Worse Than Death

Summary

What if Tenma had fainted after failing to shoot Johan in the library.. only to wake up and find himself completely at the mercy of the monster he had been hunting? A story of bondage, cruelty.. and love? Johan/Tenma - Yaoi

Notes

A/N: Spoilers abound, mainly up to episode 38 of the Anime, but also beyond that. The wonderful characters are not mine, but Naoki Urasawa's (*sigh* - if they were mine, Johan would have A LOT more screen time). I'm trying to do them justice, so I'm really doing my best to stay IC, though I'm not completely sure if I can pull it off. Johan/Tenma pairing – so, obviously, there will be yaoi! Rated "explicit" for graphic (and mostly non-consensual) sexual content in later chapters, as well as some instances of language, sexual themes, bondage, mental torture and some kinkiness throughout (do I even need to mention these last elements if Johan is involved? ;D). But there is also LOTS of talking and brooding - so if you're just looking for some quick PWP, this might not be for you. Otherwise, Please enjoy and leave comments! :)
Chapter 1

He's the brat with the sterilized pitchfork

(Adam Green)

---------------------------------------------

Fire.. smoke.. what a splitting headache..

Tenma heard his own groan, seemingly coming from far away. He tried to reach for his forehead. Failed. Tried again. What was happening? He attempted to open his eyes. It hurt. His whole face seemed swollen.

Right, the fire.. that guy beat me up.. and then.. ngh..

He suddenly understood why he couldn't move his hands. They were tied to something with what felt like a soft but firm piece of cloth. He tried moving his legs. His feet were equally tied. Urged on by a panic which was slowly rising to the surface of his clouded mind, Tenma managed to force his eyelids open.

A white ceiling. Walls that probably used to be a pale beige. Yellowed pictures showing random landscapes hanging above the bed he was lying on, his four limbs tied separately to bedposts. Old, tatty furniture dimly lit by what seemed to be the remaining light of a rainy late afternoon.

What the..

Tenma helplessly tugged at his bonds for a while, too dazed to formulate a single thought.

"So you're awake".

Johan's smooth voice cut like a cool draft of air through the black smoke inside the doctor's head, causing him to flinch violently and tear at his bonds with increased force, more a reflexive reaction to that calm voice than a real attempt to free himself. He flipped his head around to see the all too familiar figure standing in a doorway. There was no doubt, despite a shadow that mercifully covered Johan's face – Tenma was quite sure that it bore an expression he could not endure right now. Heavy silence engulfed the sparsely lit room, only softly punctured by the inappropriately comforting sound of raindrops hitting the window pane. It allowed shreds of not-so-well thought out questions to run wild in Tenma's aching head, and he randomly picked one to prevent it from bursting.

"Where.." the doctor's tongue felt numb and refused to finish its work. The silence continued for a few long seconds, and Tenma was starting to wonder if Johan would bother to answer questions before killing him, when the response finally came.

"In a hotel".

This was unsurprising considering the tacky décor of the room, and the older man cursed internally for wasting a question. He licked his lips, not sure if his next one would be a better idea.

"Why?"

The answer came quicker this time, and was delivered in calm, measured statements devoid of any emotion.
"You fainted in the library after you failed to shoot me. You probably would have died. So I took you here, Doctor Tenma." These last words were slightly accentuated, and hit their addressee like a thud in the stomach. Before he could even think of mustering up an answer, or rather an obvious follow-up question, Johan added: "Your head must hurt terribly."

With that, the young man disappeared into the opening behind him, leaving Tenma staring into the now empty space with a mixture of confusion, despair and pain. The monster was damn right, his head was breaking in two, and their short conversation had truly done nothing to make him feel any better. With a sigh, the doctor let it fall back onto the bed, darkness spinning in front of his now closed eyes... how was this even possible?

Just as he was trying to push the unasked (and increasingly eerie) question why Johan had saved his life out of his consciousness, he heard steps coming back into the room. Coming closer. Stopping in front of the bed. Tenma decided to keep his eyes closed.

_Just kill me now. End it._

He suddenly felt Johan's weight sink into the mattress beside him, felt his whole body tense in shock, his hands building fists of their own accord. Cold sweat started to build on the older men's forehead.

_Now. Please._

He was shaking all over.

"Here".

Tenma realised that he must have held his breath for a while, because he let it out in a surprised hiss at hearing Johan's soft voice so close to his own face. He turned it as far away from that voice as possible, which, considering that both his arms and his legs were fastened to the bed, was not very far.

"Take this", Johan calmly suggested again, seemingly ignoring his captive's desperate efforts to pull away.

"What is it?" Tenma muttered, in an attempt to regain his composure rather than seeking an answer. How was it possible that the young man's closeness caused such stress to his system? After all, the worst thing Johan could do was kill him, and the doctor had been preparing himself for this possible outcome since starting to track the monster down. It was pathetic.

"Just a painkiller".

Instinctively, Tenma pressed his face further into the bed sheet, firmly holding his lips together. There was a soft noise – a sigh or a chuckle, he could not tell which.

"It wouldn't make much sense for me to go through all the trouble of bringing you here only to poison you right away, now would it?" That voice was like silk, a silk sheet covering a shiny set of torture tools, and the words "right away" did not bode well.

"Nothing that you do.. makes much sense to me.. Johan." Tenma silently congratulated himself on finally getting out a whole sentence, though his hope of regaining some confidence by forcing himself to say the monster's name out loud faded when he realised how ragged his voice sounded.

"You break my heart saying that."

Despite better knowledge, the doctor's head turned around, acting on its own will, to look at Johan in
surprise as he uttered this last sentence. His captor's face was hovering only half a metre away from Tenma's own, one corner of his mouth slightly curled upwards in a hint of an ironic smirk. However, as soon as he was sure of the doctor's attention, Johan's face lit in a full blown, most charming smile, and instantly, but too late, the older man knew why he had previously vowed not to open his eyes. Even on the numerous occasions that Tenma had observed Johan from a considerable distance, generally through the sight of his rifle, he found the young man's perfect physiognomy almost painful to look at. However, from this close, his beauty was simply breathtaking. And not in the good way; it was literally choking. The delicately heart shaped face, jaw line just angular enough to suggest masculinity, framed by hair the colour of sunlit sand; the elegantly curved lips; the eyes, clear and deep at the same time, like a winter's icy sky just after dawn, up in the highest, snow-clad mountains; and a smile which seemed capable of radiating enough well-calculated warmth to make these mountains melt into nothingness. To make everything melt away into nothingness. Tenma could only stare helplessly, the striking conflict between his opponent's flawless appearance and history of crimes now joining his headache in its mission to split his head in two.

Apparently, he was staring with his mouth open, as Johan unhurriedly proceeded to slip two tablets into it, followed by a drinking straw which stuck out of a glass of water he was holding. The feeling of the young man's unexpectedly warm fingertips on his lips and teeth sent a shiver down the doctor's spine, from where it slowly and unexplainably took over his whole body.

"Now, drink."

Tenma found himself following the simple instruction without a murmur, as if displaying a conditioned reaction in a Pavlovian experiment. As he swallowed the tablets, he realised that he was dying of thirst, and continued taking slow gulps for as long as he could bear the pain in his neck. The current position of his body was considerably unsuitable for drinking (or any other action, for that matter), even though Johan patiently held the glass in the most convenient way that was possible. When the doctor finally let his head sink back into the mattress, suppressing a groan, his captor leaned away, seemingly satisfied, the deceptively warm smile substituted by his usual calm, unreadable facial expression.

"There's a good doctor. We don't want you in pain, do we?"

With great difficulty, as if pulling away a finger painfully stuck to icy metal, Tenma managed to turn his head away from Johan, deciding to ignore his patronising tone, which, considering their age difference, was thoroughly insulting. Something told him that Johan was quite aware of the fact that this was even more true for a Japanese man of his age.

"If you care about me being in pain, you could release me from these bonds", he noted bitterly, the stiffness in his body becoming more noticeable as his headache started to fade. Whatever it was that Johan gave him – and Tenma tried to not even think about what black market drug he just swallowed – it certainly was powerful stuff, the effects already starting to show.

As expected, Johan ignored his suggestion, but got up from the bed and stepped a few strides away, causing the older man to exhale in relief (quietly enough not to be heard, he hoped). However, in the same measure as his mind was clearing, it was becoming flooded with memories he had been too dazed to put together before. The unbearable heat.. How many hundred people..? Frantic screams.. He shot.. Tenma's eyes widened in shock as he let out a stifled sob. The monster approaching him.. unable.. unable to pull the trigger.. And just before he fainted..

"NINA!" Tenma cried out, facing Johan once again, the image of the girl standing on the stage behind Schubert, engulfed in a sea of smoke and flame, hit him with full force. "What have you done? Is Nina alright? Where is she? TELL ME! Oh God."
Johan tilted his beautiful head slightly, letting out a soft chuckle. "Oh? So you are more interested in my sister's well-being than that of the other three hundred people at the ceremony? All human life isn't equal after all, Doctor Tenma?" That voice was sweet like the most delicious poisonous fruit, and the torture tools were out now.

