leather blazer with dark jeans that had several tears on it. For an added ‘cool’ factor he had a chain dangling off the belt loops. His sister Alisa was dolled up in a red riding hood-esque fashion. Alongside her was Yaku in dark gray ouji attire and wolf ears. Tsukiko found it cute that the engaged couple were purposely matching in costume.

As for the Yorozu-kan group;

Ushijima was in a hooded jacket and shorts paired with leggings that were Nike and Adidas branded sportswear.

Akaashi and Bokuto had similar clothes but only because the former picked everything out with his own tastes. They wore solid button-up shirts left open to show off their splash-patterned undershirts. Apparently Bokuto made the shirts with some of the neighborhood grannies.
“Didn’t expect you to be a goth.” Tsukiko momentarily broke character as she approached Kuroo. He was wearing a completely black outfit from the dress shirt to tight straight slacks and shoes. If he had piercings and tattoos, Tsukiko honestly believed he would rock an edgy punk look.

“Didn’t think you enjoyed being walking diabetes.” Kuroo mocked back with a smug grin. He knew Tsukiko wasn’t going to blow up on him while she was on the clock. Any chance he’d get to poke fun at her and not get punched, he’d take it.

Hinata’s outfit was bright like his personality; being mostly white with an orange stripe at the hem of his shirt. Despite it being the end of October, he wore cargo shorts. His constant bouncy movement was probably keeping him warm.

Kageyama dressed closely to Ushijima, also downed in sportswear. But he too was wearing shorts and wore a studded snapback hat.

Tsukishima showed up looking like a bookworm. He was wearing a striped dress shirt with a sweater vest over it. His jeans stopped at his ankles, revealing his diamond-pattern wool socks.

Yamaguchi was a surprising sight for Tsukiko that she had to do a double take. Her boyfriend wore a casual suit with some of his hair swept to the side. It looked more like something she’d see Oikawa wear on a date— in fact, wasn’t this what Oikawa had worn on his birthday outing with Tsukiko?

“Which is the boyfriend?” Misa, aka Yusarin, whispered into the sweet lolita’s ear.

Tsukiko raised a brow. She swore there was a time she had shared a picture of Yamaguchi to her two closest coworkers. Wasn’t he on her lockscreen too?

“Silly Suki~ that’s your 2D husbando on your phone~!” giggled Yusarin.

Yamaguchi took attention to the information. Strangely enough it didn’t surprise him that Tsukiko really did have an anime character set as the wallpaper of her lock screen instead of her actual 3D boyfriend. If anything he was rather amused than bothered.

“Is Kiko-chan your lock screen?” Akaashi bluntly asked, inciting a shrill cry out of Yamaguchi.
While being the truth it didn’t mean he was ready to share that fact with the world. Unfortunately Yamaguchi was betrayed by his own friends.

Hinata managed to swipe his phone out of his pocket and reveal to their group its wallpaper image. Some of them started snickering while others either screamed excitedly or were completely unresponsive. On Yamaguchi’s phone was a collage of Tsukiko selfies that he had taken from her social media posts. Ah, the shame that came with loving your girlfriend way too much…

The group split up to leave the idols and pre-debuting idol doing their promotional work.

A few photographers asked for pictures of Alisa and Yaku, which they allowed. Kuroo and Hinata cawed with astonishment as they watched from the sidelines.

“Do couples normally match outfits?” Kageyama randomly asked while stuffing his cheeks with free snacks being served at the event.

Yamaguchi flushed slightly while rubbing his neck. “E-Eh? Some of them do, I guess…” he answered.

Seeing the other couple holding each other as they posed for the camera was making Yamaguchi wish he could do the same with Tsukiko. He couldn’t recall ever matching clothes with her and it certainly did look fun to do. When was the last time they took a picture together anyway?

Turning around, Yamaguchi saw that Alisa and Yaku weren’t the only ones getting asked for pictures. Seeing that it was Akaashi and Bokuto had to raise some concerns though. They were practically being demanded to pose together by a crowd of women shrieking and cheering.

“Huh?” Yamaguchi blinked. His features jerked when a smile popped onto his face.

Among the female crowd was Tsukiko herself, shouting a request for Akaashi and Bokuto to move closer to each other. This suddenly gave Yamaguchi an idea.

“Hey miss,” Tsukiko turned around when her attention was called for. She was about to greet the person with a ‘Suki-Suki heart attack’ smile but then realized it was only Yamaguchi.
“What are you doing?” she giggled while watching her boyfriend gesture for a picture request.

Tsukiko did a spin before posing for Yamaguchi. He got one picture but that wasn’t all he wanted.

The distance between them closed. An arm wrapped around Tsukiko and the calming scent of cinnamon tickled her senses. Her gray eyes shifted upwards where Yamaguchi held up his phone. Once they were perfectly in-frame and in-focus, Yamaguchi snapped the selfie.

“*Ahh, I wanna kiss his cheek.*” Tsukiko swooned. She made a mental note to do so later when going home.

Kanon appeared between the couple, a hand on both their shoulders. The bloody eyepatch made her grin look more sinister than charming.

“*Only people who purchase something from our brand’s booth can take a selfie with our models~*” she informed Yamaguchi. He gulped nervously and Tsukiko gestured an apology for not warning him beforehand.

They checked out the product selection together. Nothing fit Yamaguchi’s fashion palette and a majority of the clothes were geared towards females. It was all pricey too. He instead picked something out to give to Tsukiko.

“You did say you liked that sundae purse, right?” Yamaguchi asked and Tsukiko grinned widely.
HEYOOOOOO IT'S AN UPDATE!!!! Hasn't been too long I think? I WANTED TO UPDATE YESTERDAY WHEN IT WAS HAIKYUU DAY (8/19) BUT I GOT BUSY AAAAAHH-- anyways, as I mentioned in last chapter's end notes, I've decided to go back and polish all previous chapters. Everything has been fixed to various degrees! The chapters with the most changes are 38 to 50, which was the middle school flashback arc. Most of those chapters got extended content, so I recommend going back and reading them~ now................................. BONUS SKETCH BELOW AHAHAAAAAAA bet you looked at it before reading this ending note :E ssshhhhhh it's okay I would've too > u > wanted to draw all of the boys but not enough time/energy T u T

And again, because classes are starting up soon and I have a job, updates won't be weekly anymore until I've got free time. Or I'll just follow a monthly update schedule for now. Thanks in advance for your patience and understanding! If you're ever lonely definitely follow my twitter. I'll probably be uploading art related to this fic like I do with my BnHA one lol we can talk about my stories too if you're down for it? I'd love to hear some opinions to make my writing better c:

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*
Cruel Angel

Chapter Summary

Good thing Halloween fell on a Saturday.

This is Halloween!

Yorozu-kan was lightly decorated for the Western holiday. Paper bats were taped to the walls and orange pumpkins, both fake and real, were outside the entrance. Some of them were carved—rather sloppily at that, while the rest were scribbled over with markers. Last year, Tsukiko allowed a Halloween party to be hosted at the house. Guests consisted of friends and friends of friends. Unfortunately for Kuroo and Bokuto, the two party animals, their house mother didn’t want to have another one at Yorozu-kan.

“Cleaning up was a huge pain in the ass,” Tsukiko stated with hands on her hips. “Even Waka-papa was complaining! And don’t think I’ve forgotten about the sofa getting ripped!” she added to which Ushijima grunted in agreement from across the room.

Kuroo grumbled under his breath.

“Fiinee. We’ll just go to one elsewhere and it’ll be way better than what you have planned here,” he said with his tongue out and pulling down an eyelid at Tsukiko. Bokuto did the same, causing the female to emit a scary aura.

Good thing Halloween fell on a Saturday.

Kuroo was going through his contact list, browsing for names of people he knew for hosting worthwhile parties in the past. A few struck his interest but when he texted them for details they had other plans supposedly. It sounded like a lot of people were going to the same party. Where’s his invite, Kuroo thought.

Bokuto leaned against his soul-brother and yawned. “Any hits?” he asked but Kuroo sighed. The two wanted to go somewhere that would give them bragging rights. It needed to be the biggest event of the year. Then again, whatever they end up attending would surely be better than the Yorozu-kan’s horror movie binge night.
Within the passing hour though, their prayer was answered.

From: yaomomo-chan

> Hello Kuroo-san, this is Yaoyorozu from the dance club.

> I am hosting a Halloween get-together at my parent’s estate.

> If this interests you, please reply ASAP for the details.

“WHOA!! YOU GOT RED SPORTS BRA’S NUMBER?!?!” Bokuto hollered with envy.

Kuroo cocked a grin. He was curious as to why Momo even considered giving him a formal invitation to her party. None of his flirtatious advantages have shown signs of getting to her from what he could tell. It wasn’t like they’ve interacted much outside of Kuroo showing up at the dance club room either. They weren’t really a part of any other circle. Tsukiko was their main mutual.

Oh well though. Kuroo couldn’t possibly turn down a pretty girl’s offer. Whatever “get-together” she had planned couldn’t be as bad as spending an entire night watching scary movies.

“.........Holy shit.” Bokuto and Kuroo uttered in unison. They were baffled by the sight before them. Momo was hosting her party at her parent’s house and what the two didn’t know was that she came from a wealthy family.

“Welcome guests,” greeted a real butler that opened the large doors.

Aside from the Halloween decorations, the mansion interiors were impressive. For a moment Kuroo thought he had the wrong location entirely. Soon he and Bokuto were approached by their party hostess. Momo’s costume was a red-colored variation of Chun-Li from Street Fighter.

“She can headlock me with those thighs,” Kuroo mentally commented while Bokuto was still stunned by the grand size of the house.
The young men followed Momo to where her party took place. It was in a massive ballroom with a high ceiling adorned by gold chandeliers and fake, decorative cobwebs. On the right were classy games such as billiards, darts, and even a mini bowling alley. To the left were the snacks and beverages consisting of expensive-looking goodies. Bokuto could finally cross off macaron cookies from the list of treats he’s never eaten before.

A possibly real black crow was perched by the fireplace that had a s’mores station and chocolate fountain shaped like a gargoyle. The lounge seats were pumpkin-shaped bean bags large enough to be beds. If those weren’t to anyone’s fancy there were also velvet sofa chairs. From the looks of it, most people were still avoiding those as to not leave a mess on such expensive furniture.

After Momo gave a brief tour of the main party grounds she directed the two outside, showing them the glowing pool with floating lights in the water. A stage light from above was projecting ghostly images across the water surface for an added special effect. One of the float toys was a skeleton riding a flamingo.

“If you need a swimsuit and change of clothes, I can most certainly provide it.” Momo mentioned with a serene voice of hospitality. She added that the pool was heated, so nobody has to be afraid of catching a cold from swimming at night. It went without saying that there was also a hot tub jacuzzi.

Kuroo could barely keep up with the reality that he was attending the fanciest Halloween party a college student could attend— and all for free. He adjusted the collar of his red and gold pirate captain costume as it was making him feel stuffy. There were quite a number of people attending, some of which were familiar faces from people he met at other campuses. Despite that it wasn’t like the place was crowded. Kuroo honestly thought the room was big enough to fit three times the amount of people already present.

“Bro! Bro!!” Bokuto shook for Kuroo’s attention. The tom followed the owl’s pointed finger. At the end of it, he saw a girl laughing with a martini in her gloved hand. It was Tsukiko wearing her pink devil costume from the previous year. Why was she at Momo’s party? Wasn’t she supposed to be watching scary movies with the group at home? Bokuto went to approach her for answers but Kuroo made his way back inside, not particularly caring.

“Whatcha doing here?!” Bokuto asked after Tsukiko greeted him. She analyzed his costume and snorted. Bokuto wore the yukata given by Madame for the summer festival. A demon horn was clipped into his silver-black hair and an inflatable spiked club balloon toy was sheathed at his belt. It was obvious what Bokuto tried to achieve with a closet-made costume.

“Yaomomo invited me saying that everyone from dance club missed me so I decided to make a show of appearance,” Tsukiko replied. Sitting under the poolside canopy beds with her was a witch
Uraraka and candy ghost Midoriya. Next to Tsukiko was Todoroki in a vampire costume. He had the red half of his hair slicked back and a part of his cape wrapped around Tsukiko because she complained about being cold in her outfit. It exposed her shoulders, midriff, and legs after all. Bokuto settled himself between them with the intention of protecting the girl from a potential romantic threat.

“I got my eyes on you, Alucard…” he glared with his nose stuck up at the confused Todoroki.

Two hours into the party, a certain someone was turning into a drunken mess.

Kuroo hiccupped and wiped the liquid dripping from the corner of his open mouth. Normally the guy can avoid getting to this level of intoxication. He ended up going overboard because the alcoholic selection was superb and completely free of charge. Whatever mixes Kuroo ordered, he drank all of it without second thoughts.

The drunkard leaned closer to the hostess seated beside him, much to her obvious discomfort.

“Kuroo-san I think you need to take a break from the bar…” Momo said. She added the fact Kuroo was drinking too much and it wouldn’t be good for his liver. Sending him to the hospital wasn’t part of her party’s agenda either. But Kuroo objected while stating he wasn’t even buzzed and could still walk a straight line.

Frankenstein Iida went up to the bar and started lecturing Kuroo for not giving a lady some space. The dance club captain gulped when Kuroo rose from the bar stool. Iida tried to stand his ground against the pirate that stood a few inches taller than him. There was just enough of a height difference for Kuroo to appear intimidating even to Iida.

“Oh, ow, ouch!!” Kuroo suddenly yelped. He felt his ear being tugged on and by Tsukiko no less. The girl’s features were flushed, indicating she was intoxicated too. She smiled to her seniors before pulling Kuroo outside. There weren’t people hanging around the pool anymore so the two were practically alone.

“Don’t give Yaomo probems!” Tsukiko drunkenly said with a finger to Kuroo’s sharp chin. As expected, she had been restlessly drinking too.
Growling in his throat made Kuroo’s adams apple throb. “Huuuhh? I’m jus’ trying to get myself into the dating game too!” he exclaimed. The girl in front of him let out a dramatic gasp before gurgling out laughter.

“Pfffasdfgijhkl~! Since wen were yu cereal ‘bout dat? I thot Kuroo onry did hook ups.” she slurried after downing what was supposedly her eighth cup of mango vodka and strawberry rum mixed cocktail.

Kuroo huffed. “Since you rejected me, dumbass!” he said.

Tsukiko’s brows knitted together into a scowl. “Who’re callin’ a dumpass?! An’ I neva rejected you ‘cuz yo havn’t asked me out befor!!” retorted the little devil.

Bokuto listened as best he could in his own drunk state to the argument happening above him. He was laying down on the pavement with his head partially dunked in the pool water. Both Kuroo and Tsukiko weren’t aware they were even standing over their groggy friend.

The back and forth yelling was making Bokuto’s brain pound the walls of his skull. He tried to block out sounds by submerging enough to where water filled his ears, but he could still hear the two fighting. They went on and on about how a committed relationship worked. Tsukiko made claims that hers was the epitome of dating goals while Kuroo insisted it was actually the opposite. Among other things, it sounded like a lot of their squabbling had something to do with their Nekoma days.

“Ya know what’s sooo funny? When I tell folks from high school that you’re still dating the Karasuno pinch server they get all shocked and surprised. They all probably doubted you two could keep a long distance relationship!”

After Kuroo said that, Tsukiko began the waterworks. Her shoulders dropped as her expression shifted to disbelief. But quickly she went back to being angry. Tsukiko was use to stuff like this in the entertainment industry now. Other idols had always been talking behind her back, saying that she wasn’t going to have a successful debut. And who cares if there are people from school thinking similarly towards her relationship with Yamaguchi— not like Tsukiko still talks to anybody that wasn’t in the volleyball club. But still… it still hurt to hear a confirmation that it’s actually happening.

Tsukiko inhaled sharply and started shouting at Kuroo. Something about him not being a good friend to her. In turn, Kuroo said he hardly considered her to be a friend. He had a smug grin when stating this.
“AAARRRRRGGGHHHHH!!!” screamed Bokuto as he rose up. He shook the water out of his hair, purposely splashing the other two. They were appalled enough to start bickering at Bokuto for getting water droplets on them. Even through their drunk minds, they felt odd to see Bokuto being angry all of a sudden. Very rarely did he ever have an expression of genuine frustration.

“Both of you are dumbasses!” Bokuto told the two that fell silent.

“Kuroo! You gotta, like, stop with the jealousy! It ain’t good for your image bro. Kiko! Can you pleeeasssee admit your honest feelings? I know you know what I’m talking about and that says something if I know!!

BUT DAMMIT KUROO BRO WHY YOU MAKING A CUTE GIRL CRY HUH!??!! AND SERIOUSLY KIKO-CHAN DO YOU HAVE TO ALWAYS GET HOSTILE WITH THIS STUD MUFFIN?!!?

BOTH OF YOU NEED TO CHIIIIIIIIIILLL AND STOP MAKING UP EXCUSES TO KEEP FIGHTING!!”

The rest of the party-goers were watching from inside the mansion. Nobody knew what to do about the three that were having a verbal fight by the poolside. It was apparently loud enough that almost everyone noticed the arguing over the DJ’s music.

“This is clearly personal business we cannot tread onto,” stated Iida with his typical arm gestures.

Kirishima in a red riding hood costume shrugged. “I dunno man, this looks serious. I feel like Kiko-senpai is gonna start throwing punches at the big guy with wild hair,” he said. His partner Bakugou scoffed while chewing on a bite-sized piece of steak. It paired well with his werewolf suit.

“Who the hell even invited those giants?!?” he barked.

Momo raised her hand in answer. “Kiko-chan asked me to,” she informed.

All attention went back to the outside scene after hearing a splash. Everyone was startled and some
hurried to help two people get out of the pool, quickly.

Tsukiko and Kuroo had fallen into the lukewarm pool. It was after the girl lunged forward to slap Kuroo because something offensive came out of his mouth. Both were completely drenched in their costumes. They also had to be held back once out of the water because being soaked to the bone wasn’t going to stop them from hollering at each other. Seeing Tsukiko behaving like a rabid animal scared her clubmates.

“YOU FUCKING ASSHOLE!!!” she roared with wet hair covering half of her face. The runny makeup made her look worse.

Kuroo spat water at the ground. “OH? YOU WANT ME TO FUCK YOUR ASS NOW TOO?!” he cursed before snagging a towel that Mom was handing to him.

Bokuto clenched his fists. His weary eyes fell to the reflection in the water. “Dammit… what is up with you two.” he grimaced.

For their safety and sanity, both Kuroo and Tsukiko had to be taken home at different times. It’d be bad if they fought on the way back. Tsukiko was picked up first by her father-figure and boyfriend. Bokuto went with them as well. Half an hour after they left it was Kuroo’s turn. Kageyama and Hinata accompanied him, despite dreadfully wanting to stay at the party for its delicious food.

Once the first group arrived home, Tsukiko went straight to her room. She left her wet costume in a bag with Ushijima before marching to the elevator. Yamaguchi made sure to keep up with his girlfriend so she wouldn’t lock herself in the basement.

Akaashi watched as Bokuto entered the living room in a sluggish manner. This was completely different from his dejected mode.

“What happened?” Akaashi asked, though unsure if Bokuto was alright enough to speak. He was after Ushijima came into the room to listen too. Once the night’s events was told, everyone went wide-eyed.

“...Thanks for being there,” Ushijima said to Bokuto, who felt like he didn’t deserve the praise. It wasn’t like he really did anything to stop the two from seriously hurting each other any further.
Pushing Kuroo and Tsukiko into the pool was mostly an accident on Bokuto’s part.

Akaashi rubbed his friend’s back. “You did what you could. I’m proud of you,” he said with a subtle smile. Bokuto in turn scrunched his face and leaped over for Akaashi’s comforting embrace. The way his body jerked and the faint sound of sniffling was completely new to Akaashi. His chest fell as he imagined the unspeakable. Was Bokuto… crying?

Yamaguchi returned downstairs in time to catch Kuroo arriving home with Kageyama and Hinata’s help. The quirky duo felt an awkward tension build up in the hallway because the other two were having a stare down. Hinata quickly darted to the living room to notify Ushijima that something was probably going to happen. Fortunately, nothing was. Yamaguchi and Kuroo passed each other without speaking a word. Like Tsukiko, the other cat of the house silently went to his room.

“How is she?” Akaashi then inquired. He assumed the boyfriend had gone to soothe his troubled girlfriend.

Yamaguchi dropped his shoulders. “Calmed down enough to tell me what she remembered happening,” he answered before giving the guys a repeat of what he was told. Nobody was surprised it started with Kuroo’s apparent jealousy.