*I mustn't give in to this.. mustn't..*

The doctor gritted his teeth. "What happened to her? What happened to Schubert? How many casualties were there?" He now remembered that he had shot out one of the library doors, helping the trapped people to escape from the main hall, but as the fire had consumed most of the library by that time, the number of deaths could still have been horrendous.

"Doctor Tenma", Johan uttered in the tone of a teacher scolding a bright but inattentive student. "You should have realised by now that I am interested in scenarios, not outcomes. Also, you should know that I would take care of my little sister." With that, he gave another smile, but this one was so cold that it made the blood in Tenma's veins freeze. "Oh, by the way..." Johan continued slowly, the smile broadening to reveal a row of perfectly even white teeth, and it was quite clear that what would follow was not simply an accidental afterthought appearing in the monster's mind. ".. I saw your friend Doctor Reichwein and the little boy on the way out."

The doctor's heart stopped for a long, long second. "Wha.. No.. You.. If you.. I will.." He frantically tugged at his bonds once again, a wave of choking heat washing over his body.

".. kill me?" The young man filled in the last blank, slightly raising one slender eyebrow. "Your last attempt was not very impressive, my dear doctor, to say the very least. I could have hardly provided a better target for you, even if I had painted the bull's eye right in the middle of my forehead. Aah, Doctor Tenma.." Johan lightly shook his head in a disappointment that seemed surprisingly sincere. ".. after all that training you had, all that trouble you went through in order to obtain a sniper rifle, all those times that you observed me from behind a bush – and you still weren't man enough to rid the world of what you have inflicted upon it as a result of your good intentions. But tell me..

The torture tools were slowly but unrelentingly cutting into the older man's flesh, centimetre by centimetre, aiming for his very heart.

".. it must be frustrating to know that even though you have now stained your hands with the blood of another human being and brought all the people close to you in danger, you have still failed to achieve your goal when it was so close."

This time, Tenma could not suppress the shaky sob that left his lips. His eyes closed, his body limp and covered with cold sweat, he intently hoped that he could die on this very spot.

*Thinking that killing me is the worst thing he could do.. how stupid of me..*

"I will go out for a while. Make sure to wait for me here." With that final mockery, the doctor was left to his own devices.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

She tied you to her kitchen chair
She broke your throne and she cut your hair
And from your lips she drew the Hallelujah

(Leonard Cohen)

There is a patient waiting for me here... waiting for me... behind the door, a little boy... the gaping hole in that tiny head... I must... the rattling of keys... someone locked the operation room... I will never get out again... never... NEVER!

Tenma woke up with a gasp, almost overstretching his arm muscles as he tried to sit up in his bed. Then he remembered. His headache was gone, only to be replaced by soreness in his back and a painfully full bladder. He must have been asleep for a few hours, as he was now lying in complete dark, only a thin stretch of bright yellow visible where Tenma remembered the door to be. There was indeed a rattling of keys, however, and a few seconds later the door opened, a blaze of electric light filling the room and making the doctor screw up his eyes.

"Good evening, Doctor Tenma, did you have a nice rest?"

Tenma squinted. Johan was looking down at him with the most light-hearted of smiles, as if talking to a guest relaxing at a holiday resort. He was wearing a light, finely tailored grey suit with a white shirt and a blue tie which perfectly matched the colour of his eyes.

"What do you think?" Tenma growled. The formal wear, and the fact that the monster seemed to be in a good mood (in as far as the term "good mood" was applicable to him) caused the doctor to feel decidedly uneasy.

Where has he been just now?

Tenma decided not to think about this matter in favour of keeping his sanity. As if reading the older man's thoughts, Johan chuckled. "I am thinking many things right now, my dear doctor, and I am quite sure that you don't want to know most of them." He continued looking down at his captive, mustering him with the same careless, slightly bemused smile, as if examining an interesting museum exhibit. His eyes were slowly sliding over the older man's body, and the latter was almost thankful that the painful urge in his body began to demand his full attention before he even had the chance to contemplate on how that look made him feel.

"Johan, I really need to... use the bathroom." Tenma felt blood rush to his cheeks. This was definitely not something he would normally share with another person, but his bladder was throbbing by now, threatening to burst. "Could you...?"

Tenma suddenly felt his mouth go dry. Being a mentally sound person, he was not even considering the possibility that Johan could deny him a basic need like this until a second ago, when a cruel edge crept into the young man's smile.
Oh dear God no...

"Of course", his captor purposefully let his words come out very slowly, syllable by accentuated syllable. "That would be very embarrassing, wouldn't it? What was it that they used to call you when you were a child? Oh, yes. Sissy Pants Tenma, right?" The monster giggled. "Children can be so cruel, can't they?"

Not as cruel as you, you sick bastard.

"I wonder if they picked on you because you wet yourself, or if you started wetting yourself because they picked on you." Johan tilted his head in contemplation, holding his captive's gaze in a deadly grip with his own sky blue eyes. "Hmm...". Through a veil of despair, Tenma took notice of his burning cheeks, as well as the burning question how Johan could possibly have obtained this kind of information about him. However, right now, there were more urgent matters to focus on.

"Please," he groaned, "I promise, I won't try to escape. Or anything else. It will only be a minute. Just... please." There he was, begging. At this point, Tenma would probably have agreed to lick the young man's shiny black shoes. Because of his childhood experiences, he was indeed horrified by the thought of losing control of his bladder in public, and if Johan knew something well, it was how to put the hook where it hurt most. And how to make sure that hook was red-hot.

He is a surgeon, like me. Except, he's the hell's surgeon. He'll cut me open, layer by layer, then let me slowly bleed to death. Oh, please let me die quickly...

"Well, Doctor Tenma,..." The monster approached the rear end of the bed, moving in slow motion, and picked up one loose end of the rope which tied Tenma's right leg to a bedpost, playfully moving it around in his fingers. "Since you are an exceptionally intelligent person, I believe that you can imagine what kind of behaviour I would not like to see from you if I were to release you from these bonds. Or what consequences unfavourable behaviour on your part might have for those people close to you."

Johan sat down on the footboard and took an elongate object out of his pocket. He gave it a quick shake. It was a butterfly knife. "You know where this little monologue of mine is going, right?" The young man was watching his hand as he skilfully flipped the knife a few times. Then he returned his attention to the doctor, his face displaying that light, untroubled smile once again. "Right?"

"Yes. Yes, right. God! Just release me. Please!" Tenma did not even try to hide his agony, and Johan obviously took pity on him, as he did not further protract the process of cutting through his captive's bonds.

When he was finished, Tenma almost sobbed in relief, his mind feeling as blank as the once white bathroom wall he was now staring at.

"Doctor Tenma..."

Startled, he frantically dragged up his trousers; sure enough, there was no lock on the door. However, Johan did not come in, speaking through the thin wooden door instead.

"You are welcome to take a shower, if you like. There are fresh towels in the bathroom cabinet, and some fresh clothes. I think they will fit you." There was a pause. "I will give you twenty minutes."

Twenty minutes!
That was a lot more than Tenma could have hoped for. "Umm.. yes." The older man was disgusted by how grateful his voice sounded, and took a deep breath as he heard Johan's light steps walking away from the door. He listened out for any subsequent noises while carefully examining the room. It was shabby-looking and bare, but seemed reasonably clean. There was no furniture, apart from the small white cabinet, and no décor, which considering the questionable art in the room where he had been kept was probably not a bad thing. He heard an indefinable metallic rattling sound coming from somewhere on the other side of the door.

Is it really safe to take a shower? Why would he suddenly be so generous?

However, the truth was, Tenma needed a shower so badly that he didn't really care any more.

He let out a shaky sigh as the hot water hit his body, the water pressure being unexpectedly and pleasantly high, and pressed his face against the cool tiles of the bathroom wall. His face burnt when water streamed over it, and he regretted that there was no mirror for him to see how bad it looked after that guy...

His fingers clawed into the wall, and he purposefully and painfully banged his head against it, trying to drive the thought out through sheer physical force. Now was not the time to torment himself with the thought that he had killed another human (albeit in an act that would certainly qualify as self-defence before the court – details like this mattered little to Tenma's conscience). Johan would attend to the tormenting side of the whole mess he currently found himself in. He needed to focus on staying calm and rational and finding a solution.

Think, think, think!

The doctor automatically grabbed a bottle of shampoo, hoping that a simple and practical act like washing his hair would help him to chase away the madness that was waiting right at the entrance to his soul like a hungry hyena – a hyena with blond hair and blue eyes.

Does he actually live here at the moment? It doesn't seem like his kind of place. Or is all of this arranged just for me?

Tenma suspiciously eyed the bottle, which looked fairly expensive, before squeezing some shampoo into his hand. The thought of possibly sharing toiletries with Johan did not appeal to him, but this was hardly his major concern right now.

Surely, this hotel belongs to one of his pawns, so there's no point screaming for help. I wonder where it is. The fire was in the early afternoon, and I woke up in the early evening, so it can't be far from Munich. That means... there is a chance that Dr. Reichwein and the others could come looking for me and bring themselves in further danger. If he has not actually captured them...

Tenma shuddered at the thought, but after contemplating it briefly he shook his head and started applying shower gel.

No, that wouldn't be necessary. He is certainly observing them, but to capture them in order to threaten me would only cause him hassle. He likes things the elegant way. But with Nina...

The doctor had to admit that he wasn't sure what Johan's plans for Nina were, but he was fairly certain that the young man would not kill his sister, so he decided to postpone this worry.

I wonder if I could overpower him... But even if I could – there is a good chance his men would know and take actions... He's too clever... I can't risk that.

Dieter's face appeared before Tenma, and he quickly washed away the remaining foam and turned
off the water. Feeling refreshed, he suddenly realised that his scope of action boiled down to two options: Either finding a way to escape should Johan leave him on his own again – or negotiating with the monster. But in order to negotiate, he needed to face the most obvious question first, the one he still had not asked, the one that truly scared him. "What do you want from me? Why am I here?" Tenma whispered into the towel as he was slowly drying off his face. He had to find out as soon as possible. In the meantime, there was no other way than to shut off all emotions and ignore Johan's humiliations.

He has done his research. There is yet more to come.

The doctor took a pair of black trousers, a light brown jumper, a pair of boxers and some socks out of the cupboard. Everything fitted perfectly. He even knows the size of my underwear, Tenma thought grimly before leaving the bathroom.

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He found himself in a narrow corridor and turned to the right, following a noise. There was a doorless opening, only a few steps away, which lead into a small kitchen. Johan was standing in front of the cooker. He had just closed the oven door and was manipulating the knobs.

Is he... COOKING?

Tenma's jaw dropped. The thought seemed uniquely bizarre under the current circumstances, yet judging by the looks of the working surface, there could be no doubt.

"Feeling better?" Johan enquired softly, his attention still focused on the cooker knobs.

That devil can even cook in a white shirt and tie without making a mess of himself...

"Er..." was all that Tenma could utter. The young man finally turned around to face him, a ghost of a smile playing on his lips. He was no longer wearing a suit jacket, and the white shirt accentuated his broad shoulders and slim waist in equal measures. Tenma suddenly realised that they have never stood that close to each other yet, apart from those times when Johan walked past him in the library, and on the roof of that building...

"You didn't think I could cook?"

"No", the doctor admitted simply, too baffled by the oddness of the whole situation to look for a better answer.

"Well, you haven't eaten anything in a while, since you spent the night in the library, have you?"

"No."

This was not going well.

"What did you have a think about in the shower?"

Tenma gaped at the young man. He surely wasted no time on his mission to provoke the doctor as far out of his comfort zone as possible.

"Johan, what..." The older man swallowed hard as Johan put on a most innocent face which made him look just like the pretty twenty-year-old boy that he was on the surface. ".. what do you want from me?"
That immaculate face looked delighted. "I thought you would finally muster up the courage to ask me that, Doctor Tenma. I'm afraid my answer won't be very satisfying for you, but first... come and sit over here."

Johan pointed to a kitchen chair. Tenma complied at first, but immediately jumped up when Johan put his hand into a pocket of his jacket (which was now hanging on a second chair) to produce a pair of handcuffs held together by a long chain.

"Wha.. wait! I thought we agreed that I won't do anything... inappropriate. You don't need to handcuff me!" Tenma's mind was racing anxiously.

If he ties me up again, maybe I will never get the chance to... Maybe I should just... But the knife...

"No", Johan agreed in a perfectly calm voice, "but I want to. So sit down and put your hands behind your back."

His face was placid, but Tenma was well aware that the monster's eyes have just narrowed, only very slightly. He did not really have a choice. Frustrated, he let himself fall onto the chair. How could he have been charmed, even for a short moment, by the angelic look on the monster's face, just a few seconds ago?

"Does this give you a little power trip?" The older man muttered, putting his hands behind his back just as he was told. He instantly regretted his comment when he heard an outburst of laughter from behind him.

"My dear, dear Doctor Tenma" his tormentor purred sweetly, leaning in so that his breath brushed against Tenma's neck, setting his hair on edge as soon as the monster spoke again, quietly. "The way you seem to react to me, I only need to be in your proximity if I feel like a power trip, which, by the way, is not my main purpose. Isn't that right?"

Tenma flinched helplessly. His breath caught in his throat.

"Isn't that right, Doctor Tenma?" Johan's words were only a whisper, his lips so close now that Tenma could feel them moving along his neck, just short of touching it, the warm breath on his sensitive skin causing his whole body to feel as if it was numb and crawling with ants at the same time.

What is he.. ?

"I don't... know... what you're... talking about", he managed to press out through gritted teeth.

"No?" Johan exhaled into Tenma's ear, and the doctor had to bite his lip hard in order to suppress a startled cry.

What is he DOING?

"Oh." Johan withdrew abruptly and proceeded to handcuff his captive's hands behind the chair, adjusting the chain length to allow only little room for movement. "Your hands are sweaty", he muttered under his breath, before returning to face Tenma. The latter was looking down onto the floor, acutely aware of the fact that his face was probably the colour of a ripe tomato, and his breath was still visibly shaky.

This is what I get for trying to step into his territory of mind play. There's no point talking... or listening to him beyond the absolutely necessary. Everything else is just... self-destructive. I must ignore all of this nonsense. He was trying to push Johan's strange words, and the unwanted reactions
of his body which have just proven them right, far away, when the monster drew the second chair closer and sat down right opposite him.

Tenma's situation didn't look as if it was going to improve anytime soon.
Eyes still turned to the floor, Tenma decided that he was done playing games. Whatever Johan's actual intention was, it looked like he was keen to get some sick entertainment along the way, and the doctor was less than keen to provide that entertainment for him.

"Tell me what you want", he tried again, attempting to match Johan's unfailingly calm tone. "If you wish to kill me, then do it already." He started to despise that voice within him that could never stop embracing life, the voice that wanted to come home. Tenma had not had a home for too long; maybe he never did.

"No, I do not wish to kill you, since you are the one who is going to erase me, remember?" Johan's voice came from way too close, his tone reminiscent of an adult patiently explaining an obvious fact to a slightly confused child. "Now, let's have a look at your face."

Johan's fingertips were warm and soft when they came to lay upon both sides of Tenma's face, but the doctor winced as if they were pointy icicles. Icicles so cold they made his skin burn.

"Don't... " He hissed, trying to shake off the other man's hands, but Johan's grip was light yet persistent.

*Don't TOUCH me. Insult me as much as you like, just don't... TOUCH...*

"Stop struggling. I need to see if there are any wounds I should treat." Gently but firmly, Johan applied pressure to lift up his captive's face. Tenma tried to relax. Resisting was a sure way to urge the monster on, to act out his allocated role in this absurd play. He kept his eyes down as the young man scrutinised his face, carefully turning it to one side, then the other.

"Aaah.. I would have punished Roberto for hitting you in the face, Doctor Tenma. But you punished him yourself, didn't you?"

*Well guess what, I already made up my mind about this, you can't get to me with this anymore.*

Tenma triumphed as one of Johan's poisonous arrows shot past him. But whether his tormentor had noticed it or not, he did not let it show.

*Coulould you just stop STARING at me already? God...*

It felt like the young man's gaze was burying its way deep into him, making his blood inexplicably freeze and boil at the same time.
As if hearing his silent plea, Johan suddenly let go of his face, turning slightly to take something from a shelf. "Your face looks different from when we first met again after nine years." His hands were now holding a small bottle of antiseptic and a gauze pad. "You look much older."

**Yeah? And whose fault could that be?**

"You decided not to talk to me anymore?"

Tenma watched Johan's smooth long hands as they poured a few drops of the liquid onto the gauze. "You still haven't answered my question," he countered, drawing his breath in sharply as Johan pressed the pad to a cut just above his brow, where Roberto had hit him with his own rifle. "Shhhh.." Johan's voice held an unexpected soothing quality which made the doctor feel anything but soothed.

"Would you STOP treating me like a child?" Tenma exploded, finally looking up at Johan. "I am a lot older than you. I don't think any of this is necessary. I can treat my wounds myself. I am the doctor, no?"

The young man leaned away for a second, obviously amused by his captive's outburst, before covering the wound with a plaster. "You know..." he began while smoothing the plaster out with one long finger. Looking into Johan's eyes was like being lost at sea, far away from any human settlement. "...I've always wanted to do this."

"What, play doctor?" Tenma tried to put his feet back onto solid ground.

"No. Touch your face."

All solid ground slid away and Tenma sunk in, his heart skipping a beat. Now he was the one staring into that calm face, and Johan held his gaze, unmoved. And apparently, he decided to up the oddness of what he had just said.

"I quite like your hair long like that."