“It’s not just that…” Bokuto moaned with his face buried in Akaashi’s neck. He lifted his head and rubbed his nose.

“Kuroo called her a slut for making out with him and then Kiko called him out for not stopping her. Some other stuff that happened in the past I guess was mentioned too, like, Kuroo almost sexually assaulted her..? But he said he wasn’t actually going to touch her at the time—an intimidation move, he called it. I dun know… I’m lost as to why they even fight. They sound like petty children, honestly.”

Bokuto finished and Akaashi was taken aback by the last analogy. It had to mean something for Bokuto to call someone else childish.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t do anything, man.” Bokuto lowered his head and apologized to Yamaguchi. The freckled boy waved his hands.

“No need to do that, Bokuto-san! I’m glad you were there—”
Everyone was struck shocked by Bokuto’s outrage, more so Akaashi. For once he couldn’t understand the guy he’s known since high school. He wanted to ask what had Bokuto feeling upset but couldn’t bring himself to question it. At least not possibly yet. So much for the Yorozu-kan returning to it’s peaceful days, he thought.

In the master bedroom, Tsukiko tossed and turned, almost letting her thick blanket slide off her body. She thought about how terribly everything played out. Why weren’t things going the way she wanted? Why couldn’t she say things properly to Kuroo? Even Bokuto could tell she was still hiding for no reason.

“I really can’t face Ken if I’m still like this…” Tsukiko mumbled into her pillow. The light of her phone reflected in her eyes as she stared at the delivered message she sent seconds ago.

To: duckbutt hair

> I said stupid shit again while drunk. I’m sorry. Again. Do you hate me now?
> Since you likely deleted the text I sent last time, I’ll just repeat myself here.
> Please. Let’s talk. I want us to actually make up for reals.
> Tetsurou. Please.

There was also an older message that Tsukiko sent months ago. Every time she reread it to herself she would sigh and think, “Will we be friends any more?”

To: duckbutt hair

Sent: Saturday, August

> I’m sorry. I thought it’d help if we made clear our feelings.
> Well, I understand that you don’t want me as a friend…
> But you’re more than a friend to me too, Tetsurou.
> Even though it’s not the same way you might think of me.
> I care about everyone in this house and that includes you!
> When we made out that night, we both know I wasn’t just intoxicated.
> Look, I get horny and stuff too okay?! You happened to be there and…

> You know. I’m sorry I sorta avoided you later. I was just worried for myself.

> This is all too much to put in one big text message which is why I want to talk.

> I don’t want to pretend we made up. I want us to actually make up.

> Tetsurou, please. Please talk to me.

honestly didn't bother properly drawing this chapter sketch bc the stick figures are too hilarious to get rid of pffft— it's Akaashi, Wakapapa, Kageyama, and Hinata btw

HELLLOOOO IT'S BEEN A MONTH!!!!!!! it's only the third week of school but I'm exhausted LOL haven't even started on projects yet hhhhhh but anyway here is the promised update~ I've been writing chapters during my two hour break between classes. Ughhhhhhh this chapter has gone through sooo many revisions and now here it is in glorious 3.2k words! LOL when I finished writing this chapter I told my friend that I made Bokuto cry and she looked me dead in the eye while holding her Bokuto pencil pouch and went "How dare you we can't be friends" LMAO I AM SORRY BOKUTOOOOO ; u ; BUT YOUR TEARS ARE NECESSARY FOR PLOT REASONS and the drama doesn't end here— maybe— idk it's 2am my mind isn't functioning right ;")
p.s. I STILL HAVEN'T CAUGHT UP WITH THE MANGA BUT I SAW ON TWITTER STUFF ABOUT KUROO AND KENMA AND OMGGGG I CRY AND SCREAM AND AND I FEEL EVEN MORE GUILTY TORMENTING KUROO IN THIS FIC T - T m-maybe I'll give him a spin-off story where he gets Tsukiko fffffffff

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Sick in the Head

Chapter Summary

“Yeah. You were terribly sick around this time last year too. Kuroo took care of you then.”

Every first day of the month Tsukiko would normally say “rabbit” three times as a good luck charm. She couldn’t do it now because she was having a hangover for once. It made her head feel heavy like a sack of rice. Simply blinking her eyes caused the pain to surge all over her face like the balls in billiards.

Tsukiko had always avoided trouble like this. She’s learned from experienced drinkers that flushing the alcohol out of her system could help reduce the likelihood of getting sick later. As advised, she drinks a lot of water after downing alcohol. The only reason Tsukiko broke her routine this time was because she went to bed immediately after last night’s party. She didn’t drink any water as she normally would and forgot to ask her boyfriend to fetch a cup. After the stunt she pulled, Tsukiko wanted to wallow in bed the rest of the night.

Ushijima allowed himself into the girl’s room without knocking. He already predicted what Tsukiko was going through. That’s why he had prepared some water and an elixir that alleviates hangovers.

“I’ll tell your manager you can’t go in for any work today,” Ushijima said while already using Tsukiko’s phone to contact the person in charge of arranging her work schedule. Ushijima was definitely a doting father when it came to Tsukiko. The fact he knew her passcode showed she trusted him plenty. With Akaashi for an assistant, the two were taking the place of Tsukiko’s actual parents. The running gag had practically grown out of being a joke.

An hour later Yamaguchi peeked inside Tsukiko’s room to check on his beloved girlfriend. She was sound asleep while buried beneath three layers of blankets and a stuffed toy cushioned between her arms. Yamaguchi chipperly hummed to himself and wondered how Tsukiko could be any more adorable. He crept to her bedside to get a closer look. A strand of her dark hair fell to uncover the beauty mark under her left eye. It never failed to put a smile on Yamaguchi’s face.

The more Yamaguchi stared at Tsukiko’s sleeping features the less intrigued he got however. Something was wrong, he thought when noticing how red Tsukiko’s cheeks were. She was breathing heavily with her mouth open too. Yamaguchi put a hand on her forehead and the moment he touched her hot skin he presumed she had developed a terrible fever.
“Oh geez, you’re actually sick!?” Yamaguchi panicked. He hurried downstairs to figure out what he needed to do. The parental figures weren’t home so he couldn’t notify them of the issue. Pretty much everybody was at their jobs, all except Yamaguchi and Tsukishima. Thinking of the blond, he went to ask his friend for advice.

“Let her perish,” was what Tsukishima said before going back to his literature studies.

When Yamaguchi hopped onto the main floor he stopped and stared at the large body slumped over the dining table. He forgot that Kuroo was home too. It made sense that he also had to deal with his own hangover.

Kuroo swallowed some pills dry then quickly covered his mouth before coughing.

“Did you get sick too?” Yamaguchi asked out of genuine concern for the other guy. Kuroo grunted as an answer. He slid to Yamaguchi the same medicine he had just taken for himself.

“Give that dumbass this,” he muffled hoarsely under his hand.

Yamaguchi was surprised by the help and that Kuroo already figured what was going on. Nonetheless, he accepted the medicine but didn’t go back to Tsukiko until after he said, “thank you.”

Kuroo lazily watched Yamaguchi leave. He thought to himself how spoiled Tsukiko was to be getting taken care of by someone who cared for her. The sick guy put his head on the cold tabletop and coughed into his elbow. He remembered having to be in charge of nursing Tsukiko when she was sick once before. Kuroo knew how to take care of sick people since he was used to doing it for Kenma back in their middle school days. With Tsukiko, she turned out to be a pain when struck ill and Kuroo had to learn that firsthand.

“I can already hear her whining and complaining to her precious boyfriend,” he groaned in his throat.

Tsukiko was fully awake around noon for lunch time. She slowly ate some warm rice mixed in
water. It was the only thing Yamaguchi could give her because the kitchen wasn’t restocked on groceries yet. After Tsukiko managed to finish the bland meal it was then that Yamaguchi realized he could’ve ran to the convenience store to buy soup.

“I’ll go get soup right now!” he said but was stopped by a tug at his arm.

Tsukiko shifted in her bed then patted the empty space for Yamaguchi. Understanding, he sat beside her while she laid down to rest her head.

“This is the first time you’ve watched over a sick me, huh?” Tsukiko said with a croaky voice. She didn’t sound great at all that it raised Yamaguchi’s worries. He stroked her backside soothingly.

“Yeah. You don’t usually get like this though. Could it be from falling into the pool last night? Or is the stress from work finally getting to you?” he proposed.

Tsukiko reluctantly agreed with a moan. Taking Yamaguchi’s hand she placed it on her cheek. It was warm, exactly the way she liked. Yamaguchi tried to retract his hand when he thought of going to make an ice pack for Tsukiko but she wouldn’t let go of him.

“I’ll be back real quick so—”

In the blink of an eye, Yamaguchi found himself laying in his girlfriend’s bed with her body weighing him down. From his view, he could see her exposed collarbone as her pajama top slid open.

“He-Hey, hey, hey!” he stuttered while attempting to look elsewhere. Tsukiko crawled up on Yamaguchi to wrap her arms behind his head. He could feel her pressing against him in various places. The heat of her body passed onto him.

Yamaguchi squeaked. “Wh-What’s the matter?”

When bravely directing his vision back to Tsukiko, he could see the lust in her eyes. They were like this back at the summer beach trip. Seeing Tsukiko lick her upper lip had to be the icing on the cake. Yamaguchi pushed her up to switch positions so that he was hovering on top. The bashful reaction she made contrast with the way she purposely opened access to her neck, much like that night at the summer festival. Again, Yamaguchi wasentranced by her well-hidden beauty mark.
“Look, uhh, we can’t do this… you’re sick so—”

Tsukiko smirked. “My head’s not the only thing heating up~” she purred.

Yamaguchi gulped. That was his first time hearing Tsukiko speak in an alluring way. Like a magic spell, it made his mind go hazy.

Giving in to desire, Yamaguchi leaned down to kiss the dot on Tsukiko’s neck and in doing so inhaled the sweet scent of her sweat. He also took hold of her arms, trailing up to grab her wrists. Tsukiko’s legs spread slightly for Yamaguchi to rest his knee in-between them. He would have done more such as exploring uncharted territory with his clammy hands, but a thump at the door spooked the lovers out of their sensual daze.

Yamaguchi fixed himself, though there wasn’t anything disoriented with him. He went to check who was at the door but nobody stood out there. He did find something placed on the floor. It was a can of chicken soup.

Who dropped it off? Tsukishima was the least likely culprit since he wasn’t the considerate type. The only other person at home who knew of Tsukiko being sick was Kuroo. This then had Yamaguchi wondering if the guy happened to see what could’ve escalated into something exciting. The door wasn’t open, which left the possibility of Kuroo actually hearing everything. Wracking his brain around the questions made Yamaguchi want to grovel into a corner from shameful embarrassment.

“So uhh… I guess I’ll make—” Yamaguchi turned around and saw that Tsukiko had passed out with a leg dangling off her bed. He sighed, tucked her in properly, then left to go cook the soup for her to eat later. First he had to stop by the bathroom to splash cold water in his face. He needed to wait for his nerves (and something else) to settle down.

“**HOLYSHIT TSUKIKO ARE YOU A HORNY HIGH SCHOOL BOY WHEN SICK?!?!?!”** Tsukiko mentally screamed while she was pretending to be asleep.

The first to arrive home were Bokuto and his two pupils. Hinata plopped down a bag of coffee beans onto the kitchen counter that Touka gave to him. It was meant as a get-well gift for Tsukiko but Kageyama made a point that the housemother didn’t drink coffee to begin with. They also
Everyone was notified earlier in the Yorozu-kan group chat about Tsukiko being sick. Too bad for Ushijima he had to work late so he wasn’t able to rush home and take care of his daughter. He even told his manager exactly that and was almost taken seriously until his coworker informed Ushijima didn’t actually have a daughter.

Hinata gasped at a peculiar sight in the living room. “Kenma?!” he squawked.

“Yo,” Kenma casually greeted before going back to cleaning Kuroo’s ear on the floor.

“That’s loyalty.” Kageyama called it.

Bokuto laughed before dropping to the floor and mocking his bro friend.

Kuroo glared. “Dirty ears can make a person sick,” he said and Bokuto pretended to agree.

The returning trio went upstairs to check on the sick girl. They were glad to see she appeared fine enough to be sitting in bed. Yamaguchi mentioned that he had been taking care of Tsukiko all day. Of course, he wasn’t going to reveal what happened earlier during lunchtime.

“Kiko-senpai!! Have you cleaned your ears out too?” asked Hinata suddenly.

Tsukiko shook her head. “Now that you mention it, I probably should. Dirty ears can make people sick after all,” she said with a finger to her chin.

Bokuto hooted as he stepped deeper into Tsukiko’s room. He wiggled his thick brows and said, “I can clean ‘em~” Tsukiko glared at the owl. She looked to Hinata and smiled, as if silently saying she wanted the ginger to clean her ears. Picking up the signal, Hinata blushed. He wasn’t ready to do something that personally intimate with a girl, even if it was Tsukiko.

By dinner time, Tsukiko was able to go downstairs and eat. Despite Ushijima earnestly wanting to keep her in bed, and insisting he’d take food up to her, the girl demanded to eat with everybody. They all watched with slight agony as Ushijima babied Tsukiko. He would wipe her face after
delivering a spoonful of chicken and vegetable soup into her mouth. It really didn’t help that she was fine with the spoiled treatment.

Akaashi massaged his temples. “It’s definitely been ages since they last did this stuff,” he muttered.

Bokuto laughed. “Ain’t nothing wrong with a papa takin’ care of his lil girl!” he joked before shifting attention to Kuroo, who was quietly sitting at the high counter beside a disgusted Kenma.

“Need me to feed ya too bro?” Bokuto asked for fun.

“Why would I want that when you can barely feed yourself?” Kuroo hissed back.

Akaashi snickered with a smirk. “He’s right Bokuto-san. Just look at yourself,” he said while pointing at Bokuto’s own mess. Crumbs littered the table and his face. The owl screeched when realizing this. He clapped his hands and then pointed at his dirty chin while facing the boy next to him. Hinata responded to the wordless command, taking a napkin and dabbing it on his mentor.

“What a manchild…” Akaashi sighed with disappointment.

For the rest of the night, Ushijima and Akaashi did their parenting job in caring for Tsukiko. They took her to the bathhouse, enlisting Momo to clean the sick girl for them. Meanwhile at home her bed sheets were switched out and all plush toys were quarantined—in other words, put away in her spacious closet.

Upon returning home Tsukiko was sad to hear that Kenma left while she was bathing. She had hoped hugging him would heal her and went back to her room with a pout. Akaashi followed so he could brush Tsukiko’s hair before she slept. The two sat on the bed and like it were normal did the usual they use to do.

“It’s been a long time since I last did this too,” Akaashi said using a nostalgic tone.

Tsukiko hummed in agreement. She hadn’t been tying her hair as much lately because that use to be Akaashi’s job. A soft grin came to her pinkish face. It felt nice having Akaashi treating her hair
like they were ‘girl’ friends again.

“How tell me... how long are you and Kuroo-san going to keep fighting for no reason?” he inquired with seriousness.

Tsukiko saw the question coming from a mile away. It was finally time for the return of their ‘girl’ talk apparently. Letting out a sigh of defeat, Tsukiko answered honestly.

“At this point I don’t know if I’ll be able to keep pretending we’re still friends. Assuming we were to begin with. He told me last night he didn’t see me as one anyway...” she said.

Akaashi continued brushing while he spoke.

“I’m sure that was the alcohol speaking on his behalf. But assuming it’s really what he thinks, then do you even want to be his friend anymore?”

Tsukiko jerked. “Of course I do! Tetsu’s the one making it hard— errm, no... I can’t keep blaming him.”

Akaashi was fairly surprised to hear the last bit. He started braiding Tsukiko’s hair but slowly as she kept talking.

“I want to apologize in person but it’s like there’s never a good time to do it,” she continued.

“Apologizing isn’t something you plan out like a marriage proposal. Just do it.” Akaashi interjected.

Tsukiko grumbled back.

“What I mean is— argh! When it comes to Tetsu my tongue gets tied. I know what I want to say but what I end up saying isn’t it. And then my tsundere ass surfaces— I just... I get flustered with him! Does that make sense?”
Akaashi rolled his eyes. “Sounds to me you like Kuroo-san back. Romantically.”

Tsukiko huffed angrily. “Of course I like him! Not… the way I like Tadashi. Ahh! Why is it so hard to have a platonic relationship with other guys?!” she grumbled in her throat.

“Calm down. You’re not one of those reverse harem protagonists.”

Tsukiko choked on saliva as she started laughing from Akaashi’s sassy remark. She turned around and hugged him tightly.

“\textit{I missed you},” she said into his shoulder. Akaashi smiled while returning the gesture. “\textit{Good, because I missed you too.”}

It really had been a long while since the two spoke like they did just now. They were glad to finally have a proper moment alone where Tsukiko could relieve her thoughts and Akaashi listened.

“\textit{By the way, do you know what was up with Kou-tan? I remember him not really being himself when he dealt with Tetsu and I at the party…”} Tsukiko asked while sprawled across Akaashi’s lap. He sighed in response to the question.

“I’m still not sure myself. I’ve been wondering the same thing and I can’t find it in me to ask him,” Akaashi answered.

Tsukiko wiggled her eyebrows. “\textit{Ehh? What happened to the Aa-kun who knew everything about the guy he’s in looove with~?}” she playfully teased. A blush slashed across Akaashi’s face as he stuffed a pillow over Tsukiko’s head. “\textit{Sh-shut up!”} he huffed bashfully. Akaashi bolted out of the room as soon as Ushijima entered to give Tsukiko her medicine for the night.

“If the pill is too big then swallow a large gulp of water first to open up your throat more,” he instructed her.

Tsukiko followed and then afterwards asked, “\textit{how’d you know that trick?”}

Ushijima shrugged. “Kuroo made you do the same thing before.”
“Before?”

“Yeah. You were terribly sick around this time last year too. Kuroo took care of you.”

Tsukiko swerved her eyes upwards.

“Waka-papa… I had a sore throat. I wasn’t ‘terribly’ sick.” she reminded him.

Ushijima paused before adding, “A sore throat can develop into something worse. It could have ended your singing career had we not been careful.”

Tsukiko found herself laughing yet again. She fell back onto her bed and pulled her thick blanket up to her chin.

“Waka-papa sure talks a lot when he’s worried about me~” she mewed.

“Any loving father would.”

“…sometimes even I wonder how serious you take this whole father-daughter joke.”

“Tsukiko. It stopped being a joke ages ago.”

The sick girl stared at her ceiling after Ushijima left. A stunned expression was on her face.

“Who replaced Waka-papa with my actual papa?! ” she wondered with a panic sweat.
GUESS WHAT?? HAPPY 1ST ANNIVERSARY TO THIS FIC!!!!!! AND IT'S ALSO KENMA'S BIRTHDAY <33333

BIG THANKS TO YOU READERS THAT ARE KEEPING UP WITH THIS STORY!!!!!!

I LOVE U ALL SO SO MUCH <3333333

an update from me this past month: I've been slow writing chapter drafts because I'm trying to write this story better than my best, so I've been constantly revising lol also notice how the sketch looks different than previous ones-- because I got clip studio aaaand the pencil brushes I downloaded there are EXACTLY what I want a digital pencil brush to look like!!! PHOTOSHOP IS STILL GOOD BUT I HATE THE PENCIL BRUSHES LOL also I get better ink brushes in CSP fffuuuuuuu I'm having so much more fun with this program T u T

ANOTHER THING been thinking about moving the side stories over here so it's easier to see them? know what, I'm just gonna do that LOL so have a double update in celebration of one year <333333333

THANKS FOR READING!!  follow me:

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The landlady Madame sent a special gift to the Yorozu-kan group: an alcoholic drink called ‘Younger Daze’ that she picked up in a foreign country. There were suspicious instructions attached to the bottle that state you must only drink a single shot per night. However, two people decided to ignore this rule and drink more than they were suppose to. The next morning, Kuroo and Tsukiko weren’t found hungover…

The first one to discover what happened was Yamaguchi. He woke up to find his girlfriend missing from his bed. “Did she go back to her room?” he wondered. In all honesty he would have loved to wake up to see the girl’s adorable sleeping face. Just imagining it made his heart flutter. When his feet touched the floor he heard something squeak. It startled Yamaguchi for a moment as his thoughts jumped to the assumption that there was a rodent in his room. With caution, he knelt down to check what was under his bed.

“Nn…” whimpered the person hiding there. Yamaguchi felt relieved. “Ah, it’s just you Ki—” he froze when lifting the blanket. The reveal was shocking enough to make him scream.

In a matter of seconds, Ushijima barged into the room with a volleyball clutched in his arm. Apparently he always had one next to him when he slept. “What’s wrong Tsukiko?!” he shouted. The only reason he appeared was because he thought he heard a girl’s scream and the only female in the house was the house mother, who Ushijima was strangely protective over.

Ushijima looked down to see Yamaguchi had retreated to one end of his room with a petrified expression. He followed where the other’s shaky finger was pointing at.

“....papa?” cried the girl that hesitantly poked her head out of hiding.

Ushijima couldn’t believe what he was seeing. He recognized who it was that was reaching out to him from under the bed. It was Tsukiko but in a form he only saw in photo albums.

Akaashi paced frantically around the living room while fiddling with his fingers. “How did this happen? Is this even real? What do we do about this?” Worrisome thoughts were wrapping around
his head until Bokuto had to shake the nerves out of him, literally.

“CHILL AKAASHI, CHILL!” yelled the owl who was suddenly flicked in the head by the one he was shaking. Akaashi scolded him for being loud in front of the scared girl on the sofa.

“This is impossible.” Tsukishima said as he lifted up his phone with the intent of collecting blackmail material of the girl.

Yamaguchi stopped his friend. “D-Don’t take pictures of my girlfriend!!” he shouted and also got scolded by Akaashi.

Sitting on the sofa was Tsukiko but appearing as a child version of herself, evident by how she shrunk down to three-feet in height. Her eyes and cheeks were big and round too. Her tiny hands were clutching desperately onto Ushijima’s shirt and her tearful face was pressed against his side. Everyone understood why she was only comfortable with Ushijima. It was because he happened to look similar to the girl’s actual father. Akaashi was glad they didn’t need to resort to gluing a mustache on Ushijima though just to convince the little Tsukiko even more.

Trotting down the stairs was Kageyama holding a pair of feet and behind him was Hinata holding a pair of arms.

“Put me down!!” hollered the person they were carrying into the living room.

Tsukishima and Bokuto were trying hard to hold back their laughter. Getting dropped onto the floor and standing before them was Kuroo— except he too had shrunk to where he was just slightly shorter than Hinata, unless you count his rooster hair.

“Who are you guys? Where am I and why?!” said the younger Kuroo as he shifted his stance in preparation to run at his chance of escape. His suspicion only worsened when he saw the little girl in Ushijima’s arm. “CHILD KIDNAPPERS!!” he started shouting repeatedly in an attempt to attract attention from the outside. It took a whole effort from Bokuto, Hinata, and Kageyama to shut the kid up before Akaashi lost his composure.

Once the room was quiet, everyone took the chance to analyze the situation. On the sofa, being held down by Ushijima in both of his arms, were Kuroo and Tsukiko. Somehow they both reverted back to being the children they once were.
“Alright, let’s start with introductions,” said Akaashi with his soothing voice that relaxed the children.

“I’m Akaashi, Keiji. Nice to meet you two. Over here are my friends.”

One by one each person in the house introduced themselves calmly and as friendly as they could. Fortunately for Hinata he has a younger sister so he knew how to interact with kids as easily as Akaashi could. Kageyama, on the other hand, apparently wasn’t good with little people so he didn’t have a nice air around him.

“I’m big bro Koutarou! Call me your big bro!”

Tsukishima was still trying to keep himself from dying of hysterical laughter that he ended up looking evil to the kids. In his place, Hinata introduced him as ‘evil lord of glasses’.

Yamaguchi made sure to give his (not?)girlfriend a reassuring smile. The last thing he wanted was to make a bad impression on the girl’s child form, but then he remembered what happened earlier. He realized that the little Tsukiko woke up to find herself sleeping next to a grown stranger. It was why she had hid herself under his bed in the first place. Suddenly Yamaguchi’s face was overcome with gloom.

“Papa,” Ushijima stated. There was no choice but to lie about his identity for the time being. While they could call Tsukiko’s parents, it might make the boys look bad for not taking care of their daughter like they promised. It was also best to keep this whole thing within the Yorozu-kan house too.

Kuroo was still glancing at everyone with suspicion. He looked over on the other side of Ushijima and met eyes with baby-faced Tsukiko. Her eyes were glossed from tears, which only enhanced her cuteness.

“Ku-Kuroo… that’s me.” he blurted his name with a blush slashed across his face.

The sound of a growling stomach interrupted everyone’s attention. Tsukiko tightened her grip on Ushijima while flushed in embarrassment. The man gently patted her head. “I’ll make breakfast,” he told her but when standing up the girl continued to cling to him. Tsukishima grabbed a throw pillow from the sofa and shoved his face into it. Hinata scrunched his nose, cringing at the sight of the tall blond acting out of character with the non-stop laughing.
Akaashi approached Tsukiko carefully to get her off of Ushijima. “Papa has to cook now. Want to sit on the high chair so you can watch him?” he asked her to which her adorable features lit up happily while she nodded. Bokuto and Yamaguchi felt their hearts ping from the cute sight.

When Ushijima went to lift Tsukiko up, the girl yelped and something had fallen to the floor. Akaashi’s eyes went wide when he realized something extremely important. It just occurred to him that both children were still wearing the clothes their adult selves had gone to bed in. Kuroo had been holding onto his shorts the entire time and Tsukiko was wearing a large t-shirt. After being lifted into the air it was her underwear that slid off. Bokuto started roaring and pounding the floor in excitement. In front of him was Tsukiko’s pastel blue panties. He started engraving into his memory until Akaashi took another pillow from the sofa to hide the very thing.

“Shouyou-kun! Go to the basement and get a box of children’s clothes in the storage room!” he commanded the crow who saluted in response.

Breakfast was a simple omelette with rice. Tsukiko was shoving food into her mouth with her small plastic spoon. She swung her feet happily from the high chair. While she ate, Akaashi was carefully tying her hair back into two pigtails. The box of children’s clothes happened to have things for Kuroo to wear, which Akaashi did question about. What would Tsukiko’s family need boy clothes for in the first place? She didn’t have any male relatives as far as he knew. Perhaps they belonged to Ken?

“Done!” Kuroo said after he cleared his plate. He was about to beeline out of the dining room until Akaashi called to him.

“Where are you going mister?” he asked in a stern, mother-like tone. It made Kuroo go “geh” and backtrack himself to sit at the table again. Bokuto and Tsukishima started snickering but then Akaashi used the same tone on them to hush.

“Akaa,” Tsukiko called for Akaashi’s attention. Normally he would’ve groaned at his nickname but it sounded cute coming from a little Tsukiko. The girl gestured that she was thirsty. Normally he would’ve rolled his eyes and told her to get a drink herself but he couldn’t say no to the angelic, cute face of hers. While Akaashi was searching for their safest cup to use, Ushijima was cleaning the girl’s face with a napkin. They looked like an actual family, which didn’t come off as odd to the rest of the house residents.
Yamaguchi was eating his breakfast with a pout. Kageyama noticed this. “Are you jealous?” he asked straightforwardly. The other jumped in his seat while questioning why Kageyama would think he was.

“Nah! He wants to take care of baby Kiko-senpai too.” Hinata interjected after he licked his own plate clean.

“Lolicon.” Tsukishima said in between forced coughs. Him and Bokuto started snickering again at Yamaguchi’s flustered reaction.

“I wanna go outsiiiide!!” Kuroo whined as pawed the backdoor like a begging cat. Akaashi stood firmly with his hands on his hips. He looked like Tsukiko whenever she was laying down her authority as the house mother.

“You can’t go outside. The neighbors will see you.” he stated.

Kuroo gritted his teeth. “So this is a kidnapping!?” the boy shouted and got flicked in the forehead as punishment. He winced from the stinging pain before crawling on his knees to the little girl drawing at the coffee table.

“Hey you,” he whispered. The girl squeaked in response and turned to the ‘stranger’ with a timid expression. It made her look like a hamster, Kuroo thought before giving her a wide grin.

“Wanna play together?” he asked and Tsukiko’s eyes started sparkling. She nodded, her pigtails bouncing adorably.

“Let’s play volleyball then!” Kuroo happily suggested. The little girl tilted her head curiously.

“Voll… ball?” she questioned.

Kuroo smirked as he stuck his chest out. “Don’t know it? Even better! I’ll teach you.” he told Tsukiko.
Ushijima returned to the living room after trying to call Madame; the woman who sent them the mysterious elixir that was the root cause of the situation. He gave Kuroo a menacing stare, causing the boy to cower. Tsukiko saw the fear in his cat-like eyes then stood with her arms up in a defensive manner.

“I want play,” she said in her chipmunk-like voice.

“Play with Kuu-roo,” she continued to demand.

Akaashi sighed. He was going to repeat the rules but Ushijima shook his head. “We can play,” he said. The children smiled then thanked Ushijima with hugs of appreciation. It was obvious who they favored more in the family.

Everyone went outside where the weather was perfect for children to play to their heart's content. Kuroo showed Tsukiko a volleyball he was given by Ushijima and explained how to play in the most basic way he could.

“You just keep the ball in the air and get it over the net.”

It was honestly a poor explanation but the simpletons Hinata and Kageyama seemed to be the only ones who agreed with the kid.

Ushijima remained behind Tsukiko as she practiced tossing the ball back and forth with Kuroo. She did well with catching the ball even with how tiny she was. Akaashi clapped his hands for her. “You’re doing great,” he told her with a smile. The other guys sat back on the patio and watched. Some of them were itching to play volleyball too.

“Ahhhh!” Bokuto cried. “Let’s show these kids what real volleyball looks like!” he said, to which both Hinata and Kageyama responded with an “ossu!”

A makeshift volleyball net was placed in the yard using the laundry line with some clothes still pinned to it. Kuroo was looking forward to seeing ‘grownups’ play and even Tsukiko was excitedly hugging the volleyball in her arms. Once the setup was as complete as it could be, Kageyama started with sending a toss to Hinata. The latter’s high jump made the children gasp in surprise. What amazed them more was the quick horizontal spike that followed.
Kuroo jumped to his feet. “Awesome! How do you pull a quick that fast?!” His amazement made Hinata feel bashful as though he were being praised. The attention diverted to Bokuto after Kageyama tossed to him.

“Hey, hey, heeeyy!” Bokuto held his hands up to kid Kuroo who then responded to the double high five.

“That straight was straighter than a ruler!! How’d you get that cool big bro?!” His compliment made Bokuto stroke his ego.

“It’s because I’m an ace!” Bokuto stated and Kuroo was in awe.

The boys continued to play a light game of volleyball and showing off to Kuroo while they could still milk compliments out of him. Tsukiko rocked back and forth while in Ushijima’s lap. He looked down at her. “You can play when you’re bigger,” he told her. Tsukiko bobbed her head with a smile in response.

Taking a seat beside her, but keeping his distance, Yamaguchi attempted to appeal to his tiny (not??)girlfriend. He pulled out from behind his back the girl’s favorite character mascot of all time: Gudetama. Tsukiko stared at the toy for a bit before reaching out to take the Gudetama plushie. She squeezed it in her arms and rubbed her face against it. Seeing the joy in her cheeks even made Ushijima grip his shirt. It was as if an arrow struck his heart.

Yamaguchi began to show Tsukiko videos of Gudetama on his phone and each one made her laugh. At some point she got up and started imitating the ending dance sequence.

“Gu-de-tama-tama~!” Tsukiko sang along. Akaashi gave in to the cuteness and started recording the scene. Tsukishima acted like he wasn’t interested but he also had his phone out to take a video too— with the intent of blackmail, of course.

The girl paused for a moment to tug at Ushijima’s arm. “Papa! Dance!” she told him. Ushijima kept his stoic expression and, to everyone’s surprise, he started doing the Gudetama dance with Tsukiko. Of course he wasn’t moving as enthusiastically as her but the scene was still hilarious.
The fun continued for the remainder of the day. However, while everyone had their attention on Tsukiko during lunch break, the mischievous Kuroo was snooping around the main floor in search of a phone. Though he did find one in the hallway by the stairs, it wasn’t the kind he knew how to use. It was a rotary phone that he’s seen at his grandparents house. Kuroo decided to look elsewhere. He went up the stairs and back to the room that Kageyama and Hinata had dragged him out of. On the bed he found a red smartphone.

“Tsk. Locked.” Kuroo grunted. He started entering random codes and by his fifth try the phone had unlocked. It surprised him how his birthday was the password. The boy navigated in search of an icon with a phone. He found it and pressed his thumb on it but instead of a keypad it listed recently called numbers. The first name he spotted was one he knew and he immediately called it.

“....what is it?” asked a grumpy voice which wasn’t exactly what Kuroo expected to hear.

“Kenma? That you?”

“Yes. Who’s asking? This should be Ku—”

“Help me man! I’ve been kidnapped!” Kuroo begged.

Kenma inhaled deeply. It sucked being a good person. “....where are you?” he asked reluctantly.

Thirty minutes later, right as the family was cleaning up lunch together, the Yorozu-kan doorbell rang. Hinata got up from the sofa to answer it. He cawed in surprise to see Kenma at the door.

“What’re you doing here? Oh! That’s right, we borrowed your game controllers.” Hinata said as he hurried back into the living room to retrieve the items before Kenma could state his actual business.

Kid Kuroo ran down the stairs and slid across the floor towards the entrance.

“Kenma! You ca—”

The child froze in place. He didn’t exactly recognize the person at the door but he knew those
sharp, sleepy eyes anywhere. Kenma dropped his shoes with his mouth agape from shock. The partial blond made his way to the living room where his appearance almost caused Akaashi to drop a plate. Kenma pointed at Kuroo while glaring at the group.

“What the hell is that all about?” he demanded a sensible explanation.

Hinata quickly ran the situation to Kenma, though the ‘whoosh’ and ‘shwoom’ sound effects regarding their volleyball game wasn’t necessary information. Kenma let out a sigh and looked back at his childhood friend who was pressing himself into a corner of the room. The boy would hiss each time Tsukishima was teasingly reaching out to poke him.

“This is just weird.” Kenma said with Akaashi sighing in agreement. The tiny Tsukiko boldly approached the newcomer with the Gudetama plushie in her small arms. She couldn’t take her curious eyes off of Kenma’s hair. Everyone was sure that the girl was thinking about how his hair resembled flan pudding. But like Kageyama, Kenma also wasn’t comfortable with children. They were loud and mostly annoying things from what Kenma experienced. Though, he had to admit he found Tsukiko pretty adorable.

“Do you guys even know how this happened?” he asked while petting Tsukiko’s soft head.

Akaashi gave the other his only guess: the liquor their landlord sent them. It came from an unknown country and had specific instructions about drinking it. He retrieved the bottle that was nearly empty to show it to Kenma. There wasn’t much of a smell to the liquid and from how it was described by the ones who drank it last night, the flavor wasn’t distinctive either.

“Well, if Kuroo and Tsukiko were the only ones who went over the single-shot limit then that could explain why they’re the only ones affected. We can assume that the additional amount they drank also influenced how far back they de-aged.” said Kenma, sounding somewhat logical.

“I guess we know who drank the most shots last night~” Tsukishima joked while still attempting to poke Kuroo. But when he wasn’t looking, Kuroo had bit his hand like an angry cat.

While everyone was discussing a solution, Yamaguchi was continuously trying to keep Tsukiko’s attention to himself. He showed her pictures of cute things he knew she liked all while carrying her on his lap. As weird as it was having the child version of his girlfriend in his arms, it made Yamaguchi let out a sigh of bliss.
The night took over without a hitch. Kuroo had warmed up to Kenma and the two were playing a video game with Bokuto and Hinata. They also took turns babysitting so others could go take their baths.

“Me want clean,” Tsukiko said but her ‘father’ had told her to skip bathtime for the night. The communal bathhouse nearby did have a family bath, but because the owner there knew the Yorozu-kan group, it would raise suspicion if they showed up with little kids. Additionally the owner was old enough to possibly have known Tsukiko when she actually was a child.

To change the subject, Ushijima started a conversation with Tsukiko.

“How old are you?” he asked and Tsukiko held up five fingers after counting down from ten. She seemed unsure of her own age though since she was putting a thumb down then back up.

“Do you know your name?”

“Kikoko Yamuchi!” she answered with a stutter. Yamaguchi chuckled. He thought to himself how cute it was that Tsukiko even messed up her own name as a child. The habit apparently persists when she’s a grown woman.

“Tsu-ki-ko Ya-ma-u-chi.” Ushijima corrected Tsukiko before following with the next question that asked what her favorite things were. The little girl paused, appearing to be in deep thought. She didn’t ponder for too long then gave her answer.

“Papa an’ mama! Aaaan…. voll-ball! Gudetama-ma!” Tsukiko then turned around to point her finger at the other guys in the room.

“Tada,” she said for Yamaguchi, causing him to swoon.

“Zushishima,” she said for Tsukishima, which surprisingly did not irritate him.

“Kouta-nii,” as in Bokuto.
“Shou-nii,” as in Hinata.


“Kuro-nii and Purin!” were obviously Kuroo and Kenma respectively.

Tsukiko excitedly cheered out loud, “Me like everybody!”

The joyous scene was bright and warm, but it was quick to fade and slip away because Tsukiko was waking up from her long dream.

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in celebration of one year, I present to you a side story turned into main series chapter!!
ahahahaofhaofheawhaeahahahahddaa gosh this story is so funny and glad I could bring it over here to use as a silly dream sequence x'D also I edited this slightly, you'll catch the differences in the version posted on Yorozu-Kan (sides) but anyway might be doing this for more side stories just so y'all get some funny content in between the serious chapter updates~ it'll also help me get closer to making this fic end at 100 chapters >u> technically there'll be 101 because the first chapter is an information spiel on Tsukiko hhhmmmmmm

SEE YOU NEXT MONTH FOR THE CONTINUATION! WILL TSUKIKO AND KUROO BE ABLE TO MAKE UP AFTER THEIR FIGHT? FIND OUT NEXT TIME 8)

THANKS FOR READING!! follow me:

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The day was permitted a free one for Tsukiko. Her manager wanted her to recover some more energy before another wave of idol work. Everybody else had to attend their own plans; whether it be going to their jobs, hitting the gym, or whatever college boys to do in their spare time.

“It. Was. Super. Weird.” Tsukiko uttered at breakfast first thing the following morning.

Yorozu-kan’s house mother had a strange dream. She wanted to share it immediately—she needed to. When describing the story in great detail to her roommates, they all reacted very much the same; stunned and in disbelief. It was beyond wild imagination to comprehend.

“Does recovering from a fever give you weird dreams?” Akaashi said while boggling his mind about what he heard. The dream Tsukiko had last night was about her and Kuroo magically turning into children for a day. Apparently it had something to do with a drink that the landlady Madame sent to the house. That part made Akaashi feel wary of an actual drink that was delivered some time ago too.

“Taking care of a kiddy Kiko-senpai sounds fun though! You looked super cute as a kid,” Hinata commented in reference to the photo albums hidden within the living room walls. Tsukiko squealed in response before happily engulfing Hinata into the mounds on her chest.

Bokuto nearly choked on his rice while laughing. “But Ushiwaka dancing to the Gudetama theme?! Now THAT is a dream I wanna see come true!” he said, garnering a mean glare from the big guy himself.

Yamaguchi chuckled. He felt his actions in Tsukiko’s dream were very like him. If he ever woke up to find his girlfriend had turned into her four-year-old self, he’d do anything to obtain her affections.

“Though that’s pretty harsh of kid Kuroo-san to threaten calling the police on everyone,” Kageyama said while his cheeks were being stuffed with food. The guy who too recovered from illness leaned towards the young setter.
“Any kid would logically treat that kind of situation as a kidnapping,” Kuroo argued without breaking his devilish grin.

Kuroo went back to eating his breakfast while silently thinking about the story Tsukiko told. It bothered him how he had the exact same dream as her. Was it from whatever bug they shared yesterday? He even vividly remembered a part where child Tsukiko was lifted up and her adult underwear fell off. Tsukiko didn’t mention that scene, most likely to keep Bokuto from getting excited, but it still felt weird for Kuroo.

The day was permitted a free one for Tsukiko. Her manager wanted her to recover some more energy before another wave of idol work. Everybody else had to attend their own plans; whether it be going to their jobs, hitting the gym, or whatever college boys to do in their spare time.