Tenma could only stare with his mouth open and his mind filled up to the brim with question marks. Not that Johan's words and actions made a lot of sense to him in general, but this did not make any sense whatsoever. And it caused his stomach to do a back flip, which made even less sense.

"But I don't like the stubble. So let's do something about it."

The question marks in Tenma's head turned into bright red exclamation marks when he saw Johan take a straight razor with a square point from the shelf. The handcuffs cut painfully into his wrists as his body tensed.

"Don't worry", Johan smiled in response to his captive's horrified look. "I use this one myself, so I'm quite skilled."

**Oh I'm sure you ARE skilled with a cut throat, damn you.**

"You only need to hold still so that I don't cut you accidentally."

Tenma looked around himself in panic, as if expecting an escape door to magically open for him in the middle of the kitchen. "What is all this farce about? Why...?"

"You like a clean shave."

"Yes, and I like to shave myself, and not with that... thing!"
And I would prefer not to be shaved by a psychopath who has just revealed to me that he'd always wanted to touch my face.

"Well, I don't have one of those electric razors you normally use, and there's no mirror, so if I let you shave yourself with this 'thing' you will end up killing yourself."

"Doesn't sound like a bad option to me", Tenma growled.

Johan laughed out cheerfully. "I'm glad you rediscovered your sense of humour, Doctor Tenma. Now, hold still." A warm, wet towel materialised itself on the older man's face and was pressed down gently.

I wasn't joking.

"Can't we just talk like grown men?" He desperately tried a different route as his captor began to apply shaving lather to the lower part of his face with slow, circular brush strokes. Tenma wondered if he could appeal to some sort of masculine pride in the young man.

"I would not advise you to talk too much, or you will get soap in your mouth. And once you calm down and behave like a grown-up man, I will talk to you like a grown-up man", Johan promised, setting out to sharpen the razor on a leather strop. The noise chilled Tenma to the bone.

Do you even know what masculine pride IS?

However, his tormentor had a point. The only way to achieve anything at all was to calm down and meet him on his own ground of cold reasoning. Any weakness, any hurt feelings, any sort of emotional reaction to his actions were like ambrosia to the monster, and he would wring his opposite out to the very last drop of it.

Tenma did his best not to jerk as the cold blade touched his left cheek, running smoothly along the skin. Johan's other hand was firmly holding his face once again, carefully moving it to the right position and stretching the skin.

"You sure love blades" the doctor pressed out, rather randomly, as Johan rinsed the razor. Talking made him feel a bit more confident as he was beginning to wonder how much more humiliation he could take.

The monster chuckled. "Maybe it's a Freudian thing." Tenma raised a brow, wearily.

Is this what you call a joke?

"Now, regarding the issue of why I brought you here..."

The sentence sounded promising, yet Tenma found himself struggling to focus on Johan's smooth voice. It took a lot of willpower to suppress the shivers that the scraping of the blade against his skin sent through him. What was far worse, however, was that his brain was still trying – and failing – to process the feeling of Johan's fingers on that same skin. Of course, being a doctor, Tenma was used to close physical contact with patients. However, in his private life, if he had a private life at all, he was not the person to be comfortable with being touched that intimately by a stranger. Particularly if that stranger was a man. And particularly if that man was Johan, the monster. Tenma valued his personal space very much, and Johan was brutally and purposefully invading it with his hands, his face (which was too close – way too close – as it was monitoring what his hands were doing), even his smell. A fresh, sweet smell, unobtrusive, but well noticeable from this distance. Simply everything about the young man's surface seemed sweet... and Tenma helplessly felt his body starting to fall for this sweetness, against his will, despite the torture inflicted upon him, despite
everything he knew about Johan. Well, despite just about everything he knew and valued. Johan's touch was pointedly gentle, and not near as disgusting as Tenma would have liked it to be. In fact, it was as if, at this point in time, his brain refused to receive signals from any other source than the nerve endings underneath Johan's soft fingertips, and where his breath lightly touched the older man's face. It was confusing, humiliating, maddening. Tenma frantically tried to focus his thoughts on something else, anything: escape plans, Nina's well-being, the rather pleasant smell that started to emanate from the oven. But the monster's presence had already tied him up in a straitjacket that seemed more inescapable than the handcuffs around his wrists.

"... I did not plan it, so there is no elaborate reasoning behind it."

It was a tremendous exercise in willpower to try and hold up a conversation.

"Oh, I assumed, you always have a plan." Tenma could only speak in the short intervals when Johan was rinsing the blade in a porcelain bowl, which now seemed like a good thing.

"Well, yes, and you did not play your chosen part in my last plan. I already mentioned that I am quite disappointed."

And I do not care in the least about your approval.

"If your plan was to be killed, then why don't you kill yourself", Tenma suggested, cautiously. He was quite prepared to die, but angering the monster while it held an open razor to his face still hardly seemed like a good idea.

Johan sighed and shook his head, a few strands of light blond hair falling across his forehead. "You still don't understand." The razor was moving along the sensitive skin of Tenma's neck. "I don't want to die like that. I want to be erased when I am the only one left. The library was a good approximation, millennia of human wisdom burning to ashes."

Tenma realised that his eyes must have been closed for a while – feeling and smelling and hearing Johan was already more than he could handle – when he opened them to look at the monster. His face had a decidedly dreamy, even slightly sad quality, one corner of his mouth curled up in a hint of a smile. He did not expect the young man to suddenly be this frank, and he was not sure if he could bear it.

"You were playing with all those people's lives just so that you can create the perfect scenario for your own death?"

"Mmh."

"But... why...?"

"You can't understand, since you have a name." Their eyes locked and Tenma was immersed in that immeasurable still ocean once again, with no hope for a lifesaver. "I want others to see the barren land that I see, even for a moment." Mysterious deep sea creatures were lurking beneath the placid surface, waiting to consume him.

How did you become like that? How could any human being... become like that?

The doctor found himself deeply disturbed, but at the same time strangely affected by Johan's voice, uttering the most impossible things in such an inhumanly calm manner. He felt almost relieved when the young man turned his face further upwards by the chin and their eye contact broke.

"Now, the reason why you're here is that I thought it would be interesting for us to spend some time
together. That's all."

Er... HUH?

"After all", the monster placed his blade at the top of Tenma's chin, moving down in one long stroke, "we play an important part in each other's lives, and we barely know each other."

Johan's thumb moved slightly upwards to rest just underneath the older man's lower lip, his voice suddenly gaining a warm, guttural quality.

"Though I know a lot about you, Doctor Tenma..."

That thumb moved to softly brush along his lip, trailing its curve. Tenma flinched, as if struck by an electric shock – sure enough followed by a sharp pain as the razor cut into his flesh.

"Aaagh...!"

"I told you to hold still."

"BASTARD!"

"Such language from a well-educated man like you, doctor?" Johan smiled coldly, leaning away and letting the bloodstained blade slip into the bowl. He was obviously pleased to have his captive exactly where he wanted him – raging.

You are even sicker than I thought. A LOT.

"Well, I'm finished anyway." The monster pressed a styptic pencil to the cut until it stopped bleeding, then carefully patted the older man's face with the wet towel, followed by another, dry towel. Tenma endured, his fists clenched, not sure whether he was more furious with Johan, or himself. And whether what he felt was actual fury – or sheer panic.

Is this NEVER going to end?

"Ah, much better", Johan assured him. His knuckles glided along the line of Tenma's cheekbone, leaving a trail of lit-up nerve endings on their way.

"Cut it out!" Tenma was alarmed at how breathless his voice sounded. His body just didn't seem to be able to get accustomed to the sensation. If anything, it was getting worse. The more he had of that unwanted touch, the more sensitive his skin was becoming, the more he was waiting for it.

Johan's hand stopped in its motion, but instead, his calm gaze moved unhurriedly downwards along Tenma's face until it came to rest upon his mouth. The doctor's heart froze in his chest, only to instantly melt into a throbbing mess. He found himself staring at Johan's own beautifully curved lips, slightly opened in a wicked smile.

"Yes.. MUCH better.."

No.. you aren't going to.. you can't.. it can't..

A sharp beeping noise suddenly cut through the silence, making Tenma jump in his seat.

"Dinner's ready."

Johan got up to take care of the cooker, and the doctor limply leaned his head against the back of the chair, eyes closed, trying to regain control over his breathing. Never in his life had he felt this kind of
fear; not even in the operation room, or when Roberto had him at gunpoint. What was happening a second ago.. It could not be what it seemed to be. It was simply impossible. It was..

There was a clattering noise in front of him, and a moment later his handcuffs were removed. Tenma fought hard to resist the overwhelming urge to jump up and run towards the door of the apartment – or where he expected the door of the apartment to be.

"Well? Eat."

The doctor forced himself to open his eyes and grab a fork. The adrenaline in his blood was so high that the sheer thought of eating something caused him nausea. But at the same time he was starving, and eating was unspeakably better than other things that could be happening at this very moment. Things he could not have dreamed of in his worst nightmare.