Tsukiko was left alone with Hinata and Yamaguchi. The two boys joined her under the kotatsu and watched television together. Spending a day with her boyfriend and “son” was good enough for Tsukiko. A fourth would be with them but Tsukishima chose to study by himself at a library rather than stay in the house.

While Hinata was given the remote to browse for something to watch, he couldn’t help but squint with nervousness. Underneath the kotatsu he knew the couple was playing footsies together though his imagination was thinking otherwise. Their bubbly giggles emitted behind him. It felt awkward being a third wheel and Hinata wondered if the couple needed privacy for more steamy activities. He wasn’t sure exactly what to do if the situation called.

“OOOHHH!!!!” Hinata suddenly cawed out loud. Orange-top pointed a finger at the TV with excitement. “It’s senpai~!!” he announced with sparkly eyes. Tsukiko and Yamaguchi paused their under-the-table game to look forward. Hinata had found a commercial that was advertising soda. His finger reached out to where he spotted Tsukiko in the footage.

“Yes, that’s me.” she responded with her nose stuck up proudly. Tsukiko was technically in the background of the commercial, not the star model. But seeing her in any media was still a thrilling experience for her friends. Hinata especially liked to think of it as a personal game to find Tsukiko in a magazine or advertisement. Unfortunately Kageyama has found her more times than Hinata, which incited a pointless competition between the two.

“I’m dating a celebrity.” Yamaguchi smirked while rubbing his chin. His girlfriend pushed him with her cheeks puffed out. “I’m not one yet!” Tsukiko huffed bashfully before tapping her foot against Yamaguchi’s.
Hinata went back to distracting himself with the TV as to ignore the couple again.

Meanwhile, at a local library…

“Hii~ megane-kun~” rang a lofty voice.

Tsukishima didn’t need to look up from his papers to recognize it was Oikawa approaching him. He also went on to ignore the guy explaining that he was only at the library because some “cute girls” invited him out for a study session. Said “cute girls” were waving at the charmer from another table. They signaled gestures implying they were going to move where Oikawa went, but he knew Tsukishima wouldn’t like that. Plus he wanted to talk privately to the college freshman for a short moment.

“Sofoo how’s my hunny?” Oikawa asked as he leaned over the table.

Tsukishima frowned from having his concentration broken with the mention of Tsukiko. Of all people it was of course her that Oikawa brings up.

“If you’re referring to her being sick, she’s completely fine now.” answered the blond.

Oikawa sat down and pushed his lower lip out. “Hmm that’s great but I was wondering more about the condition of her heart,” he purred before adding;

“I arrived at Yaomomo-chan’s party very late and heard that a fight between Kiko-chan and Kuroo-kun went down. Only got some details from the folks still there, but when I tried asking Kiko she didn’t text me back~”

Tsukishima grumbled. He could tell that Oikawa was trying to get information out of him. It’s not like he knew any more than Oikawa either. Hoping to regain peaceful solitude, Tsukishima opened his mouth.

“Apparently they both got drunk and started insulting each other, as per usual. But according to Bokuto-san, Kuroo-san went as far as to call her a slut. Ah, you probably never knew this but the two made out once— which was why she got called a slut. Then she tried to actually swing at him
so guess she knew he wasn’t wrong either, *ha*.”

Tsukishima finished explaining. He had a smug grin while he spoke until noticing the brunette’s reaction. Oikawa wore a menacing glare akin to when he’s about to hit a deadly, fatal jump serve. Was he jealous that Kuroo got tongue action with Tsukiko? Jokingly, Tsukishima thought for sure that was it. But Oikawa’s face had genuine anger. It was very much clear.

“I will castrate the bastard if he keeps that shit up…” Oikawa murmured with what sounded like serious ill-intent. Tsukishima sat back against his chair, finding the murderous atmosphere unpleasant. He wasn’t expecting Oikawa to be profoundly mad after hearing the details. It had him thinking Oikawa had serious feelings towards Tsukiko like Kuroo does.

“Why are all of you on her side anyway?” Tsukishima accidentally spoke out of his mind. Before he could take it back Oikawa swiftly replied.

“I never claimed being on Tsukiko’s side,” he said. This stunned Tsukishima enough into asking for Oikawa’s reason. The brunette went on to say;

“Kiko-chan is one of the sweet loves of my life, don’t get me wrong~ but I’m not biased enough to agree on everything about her like Yama-chan does.

When I met Tsukiko the first thing I thought was, ‘what a sad looking girl’ because all I saw was this beautiful young lady hiding pain behind a half-forced smile. I tend to see through people who are like me after all… so I understand the part of her that acts for the sake of appearances.

As her handsomely dear friend, I want to help Tsukiko do better. Unfortunately I don’t see her in-person as often as all of you and, as you might not expect, she ignores my calls~ it’s like, do I need to move in the Yorozu-kan to get anywhere with that girl?? Though, this just shows how guarded she is about her heart.

…I’m still pissed at Kuroo for calling her such crude things, but I’m also upset at how Tsukiko is afraid to be honest with him. They want to be friends, that much I can smell from here. If oooonly there was a way to push them together so they’d kiss and makeup, y’know~?”

Seeing the somewhat confused look in Tsukishima’s eyes, Oikawa added;
“The thing about her not visiting your sleeping boyfriend, Ken— I don’t agree with Tsukiko being scared to confront him. I know she wants to see him and she’s being afraid for no reasonable reason. Honestly I think that seeing him, awake or not, is the closure she really needs. She’ll keep hurting herself the more she tries to distract her eyes. I’m sure she’s well aware it makes her a poor friend the longer she avoids seeing the guy too.”

Tsukishima’s brow twitched at the first part but he was too disgruntled to correct Oikawa. He also felt that Oikawa would scold him for what he’s done to Tsukiko. For the past few months, Tsukishima was never being direct to Tsukiko about visiting Ken either. He kept trying to make her remember on her own, thinking it would be impactful enough to change her mind. But instead it only seemed to intensify her fear.

“And don’t think I’ve forgotten how mean you’ve been to my sugar baby, Stingy-shima~” Oikawa stated as though he had read Tsukishima’s thoughts.

Akaashi let out a sigh. He stood at the register, tapping the marble counter while staring back into the eyes of his own reflection. In a matter of seconds another heavy breath escaped his thin lips.

“That’s the seventh sigh you’ve made!” pointed out Rinko. She trotted over to Akaashi with her little braids that were resting over her shoulders. According to her, Akaashi had been sighing since starting his shift. It didn’t put a pleasant expression on the guy. When the small girl brought it up out of concern, Akaashi forced a reassuring smile. He mentally told himself to get his act together. Wearing a gloomy face in front of customers was bad business practice. Fortunately there weren’t any in the pastry shop at the moment.

The short girl poked Akaashi while wearing a face that was practically demanding him to spill the beans. With a light chuckle, he admitted that some of the sighing had to do with Tsukiko, to which Rinko seemed to gleam.

“Whenever you talk about Kiko-chan it’s like you’re talking about a sibling!” she giggled.

Akaashi pressed his brows together in question. He wondered if that were true. In the year he’s had to bond with Tsukiko, she was both a sister and child in Akaashi’s eyes. Another sigh almost escaped but he managed to catch it. Seeing how the pastry shop was still empty, he started expressing more of his worries to Rinko. Normally he wouldn’t reveal personal ordeals with others uninvolved but Rinko was a sweet girl offering to listen. It would also be the effect of Akaashi wanting ‘girl’ talk.
Besides worrying about Tsukiko, the biggest problem that Akaashi had was about Bokuto. He still clearly remembered the distressed tone Bokuto used and his expression of anguish the other night. The crinkled face he had then couldn’t compare to how he reacts sullenly during volleyball games. Bokuto was genuinely frustrated with his friends and not because he got his favorite straight spike blocked.

“My senpai has more awareness of his surroundings than he normally leads on— that, I’ve come to figure out. Whenever Kiko-chan and our friend had their fights, my senpai mostly stood and watched. I always thought it was because he never knew what to do and I don’t think he’s ever intervened until now. He was the only one who would stop them this time around…”

Akaashi finished explained a gist of his thoughts. The petite girl next to him paused to think.

“Have you ever asked what he thinks about the drama? Like, maybe he’s been bottling it in and hiding his feelings for everyone’s sake? Even boys can get overwhelmed by emotions y’know.” Rinko suggested and Akaashi shifted his mouth to the side. One thing he’s learned Bokuto was incapable of doing is suppressing his emotions. It’s always easy to know what he’s feeling because his body language gives it away. If Bokuto really has strong feelings regarding Kuroo and Tsukiko’s fighting, then surely he would have shown it from the start, or shared it with Akaashi at some point. They were close enough friends for that, right?

Hearing the shop bell ring made the two employees turn their attention forward. They hollered the usual store greeting and Akaashi was surprised to see who the arriving customer was.

“Ah, hey there man.” Kenma greeted with a low voice.

Akaashi put on a smile. “Good afternoon, Kozume-kun.”

Seeing the two were clearly acquainted, Rinko made an excuse to check on the pastry chef in the kitchen and left. While Kenma was picking out what desserts he wanted, Akaashi leaned against the display case. He took note of Kenma having pretty much lost his blond hair. All he had to do was cut off the remainder of it at the tips. Long hair seemed to sport well on the guy despite how creepy it made Kenma sometimes. At least if he ever needed to tie a ponytail on himself he could do it, unlike a certain girl.

“I heard from Kuroo,” Kenma spoke up while a finger pointed at a berry fruit tart.
Akaashi blinked. He could only assume that Kenma was referring to the Halloween party incident. Though he never pegged Kuroo to be the type to talk about these things with friends. Then again, Kenma has known him since childhood. It’s likely that Kuroo told Kenma everything. As close as they seem to be they don’t address each other by given name, Akaashi noticed.

“...what are you thoughts on their fighting?” Akaashi mustered the courage to ask Kenma. The sleepy-looking guy groaned and then pointed to his second pastry choice.

Kenma answered, “Trying to help them is exhausting... not that I’ve really been trying hard in the first place.”

Akaashi started packing the pieces of desserts in small boxes. “Honestly, it makes me tired too.” he replied with a heavy sigh. The sighing really had become a bad habit now. Kenma pulled out his wallet and continued to speak. He kept complaining about how much of a drag it had been listening to Kuroo’s rants about Tsukiko. It reminded him of a lot of their bickering from high school. Then there was the silent treatment from Tsukiko’s end. If she’s willing to ignore her beloved Kenma, it’s gotta be really bad.

“And I can tell they want to be friends again. They’re both just being dumb and stubborn. It’d be great if there was a way to get them together and talk.” Kenma added with a puffed cheek as he took his desserts.

Before departing, Kenma had one more thing to say. He directed his cat-like eyes to Akaashi then said, “Please do something about Bokuto too. I keep getting mobile game invites from him, which he only sends when he’s upset with Kuroo.”

Akaashi put a palm over his face and resisted the urge to sigh. However he kept Kenma’s words in mind while making his way home.

The sky was partially an orange gradient, signaling the shift from afternoon to evening. Akaashi looked up at it with a blank expression. He was wondering if Bokuto was also heading home under the same sky. Was he admiring the color? Did he walk into a street lamp due to his easily distracted brain? But a sad image of Bokuto’s gold eyes drooping downward at the pavement only came to mind.
Once home, Akaashi was surprised to see Bokuto at the front door. They both arrived at the same time apparently, which was a rare occurrence itself. The two greeted each other as they removed their shoes. In the living room, Akaashi and Bokuto walked by a sleeping couple. Bokuto paused to awe at the sight.

“Sho cyute,” he gushed a high-pitched squeal. Seeing Tsukiko nap peacefully with Yamaguchi under the kotatsu really was adorable. It had Bokuto feeling a bit envious. He wished there was someone dear to him he could snuggle with— someone like Akaashi for example.

The arrivals left the napping couple be as they went to see who was outside in the backyard. It appeared that Hinata and Kageyama were practicing volleyball tosses together. Considering how loud the two were, Akaashi expected them to wake up Tsukiko and Yamaguchi.

Bokuto leaned against the backdoor with eyes on the other duo. He cleared his throat in a way to grab Akaashi’s attention, which it did. Akaashi perked up, waiting with curiosity as to what his friend was going to say.

“I want them to stop fighting. But I don’t know how… so, uhh, could’ya help me out?”

Akaashi didn’t sigh. He didn’t blink. The young man felt dumbfounded by the request made. Bokuto was asking for his help. Bokuto, the strong ace who carried his teammates, was asking Akaashi to help him. If he were any more emotionally sensitive, Akaashi would have been teary-eyed when he replied, “Of course,” with a smile.
AAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHH I wanted to update last week while it was Yamaguchi's birthday!! But I worked that day T_T then I started writing a special birthday chapter for him.... but it's not done :'D tomorrow is Kuroo's birthday too omg omg omg......................

AAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH-- also, it's been over a year since I posted chapter 11~ gosh time goes by fast we're already past 50 chapters ; u ; THANK YOU FOR KEEPING UP!!!!

Now a serious note from me(as of 11/16/18): in case you haven't heard- California is on fire. Don't worry, I wasn't caught up in the big one at Paradise, but my area is suffering from unhealthy air conditions caused by the smoke. Most schools were closed this whole week because breathing is just that dangerous now. For some places they're advising people to even wear masks while indoors. I'm doing fine as far as I can tell. My house is pretty well ventilated. But so many have it way worse out there- it's really upsetting. This has me mentally exhausted to the point I don't want to get out of bed. I've got art commissions and other online work to do but with California's situation right now it's just... hard.

Aaaaand back to my positive face-- happy birthday my two favorite boys, Yamaguchi and Kuroo <3
can't wait for all of you to see the chapter where things get resolved!

THANKS FOR READING!!  follow me:
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Let’s Have a Chat

Chapter Summary

Akaashi heaved a sigh bearing more weight than an entire year’s worth. He did not anticipate the situation to possibly worsen.

Akaashi and Bokuto left the house together after dinner. They made an excuse to buy dessert that Bokuto desperately wanted from the convenience store. The truth: they were going to discuss their plan of action outside.

With it being November the night was a chilly one. After getting far enough from the house they started talking.

“Alright. Do you have an idea on how to make them friendly again?” Akaashi asked.

Bokuto trotted forward with his hands in the front pocket of his jacket. He nervously narrowed his brows and replied with rising shoulders.

“Oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooof course not.” Bokuto finished with a ‘tee-hee’ motion of knocking his head playfully, as though he were Oikawa. Here would be when Akaashi lets out a sigh, but he held it in.

As they walked, the smarter of the pair took reign of the discussion. Akaashi reviewed back to the issue at hand. The main problem: Kuroo and Tsukiko keep fighting. The desired resolution: them being friends again (and no more fighting too, of course).

How and when did the cats begin to fight? Bokuto said it started back in late March. This would be when Yamaguchi and others moved in. He assumed so because with Yamaguchi, the actual boyfriend of Tsukiko, being physically present made Kuroo jealous. Akaashi gave his friend points for at least knowing that much but he had to disagree with one thing.

“I believe this dates farther back than we would expect,” Akaashi stated. He recalled times Kuroo and Tsukiko had heated arguments even before the first years moved in. This meant the turmoil started after they began living together, or perhaps it was during high school.
“Even though we mostly saw their interactions at the summer camp and practice matches, I remember seeing Kuroo-san being sorta rough with Kiko-chan. He use to grab her by the collar a lot, which wasn’t something Kuroo would do to a girl.”

Bokuto nodded. His memory replayed the past as best it could. Though from his perspective, it looked more like Kuroo and Tsukiko were very close. He compared them to Oikawa and Iwaizumi with the way they would bark at each other.

In Bokuto’s mind was a recalling of the Tokyo representative playoffs before nationals. After Fukurodani beat Nekoma, he happened to overhear an exchange between Kuroo and Tsukiko.

The next game was going to be Fukurodani versus Itachiyama. Before that, Bokuto needed to relieve himself with a toilet break. He hooted and whistled to himself down the hallway in search of the bathroom. It would have been the next corner he turned but something had Bokuto retract his steps. His gold eyes locked on sight of two familiar red jerseys. Shouldn’t they be on their way to play against Nohebi?

“That was a pretty close game, huh?” said the girl with messy hair and spiral-etched glasses. The tall guy standing in front of her sounded unamused as he replied, “yeah.”

Kuroo questioned why his manager pulled him off to the side from the rest of the team. Since they were in a rather secluded area he joked that she was going to confess to him. Of course, he knew that actually wouldn’t happen. Tsukiko was already dating someone—apparently. What did she want then? He was tired from the match against Fukurodani and he needed to hurry to get changed for the next game.

Tsukiko appeared restless. She was fiddling with her thumbs while holding her head down. When Kuroo shifted his stance she thought he was about to leave. The female manager perked up and stopped fidgeting. Lifting her glasses, she showed Kuroo eyes of concern.

“What you were telling Lev earlier… that was pretty admirable.” she admitted and Kuroo gasped dramatically.

“Whoa! So you *can* dish out a compliment!” Kuroo then snickered.
Though puffing her cheeks, Tsukiko let the snarkiness slide. She continued speaking. The words were broken since she kept holding back her full expression but Kuroo still understood. Tsukiko was telling him that his encouragement towards Lev was, in the most simplest of words, nice. It brought a soft grin to his face hearing Tsukiko add she liked being invited to the team’s ritual. It made her feel she was actually part of the team. Kuroo didn’t hear a proper ‘thank you’ as he was hoping for, but through her slight shyness, he got the message.

Kuroo placed his sweaty palm on top of Tsukiko’s head.

“Get ready to join it again because we gotta go kick snake ass,” he smirked.

Tsukiko’s glasses fell back onto her small nose. She cringed at being touched by the captain and remarked that snakes technically don’t have butts. Kuroo just laughed while ushering her to head back to their team.

The duo found themselves roaming around in a park. It was peacefully quiet at night. Bokuto sat on the ground while Akaashi remained standing. They faced a fountain that wasn’t spouting water then gazed at the stars. The hundreds of specs were sparkling like the surface of water reflecting daylight.

“Hey… I gotta know.” Akaashi voiced. He took a deep breath then asked, “why were you so upset the other night?”

Bokuto tossed his head back and crossed his legs.

“All of ya kept saying y’were glad I was there to stop the fight from getting nasty. I didn’t think I deserve that praise. There were other times they got into verbal arguments, some almost turning into the one from the party… and I was there each time… but I didn’t do anything. I never did.”

In a low voice, Bokuto listed off what he remembered happening the past two years. Most of the disputes Kuroo and Tsukiko had were minor ones. These were where they argued over things like who’s turn it is to clean dishes or what temperature to set the thermostat. Then they had feuds such as the time when they were yelling in the hallway. Akaashi remembered that one definitely had to do with Kuroo getting jealous. Bokuto mentioned another night when Kuroo was jokingly telling
Tsukiko that she would be breaking a house rule if she ever went into her boyfriend’s room. She didn’t take it as a joke and actually got offended—though the girl really did it.

Bokuto cried out, “The reason I want them to make up so bad is, well, because I want all my friends to be friends!”

Akaashi knelt down. It felt surreal to be having a heart-to-heart talk with Bokuto of all people. But this was something Bokuto likely needed. He never had moments like this with anyone else since he was afraid that whatever he said would come out sounding dumb. Bokuto had his insecurities too. Speaking out relaxed his shoulders and probably increased his social bond with Akaashi.

Returning on topic of Kuroo and Tsukiko, there was still no progress made on a plan that would get them to stop fighting. Therapy and counselling would have to be a last, desperate, resort.

“What’bout leaving ‘em in the basement?” Bokuto suggested.

Akaashi crossed his arms to reject the idea. Who knows what would happen down there.

“Then we interrogate them bad cop and good cop style! You’re good cop.” Bokuto said next.

Again, Akaashi shot him down. He mentally sighed at the realization he would have to come up with the plans by himself.

The following morning was a boring day of lectures. With tests coming up, class time was spent reviewing past material.

Akaashi felt tired for once. It mostly had to do with brainstorming ways to fix a falling friendship. He knew being direct would likely worsen the situation. Tsukiko was a stubborn girl with the tendency to run away as soon as she feels uncomfortable. As for Kuroo, he would probably keep quiet too and also ask his friends to not get involved. Even though Akaashi has lived with both of them for nearly two years it was surprisingly difficult to figure out how to fix their friendship.

“Akaaaasshii-san!” screeched the “finally at 165cm” Hinata Shouyou. He had just gotten out of
class as did Akaashi. Running into the first brought about an idea that wouldn’t hurt to try.