The Auflauf* that Johan had prepared was indeed surprisingly good, and Tenma felt the nausea wane slightly after a few forkfuls, but it did little to improve his gloomy mood. For a while, he eyed the blunt looking table-knife lying next to his plate in despair, before looking up in sudden realisation. Sure enough, the monster had followed his gaze and was now looking at him in slight amusement while chewing at his own portion. Mercifully, he refrained from a comment.

"Oh, I forgot... Would you like some wine?"

Tenma gaped.

"No."

*What do you think this is, a bloody date?*

"Fine."

Johan poured himself a glass of what looked like an expensive red wine and they continued eating in silence, for which Tenma was less than grateful right now.

*Say something... where have all your quips gone... anything... just don't leave me alone with my thoughts...*

But thoughts were coming, mercilessly. Questions. Even in his teens and early twenties, Tenma had always regarded himself as a sensible and very self-disciplined person. Or maybe not even regarded himself as such. He never questioned these qualities, since this was how he was raised and cut out for his role in society. Then why did his body play such a trick on him now, in his late thirties, and in the most ridiculous circumstances? And what kind of trick was it?

Obviously, I'm NOT attracted to men... I've been engaged... to a WOMAN... and, well...

Yes, certainly, Johan was heart-stoppingly beautiful. This was a simple fact, like two plus two equals four. And not just beautiful. Intelligent. Eloquent. Charismatic. But there were many people like that.

No, not like Johan.

Tenma clenched his fist around the fork until his fingers went white.

But he is ALSO manipulative. Cruel. Heartless. Well... a mass murdering psychopath who I was... who I AM planning to kill... WHAT THE HELL?

There was another, not less frightening question of why Johan was subjecting him to exactly this
kind of torture. All the weird things he said. The touching. It was not accidental. Probably, he was (correctly) assuming that this was simply a very efficient way to destroy his captive from within. Unless...

No, don't think that! Don't even GO there... don't.

... unless these were actual sexual advances.

Tenma choked on his food and doubled over in a severe coughing fit. When he could breathe again, he looked up to find Johan smirking at him over the rim of his empty glass.

"Was the food that bad?"

"Um.. no."

Tenma suddenly realised that he had finished his portion and gulped down a polite phrase that he almost uttered out of habit. Complimenting the monster on his cooking seemed very wrong. In more than one way.

"Hmm.", Johan did not let his captive out of his sight for a second, carefully studying his face, and Tenma wondered in dismay how much of what he thought was clearly written on his face for the monster to read and throw back at him when he would least expect it. He has always been terrible at poker.

"You must be very tired, Doctor Tenma. Dozing on top of a bookshelf must be rather uncomfortable. You should prepare yourself for bed. There's a toothbrush for you in the bathroom."

Prepare myself... for bed?

The doctor's hands were shaking so much that putting tooth paste on a brush turned out to be a challenging task. He brushed fiercely, trying to suppress the fear that was filling his guts like cold fog, slowly spreading into his entire body. He was not entirely sure what he was so scared of, but scared he was.

Will he tie me up again? Will he...?

Tenma looked around in anguish. Was there not a single object he could use to knock the monster out? Maybe he could screw off a tap... no, this would take too long. He had to talk to him. He had to persuade him. He just had to do... something.

When he came out, the monster was already waiting for him. Of course. Tenma followed him into the bedroom.

"I will need to secure you, Doctor Tenma, but I will give you a bit more freedom so that you can sleep more comfortably."

"Look, Johan...", Tenma started, licking his lips.

"Yes, Doctor Tenma?" Johan smiled at him, reassuringly, but his eyes and voice were an icy river, and Tenma was fighting to keep his balance in its deadly current.

"Look... I do not think that it will be interesting if we spend time together. I don't want to spend time with you."

Why does my voice have to tremble that much?
"Now that's a pity...", Johan's initial fake pout quickly spread into a cruel grin, "... since you won't have a choice. And I thought you had the reputation of caring about former patients."

"But there is... no reason for this", Tenma protested desperately, ignoring the mockery. "If you want to know something about me, then... ask me... but this is simply..."

"Doctor Tenma", the young man sighed like a professor asked to summarise the main points of his lecture for a lazy student, "You didn't pay attention. I said I already knew enough about you. Now I want to know you. There's a difference. See?"

"But I don't want you to know me, and I don't want to know you", Tenma barked, at the very end of his tether. "I know you way too much already for my liking. I wish I had never met you in the first place!"

"Well, you'll be rid of me for now", Johan shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly, paying no heed to his captive's outbursts. "I won't spend the night here with you." He observed the older man's breath catching at the ambiguous formulation and gave him another mocking smirk. "Hope you're not too disappointed."

It was the final nail in the coffin of Tenma's countenance. He snapped, and then things went very quickly. He couldn't even tell how, only seconds after his futile attack, he ended up with his back pressed into the monster's chest and the butterfly knife pressed to his throat.

"Doctor Tenma!" Johan exhaled in mock surprise.

"You said.. you wanted to be.. killed by me" Tenma hissed breathlessly before the knife pressed further into his flesh, just short of breaking the skin.

"Well, yes, but since you missed your chance, you will have to patiently wait until I offer you another opportunity."

Tenma shuddered from fury and embarrassment, from Johan's quietly uttered words, from the feeling of these words being uttered straight into his ear, their heads being pressed together. His whole body felt like jelly, and he could hear madness approaching in long, heavy strides. And he was welcoming it with open arms.

"I will only forgive you this once, and only because it's you, Doctor Tenma. You understand."

There was no breathlessness in Johan's voice, no threat, not even a hint of aggression. It was merely stating, void of any emotions.

When the monster let go, the doctor's knees gave in and he sunk to the ground. His eyes were burning as they gazed into emptiness.

"And it has been a rather enjoyable evening. Did you have to ruin it?" Johan stretched out a hand to help him up.

"Fuck you", Tenma suggested, ignoring the helpful hand while struggling to his feet. He was deadly exhausted from the constant mental battle against Johan's provocations, and even more so from the one he fought against himself. Face-saving strategies hardly mattered any more.

Tie me up quickly, and then go to hell. So I can cry. Scream. Just... go.

Chapter End Notes
* Auflauf: A German bake
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Light up, light up
As if you have a choice
(Snow Patrol)

When Tenma woke up his bonds were gone. He jumped up, swayed, almost fell back on to the bed, weakened by the confinement. The room was plunged in darkness. He had to get out, quick. Tenma stumbled into the corridor. Streaks of moonlight fell across the front door, though the doctor could not make out a window. And chained to that door was.. Johan.

He was naked. His body was as beautiful as his face, as if taken from a page of Tenma's anatomy books. Every muscle defined to perfection, flawless. The pale light dripped down his sleek skin like milk; his voice was pure honey.

"My dear Doctor Tenma, look at me! The mo-"

Tenma covered Johan's mouth with his fingers. Why were they suddenly so close, when had he come up to the door?

He pressed his face into that warm, smooth, immaculate skin, kissed his face, neck, shoulders, run fingers across his chest.. so beautiful. Tenma wanted to drink him in, to loose himself, his heart fluttering tumultuously, like a swarm of butterflies caught with a silk net..

I will never get out again..

The doctor's eyes fluttered open, slowly at first, then suddenly wide as his mouth joined in. His face felt hot, as did another area further south, filling him with embarrassment so deep he instantly wished he had never woken up.

Or maybe I wish I had never woken up, because.. NO!

Johan was leaning out of the open window at the opposite side of the room, his back turned to the doctor. He had pushed back the curtains, allowing the sunshine of a clear autumn day to fill the air.

DON'T TURN AROUND!

The doctor was desperately persuading his blood to leave that particular part of his anatomy, moving slightly to rub his sweaty face against the fabric of his jumper. Finally, his heartbeat was beginning to slow down, but the image of Johan's beautiful, exposed body refused to leave his head.

How can I dream something like THAT? After yesterday, after all that he's..

"You slept for a long time. It's almost midday."

Obviously, the doctor's movements, no matter how cautious, did not fail to catch the monster's attention. Tenma decided not to engage in purposeless conversation, even if it meant that Johan's
translucent voice continued to spin around in his head.

"I bought tickets earlier this morning. I'm going away in tree days' time. Thought you would be pleased to know, since I am planning to let you go when I leave."

Tenma was not entirely sure if he was pleased about the prospect of having to endure three more days of this... whatever 'this' was.

Three days. That's seventy two hours. That's four thousand three hundred and twenty minutes. That's...

Sadly, the task of calculating the amount of milliseconds did not keep the doctor's brain engaged for too long. He couldn't bear the silence.

"Where are you going?"

Tenma knew he would regret this. The monster turned around to give him a smile tinted with melancholy. The sun was playing hide-and-seek in his blond hair, creating the impression that his head was glowing. Tenma was not sure anymore if it was daylight that illuminated the room – or if it was Johan.

Oh yes, you could light up a whole palace. You would light it up, then set it on fire. Damn you, you gorgeous bastard.

"Really, Doctor Tenma", Johan chided softly, turning away once more to place his chin on his arms which were folded up on top of the window frame. "It would be against the rules if I told you that, would it not? You will have to hunt me down. And I will have to wait for you. That's how it goes."

"What's all of this to you?" Tenma cringed. "You talk as if your life was just a game."

"But it is. I always failed to understand how it seems to be something else to other people."

There was a quiet exhale, not quite a full-blown sigh.

In what kind of a strange mood is he today?

"You should have a look at all these tiny matchstick men rushing about their daily business underneath here. They all look so purposeful and pleased with themselves. It would be tragic, if it wasn't so ludicrous." Johan chuckled.

The doctor furrowed his brows, slightly perplexed.

"Did you never see anything valuable in your life at all? You, of all p-"

Tenma bit his lip. He was talking too much for his own good. But it was too late.

"Me, of all people? How do you mean that, Doctor Tenma?" Johan asked sweetly. He closed the window and turned around to face his captive.

"Umm, well." Making compliments to the monster who had him tied up by his arms and legs seemed a ridiculous thing to do. "You obviously are an intelligent and well-educated young man who had a family... no, several families who cared for him. Whatever happened in your childhood... many orphans dream to be that lucky, yet you.."

He was interrupted by an outburst of resounding laughter.
"What's so funny?" Tenma grumbled.

"Oh, it just never ceases to amuse me how people like you seem to regard intelligence and erudition as the philosopher's stone, while it's a commonplace that the dumb ones are the happy ones." Johan had come up to the bed and was now sneering down at him, eyes crystal clear and cold.

You need a good punch to wipe that smugness off your face, you..

Tenma was surprised at the thoughts that were creeping into his head. He had always despised violence, but apparently, even a single day in Johan's company was enough to make him start losing his principles.

"There is nothing wrong with intelligence", he muttered, "if you employ it for a worthy purpose instead of using it to insult and hurt people.."

"Oh? And what is a worthy purpose, Doctor Tenma?"

Tenma could have slapped himself for letting the monster entangle him in a conversation which could not possibly lead to any good.

"Well, to better yourself, at the very least."

And I will not even TRY talking to you about such obviously ridiculous purposes as helping others...

"I see. And do you feel that you have bettered yourself by exchanging a scalpel for a rifle, Doctor Tenma?"

The older man sighed, turning away. There was indeed no point in talking to Johan. It was like blowing a dandelion clock against a hollow wall made of of slippery ice.

"To better yourself...", Johan mused, taking a seat on the bed next to Tenma, their bodies just short of touching. "Is this a goal that you were brought up to pursue?"

The doctor was too occupied fighting the tenseness that overtook his muscles as soon as he felt Johan's closeness. He did not process the monster's words straight away. They sank in, however, and Tenma suddenly realised that Johan and himself were indeed complete opposites. The doctor had never, ever doubted the purposefulness of his existence. Not because he was particularly convinced of himself; this kind of thoughts simply had no place within the rigid society he grew up in. A failure to set and achieve goals has never been an option. Whereas Johan had apparently never doubted the lack of purpose in his existence. Still, Tenma certainly loved his way of life.

"No", he insisted eagerly. "That's something my heart tells me."

Instantly, he cringed at the cheesiness of his own words, intently hoping that Johan would let his statement slip by.

"You heart?"

He could not let it slip by. Of course not.

"Now, that's interesting."

And in a gesture which took the doctor completely by surprise and cut off his breath, the monster leaned in to lay his head on his captive's chest. Tenma felt his body turn rigid, trying to focus on inhaling and exhaling in an orderly fashion to keep his nerves at bay. He almost blurted out the
question if Johan had nothing else to do but to hang around and provoke him, but bit his tongue just in time. There were incomparably worse things that Johan could be doing right now. Tenma simply had to endure.

"I can hear it beat, Doctor." Johan's even voice adopted a thoughtful quality as he lightly placed a hand on Tenma's chest, right next to his head.

"Well, obviously... I'm alive..", Tenma breathed, feeling a tremble slowly starting to spread through his body. The barrier he had built to shut out everything that Johan had said and done the day before, to shut out the way his body had reacted, his embarrassing dream.. that barrier was breaking down, mercilessly.

Go away go away go away go away go away go away go away go away...

"Have you never found it surprising, Doctor Tenma, that while human life seems so complex and intricate on the surface, it is sustained by nothing more than this simple, fist-sized pump?"

Johan's head felt warm and heavy and so close against his chest. Tenma had to sustain the conversation by all means, or else..

"You know very well that human life is sustained by much more than the cardiovascular system.."

Johan's hand started to slowly slide along his chest.

".. since the central nervous system is just as impo.. ha.. tant.. and.."

Johan's fingers had accidentally (or maybe not so accidentally) brushed against his nipple, sending an unexpectedly strong signal to the very central nervous system he had just been talking about. He lost the thread of his argument. Sure enough, the monster's fingers stopped in their sliding motion and returned to rest on the spot that had caused the reaction. Tenma winced, feeling goose bumps raising on his skin.

"What's the matter, Doctor Tenma? I'm listening", Johan murmured, rubbing a finger along the bud, as if pressing the button to switch on electricity in the doctor's body.

"Jo.. Johan! Stop this!" Tenma exhaled, trembling, eyes widened in bewilderment.

"Are these sensitive spots, Doctor Tenma?"

Johan slightly moved his head, and then, without a warning, bit down on Tenma's other nipple through the thin fabric. Tenma shuddered violently and gave a stifled cry, as shock, pain and pleasure shot through him in equal measures, tearing the sorry remains of his composure to shreds.

"JOHAN!"

Overwhelmed by panic, the doctor began to wriggle in his bonds, hysterically and utterly futilely. Johan had indeed allowed him a little more freedom when chaining him to the bed with two pairs of cuffs yesterday evening, but it was far from enough to enable him to escape whatever Johan was planning to do. Soon, Tenma was out of breath, his muscles feeling like hot pudding. The monster was waiting patiently, watching him, his head slightly lifted from where it used to rest.

"Have you finished?" Johan enquired with an amused smile when the older man sank back into the mattress, panting heavily, and returned his head to Tenma's chest.

"Your heart beats a lot faster now, Doctor Tenma", he muttered, "I wonder if I will be able to feel
"your heartbeat here..."

The young man moved, his face brushing along the doctor's shoulder, to carefully press his lips to the throbbing artery on his captive's neck. There was a faint sound, a breathless whimper, and Tenma realised in dismay that it came from his own mouth as his heart picked up pace once more, blood rushing to relay the incredible feeling of Johan's lips to every corner of his body.

"Yes..", the monster purred against him, his breath warm and tingling, before replacing his mouth with increased pressure, gently sucking in the sensitive skin and eliciting another stunned mewl from his victim.

Tenma's protests left his mouth in embarrassingly inarticulate vocalisations as Johan's lips started to move upwards, unhurriedly, to place explorative kisses along the line of his neck. He tried to pull away, but the monster had already tangled one hand in his long hair, firmly holding him in place. Every brush of the young man's lips, every soft sucking resonated through his entire body, radiating warmth into every cell and sending his stomach fluttering wildly and utterly inexplicably.

"N.. no.. please.. Johan.. stop please stop pleasestoppleasestoppleasestop..

He ended on an almost screeching, terrified note which finally caught his tormentor's attention.

"What is it, Doctor Tenma?" Johan asked simply, placing a light kiss just behind Tenma's earlobe, as if there was nothing in the least weird about his actions.

"Don't", Tenma whimpered, his mouth dry and numb. He felt as if his body was tied up with a light string, unable to move while Johan was switching on the light bulbs, one by one by one.

This should be repulsive. Repulsive. How can he make me feel this way? How..?

"Why are you acting so surprised?" The monster whispered into his ear, making the goose bumps on his skin turn into white-hot needles. "You knew where this was going."

Johan dipped his tongue into that spot behind the doctor's ear and started trailing it down the curve of his neck, the wet heat turning Tenma's blood into liquid fire. He exhaled sharply, the handcuffs cutting painfully into his wrists as his fists clenched repeatedly.

"I don't think my attempts at flirting were too subtle", the young man purred into Tenma's collarbone.

"Flirtng?" The doctor managed to press out through gritted teeth, shaking uncontrollably. "Youmean.. torturingme.. andteningme.. withaknifeeyes?"

Johan chuckled softly, the sound vibrating against Tenma's skin, and ran his tongue along the outer shell of Tenma's ear before allowing it to slide in.

Tenma jerked and cried out, a surge of blissful heat rushing through his body, head to toe, his stomach turning a breathtaking somersault. He could feel Johan smiling against his ear and slowly dip his tongue in and out several times, his heart racing dangerously in his chest as tingling shivers ran up and down his spine, making his breath hitch again and again. And then he could not help but noticing it: that urge slowly starting to build up again where he least wanted it. The feeling of dismay at his body's betrayal was so overwhelming that Tenma sincerely wondered how his heart could even continue to beat.