After bribing Hinata’s time with a snack from the vending machines, Akaashi cut to the chase. He asked what the boy would do to get Kuroo and Tsukiko into having a civilized talk with each other. This reminded Hinata of something similar that happened in high school. Back then, it was Yamaguchi asking for his opinion on what to say to Tsukishima about his lack of motivation towards volleyball. But because this issue wasn’t about volleyball, Hinata wasn’t sure what to advise.

“I don’t think it’s so bad that they’ve stopped being friends,” said Hinata. He informed Akaashi that he had actually seen Kuroo and Tsukiko interact at least once after their catfight. Akaashi was intrigued until Hinata confidently said, “They were passing the salt shaker to each other the other morning!”

Back on topic again— sure, it was possible for Kuroo and Tsukiko to go back to being on speaking terms, but it won’t get rid of the bad mojo between them. They could end up fighting all over again and it’ll be back to square one. To really settle things was to quell whatever it is they’re so mad about with each other. Akaashi just wished he knew exactly what that was.

Kuroo’s jealousy towards Yamaguchi?

Tsukiko getting called a slut by Kuroo?

It was easy to assume the root of everything to be Kuroo’s feelings for Tsukiko. How deeply infatuated was he? Obviously, it couldn’t be puppy love, otherwise the guy would’ve let go of his feelings earlier. So was it love- love? Was Kuroo actually in love with Tsukiko?

Akaashi had trouble seeing Kuroo’s feelings were the real deal. Though the more he thought about it, the puzzle pieces were matching up. He realized, as far as he knew anyway, that Kuroo never dated anybody. The guy had one-night hookups with girls from mixers but that was pretty much it. Ever since Tsukiko moved in, Akaashi hardly heard of Kuroo attending parties. That’s why when Kuroo openly talked about his college flings a while back, it came as a surprise for Akaashi. Was Kuroo perhaps home often to spend close time with Tsukiko? No way someone with a small crush on a girl would go as far as leaving behind the fun nightlife…

Then there was the incident during Valentines Day where Kuroo and Tsukiko made out. Like Kuroo admitted, he was the one who initiated and asked to kiss Tsukiko. He likely took advantage of her being intoxicated to fulfil his inner desires. From what Yamaguchi described it sounded like Tsukiko was very bothered by what happened. She apparently cried afterwards, which Akaashi
realized he sometimes forgot Tsukiko was more sensitive than she leads on. Her long-term relationship was on the line after all. However, she and Kuroo did well keeping everyone else in the dark about it. Akaashi couldn’t help but wonder what it takes for them to be on non speaking terms.

“Know what, I should ask Tadashi for his opinion on the matter too. Think you could tell him to meet up with me, Shouyou?”

Akaashi turned to Hinata but found him replaced by Kageyama. The raven-haired college freshman stood silently in front of the fellow setter while sucking on a carton of milk.

“............I don’t suppose you happen to have an idea on getting those two to make up?” Akaashi decided to try asking.

Kageyama exhaled through his nose before answering, “How about volleyball?”

With Ushijima the designated house cook being scheduled to work late, it meant one thing: eating outside. The Yorozu-kan residents gathered around the kotatsu to decide where they wanted to go eat at. Hinata was in the mood for ramen but Tsukishima complained they already had noodles last time. Kageyama joined to throw in wanting to try a new restaurant that he heard served his favorite pork curry.

Bokuto nudged Kuroo with his foot and asked what he wanted to eat. Kuroo hummed in thought for a moment before stating, “anything fried.”

Tsukiko leaned against her boyfriend. She was scrolling through her phone in search of options. Nothing really caught her interest. Something warm to eat was her main criteria. When Yamaguchi asked for her opinion on where to eat, she said, “Waka-papa’s place.”

“Ahh… don’t think an izakaya counts for dinner,” Yamaguchi replied.

Akaashi clapped once to silence the room. With a calming smile, he said, “let’s decide with volleyball.”
Everyone looked to Akaashi in confusion. The suggestion felt out of character for him. Hinata or Kageyama would’ve sounded better saying it. In fact, those two got excited and ran outside to prepare the net.

Tsukishima clicked his tongue. “It’s cold as hell. No way.” he hissed.

Tsukiko nodded, agreeing with the blond.

“Let me know who wins,” she sighed while digging deeper into the kotatsu. Without warning, Bokuto had grabbed her ankles and pulled her through the other end of the table.

“Be on my team Kiko~!!” cheered Bokuto. He stumbled back when the girl started kicking him but Bokuto wasn’t going to give up. Volleyball would patch things between Tsukiko and Kuroo— he earnestly.

After five minutes of struggle, the gang went to the backyard. Team Ramen was Hinata, Bokuto, Akaashi, and Tsukiko. Opposing them was Team Pork consisting of Kageyama, Kuroo, Tsukishima, and Yamaguchi; who only got pushed in to even out the teams.

“It’s too cold!” Tsukiko whined. On top of shivering in 15°C weather she was too hungry for physical activity.

Akaashi spun the ball in his hands. “How about this…” he spoke up to propose a slight alternative. Instead of playing an actual game of volleyball, it would be individual face-offs. Since both sides had setters they were going to toss to each spiker and the receiving end had to do one-man blocks. The best two-out-of-three would win.

Tsukiko puffed her cheeks, still not approving of the whole thing. Looking at her boyfriend’s team, they had the greater advantage due to height. It made her lose even more nonexistent interest in playing. Thanks to Hinata’s puppy-dog eyes, Tsukiko was easily swayed.

Attacking first was Team Pork. They easily won two spikes. The final lose belonged to Yamaguchi who purposely let his girlfriend succeed in blocking him. Having a feeling he’d let her win again, Akaashi rearranged the lineup when it was Team Ramen’s turn to spike.

Hinata managed to beat Tsukishima, surprisingly. Bokuto easily shot through Yamaguchi. When it
came down to Tsukiko versus Kuroo, the air strangely felt more chilly. After the spike was hit things only got colder.

“Where the hell were you aiming?!?” Kuroo barked.

Tsukiko crossed her arms and feigned ignorance. She had spiked the ball directly in Kuroo’s face. It bounced back to her for a second chance. She hit again and the ball went straight for Kuroo’s crotch as he was falling back.

“Shut the fuck up. It was clearly an accident.” The girl remarked crudely. Tsukiko felt a bitter aftertaste in her mouth when realizing that she just swore in front of Yamaguchi. She didn’t want him seeing her this way. Not again. With an irrational state of mind though, Tsukiko couldn’t control her temper. The next moment she was putting blame on Kuroo for not read blocking well enough. An insult was thrown in too.

Kuroo spat into the grass. “Maybe if you had properly wore a bra like all the normal girls I wouldn’t have gotten distracted.” he grumbled.

Tsukiko gritted her teeth. She squeezed tight fists that would’ve sounded like twisted leather. With a loud huff, Tsukiko went back inside.

“C’mon Sho-tan! We’re getting ramen by ourselves.” she said almost aggressively.

In the end, the whole group split ways to eat wherever they wanted. Tsukiko dragged both Hinata and Kageyama out for ramen with her, Kuroo left on a solo journey for mackerel, and the rest went to Ushijima’s workplace. Being recognized by the owner allowed them a private booth and some free appetizers.

Akaashi heaved a sigh bearing more weight than an entire year’s worth. He did not anticipate the situation to possibly worsen. Tsukishima had already figured something was up regarding the forced volleyball play. While food had been served, he was given the truth with Akaashi and Bokuto explaining their intentions.

“...that’s fucking stupid. You two dragged all of us into that dumb game in the fucking cold just for those two dumbasses ?” Tsukishima replied with extreme harshness. Hearing him swear so much
was very off putting. Not wanting to hear any more, Tsukishima left the izakaya without actually eating anything. He left some change for his share of the bill though. Bokuto would have chased if Yamaguchi didn’t tell him not to.

Nibbling on Tsukishima’s fried chicken bites, Yamaguchi kept a fairly calm composure. He didn’t seem to be unsettled by what happened earlier. His lack of reaction was actually making Akaashi nervous. He sensed a “calm before the storm” thing but really couldn’t imagine Yamaguchi blowing a fuse.

“I’ve been meaning to ask— how do you feel about their fighting?” Akaashi finally asked.

Yamaguchi looked up in thought while continuing to eat. He swiped a french fry and hummed before saying, “my feelings don’t really matter.”

“What I want to know is their feelings. How come Kiko-chan is upset? Is Kuroo-san okay at all? Do they think about each other and wonder how they’ll go back to talking normally?”

The questions Yamaguchi raised came as surprising to Akaashi. He wasn’t expecting this kind of reply, especially the part with Yamaguchi being concerned for Kuroo too. It sounded like Yamaguchi wasn’t picking a side either.

Bokuto tore some meat off a skewer and chewed loudly.

“Do ya have an idea on helping them?!’ he was asking with his mouth full.

A gentle thud came from the end of the table. The remaining three saw Ushijima standing in front of them. He overheard everything and wanted in, even if it meant neglecting his job for a bit.

Yamaguchi drank some water to clear his throat. There was a plan he had in mind and now was the perfect time to share it. He pulled out his phone then pointed at a certain day…
HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!! AND ALSO HYPE FOR SEASON 4 ANNOUNCEMENT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
WE WAITED 2 YEARS TO HEAR THIS NEWS AND NOW WE'LL GET OUR HAIKYUU ANIME CONTINUATION NEXT YEAR!!!!!!!!! I AM SO EXCITED BECAUSE PRETTY SURE SEASON 4 IS GOING TO BE ALL ABOUT THE TOKYO REP PLAYOFFS ARC, WHICH MEANS NEKOMA VS FUKURODANI AND NEKOMA VS NOHEBI AAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHH THE CATS ARE GONNA GET SO MUCH SCREEN TIME!!!!!!!!!!!!! CRYING IN THE CLUB FAM NEXT YEAR IS GONNA BE AMAZING BECAUSE HAIKYUU SEASON 4 CONFIRMED :'D

also side note- updated the previous chapter 56 with its sketch~

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Chapter Summary

Operation “talk with Kuroo” was initiating.

The middle of November has two birthdays that are only a week apart. This time, it’s for a pair also as opposite as last month’s. It’s now Yamaguchi and Kuroo’s birthday mashup party.

Glass cups clinked together for a toast. The Yorozu-kan family and their group of friends were all celebrating at the White Fang. After its restaurant hours it was open as a bar. With permission the whole place was privately reserved for the party tonight.

About half of everyone present was of legal drinking age. Unfortunately for Akaashi, whose birthday was only in about two weeks, he had to drink regular juice with the rest of the minors. He really didn’t mind it as he had doubts he would enjoy the taste of alcohol. If there was something to complain about, it’d be the fact he has to take care of his drunk friends, Bokuto specifically, later in the night. However, his job already began.

“Bokuto-san, please let go of the tree.” Akaashi groaned while tugging at the owl’s coat. They had gone outside for fresh air and ended up at the park across White Fang.

“It’s such a beauty though~” Bokuto grinned from ear to ear. He rubbed his face against the rough bark then stroked a finger along the trunk of the tree. Any more affection and Akaashi was sure he would witness the world’s grossest marriage proposal to nature soon.

“Come on now… after we went through the trouble of reserving the restaurant and setting up the party, you let yourself go before we can put the plan into action. We spent a whole week arranging it you know.”

Akaashi walked to the other side of the tree so he could check on Bokuto. His expression was dumb, Akaashi thought but it still put a smile on his own face. Bokuto’s eyes opened to the sight of a smiling Akaashi. He reached out and touched his friend’s face to where his fingers were brushed lightly on the other’s soft eyelashes.

“Kiko-chan’s right! You aaaarrreeee pretty!” he exclaimed excitedly.
Akaashi wasn’t sure who was more reddish—himself or the drunkard that nearly poked him in the eye.

Back inside, Kenma was partially regretting showing up to the party. The two he disliked most during these events were bothering him. He found himself being squeezed between cheery Lev and drunk Yamamoto. The lion and mohawk tiger were attempting to put on a performance for their former team captain with the ‘brain’ in their arms. While nothing was sensible in their movement it was still entertaining Kuroo enough to make him cry out his hyena-like laugh. Yaku sounded like he was laughing and scolding them at the same time to which the normally mute Fukunaga made some kind of joke that nobody seemed to catch.

“This sure brings me back,” Kai laughed softly. He turned around to see the girl he invited was having a rather intense discussion with Tsukiko.

“HANDS DOWN, IT’LL HAV’TA BE SPYAIR!” shouted Kai’s girlfriend.

“AGREED!!” agreed Tsukiko.

The two young women, after who knows how much tequila they drank, were heated over an idea they came up with at some point in their conversation. They had similar tastes in music and watched anime, so the topic was: what if their boys had a volleyball anime about them? Even though both graduated from Nekoma High, it was actually Karasuno and Hinata that they decided to be the focus of the hypothetical show. The idea was the story be about an underdog player who has to overcome a presumed disadvantage.

“Oh, oh!! AND THE SHRRITOZA MATCH COUL’BE A WHOLE SEASON ON ITS OWN!” said an utterly incomprehensible Tsukiko that was slapping Ushijima’s back. As usual, she had no physical strength to cause actual harm.

Tsukiko threw her arms up and added, “I CAN SHE IT NOW… BURNOUT SYNDROMES FOR THE OP…!”

Kai’s girlfriend downed her shot glass, exhaled relief, and then went on to say;

“The OUTRO SHOULD BE SOMETHING CHILL YET UPBEAT— SUNG BY NICO TOUCHES THE WALL!! AND, AND— IT’LL BE THIS LONG SEQUENCE OF THE ENTIRE
CAST— EVERYONE FROM ALL THE TEAMS— JUS’ MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER AND AT THE VERY END IT’S KARASUNO WITH SHOYOU POSE FOR A SPIKEEE!!”

Tsukiko scrunched her nose dramatically while fanning her warm face. “YAAASSS GURL YAAAS!!!!” she screamed joyously.

Yamaguchi’s cheeks stung from how wide he was grinning. Seeing his girlfriend having a good time for once was the best thing he could ask for his (technically belated) birthday. It did worry him how much she was drinking. The girl wasn’t kidding when she claimed being able to drink alcohol as though it were water. Yamaguchi wondered when he needed to start taking it away from her.

Taking a look around, there was activity going on throughout the room with boundless energy coming from everyone. Hinata and Kageyama had joined Lev in a dance, and Oikawa was comforting a tired Kenma at the bar. There was also Iwaizumi having an arm wrestling match with Yamamoto. Setting eyes on Tsukishima, the tall blond wasn’t as much of a grouch as Yamaguchi honestly expected. His friend was at a table with the quiet Fukunaga. They didn’t appear to be conversing but they would nod their heads as though communicating with silence.

A cold glass pressed against Yamaguchi’s face, almost spooking him out of his seat. When he looked it was Kuroo handing him a drink.

“The emperor told to give this to ya, other birthday boy,” he said with a (fake)cheeky smirk.

Yamaguchi’s expression shifted. This was the signal, he thought.

Operation “talk with Kuroo” was initiating.

Yamaguchi enlisted the help of a few friends to set this plan up. Akaashi and Bokuto’s jobs were to arrange the party, Hinata and Kageyama kept guests entertained, Ushijima watched over Tsukiko, then there was Oikawa. The brunette was to assist Yamaguchi in getting a chance to be alone with Kuroo.

Accepting the drink, Yamaguchi straightforwardly asked Kuroo to talk with him. Though quiet for a bit, Kuroo eventually nodded and followed. The two stepped onto the veranda and sat in one of the outdoor tables. They looked back at the festivities inside before giving each other serious glares.
“Is this about her?” asked Kuroo, receiving a quick nod in response. He knew there was only one possible reason that Yamaguchi would want to discuss something in private. What Kuroo waited for was to get told to stop being an asshole to Yamaguchi’s girlfriend, but that wasn’t it.

Yamaguchi gently prodded as he asked, “How do you feel?”

The conversation was already taking its sharp turn into the danger zone.

“I think I love her,” Kuroo blurted out.

A wave of chills blew over Yamaguchi after what he heard. He didn’t feel upset in the slightest, since he already knew Kuroo clearly had a crush on Tsukiko. Folding his hands together and placing them on the table, Yamaguchi kept his eyes forward.

“What has you unsure to say you ‘think’ you do?” he asked without breaking from the eye contact.

Kuroo cocked a grin.

“Because I for sure hate her at the same time,” he answered. It still didn’t seem to irk Yamaguchi but seeing him remain calm was actually infuriating Kuroo. He turned in his seat, leaning on his other arm, then asking, “How did you feel when finding out I went to first base with your girlfriend before you did?”

Yamaguchi replied honestly.

“I expected something would happen eventually. She’s one girl living with several guys. Of course, I was hoping nothing to happen but… it’s the past. I can’t do anything about it now.”

Hearing this made Kuroo snarl.

“Your girlfriend cheating on you and you don’t even so much as tell her to avoid me? Or confront me for taking advantage of her when she was vulnerable? It could’ve happened again. We’ve gotten
alone a couple of times… how can you be sure she’s not already continuously cheating on you with me or some other dude?”

Yamaguchi looked Kuroo dead in the eyes and said, “I forgave her then and I believe in her now. She won’t do anything like that ever again, I’m sure of it. You’re not a terrible person to make her go through that experience another time either.”

Kuroo was stunned.

“The hell does— …know what? Let me tell you what I came to hate about her before you ask.

First off, she gets seriously annoying with her stubbornness. Too much bite even I can’t tolerate. It’s always bothered me since we met. She’s stupidly biased and her ego is bigger than Bokuto’s, I swear! Then there’s how violent she’ll get when even the smallest of things tick her off… but you know what I hate most? The fact your precious girlfriend has been playing me like a ball of yarn.”

Kuroo slammed a hand on the table, causing the juice he initially offered Yamaguchi to spill over. He wasn’t done talking though. He kept going when balling a fist.

“I say all that but dammit… she keeps doing things that make me want her despite it all. Her passionate energy, an alluring laughter, that beaming smile… she’s so per—”

“Not perfect.” Yamaguchi said quickly.

“I use to think Tsukiko was perfect too. That’s what I thought years back but it turns out she makes mistakes like the rest of us. Whether it’s forgetting to add eggs to cake batter or not consistently visiting her best friend…”

You know, I used to worship her— or I guess, I kinda still do. But being with her now I’ve come to realize I never really looked at Tsukiko properly. Back in middle school I was afraid of making eye contact with somebody who was like a goddess to me. It’s different today because I’ve seen sides of Tsukiko that I never knew about, like how she gets defensive and that she does feel shame.

In the past, I watched her let others push her around and she’d obey with a smile. Now I see that she’s able to confidently, though brashly, fend for herself and speak her mind. There’s still room for her to grow but she’s definitely become stronger. The more flaws I find out she needs improving on
the more human she becomes in my eyes. She’s gotten more genuine. That’s some of what I love about Tsukiko.”

Yamaguchi finished speaking. He was suddenly pulled out of his chair from a tug at his collared shirt. His olive-brown eyes were close to Kuroo’s cat-like pupils that were practically daggers.

“Fucking bullshit! All of that!” Kuroo yelled. He grew red up to his ears, either from his rising anger or alcohol glow.

“She’ll learn to grow? Don’t make me laugh. Your love-blind ass can’t see the truth. That bitch told me herself she sees all of us as a game! ‘Oh look, a pretty boy! Bet I can snatch his heart with just a wink’ is the kind of crap she tells herself. Even me, I’m a toy to her! All these years she pretended not to notice my feelings! And for what? To boost her ego? Because she knows I’ll do her bidding if she gives me the light of day? It wouldn’t surprise me if she’s actually been playing you this whole time too!”

“You and I both know that’s not true!!” Yamaguchi roared back loud enough to bring attention from everyone that was still inside the restaurant. Nobody seemed to notice the birthday fellows had been missing until then.

The group moved to the veranda to see what was going on but Tsukiko was the only one who actually marched outside. Thinking she was going to fight Kuroo, the muscle-packed individuals were about to go stop her. They couldn’t pass through Kenma’s arm that blocked the doorway.

Tsukiko glared at Kuroo then at Yamaguchi. With fuzzy vision, she apparently couldn’t tell which guy was which. The slight height difference would have been obvious if she weren’t heavily intoxicated.

Tsukiko put her hands on her hips and scowled at Yamaguchi. “Teeezu!” she called him, confusing her boyfriend for Kuroo.

“Stahp bullyen Tada!” she said with a wobbling stance.

Yamaguchi blinked.

“What makes you think I’m bullying him?” he asked. Kuroo had let go of Yamaguchi and was
looking at him funny. Before he could question why Yamaguchi was pretending to be him, Tsukiko had already fallen for the trick.

“Don’t think I never see it! Yer always given herm meanie faces— like a cat bein’ jelly when a doggy git moar attentshion!” she said with a huff.

Kuroo jumped in to clarify that Tsukiko was talking to the wrong person. She persisted by stating, “Hush Tahda! I’m gonn’ set shit straight with roostrhead!!

...Listen ‘ere Tezuro! I’m done fighten!! So I’ll do du honorz and shay shorry frist! Les kiss ‘n make up err whateves like I said in me text, baaakaaa!!”

Yamaguchi raised a brow. “What text?” he inquired while ignoring the second-to-last part of what his girlfriend blurted out.

Kuroo really felt like putting a stop to the situation but he couldn’t bring himself to do it. He knew he needed to confront Tsukiko. He wasn’t sure if he was ready though. Lifting his disheartened gaze, Kuroo met eyes with his best friend at the windows. Kenma gave him a dirty look that basically told him to shut up and listen.

“My apology text fro’ months ago!! Aft’ we danced to PERFUME and I tried te make ya admit yer like me! Then th won ater Hallowee too!” Tsukiko huffed again. Her speech continued fumbling and she was panting for air. At this point it almost sounded like she was speaking another dialect.

“Yer didn’t read any of ‘em bastard! I sed sorry! I jes wanted te bo frends gain!” she kept slurring.

Yamaguchi glanced briefly at Kuroo and back at his girlfriend.

“Why are we even fighting?” he asked Tsukiko.

She answered with, “BECOZ WE NEVA MAID UP FO WHAT HAPPEN AT NASHNALS!”

Heavy tears streamed down Tsukiko’s face along with some of her makeup. She turned to Kuroo and rushed into his chest. Knowing this hug wasn’t meant for him, Kuroo was going to pry the girl
off but the next thing she said stopped him.

“I always alwyas wanted to apologize fo beck than… for everythin I dud to Tetsu in highskool. He jus’ wanted to make sure ever’one in Nekoma played voll’ball wit’out thinking they couldn’t do an’thing… even me, the worse manager eva. I never helped ‘n I never cared… then af’er he left I started to— only cuz he left! I know he alway hated me for not halping… I regret not showing him that I did care…”

Tsukiko continued to hiccup as she talked. She explained how much she felt like a letdown to Kuroo back in high school. She specifically mentioned that she never respectfully called him ‘senpai’ once. Then came what she said to be her biggest regret: nationals. Tsukiko cried as she admitted to having cheered mostly for Karasuno because, before the match, Tsukiko and Yamaguchi made a bet with each other. If Karasuno won then Tsukiko owed Yamaguchi their second date.

“Yeah. You told me this at the Halloween party.” Kuroo softly spoke while dropping his gaze as though defeated.

Tsukiko jerked in place. She sniffled again.

“I’m the worse. I did shit for Tetsu and Nekma… I knew he riked me, so I try made he hated me by not doig my jahb. Then living togeher in de Yorkuken I try to frenzone him but it no work… I mayd him like me more. It made me feel bahd b’cus I thot he still hate me fur doin nothing for Nekoma—”

“You did so much for them. For us.” Kuroo interrupted. He grabbed Tsukiko’s shaking shoulders and pushed her back so they could face each other properly. Seeing her cry because of him was hurting his chest. Since this wasn’t the first he made her cry it had him in even more pain. How many times was it his fault for Tsukiko’s tears? Kuroo lost count.

Like Kuroo said earlier, there were plenty of things he didn’t like about Tsukiko. At the same time he thought he could ignore all of that because he still loved her. From the start he already knew he’d never have Tsukiko as a lover. In the back of his mind he repeatedly told himself that every time he caught himself smiling fondly at her. It hurt him more and more as he continued to develop his romantic feelings for Tsukiko over the years. Every day he wanted to hold her hand, but he couldn’t. Every interaction with her he wanted to let her know he genuinely enjoys her company, but he always hid behind crude jokes.

Kuroo desperately wanted Tsukiko. The day they visited Karasuno and saw Yamaguchi with
Yacchi, a menace that had been dormant inside Kuroo started clawing its way out of the prison that was his heart. It kept whispering to Kuroo ideas like, “your chance is coming” and “she’ll definitely go to you for comfort.” The monster grew stronger with every moment it looked like Tsukiko and Yamaguchi were on the edge of their relationship. Eventually Kuroo realized he was anticipating for the news of them breaking up, which made him feel utterly awful.

Tsukiko inhaled deeply. She shook her head, denying that she was of any use to Nekoma. The more she blamed herself for some of the team’s failures it had Kuroo thinking he was the root of it all. He intimidated the female manager and rarely complimented her. That had to be why she thought so lowly of herself.

“You did help. You did care. Purposely not doing your job to make me hate you? Hmm… nah, didn’t work.” Kuroo told the girl that wouldn’t stop crying. He wondered if he should apologize here. And for what, being an asshole? Kuroo couldn’t think. He couldn’t figure out his words or what he was even trying to do in the moment.

Tsukiko’s lower lip fell.

“Nu’way! Yer shoulda seen it Tada-kun. Afer dat garbage dump match I… I only cared about our date. I wasn’t comforting Nekoma at all. I couldn’t say anything to the team and Tetsu even yelled —”

Everyone watching from inside gasped. None of them saw it coming.

The group of wide eyes went from Kuroo, then to Yamaguchi, who was completely still with no reaction. Cutting off Tsukiko’s rant, Kuroo went and kissed her on the nose. He would have gone for her lips if he listened to his inner demons. But looking into her grayish eyes he said;

“Thank you for joining the team. You were a big help. I never hated you for supporting Karasuno. It was your choice. And I’m sorry for yelling at you after that match… I took out frustration on you and that was unfair of me.”

Tsukiko whined softly with an attempted smile coming up her messy features.

“…wish ya told me that years ago, mophead. Instead of scolding meee.”
Kuroo chuckled at the sight.

“I only criticize you because you’re such a masochist,” he joked while rubbing his fingers against Tsukiko’s stained cheeks. He didn’t care that he was getting her makeup on his hands. It didn’t matter when his chest suddenly felt lighter— or was his head just getting heavier?

Kai stepped out and announced it was time for the birthday boys to have their cake. Everybody then gathered around the bar counter and made a final toast. They sang merrily, more so the drunks were, and once the candles were blown out all that was heard in the darkness was clapping.

When the lights returned Bokuto was the first to break out in laughter. He pointed while holding onto his pained stomach. Kenma whipped out his phone and took a picture of Kuroo’s face that had been shoved into his cake.

“Damn you!!” Kuroo hissed as he wiped the icing off his eyes and turned around to the giggling girl behind him.

Tsukishima kept his sniggering in his throat but was as amused as everyone else. “You got a lil something there, Yamaguchi.” he joked to his friend who was trying to clean his own cake off his face.

Once Yamaguchi could see again he saw Kuroo chasing Tsukiko around with the intention of smearing cake on her too. Watching his girlfriend have fun was definitely the best thing Yamaguchi could ask for his birthday.
NEW YEAR NEW CHAPTER!!!!!! THIS SKETCH FEATURES TORA, KENMA, AND FUKU-
THE 2ND YEAR TRIO <3

hoooboy this chapter was.... very difficult to write. Not gonna lie, I've been struggling on how to get Tsukiko and Kuroo to make up. This chapter had been in the works for a loooong time. Think I started the first draft of it back when I uploaded chapter 20, so literally over a year ago lol and omg the number of times I had to rewrite the private talk scene @_@ I'm still a bit insecure about my writing style too;;; but also it was hard since Tsukiko and Kuroo's relationship has since grown so much on me that I feel bad having done all this angst to them LOL. I'm seriously considering an AU spin off where they do end up dating, hehehe~

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Three days passed since the birthday party. With it being the last week of the semester, there were final exams to attend.

It was late into the night when the birthday party got called to an end. Most of the drunks passed out and were being hauled into cabs by their companions. Some of the Yorozu-kan residents stayed behind to clean up the mess.

A sobered Bokuto nudged his sleepy cat-friend sitting alone at the bar counter. They exchanged blank glances.

“Well bro, are you two fixed?” Bokuto asked Kuroo.

The messy-haired birthday guy rubbed the back of his neck. He looked into his cup of partially melted ice. The ends of his lips curled.

“I technically haven’t confessed to her, but I finally gave my thanks. Think that’s good enough?” replied Kuroo.

Bokuto had a dissatisfied expression on top of his glowing cheeks. With a pout, he said, “Weeeeelll as long you two aren’t trying to hurt each other anymore then it’s okay. I didn’t like seeing both of you be so… angry. It made me angry too y’know!”

Kuroo lowered a brow. Knowing he made Bokuto of all people say that had him feeling bad. He didn’t want anyone involved in his feud with Tsukiko, but unfortunately Kuroo couldn't hold up to that. It got drastic enough that their roommates were in on a plan to get the issue resolved.

Dropping his lanky arm over Bokuto, a purr emitted from Kuroo’s throat.

“Sorry man. How ‘bout I treat ya to a drink?” he said with a joking tone.
Akaashi turned around to the sound of cheerful laughter. He would have scolded Bokuto and Kuroo for not helping with the clean-up but he refrained. Seeing the two laugh together was a sight worth not interrupting.

Meanwhile, Yamaguchi and Tsukiko managed to walk home safely. The girl had the urge to vomit at some point but did her best to suppress it. She wasn’t going to embarrass herself in front of her boyfriend on his birthday. Tsukishima too— otherwise he’d record blackmail footage of her.

Once home, the two males had to help Tsukiko out of her shoes and coat. Her groaning and random hand gestures were signalling that she really needed to throw up.

Tsukishima immediately backed away even if it meant leaving Yamaguchi in the splash zone. He wasn’t going to risk getting his brand new jacket dirty.

“Hold it in! Bathroom is just a few feet away,” urged Yamaguchi. Seeing how Tsukiko was afraid to move on her own he went ahead and lifted her off the floor. In reaction to being unexpectedly carried, Tsukiko slapped both hands over her mouth. She felt the liquid in her belly swirl around and heat rushing to her head, causing her eyes to water.

A few minutes later, Tsukishima poked into the bathroom. The awful stench of stomach acid made him cringe. He pinched his nose while stretching his other arm out to Yamaguchi, handing over a cup of water.

The freckled boy nodded in appreciation for the assistance. He turned back to holding Tsukiko’s hair as she expelled her guts into the toilet. Not a pleasant sight but it was the consequence of drinking too much alcohol. Yamaguchi could only put himself at fault for not restraining Tsukiko from the bar.

Before Tsukishima left, since he didn’t want to stick around and breathe gross vomit-infested air, he heard an unexpected call of his name.

“Kei…” said Tsukiko with a hoarse voice. She lifted her head from the toilet for a moment.

“You’re next on the list of people I gotta apologize to.”

Tsukishima said nothing back. He remained at the bathroom door for a few seconds until leaving
with a disgruntled face. Upon climbing the stairs to his room he only thought in scorn, “It’s not me you should be apologizing to…”

Yamaguchi rubbed his girlfriend’s back to comfort her. He knew what she meant with her words. It made him proud to hear that Tsukiko was planning to take care of the issues she had with Tsukishima. Then, maybe, the three of them could visit Ken together. Yamaguchi believed that would be their happy ending.

Three days passed since the birthday party. With it being the last week of the semester, there were final exams to attend.

At noontime Tsukiko wondered what to do before her last exam for the day. Her answer quickly came from the rumbling of her stomach.

While on the way to the cafeteria, Tsukiko spotted Momo and Iida in the distance. She gasped then hid behind a corner. Seeing them reminded Tsukiko that she needed to apologize for causing a scene at the party. However, she wasn’t ready to face them just yet. Then again, today was the last day she’d have a chance to do so in person.

The world suddenly went dark. Tsukiko’s vision was taken when a large pair of hands covered her eyes. Whoever was playing with her purposely kept quiet to hide their identity.

The girl hummed as she thought about who was behind her. It couldn’t be Yamaguchi, unless his class was cancelled or cut short. But she knew her own boyfriend’s hands and they weren’t the ones on her face.

The next guess was Oikawa until she touched the hands. The skin wasn’t smooth like his, so Tsukiko ruled him out.

Ushijima, though having developed some character over time, could not be the one.

Akaashi? No, Tsukiko could tell the person was at least six-foot tall.
Bokuto wasn’t this quiet, which meant…

“Kuroo-senpai~”

“WHATTHEFUCK?!?”

Tsukiko smirked. She successfully got Kuroo back by addressing him with a sweet voice. While he expected her to figure out it was him behind her, Kuroo didn’t think he’d hear Tsukiko call him senpai. Clutching his shirt, the rooster head looked away. It sounded weird yet alluring.

“C-Could you call me that again?” he bashfully requested.

Tsukiko narrowed her eyes full of disgust.

“Pervert,” she called Kuroo who in turn pretended to act hurt.

The pair let out their chuckles then made way through the campus together. Kuroo informed he was about to eat lunch with another circle of friends. Having spotted Tsukiko, he couldn’t resist trying to toy with her— though ended up being the one who got played.

“You should, like, treat me to lunch.” Tsukiko said with arms pulled back and a hand running through her long hair. It reached her lower back, being the longest it’s ever been in her life.

Kuroo raised a brow. He could tell this was them going back to their normal flirtatious antics. It honestly felt refreshing. How long had it been since they were last like this?

“Hmmm… sorry, but I only treat kouhai that are cute and respectful.” Kuroo replied while rubbing his pointed chin. To his pleasure he got to see Tsukiko puff her cheeks in a pout. She hopped in front of Kuroo and walked backwards. Then, while batting her eyes, she said, “please feed me… Kuroo-senpai~”

The magic spell worked but it didn’t go as Tsukiko intended. While Kuroo did buy her food, it wasn’t a proper meal from the cafeteria. He bought her a snack from the vending machine. In response, Kuroo added that Tsukiko didn’t specify as to what he had to feed her. She was grateful
he didn’t grab something from the garbage bin at least.

“Sho awr we gonne aporogee to Yamo togeh?”

Tsukiko glared at Kuroo. Her eye twitched not because the guy was purposely talking with his mouth full so he could show off his delicious miso ramen. It was more the fact she understood him despite having noodles stuffed in his dumb mouth.

“Yes, I was thinking we should apologize to Yaomomo together. Y’know, since it was our fault for ruining the party.” Tsukiko clarified before munching her treat. She was thinking how less shameful it’d be if she had Kuroo bowing beside her. Fortunately, Momo was a kind girl who’d surely forgive the two. They agreed to go meet with Momo after eating their lunch.

“Half forgiven,” stated the girl in a red sports bra.

Tsukiko and Kuroo had lowered their heads and apologized for disrupting the party, but the not-at-all angry hostess wanted a better show of it. For them to receive her full forgiveness they were going to dance together. This would show Momo if they actually returned to being on good terms or not. Momo and Iida even loaned their dance shoes.

“I’m not much of a dancer…” Kuroo softly informed. Unfortunately the truth wasn’t going to get him out of his situation. He only needed to perform basic dance maneuvers with Tsukiko, Iida told him.

“You can follow my lead if you’re that unconfident,” Tsukiko said with a smug grin.

Kuroo returned a scheming smirk. “Ohh, what a challenge!” he replied sarcastically.

As soon as the music began Tsukiko was swung roughly off her feet. With Kuroo being much taller, he could practically throw her around like a ragdoll. He also forced an uncomfortable dip, which almost made Tsukiko’s head hit the floor.

Tsukiko glared into Kuroo’s apricot eyes.
“Follow my lead,” she teethed.

Did Kuroo listen? Of course not.

Minutes passed and Tsukiko was panting for air. Her cheeks reddened from frustration and embarrassment. Kuroo wasn’t being serious the entire time. He kept going off beat and changing his rhythm to throw Tsukiko out of sync.

“Geez, I pour my heart out to you and this is what I get back?” Tsukiko grumbled. Her hold on Kuroo’s arm loosened as she was about to break away. There was no point in all of this, she was thinking.

Kuroo tightened the distance between their bodies suddenly. He gently grasped Tsukiko’s soft hand and thin waist. With the proper hold the two were face to face.

Standing straight and tall, Kuroo said in a low husky voice, “I’m sorry kitten. I’ll get it right this time.”

The dance club captains watched as Tsukiko and Kuroo were doing a regular box step; the most basic move in the waltz. Step, step, and turn. Step, step, and turn.

Iida and Momo were amazed to see a different kind of expression on Tsukiko. It had to be because she was following a leader she’s closely bonded to. Watching Tsukiko dance with Kuroo, judging by the look in her eyes, she wasn’t focused on dancing. Tsukiko’s body simply moved on its own while she gave herself to Kuroo with complete trust.

The two finished their simple dance after circling around the room. They remained lost in a stare down. Only when Momo applauded did Kuroo and Tsukiko return to their senses.

“Excellent work. Kuroo-san, I really think you have marvelous potential to become a dancer. But I understand your heart is in volleyball,” said Momo kindly.

Kuroo pulled up a sly grin. He tucked his hands behind his back then leaned closer to the curvy rich girl.
“Alas, my heart may just be set on something other than volleyball…” he swooned.

Tsukiko grit her teeth before jabbing a fist just under Kuroo’s ribcage. She hit a fatal point, causing Kuroo to keel over. The violent act brought Iida to scold her while defending the ‘innocent’ Kuroo.

With crossed arms and a huff, Tsukiko remarked that Kuroo wasn’t a high enough level to attempt winning Momo. She even stated that Oikawa had a better chance. Kuroo barked back as he took offense to the statement. The two had their intense glare-off and hissed at each other like cats.

Momo chuckled as she noted, “you two are such good friends.”

Once Kuroo and Tsukiko were given complete forgiveness they left the dance room. The guy was walking with the girl to her next class to drop her off.

Kuroo was done for the day. He only had to head home since there wasn’t going to be volleyball practice. The gym’s roof was being repaired, finally. The winter break was starting too.

“Hey, duck-butt-head,” called out Tsukiko. The fact Kuroo responded to this irked him. He was going to walk away but Tsukiko took hold of his jacket. She grabbed his collar, which sparked a sense of nostalgia.

Pulling him down at her level, Tsukiko leaned in and whispered something into Kuroo’s ear.

“Please wait for me. I wanna do something together.”

Bokuto expressed in the group chat wanting to eat Tsukiko’s curry again. The girl replied that she wasn’t going to be home in time to cook it for dinner. Everyone assumed her late arrival was work-related, but then assumptions and suspicion rose when Kuroo texted he too wouldn’t be home.

“Wow, that’s fast. They’ve started eloping again,” joked Tsukishima. He kept snickering even while Hinata was angrily ramming his orange head into the taller guy’s backside.
Ushijima wasn’t worried. The house chef was more focused on making sure he could reproduce his daughter’s curry roux from memory. She never did show him how she makes it so Ushijima was going in blind—but not entirely so because Akaashi fortunately knew how to cook curry too.

While they went to shop for additional ingredients with Hinata and Kageyama, the rest were to clean up the kitchen.

Bokuto stood with an arm around a broom. The tip dug into his cheek. His owl-like eyes were staring intensely at Yamaguchi.

“Y-Yes?” asked the nervous boy.

As Yamaguchi predicted, Bokuto was wondering why he wasn’t freaking out over Kuroo and Tsukiko being gone at the same time. They were likely together and who knows what they were doing. But like Ushijima, the boyfriend believed nothing was wrong.

Yamaguchi answered that he’d rather have Tsukiko be with someone they knew than being alone. It’s dangerous for a cute girl to be roaming the city by herself. He claimed to trust Kuroo, which had Bokuto more bewildered.

Some hours passed and two trips to the store later…

“How did we mess this up.” Akaashi questioned to nobody in particular.

The group surrounded the pot of curry. It had a burnt smell with oddly shaped chunks of carrots and potatoes. This was the third trial of error that even had Ushijima wallowing in a corner. He wasn’t going to give up though. He only needed to try again until the result was perfect.

Good thing Kuroo and Tsukiko just arrived home, otherwise Ushijima would have sprinted to the nearest ATM. Tsukiko revealed having bought curry packets on the way over. She apparently knew something bad would happen. It wasn’t the whole reason she and Kuroo were out together though.
“Who the hell are you,” Akaashi uttered with disbelief. The others approached the front entrance to see what had him shaken up. Everyone gasped in surprise.

Tsukiko stuck her tongue out and winked.

“Do we look that great?” she said with a flaunting pose beside Kuroo.