Seemingly satisfied with the reactions he had provoked, Johan finally withdrew, leaning away just far enough to look at his captive. Tenma could almost feel the monster soak up the mixture of deep red shame, shock and arousal splashed all over his face, like a hungry sponge.
The young man's own face bore that thoughtful, melancholic expression once again, which seemed completely out of place. Tenma realised that now was his only chance to try and end this torture, and he grasped at the straw with both hands.

"Why.. why are you doing this", he hissed breathlessly, "you said.. I'm like a father to you."

Johan tilted his head. His calmness alone seemed like sheer mockery.

"I changed my mind. Or maybe..", one corner of his mouth curled up in a mildly ironic smile, ",.. I am just really perverted."

Well there is certainly no doubt about THAT..

"But I.."

"It's quite entertaining", Johan added nonchalantly.

Tenma gaped at the monster, still unable to comprehend the scope of his immorality.

"You can't just.. do that for your own entertainment!" He exploded.

"Why not?"

"Why not? Because.. because this is sexual abuse!"

Tenma winced at his own words, feeling his blush deepen. Johan's lips spread in a wicked grin that chilled his captive to the bone.

"No, my dear doctor, this is not an explanation. This is just another way of saying 'you can't do that', simply supported by a legal term."

"Don't give me this pedantic crap!" Tenma snapped huskily.

"Oh? I thought you value education so highly."

"I don't want this! It's disgusting! It's.. wrong!"

The grin disappeared, leaving Johan's face expressionless, unmoved except for his eyes. Deep sea creatures were out to play.

"Do you remember your first kiss, Doctor Tenma? It was not with Eva, was it?" Johan's right hand, the one that was not entangled in his captive's hair, moved to cup Tenma's cheek, placing the thumb on his chin to prevent him from turning away.

"I have never kissed anyone before." Johan's voice was suddenly as soft and warm as the fingers lightly stroking Tenma's cheek.

Tenma could only stare, his stomach churning with anxiety.. and something else.

"Are you surprised?"

"Jo.. han." Tenma could hardly gain control over his shaking lips. Begging was the only option he had left. "Your sexual experience is none of my concerns.. and I don't want to.. be part of it, so please.. please..", the doctor entreated quietly, looking into those bright, remote eyes. Was there not a sign of humanity, not even a spark of compassion..?
Without an answer, Johan bowed down. The doctor clenched his eyes tightly shut. His body felt rigid and hollow inside, as if filled by a throbbing, echoing heartbeat alone. Too rigid to even flinch when the tip of Johan's nose lightly touched the root of his own nose and slid down, torturously slowly. "I promise you I won't forget my first kiss, Doctor Tenma", Johan exhaled, his warm breath on and inside Tenma's mouth. The older man wanted to press his lips together, but they were simply trembling too hard. Feeling, smelling, tasting Johan's breath sent his senses into overdrive. "I like how you are waiting for me to kiss you", the monster whispered, barely hearable, before finally placing his lips on Tenma's own.

He simply stayed there, mouth pressed against mouth, gently, fingers fluttering over his captive's jaw. And suddenly, all anxiety, all fear was washed out of Tenma's body with one warm wave. He felt light, weightless, as if the blood in his veins had been substituted for sunshine. Nothing seemed important, no, nothing existed except for these soft lips which were now brushing against his own to enclose his upper, then his lower lip, sucking tenderly. The warmth was spreading in ripples across his body, sweet and delightfully tingling, breathtaking...

Until it was taken away, abruptly, making Tenma exhale in a mixture of a sigh and a disappointed moan. He cautiously opened his lids – and was instantly met by the boundless deep sea in Johan's eyes. Was it just his imagination, or was it moving, covered in those same soft ripples that were still radiating through his body...?

The monster chuckled, breaking the spell. The sea froze over in a fraction of a second. And as if busting through a barrier that was holding them back for a few wonderful moments, despair, shame and guilt pierced through the doctor like a swarm of poisonous needles.

"You tied me up.. to do this", he whispered, bitterly, unexpectedly regaining the ability to speak. "Don't you have any pride at all?"

"Pride, doctor?" Johan mused. "You do realise that superbia is considered to be the original and most serious of the seven deadly sins?"

Tenma gritted his teeth in exasperation.

He is not human.. he just isn't..

"Pride is such a hindrance. Your pride, for example, prevents you from admitting that you are in fact enjoying this, Doctor Tenma."

"That's NOT.. true!" Tenma gasped in dismay, overly eagerly, as he realised far too late after the words had already left his lips.

"No?" Johan leaned away, a treacherously innocent smile playing on his lips. "Shall I check?"

Tenma gasped. His heart missed a beat. Two. Three. Enough time for the monster's right hand to leave his captive's cheek and casually trail down his upper body.

"Stop.." was all that the older man could think, feel, whisper.

"This is your punishment for lying to me. Accept it." Johan suggested coldly.

Even though Tenma had been trying to prepare himself for what was to come, his fists, eyes, jaw and stomach clenched tightly, the shock of feeling Johan's fingertips running along his erection still made him flinch and whimper; then flinch and whimper again at the way that his body was reacting to that utterly inappropriate touch.
Johan giggled. "And I thought they say Asian men were not generally well-endowed."

Tenma fiercely bit down on his lip, drawing blood. Physical pain made the shame a little easier to bear as he was trying to mobilise the very last resources his clouding mind had to offer.

"I was not.. lying.. I don't.. enjoy.. it's just a simple physical react-haaa.."

The monster's hand closed around his now fully hardened length with light but determined pressure, the thin fabric of the trousers doing nothing to dampen the pleasurable feeling that it caused.

"Oh please, doctor," Johan's voice took on that unfitness lecturing tone once again. "You are not a teenager anymore. A little bit of innocent foreplay would not have caused an erection if you did not like it. Do I really need to explain this to you. What is the point of playing dumb?"

There was no point indeed. Johan was razor-sharp. In every possible way. Tenma heard and felt the zip of his trousers being opened.

"Please, Johan.. It's not too late to stop.. If you feel any kind of respect for me.. Please..

"Begging does not work with me, Doctor Tenma", Johan pointed out without any discernible emotion. "And it will hardly make me respect you more; or make you disrespect yourself less after what I am going to do."

"Then what DOES work?" Tenma screamed, tugging wildly at his bonds in a last, desperate attempt to get away from Johan's merciless hand as it slipped into his trousers. "What can I SAY to make you stop? What can I DO to make you STOP?"

"Well, quite obviously, the sooner you give in to this, the sooner it will be over for you." Johan paused to wait until his captive tired himself out, then gave him a wicked smirk. "Unless fighting it is what turns you on the most."

The clouds in Tenma's head were rapidly thickening, shutting out all reason. For a second, the thought of holding his breath long enough to make himself unconscious flickered through it. But the truth was, his body and his mind were shattered, unable to even move, let alone perform such an act of willpower. And as Johan's warm fingers slipped through the slit in his boxers he felt his overstrung muscles relax on their own accord, felt himself give in to the touch with a shaky sigh, almost a sob.

The first movements of the monster's hand were cautious and explorative. Disconnected thoughts flaring up in his mind, the doctor wondered how often the young man had actually performed this act on himself; and how these unsure movements could be so incredibly arousing. Tenma's first sex was with Eva, who knew very well what she was doing at that time. In comparison, Johan's touches were surprisingly and delightfully innocent.

The young man had leisurely freed his erection from the confines of his trousers and wrapped his hand around its base. He let his fingers slide up and down the shaft a few times, unhurriedly but with gradually increasing pressure, making Tenma tremble and exhale sharply at the end of each long stroke. He then concentrated on the head, using his thumb to distribute the pre-cum and gently rub along the frenulum, even dipping a fingertip into the slit at the tip of Tenma's length. The doctor moaned softly at these explorations, not even trying to suppress the breathy sighs that were leaving his lips, his body helplessly melting into Johan's fingers, overpowered by the most amazing, tantalising shivers. And the monster was carefully studying all of his reactions, still holding Tenma's head firmly in place in order to have the best possible view of his face. He softly brushed his thumb along the doctor's brow, wiping away the sweat that was building there, as he picked up a rhythm.
Johan surely was a quick learner, applying just the right amount of pressure as he alternated longer and shorter strokes, slightly twisting his hand on its way up. Tenma's whole frame was reduced to a sweaty, throbbing, burning mess in a matter of seconds. His blood was pounding in his ears, his breath rushing, mixed with moans, as Johan's now confident hand was sending jolts of pure, electrifying pleasure through his body. He was moving towards his release with tremendous speed, feeling hot tension building up in his stomach as Johan increased the pace. Tenma clenched his teeth, overwhelmed by the sensation.

The monster stopped abruptly, taking his hand away.

Tenma squinted at his tormentor with a dazed groan, his body shaking in disappointment. Johan was studying his face and the doctor felt his sweat turning cold as the familiar cruel smirk tugged at one corner of that alluring mouth.