While Tsukiko was cooking curry, Kuroo explained what they did all afternoon and evening. After the girl’s final exam, Kuroo followed her to the cosmetology department where she signed them up for a free hairdressing. At first Kuroo was hesitant but he went through with it because of Tsukiko’s reason for wanting to change her hair with him. It was a symbolic way for them to move on from their drama. Kuroo was actually a sucker for metaphors like these.

“Undercuts suit you bro! Makes me wanna get it done too,” commented Bokuto. He couldn’t stop rubbing his hands against Kuroo’s hair. The sides and area close to his neck were buzzed cut while the top remained its glorious rooster-like wave.

Akaashi tapped his fingers on the kitchen counter. He was still confused and not at all used to seeing Tsukiko with a different style. Her hair was normally long enough to cover her backside but now she had it shorter. Way shorter. It’s brushing her shoulders now. Her bangs appeared to be cut at an angle too. Then there was the big difference: her hair color became a dark gray with silver underneath.

“Don’t worry mom, this dye is temporary. There wasn’t much time for a permanent and I’d need my agency’s permission.” Tsukiko reassured Akaashi.

Hinata personally liked Tsukiko’s new appearance. “I remember when you had white stripes like a tiger!” he said from the high counter.

Tsukishima notified the ginger that a tiger was either white or orange with black stripes, not the other way around like Hinata was implying. As for Kageyama, he couldn’t help but think Tsukiko was almost a female version of Sugawara. Even their face dots, as he called them, were in the same place.

Once food was finally ready there was still one person who had yet to say something about Tsukiko’s hair.
Yamaguchi dropped his spoon when Tsukiko made eye contact with him at the table. She tilted her head, curious as to why he looked lost. Was the curry not to his liking?

“Y-Y-You’re just so, so beautiful… it’s really distracting—not in a bad way, promise! I’m just, speechless?” he managed to spout as he felt his face burn and his tongue tie on itself.

Tsukiko blinked. Seconds later she started blushing madly too while eating her plate of curry rice. Her excuse was that she made her serving too hot and spicy. Others joined in to tease the couple.

Ushijima quietly ate his dinner. It wasn’t obvious but he was rather pleased. Not only was the food good, he now was determined to replicate Tsukiko’s curry another time. Another thing he was happy about was how rowdy his friends were being at the table. It’s like they were genuinely having fun together— no, they definitely were.

From: duckbutt hair

> they’re not letting me face the mirror
> feels like they’re shaving off a lot of hair
> please tell me I still have my cool do

From: that one girl

> WWWWWWWWWWW
> just go shaven like Kai
> or mohawk like Tora L O L

From: duckbutt hair

> gdi you’re a pain in the ass
> .....................
> I missed this though
Kuroo lifted his head while the student stylist wasn’t working. Across from him was Tsukiko getting dye painted onto her hair. She was giggling while looking down at her phone. Kuroo opened his mouth to speak up, but the ping from his own phone grabbed his attention first.

From: that one girl

> awww, kuroo-senpai is getting sappy~
> bet you’d sound cuter saying that out loud
> even though we’re in public L O L

Tsukiko closed her eyes when instructed by her stylist and put down her phone. This prevented her from seeing Kuroo smile at the text she had just sent him. Little did she know, instead of replying, Kuroo was changing her contact info.

From: that one girl

> I honestly missed this too

[that one girl] to [the best girl]

confirm contact name update?

[Yes]/[No]
the goodness returns!! I’m glad the last chapter is done and over with, so I can start showing off Kuroo and Yamaguchi’s refreshed friendship~~ but the pain will return in a few more chapters to come... eheheheeee....

AAAANDDD SINCE IT’S VALENTINES DAY WHICH MEANS IT’S ALSO TSUKIKO’S BIRTHDAY!!!!!!! SCREAMS!!!!! HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO TSUKIKO <3333

reasons for this line-up of boys... main boyfriend: yamaguchi, sugar daddy: ushijima, side boyfriend: kuroo, wingman: bokuto, gay best friend: akaashi

theeeennnn there’s a bonus sketch of oikawa the forgotten(?) :’D
THANKS FOR READING!!  follow me:

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After a long flight the Yorozu-kan group landed in Fukuoka airport. It would still be another hour until they arrived at their final destination by train and bus. Everyone spent most of the journey either asleep or eating or playing a children’s card game. Where they headed was covered in blankets of snow. They arrived in a true winter wonderland.

Winter vacation has begun and holiday plans were already kicking off.

A young-looking woman with long brunette hair stood out in the cold. She was tall and had a slender figure, that of a ballerina dancer. When a vehicle appeared in her line of sight she waved it down then directed it into the estate behind her. Once the rental van was parked the front passenger door swung open. Out went Tsukiko in a hurry so she could rush over and greet the woman.

“Minako-saaaaan~!”

“Kiko-chaaaaaan~!” the brunette gleamed.

Akaashi watched his house mother excitedly hug someone he assumed was an acquaintance—either with Tsukiko or their landlady.

The completely absent woman, Madame, had recently sent a letter to the Yorozu-kan. It was prepaid travel tickets meant to be a Christmas gift to her tenants. They only had to pick a time for the trip and they decided to go the weekend of Akaashi’s birthday. The location was already decided by Madame; a place in Kyushu nobody except Tsukiko really knew about.

“IS VICTURI HERE?!” Tsukiko asked with flaring nostrils.
The other woman frowned as she placed a hand on the girl’s shoulder.

“Sorry… they left for the Grand Prix just the other day.” she said in a disappointed tone. Both fell to their knees and tightly embraced again, all while feigning tears.

Once that was done with, Tsukiko properly introduced the boys to Minako Okukawa. She was a long-time friend of Madame’s. Tsukiko attempted to comment on how the woman was actually much older than she appeared but got chopped on the head. Minako also mentioned having been a dance mentor for Tsukiko when she used to visit as a child. The two got back in touch only recently when Tsukiko wanted to check on the trip arrangements.

“How about we get inside and warm up? This way folks,” said Minako as she led the group of college students into their lodging.

The group will be staying in a hot spring resort called Yu-topia Katsuki. It’s supposedly the last resort standing in town due to a lack of tourism. However being home to a currently famous figure skating couple brought a spike in visitors lately.

“It’s the home of Lev’s uncle’s fiance I heard!” Hinata informed Kageyama but the latter was still half-asleep to even bother caring.

The owners of Yu-topia greeted everyone at the front entrance. It seemed like Tsukiko knew them personally too, hearing how they said things like “look how much you’ve grown” when they saw the girl.

Everyone was then taken to their assigned quarters. The inn didn’t look so big on the outside, so the guys were worried they’d be cramped in a single room. But it turned out their suite was spacious enough to hold all of them and possibly more.

“This was always Madame’s room when she use to visit so we hope you’ll enjoy your stay in here,” said the hosts.

Some of the boys shuddered. They weren’t sure how to feel about sharing a room that their mysterious landlady used before. Then they found out Tsukiko would also be in the room with them and not in a separate one like they assumed.
Bokuto expressed his excitement by immediately declaring that the girl would sleep next to him. Kuroo shoved the owl’s face away, remarking that he would keep her safe at night. The worried Akaashi suggested that Tsukiko actually get her own private room. He straightforwardly told her it was dangerous to sleep around men, especially Bokuto who snores loudly.

“It’s alright. I’d feel lonely and I wanna be with all of you.” Tsukiko answered with a soft, glowing smile.

Both Bokuto and Kuroo knelt down. With their hands clapped together they worshipped their benevolent female roommate. They shed tears of joy from the thought of sleeping closely to her. It looked like Tsukiko was enjoying the goddess treatment, seeing how she played along with the two by kindly petting their heads.

Akaashi squinted in a judgmental stare. He hadn’t seen them do weird stuff in a very long while. Yamaguchi was psyched too, evident by the fist pump he did behind his back. It didn’t escape Akaashi’s hawk-like eyes.

After the group dropped their bags in the room they set out to explore the town. Rest from the long flight and bus ride would have to wait. There was a marketplace that Tsukiko wanted to see. Her motive was to purchase a tiger-print shirt that another figure skater she was a fan of had bought in Hasetsy. She demanded that the boys help her find it as soon as possible.

The Yorozu-kan squad ended up breaking into teams of threes. This way they could spread out and cover more shops. Akaashi tailed Bokuto and Kuroo, noticing that they were leering at some female tourists. Hinata and Kageyama ran off after challenging each other to see who could find the shirt first. Ushijima followed to put a leash on them. The remainders were Tsukiko, Yamaguchi, and Tsukishima.

“Just ask the shopkeeper if they have it. It’ll be faster that way.” said the already bored Tsukishima.

Tsukiko puffed her cheeks. She stated the faster way was too easy and that she would feel more satisfied after going through the agonizing work of searching through every tee shirt shop in the area. That, and also because Tsukiko was generally too stubborn to ask store employees for help.
This only made Tsukishima more disgruntled but Yamaguchi was rather amused. He helped his girlfriend go through the racks and organized piles to find the specific tiger shirt she wanted. Since Christmas was on the way, he thought he might as well look around for presents too.

“Tsukki, look!” Yamaguchi called to his friend. He held out a shirt that had a dinosaur print on it. Tsukiko posed with her arms up as if presenting the shirt with Yamaguchi.

Tsukishima’s brow twitched. Again, he wished the joke about him having an obsession for dinosaurs would stop.

The next store didn’t have a wide selection of shirts but there was a 3D paper model of the Hasetsu Castle on display. Tsukiko pointed out this was something she had taught Kageyama to do over summer break. She convinced him that paper crafting would help make his fingers more nimble and further improve his setting ability. In reality Tsukiko only wanted to do something fun with Kageyama that didn’t involve volleyball. Remembering that his birthday was approaching, Tsukiko decided to buy a kit to make it Kageyama’s present.

Yamaguchi bought one so he could have a fun activity to do with Tsukiko at home. He suggested Tsukishima get dinosaur-themed kits and surprisingly the blond went ahead to do so. His excuse was, “This’ll lessen my boredom and keep my brain from rotting at home.”

Tsukiko poked into Tsukishima’s arm with a smug grin. Before she could say something snarky her cheeks were being pulled by the irritated four-eyed guy. Seeing this made Yamaguchi laugh. When was the last time he witnessed them acting this friendly? It probably had to be since middle school.

Over an hour passed and Tsukiko still couldn’t find the shirt she desperately wanted to obtain. She did find plenty of gifts for others at least. Snack souvenirs would have to be bought on the last day of the trip though, that's the rules. It could get eaten by herself or one of the boys otherwise.

Yamaguchi walked closely beside his girlfriend then offered to carry some of her baggage. She declined and stated she was a ‘big girl’ who could do it on her own. Yamaguchi chuckled but took some of the load anyway.

“Here, you can hold onto this,” he said as he slipped his free hand in with Tsukiko’s. The girl buried her chin in her scarf as an attempt to hide her blush. She figured her boyfriend realized the
winter cold was getting to her. That’s why Yamaguchi wanted to warm her up even a little bit.

The trio found the rest of their friends in a food court area. Ushijima saw them too and stood up to approach Tsukiko with a paper bag in his hands. He then instinctively covered her mouth as soon as she looked inside.

“ITZ ZE ZIRT!” Tsukiko attempted to scream. Her excitement was being muffled by Ushijima’s hand. The guy had to hold her down before she could jump around to further convey her joy.

“There’s ice on the ground, it’s dangerous.” Ushijima said with his typical father-like tone. When Tsukiko hugged him he patted her head in return.

Akaashi felt the corner of his lips curl back into a smile. Seeing Tsukiko completely return to being her playful self was a relieving sight. He was also glad to see her and Kuroo being on friendly terms again, though he wasn’t sure about them being flirty like before. It did peg Akaashi how odd Yamaguchi accepted and forgave Kuroo rather quickly. The awkward wall between them was no more in a short amount of time.

“Hey, hey, heeey!!” Bokuto cried out.

“I heard there’s a ninja house here! Kiko-chan, can we go see it? Pleeeassee!” he begged. The roundness of his watering eyes was too much for Tsukiko to bear. She inhaled sharply and cupped Bokuto’s face with her icy hands.

“Of course we can go!! Come, my owl son!” she declared.

“Ooohh!!” Bokuto cheered, not questioning what Tsukiko had called him.

Hasetsu Castle was easy to find because it could practically be seen anywhere in the city. Finding an empty viewing area to claim, the Yorozu-kan group took their individual pictures. Next came some pair shots, and then finally a photo of the whole group.

Tsukiko posted her pictures on Instagram and, as per usual, Oikawa was the first to like. His comment that followed was full of sad faces to express how much he wished he could be at a hot springs resort with Tsukiko.
With a reluctant sigh, Tsukiko replied, “next time darling~!” and suddenly her notifications blew up with direct messages from an excited Oikawa. There were a ton of heart and kissy-face emojis. It had Tsukiko wondering if acting desperate for her attention was Oikawa’s new gimmick.

The sky became a violet hue, basking the town in calmness. The sun started to slowly set which meant the group had to make their way back to Yu-topia.

The mischievous owl and scheming cat were conspiring plans to peep on their female friend when it came to bath time. Since they weren’t being secretive at all, Akaashi harshly scolded them for having such ideas. Ushijima chimed in to state he would make sure nobody will peek at Tsukiko, ever. He only used this forbidding tone when his ‘daughter’ is the target of some deviant’s crime.

Everyone came to a halt when they realized the girl at the front of their pack had stopped. Following the line of her gaze, they noticed she was staring up at a place called Ice Castle, an ice-skating rink. Without saying anything the boys unanimously decided to make one last stop for their tiring day.

Upon entrance, warm air blew down on everyone. Tsukiko stepped up first to greet the woman at the register.

“Kiko-chan, look at you!!” squealed Yuuko Nishigori. She and her husband went to engulf Tsukiko with a reunion hug.

“Ahh, it’s been so many years… I didn’t think you two would still remember me.” Tsukiko bashfully admitted. She explained to her boys how she had been to Hasetsu as a child during family vacations.

Even though the Ice Castle was preparing to close a special exception was made for the Yorozukan group. Everybody, except Tsukishima and Ushijima, switched their shoes out to have ice skating fun. All beginners were made obvious when stepping into the rink.

“Hehe~ I can do something Bakayama can’t~!” Hinata laughed as he circled around the struggling setter. Surprisingly the one most prone to clumsy accidents was the graceful swan for once. He could swiftly dodge Kageyama’s flimsy punches.
“D-D-D-Don’t let goooo!!” Bokuto jittered. He was posed with his rear hanging back and his arms stretched forward. To avoid possibly falling with him, Akaashi kept his grip slightly loose on Bokuto’s palms. His fear spiked when Bokuto grabbed his wrists and whimpered like a puppy that got kicked.

“Calm down Bokuto-san! If Kiko and your disciple can do this then so can you!” Akaashi said as a means of encouraging the other. It sounded like something only a simpleton would fall for— but that’s exactly what Bokuto was. He straightened his back and attempted to refrain from making a nervous face.

Tsukiko slid past the two and looked around to check on the other first-time skaters. Kuroo was holding on to the edge of the rink to find his balance. It didn’t take him long to figure things out and start gliding on his own. He seemed smug over how fast he picked it up.

The girl went over to the sideline. She asked Ushijima why he didn’t want to join the fun. It’d surprise her if the guy didn’t know how to skate. His answer was, “because I don’t want to risk injury.”

Ushijima would be playing with the national volleyball team soon. Tsukiko knew that but she still wished he would skate with her. A part of her wanted it because she missed doing it with her actual father. However it was best for Ushijima to sit out for the sake of his career. As for Tsukishima, he’s just normally isolated.

“I caught up to you,” Yamaguchi panted as though out of breath. Like Kuroo, he was using the wall for support and only managed to reach Tsukiko when she had unknowingly skated closer to him.

Tsukiko giggled and took her boyfriend’s warm hands. “You caught me~” she said back, making Yamaguchi’s cheeks more pink than they already were.

The couple began a quick skating lesson. Tsukiko started by telling Yamaguchi how to position himself. Obviously, don’t stick upright too much like Bokuto was still doing.

“Knees slightly bent with your weight on the balls of your feet,” Tsukiko advised. Yamaguchi did everything she told him. Even when it felt like it was time to let go of his hands, Tsukiko continued to hold them. She steered directions with her shoulders and Yamaguchi mirrored her movements.
with no sun it won’t be the same

show me a rainbow after the rain ♪

The pair didn’t notice that music was playing. They were more focused on each other. Tsukiko moved faster and Yamaguchi pushed himself forward to keep up with her. Strangely enough it didn’t feel like he was skating anymore. He was moving along with Tsukiko wherever she went, that’s all he knew.

Releasing his hands, Tsukiko smirked at her boyfriend. She started to do some tricks as the music kicked up in beat. The girl did a backwards crossover where she lifted one foot up and did a light jump spin after. It wasn’t meant to be flashy since Tsukiko was by no means a professional skater. Some minor moves were all she knew how to do from being an extra for an ice skating commercial.

Yamaguchi smiled back and accepted the challenge of catching up to her again. When he did, Tsukiko then took Yamaguchi’s arm and spun herself under him. It threw off his balance, causing the two to spiral into a hug.

“Love birds~” Kuroo hollered from the edge of the rink. Beside him, Bokuto whistled loudly while Hinata and Kageyama were clapping their hands. Everyone had pretty much moved to the sides as to give the couple their space.

Yamaguchi snapped back to reality. The song had ended and he was in the middle of the ice with Tsukiko holding tightly onto him. Experiencing a moment where he thought they were the only two people in the world felt surreal. Embarrassment overwhelmed Yamaguchi’s nerves, making him accidentally lose focus and fall back.

Tsukiko gasped and tried to save her boyfriend but ended up on top of him anyways. She was too shy to lift her head from his chest because of the outrageous laughter her friends belted. It was loud and echoing throughout the rink. Even so, she couldn’t help but laugh along too.

On the way back to Yu-topia the group was chatting about how exciting it was to ice skate. Bokuto and Kageyama were getting made fun of for falling the most out of everyone. Tsukishima hinted to having recorded the evidence for future blackmail, which Kuroo deviously requested copies of.
Yamaguchi held Tsukiko’s shopping bags as well as her hand. He gave his girlfriend a smile when she looked up at him. Her rosy cheeks and small red nose were adorable. If he had a free hand he’d boop her face with the tip of his finger.

“Do you like ice skating?” Yamaguchi asked.

Tsukiko nodded. Her eyes descended to the ground as she squeezed her boyfriend’s hand.

“The last time I did this was with Ken. It was a long, long time ago… so I thought for sure I’ve forgotten how to skate.” She confessed with puffs of her visible breath.

Yamaguchi leaned slightly, almost tapping his head against Tsukiko’s. Still smiling, he told her, “We’ll have to go skating again one day. You and me, Ken, and Tsukki.”

Tsukiko’s chest swelled up with heat. The image of everyone together, like they were in middle school, almost brought her to tears. She pushed her shoulder against Yamaguchi’s as a gesture that she agreed with his suggestion. It sounded nice.
WHAT IS UP MY READERS THAT MAY OR MAY NOT STILL EXIST BY THIS POINT!!!!
It's been about 4 months since the last update, and the blame goes to this semester being a weirdly stressful one. My two weekend classes make me really exhausted, especially because they're 6 hours long. One of my projects had me crying every time I worked on it because I kept making tons of mistakes- right now my prof won't accept it as completed either so I'll pass the class with a solid B //angry sobs; there's also the fact I got sick twice last month and then one of my classes constantly getting cancelled which resulted in very little time to work on my project-- BUT NO MORE (until next fall lmao)

I'm officially on summer break next week and to celebrate the sweet end to this semester HERE IS AN UPDATE!!! Because of how busy I got these couple of months, I don't have much backlog chapters and tbh I've been working more on my BnHA fic as it's easier to write when I'm following canon events, unlike here where everything is original content. I will do my best after finals week to write more for this fic! I have my timeline outlined, and if I stick to it then this fic only has about 12 more chapters to go.... WHICH IS TOO SHORT!!! GET READY FOR FILLERS UPON FILLERS!! THE YOROZU-KAN FAMILY WILL ENTERTAIN YOU IN EVEN MORE CHAPTERS TO COME!!!!!!!!!

On a side note, I dunno if this was mentioned, but I recreated the house in Sims 4 and you can see a thread of it on twitter~

THANKS FOR READING!! follow me:

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Chapter Summary

Taking Hinata out of the bath to cool off was a job left to Kageyama. It would have been Akaashi or Ushijima, being the most responsible adults, but surprisingly enough Kageyama volunteered himself. He felt somehow responsible for Hinata passing out. He also said he needed Hinata recovered to be his partner in the after-bath ping-pong battle.

Dinner was a jaw-dropping drool-enticing feast. Tsukiko ordered everybody to hold off on eating while taking pictures from every angle possible. The boys watched in agony with their stomachs crying.

Kuroo whispered (not really) to Bokuto that Tsukiko only wanted attention on social media. The girl huffed and said to him, “You’re just jealous I have way more followers than you!”

Squinting harshly, Kuroo responded with, “Huuuuh?! You only got, like, 3k followers and I’m betting over half of those are bots made by Oikawa!” Tsukiko was going to argue back but paused to put a finger to her chin. Kuroo made a good point. It honestly wouldn’t surprise her if that actually was the case. She remembered Oikawa bragging to her about taking a programming class for fun.

Back to dinner, the Katsukis prepared their most lavish meal for their very special guests. The prime dish was the resort’s famous katsudon— pork cutlet with eggs in a rice bowl. It’s been rated to be the best katsudon in all of Japan, and the Yorozu-kan group agreed wholeheartedly.

“Howzit sho gud!?!?” Hinata munched, speaking with his mouth full of delicious goodness. Kageyama was incomprehensible too. He had a slice of the breaded pork poking out of his shut lips.

Akaashi woke from a trance he didn’t realize had taken him over. From only the first bite it had him lost in reacting to how amazing the food was. When he looked over at Bokuto, the owl was crying tears of joy while eating. It had Akaashi shaking upon realizing that the katsudon was powerful enough to make Bokuto silent.

Everyone at the table was too busy in their own indulgence that none of them noticed Ushijima’s reaction. The world’s most expressionless man was actually moved by the harmonizing flavor of
breaded pork on warm rice with eggs. In Ushijima’s mind he was analyzing the ingredients used and imagining the recipe. He couldn’t wait to go back home and start making it for everybody.

Ushijima paused himself. Remembering something came to halt his thoughts. Yamaguchi saw the bowl slowly descend from the other’s face. Curious, he asked if something was wrong, to which Ushijima replied nothing was. He even brushed the question aside to go back to eating.

Hollering and cups clinking sounded from the other end of the table.

“YAHOO!!! THAT WAS DELISH!” cheered the excited (almost buzzed) Kuroo.

“THU BEST IN HERE JYAPAN!!” cackled the also excited (maybe drunk) Tsukiko.

Tsukishima pointed to the cause.

“They started drinking sake,” he said bluntly before getting shoved by Bokuto who wanted some too.

Yamaguchi laughed out loud while hiding the fact he was the one who poured Tsukiko’s cup.

Akaashi refrained from sighing, going back to appreciating the meal. He would tell his friends to tone down their volume otherwise. The dining hall was open to all resort guests, consisting mostly of elderly folk. They weren’t bothered by the ruckus at all but were fondly admiring the sight of youth enjoying themselves.

Tsukiko dumped cold water over her head to wash the soap off her body. She wrung out what remained in her hair even though it wasn’t much. It had been a long time since Tsukiko’s hair was near shoulder length. She couldn’t remember the last it was this short. Showing a pout to her reflection in the mirror, Tsukiko tried to pull her hair to cover her breasts, but it wasn’t long enough.

Finished with preparing herself for the main bath, Tsukiko grabbed her towel and draped it over herself. She had been looking forward to the outdoor hot spring. There wasn’t another soul around
which meant she had it alone. A relaxing open-air bath was much needed for the hardworking idol trainee.

As soon as Tsukiko slid the door open her eyes locked with someone’s outside. The two stared for a while before their brains finally processed what was happening.


Tsukiko stood calmly at the door. Her hair was clipped back and her towel hid the private parts of her body. There was about as much skin exposure as she has in her summer bikini, but even then Hinata was too nervous to look at her. He couldn’t bring himself to face Tsukiko knowing they were both naked now.

Hinata squealed as he went to cover his lower half with his hands.

“Too late I saw everything,” Tsukiko bluntly stated.

Hinata felt himself freeze in an awkward position and thought he heard a gong signalling it was his time to pass on.

The girl coughed into her hand, unable to suppress her laughter. She clarified not actually being able to see Hinata’s manhood. Tsukiko was nearsighted so everything past three-feet or so from her was fuzzy. There was steam in the air to further hinder her vision too.

Thinking about it, Tsukiko should’ve realized sooner that she entered the male bath by accident. The cleaning station didn’t have scented soaps. Rather than excuse herself to the proper gendered bath, she had other ideas…

Tsukiko released a sensual sigh as she felt the water quickly warm her body. It made her skin crawl how good it was to be in a hot bath that offset the cold outdoors. She couldn’t say the same for Hinata though. Poor boy, completely flustered, kept his distance and pressed himself against the stone rim on the other side of the bath. His whole face was red and it wasn’t due to the hot water.

“...if it makes you nervous, I’ll leave.” Tsukiko said in a disappointed tone.
Hinata splashed the water when he turned around.

“N-N-NO! It’d be rude to kick you out when you’re already comfortable!!” he assured the (naked) girl. Tsukiko smiled happily. In the back of her mind she knew the both of them would get into trouble, herself more likely. But could she really pass up on this thrill?

“Aww, Shou-tan is letting me take a bath with him~ but are you sure this is okay? It doesn’t bother you seeing me bare ?” Tsukiko cooed. It sounded like she was intentionally messing with Hinata but it was in fact what she was doing. Seeing Hinata squirm whenever he’s bewitched by her beauty always brought out Tsukiko’s sadistic side. She couldn’t help but want to tease him.

Hinata inhaled deeply while sucking back whatever was going to run out of his nose.

“N-Nope. Not at all!” he managed to say while staring intently at the large tanuki statue behind Tsukiko. It somewhat helped the boy avoid laying eyes on her body. Hinata told himself if he dared to even think about Tsukiko’s skin then he’d be breaking the bro-code with Yamaguchi.

“Just think of someone else,” Hinata repeated in his head. The mental image of Tsukiko wrapped in a towel kept taunting him. It drastically grew worse as the imaginary Tsukiko was slowly about to expose herself.

Hinata’s eyes were going to pop out of his head.

“Don’t! DON’T!!” he mentally screamed.

Then, as the Tsukiko in his head removed her towel, all Hinata saw was the flat chest of a man. His pecs were finely shaped as well the formation of his abdominal muscles. Hinata knew this body and gazing at the face confirmed… it was Kageyama.

“Eh? Why am I thinking about that guy? And naked on top of that…?”

Tsukiko waved her hand in front of Hinata. She had closed the distance while he went silent. His expression was strange. He seemed paralyzed.
Moments later some noise came from the indoor bath. Shadowy figures appeared, bringing a chilling fear to Tsukiko’s spine. She whipped her head around in search of a way out. There was none, of course, but she found a place to hide for the time being.

“HEY, HEY, HEEEY!!!” Bokuto shouted. He leapt into the hot bath, shivering at first from the sudden change in temperature.

Akaashi groaned while picking up the small towel that Bokuto ripped off himself. He wasted no effort in scolding the other.

“Bokuto-san! Don’t jump into the bath, that’s bad manners.”

Next to step outside were Kuroo and Ushijima then Kageyama. The latter noticed a certain carrot-top floating aimlessly in the water. Kageyama’s immediate reaction to scream at what he believed to be a dead Hinata. This was his first thought thanks to a murder drama he once watched with Tsukiko. With that in mind, he proceeded to call out to his ‘dead idiot’ and alarmed the others.

Yamaguchi dragged Tsukishima outside to join him and everyone else in the open-air bath. The blond was reluctant because, one, he couldn’t see very well without his glasses; and two, he was still a tsundere when it came to spending quality time with friends. Both arrived to witness the lifeless Hinata getting dragged out of the water.

Behind the tanuki statue, Tsukiko was trying hard not to let her laughter be heard. She kept listening to Kageyama’s attempt to revive his buddy. It sounded like he was doing it poorly—possibly slapping Hinata to wake up.

“Don’t pound his chest! We’re not even sure if he drowned!” Akaashi spouted as he tried to alleviate the panic.

Bokuto wept beside his ‘dead’ pupil, holding onto Hinata’s arm in exaggerated grief.

Kuroo would find the situation hysterical but he really wanted to enjoy his outdoor bath in tranquility. He couldn’t muster the effort to chuckle as he normally would. It was logical to assume that Hinata might have overheated from being in the bath too long, Kuroo suggested.

Together, Ushijima and Yamaguchi laid out the fallen comrade with a towel under his head. They
continued to fan Hinata off and await his recovery. This wasn’t the first time Yamaguchi had to see Hinata faint in a bath so he was experienced in how to care for him.

Tsukishima squinted at the scene. He couldn’t make out what was happening. Clearly it was something purely chaotic caused by idiocy. Avoiding the mayhem, he went back to the indoor bath. When Tsukishima submerged himself in the warm tub he saw a small figure quickly pass by. Was there another guest outside? Whoever it was, they made the right choice to leave while his friends were distracted by their own craziness.

Taking Hinata out of the bath to cool off was a job left to Kageyama. It would have been Akaashi or Ushijima, being the most responsible adults, but surprisingly enough Kageyama volunteered himself. He felt somehow responsible for Hinata passing out. He also said he needed Hinata recovered to be his partner in the after-bath ping-pong battle.

The rest of the guys were free to relax, finally. They exhaled the soothing relief of hot water embracing their bodies. It was quiet until a splash echoed closeby.

“Oh ho?” Bokuto hooted.

“Oh ho ho~” Kuroo purred back.

The two were thinking the same thing: Tsukiko was next door in the women’s open bath. They basked in their perverse thoughts of a gorgeous female friend and her bare skin. Unfortunately there would be no wall climbing attempt or searching for a peephole. Blocking them from the gender dividing wall was the sauna.

“Maybe, just maybe… we can get on top of the hut and—“

Bokuto’s ”genius” plan got shot down when the pseudo-parents glared sternly at him.

Kuroo snickered. He leaned back with arms spread behind him on the stone edge. Breathing the steam cleared his senses to where he could feel his blood flow. Recalling the fond chant he used to say back in team Nekoma brought a soft grin to his face.
Spotting the relaxed Yamaguchi by himself, Kuroo relocated to give the guy some company.

“How was the shopping?” He asked first to initiate small talk.

Yamaguchi opened his eyes and removed the small towel on his head.

“Pretty fun! She was really fired up about finding that shirt,” he answered.

From the other side of the open bath Akaashi picked up on Kuroo and Yamaguchi’s conversation. They sounded like normal friends having a normal conversation. It was good to see things working out in the end after all the drama.

“I notice you two have been getting close,” Akaashi said out loud.

“That’s because we’re lovers now.” Kuroo swiftly replied as a joke but Yamaguchi’s face turning red would imply otherwise.

Laughter erupted in the other bath. Tsukiko’s hysteria could be heard from over the wall. She was slapping the water too, it sounded.

Yamaguchi cupped his hands to holler, “That was a joke! Promise!!”

Bokuto smirked with another lightbulb over his head. He then shouted, “Ohhh nooo~! They’re touching each other’s dicks!”

The hot bath had gone from silence to being filled with laughter.

What comes after a nice, relaxing bath? One manly, hardcore game of ping-pong. To make things even more challenge-provoking, the resort owners offered their last two bottles of milk pudding as prizes. This immediately made everyone flare in competitive spirit.
Hinata chose to go back to the room and rest his head more. This left Kageyama partnerless but he was quick to forget about his usual companion. He got to team up with Ushijima, which very much guarantees them winning.

“Tch. That’s basically Ushiwaka and Oikawa alternative,” scoffed Kuroo. He gently elbowed Yamaguchi to gesture for his agreement. They were partnering too, as Tsukishima opted out of playing in order to sit in a massage chair.

Bokuto roared while rolling his robe sleeves back. In contrast to his hype, Akaashi, his obvious teammate, squinted in dread. He had a feeling that things were going to get messy with the tabletop game. Why can’t they just go to the room and play Old Maid—or even better head straight for bed.

“At least Kiko isn’t playing,” he sighed. If Tsukiko were with them, Akaashi and Ushijima would have a panic attack from the girl’s yukata flying open. They could already imagine the two perverts of their group being sneaky enough to force Tsukiko into move around a lot so her robe loosens.

By unanimous decision, Ushijima and Oikawa alternative were reserved for the final round. The other teams already knew they’d be insanely strong. It wouldn’t be fair if neither had a chance to begin with. Thus, the starting match went to Akaashi and Bokuto versus Kuroo and Yamaguchi.

“I know what’ll make this more fun…” Bokuto said to his opponents. Only Kuroo was intrigued, which had to mean he already knew what his brofriend was going to say.

Bokuto proposed a condition: when hitting the ping-pong ball, the player has to shout something they find attractive about Tsukiko. They can’t repeat what’s already been said either. This immediately went into effect with Bokuto taking the first serve and saying, “BOOBS!”

Kuroo clicked his tongue.

“Dammit you took the easiest one— NICE LEGS!” he huffed when smacking the ball onto the table. It went towards Akaashi, who remained standing still in place. He didn’t bother countering and let the ball fly past him.

Furrowing his brows in disgust, Akaashi whipped his head to Ushijima and stated, “This is sexual harassment.”
Crossing his arms, Ushijima looked down then up before making his quick decision. “It will be allowed,” said Kageyama who somehow understood his partner without communication. Like a referee he even did the arm signal that indicated Bokuto and Kuroo’s weird addition to the game was acceptable.

The match continued with Kuroo serving. He smirked and aimed at Akaashi again as he said, “HER SMOOOOOOTH WAIST!”

Bokuto knew Akaashi was going to forfeit the point again. He extended his arm to receive the ball in his place. With a determined cry, Bokuto went, “CUTE BUTT!!”

Kuroo mentally hit himself for not having said that first. As the ball bounced over the little net, his thought process sped up in search of the next thing about Tsukiko he should admit being attracted to. It has to be something that Bokuto may already be planning to use too. This was going to be a game of wits, Kuroo believed. The man who has nothing to say is the one who hasn’t acknowledged all of Tsukiko’s attractive points. If Oikawa were present, Kuroo and him would easily win together. Someone even better than Oikawa was Kuroo’s partner though. He’s got Yamaguchi.

“Wait…”

There was an error in Kuroo’s calculations. He overlooked something. Sure, Yamaguchi would have plenty of points to say, but will he actually do it? Kuroo forgot that Yamaguchi was a cherry boy—in other words, an innocent virgin. There’s no way Yamaguchi could passionately tell the world what he finds attractive about his girlfriend. Kuroo bit his tongue and prepared to save the point they were about to lose.

“Soft lips!”

Bokuto swung his paddle but missed the ball by a hair because Akaashi got in his way. Groveling to the floor, the silver-haired owl gazed up at his foes. He didn’t want to admit it, but Bokuto was glad he lost that point to Yamaguchi.

“Wooot!! He’s had it in him all along!” Kuroo cheered with hands up for Yamaguchi. The freckled boy hesitantly high fived back. His ears were red.
“I’ll let Kuroo-san take the winning point next because this is really embarrassing,” Yamaguchi gulped. He wished his past self from seven minutes ago had said no to the game’s dirty condition.

The final match came to be Kuroo and Yamaguchi versus Kageyama and Ushijima. All four had their sleeves rolled, exposing bold muscles that formed from years of volleyball experience. Their audience grew with curious guests that stopped by to watch. Now Yamaguchi definitely did not want to say inappropriate things in front of elderly people.

“Hnn… wonder what qualities Waka-papa is gonna confess to liking about his daughter,” sneered the devilish Kuroo. He was keeping Bokuto’s condition going, since Ushijima didn’t object or state he wasn’t going to indulge the freaks.

The first serve came from Yamaguchi.

“Sm-small nose!” he stuttered.

The ball bounced towards Ushijima, causing Kuroo’s grin to widen with anticipation. What was the man of the house going to say about Tsukiko? What devious thoughts could he secretly have?

Ushijima tightened his grip on the paddle. His shoulder dropped and pivoted his arm to swing upwards. As the hard ball pinged against the paddle, Ushijima said, “Tsukiko’s intelligence.”

The response had Kuroo bewildered. He almost missed his turn. How could he not realize the loophole? The rule was for players to say something they like about Tsukiko. It didn’t necessarily need to be points on physical attraction. Personality, her quirks, the other stuff that’s beyond the girl’s pretty face… Kuroo could see Yamaguchi giving him the stink eye for catching on to this realization too.

On Kageyama’s counterattack he shouted, “her healthy smoothie drinks!”

Yamaguchi stretched back as the ball almost bounced past him.

“Her.. singing!”
“Tsukiko’s tenacity.”

“MAGIC MASSAGING HANDS!”

“Her curry!”

“H-Her love for Gudetama!!”

After consecutive rallies both teams scored two points each. Whoever could get the third was going to win the milk puddings. Kuroo wanted it because he loves sweet victory—and to congratulate himself for the high grade he got on his final thesis. Yamaguchi’s goal for winning was to share the dessert with Tsukiko, obviously. Kageyama wanted to wave it in Hinata’s face and make him feel bad for not playing ping-pong. Ushijima was planning to reward Tsukiko instead of himself.

“When will this end?” Akaashi groaned while in a massage chair next to Tsukishima, who was recording the game for potential blackmail.

Bokuto’s laugh distorted from the vibrations of the chair. He threw his arms up and said, “II-III-I HOOOPPEPEPEEEE IITT ITIT NEEVNEEVERR EENDNDDS”
almost another 4 months later... and my art style changes yet again LMAO!! helloooo if you're still reading this I really really reeeaally cannot thank you enough for your patience!!!!! T u T it warms my heart imagining someone is waiting on my slow butt to update this canon x oc fanfic hhhhhhh;;;;; thank you thank you !!!!!!!

tbh this year has not been kind to me, which is why I've been slacking on stuff I absolutely love doing... my grandfather passed away in june, just days after he flew down here to visit us for his 72nd birthday. when he was put into emergency care it was hard to not think about him while attending my favorite/only local anime convention. i tried to stay positive but i was scared in the back of my mind. thankfully, with my boyfriend staying for two weeks, i had company for emotional support. he made sure i properly ate and kept me active so that i wasn't stuck wallowing in bed. june was absolutely awful. on top of all that, i found out my financial aid was denied and i was too busy mourning over grandpa that i didn't make it in time to apply for an appeal. as a result of that i'm not taking classes this fall semester. school is so... expensive. i tried to take at least ONE online class but immediately dropped out. it cost $150 to enroll, then another $140 for the textbook, and there's other fees like the access code that's required so i could actually DO the homework. ahhaha NO THANK YOU (^: college is absolute financial bullshit- but at least i can take a break this semester to focus on art work. really really reeeaally want to make more money from art commissions but it's super rough when i'm just a small twitter account of barely 130 followers. so gonna try setting up art streams in hopes it gains me attention. might do cosplay commissions too. WELL that's about it for a personal info dump aahahahaa imo it's important to me that i let readers know i'm just busy trying to get through life. i hope you're all doing better than me, or at least this silly chapter brightened your day!

THANKS FOR READING!!  follow me:
UPDATE NOTICE

Chapter Summary

tldr; taking a break from fanfic writing, will delete this later when I return!

Hello! It's been a long while since I last updated this fic and I'm finally putting up a hiatus notice lol

Basically, I've been busy and unmotivated these past few months. As I've mentioned before, my grandfather passed away June 2019 and I've been in a personal life slump ever since with school and work giving me stress. I haven't been in a "fanfic nutting" mood, even my friends have noticed and pointed this out LMAO

I love writing my OC/canon ship fics because I love indulging myself and I absolutely looove my OCs very much uwu but lately it's been tough to continue writing and even though I have my ideas outlined and drafted I can't bring myself to flesh anything out properly. Forcing myself to write just kills the vibe, yknow?? Like... I think the last time I touched my gdoc of this fic was only to do some grammar fixes when I was reading over the drafts.

Now it's 2020! My job is picking up in pace, a bit too much for my own pace tbh.. and I'm finally on my way to graduating community college omfg wow finally. So yeah, I gotta prepare for the life plans that come afterwards.

And so- there is NO plan to discontinue this fic, only a hiatus! I want to show off my undying LOVE for Tsukiko to the world!!!

You can continue following me on my twitter @hikariotakuhime where I retweet people's amazing art more than I post my own LOL and sometimes you'll see me scream about my OCs, usually Tsukiko asdfhdkj

Thank you for checking in on this fic! See you when I come back with the real chapter update!!
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!