Oh God..

He pressed his wet face into the bed sheet, grasping at the shreds of thoughts floating through his remarkably empty head. "Johan.. I stopped.. fighting.. I gave in to this.. What else.. do you want?"

Shame, frustration and an urging need made his skin burn unbearably.

"The question is, what do you want, Doctor Tenma? Tell me... "

Though he could not see it, Tenma could almost hear the cruel smile spreading across the monster's face. His fists clenched forcefully as he gasped in dismay, refusing to let go of the last spark of self-regard he had left.

"No."

"Tell me", Johan repeated sweetly, flicking his hand over Tenma's most sensitive skin in one slick move, too quick to allow him to come, but more than enough to make him squirm and moan desperately.

"Fi.. nish." Tenma whimpered, barely hearable.

"Finish what, Doctor Tenma?" Another quick movement of Johan's hand, another maddeningly unsatisfying jolt of pleasure. Tenma felt his hips bucking involuntarily, but the monster's hand was already taken away.

"Ngh..." Tenma tugged at his bonds, intently hoping that the overwhelming humiliation he felt would lessen his arousal at least a tiny bit. It did not happen.

"I could do this forever." Johan promised softly, moving his thumb across the tip of Tenma's throbbing erection.

The doctor started to see stars jumping in front of his tightly clenched eyes. He finally lost it.

"Just let me come already, damn you!"

Suddenly, Johan's warm lips were back to cover his own. "Now, how could I deny you a wish, Doctor Tenma?" The monster purred, those mocking words vibrating against his mouth. His hand resumed its movement, unhurriedly but steadily, letting Tenma's orgasm approach slowly, then wash over him with mind-boggling intensity, wave after crushing wave. The doctor shuddered violently, moaning helplessly and embarrassingly loudly into Johan's mouth. The young man licked and sucked at his lips with dedication, as if determined not to let a single moan escape past him, and at his very peak Tenma fiercely pressed into those soft lips, crying out, unbearably hot bliss rushing
through his body and sending him flying.

For some time, there was nothing but the delightful, overwhelming, dark heat. Tenma could not tell how long it took for his body to regain weight and for his mind to regain some self-awareness. But he suddenly realised that Johan was now kneeling beside the bed, his left hand still tangled into Tenma's hair, and the young man's face pressed into the nook of his neck. Only the hand that had been torturing him was gone. It took several seconds before the doctor understood what was happening. Johan was trembling. It was only a slight shaking, barely noticeable, but Johan was trembling. Tenma lay still, eyes wide open in disbelief, as the young man ran a hand through his long dark hair in a shaky, uncoordinated motion, very unlike his usual elegant movements, pressing his face even more tightly into him. Then, suddenly, that hand clenched in his hair and Johan convulsed.

"Ken.. zou.."

Tenma's heart stopped as his breath was cut off by two simple syllables. The seconds that passed seemed to last forever. Johan's body was slowly relaxing, his face feeling hot and damp against the doctor's skin. The young man remained still for a few moments and Tenma could feel him exhale shakily into his neck, causing a warm shiver to run down his spine. Then, very abruptly, Johan got up, and before he could turn around to dart out of the room in a fashion that seemed irreconcilable with every single trait of his being, Tenma caught a glimpse of something that made him noticeably gasp.

It was Johan's thoroughly blushed and completely, utterly, beautifully unguarded face. He only saw it for a fraction of a second, yet the sight was so unexpected and breathtaking that it seemed to burn itself straight into his retina. It wholly occupied his mind as he listened to the water being switched on in the bathroom and running for a long, a very long time. Tenma was lying on the bed, unmoving, in unspeakable shock, the heat of the orgasm still rushing through his body and clouding his mind. Yet even though he had just been subjected to the most embarrassing torture he could ever have imagined, a torture that would make him question his very being as soon as he regained the ability to think clearly, the second part of the whole event has shocked him even more. Humiliation and cruelty was what he expected from Johan, but not this, not...

The water was switched off in the bathroom and the doctor swallowed hard as he heard Johan's steps a short while later. He was more than certain that the monster would punish him for what he just saw, and severely so. In fact, he expected a gun being pointed at him every second. Yet Johan did not carry a gun when he came back into the room. He simply stopped in front of the bed and looked down at his captive's face, refraining from making eye contact. The monster's own face was composed once again, but his cheeks still carried a slight red hue and the hair surrounding his face was damp. Tenma immediately thought that he looked as if he had been holding his face under cold water for quite some time; which very probably was exactly what he had been doing in the bathroom.

"You hate to feel warmth that much?"

There was something else as well; something Tenma could only see because he had been forced to study Johan's face from a close distance over the last twenty-four hours. His captor had not quite managed to put the shield back up the whole way yet, and his face displayed barely noticeable traces of.. embarrassment? Insecurity? Caution? Sincere Surprise? Tenma would never have expected to see any of these emotions on that flawless face, and the doctor could not help but stare at it, even if it meant that he was giving Johan an even better reason to dispose of him as quickly as possible. The young man's brows were furrowed ever so slightly, and Tenma could almost see his brain evaluating, discarding and reconsidering different possibilities of dealing with the situation at hand; it was a
Suddenly, he seemed to have come to a decision, for his face melted back into the usual unmoved, unreadable, yet still stunningly beautiful mask.

"Well, Doctor Tenma", Johan's voice was soft and cool, pointedly reverting to the formal address. "I did not expect that seeing you come would turn me on quite that much. It was rather fascinating. Especially all those noises you made, begging me."

A hot wave of shame washing over him, Tenma silently congratulated the monster on his strategic genius. Johan has made sure to let him feel his humiliation as deeply as he could, while also taking any possible weapons out of his hands by being reasonably sincere. Tenma was, however, strangely relieved that Johan had returned to his usual self. Seeing him unguarded was just too mind-bending, too... intense. And now that the monster was back, and apparently not intending to kill him right away, the doctor could finally, finally concentrate on his own feelings, which were starting to mix together into an acidic cocktail of embarrassment, self-hatred and boiling rage.

"But I am sorry that I addressed you by your first name. That was rather impolite."

"IMPOLITE?" Tenma barked in disbelief. "This is all you're sorry for, you perverted bastard?"

Johan gave him a chiding look. "I'll go and prepare us some breakfast."

"Wait a second!" Tenma suddenly realised, with considerable disgust, that he was still lying on the bed completely exposed. "Are you not going to untie me? I wouldn't mind washing myself as well!"

"Hmm.." Johan seemed to consider it for a moment, but the doctor's heart sank when he was given a cold smirk. "I don't really feel like dealing with your hurt feelings right now, so I'll let you cool down a bit."

"GUESS WHAT I DID NOT REALLY FEEL LIKE!"

"See? That's just what I meant." With that, Johan disappeared into the kitchen.

Tenma sank back into the mattress, fuming. All the things he wanted to say, no, to scream at Johan. at himself. disconnected rows of bold, black letters raced through his head, tearing it apart, rushing together, exploding in a cloud of black smoke..

And then there was nothing. Tenma allowed himself to sink into that vacuum. The peace would not last for long.

He stared at the blue autumn sky beyond the window.

Such an amazing blue..

The sun was lazily painting streaks of bright yellow across the room.

Tenma closed his eyes with a sigh. He was quite certain that he was going mad. He was also quite certain that he wanted to see that unguarded face once again.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Now when I caught myself,  
I had to stop myself  
From saying something that  
I should have never thought of you

(Paramore)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tenma was still immersed in the comfortable dark vacuum behind his closed eyelids when a poignantly familiar blend of smells started to emanate from the kitchen. Freshly brewed coffee, and something else..

.. croissants?

The doctor smiled weakly. Croissants were his favourite guilty pleasure, which was a well-known fact among his former colleagues in Düsseldorf. He did not believe in coincidences where Johan was involved.

Just what is going on?

Slowly, ridiculous thoughts started to trickle into Tenma's mind which had been agreeably empty for a few blissful minutes.

He's obsessed.. in his very own cruel and twisted way.. but obsessed.. with me..

It could not be denied any longer. Surely, when the young man explained the reason why he had abducted him the previous day, Tenma dismissed it as yet another mockery; but in fact, there was probably more truth in his words than he cared for.

".. It would be interesting to spend some time together.. I always wanted to touch your face.."

Still dazed, the doctor shook his head in a rather limp attempt at driving Johan's voice out. Yet those softly spoken confessions were armed with tentacles, smooth and sticky like spider silk; and they had firmly planted their hooks into their victim's brain.

".. I promise you I won't forget my first kiss.."

Tenma groaned. It could not be, it was just too.. sick. Just wrong in every possible way.

And in some impossible ways as well.

Yet all the little pieces had already started to come together, filling this frame of mind-bending madness to create a picture which was logical in its own, deeply disturbing way, like a kaleidoscopic image of hell. The messages Johan had left for him.
Why me?

The murders which ensured that Tenma became Chief of Surgery.

When he could have anyone..

The effort and resources the monster must undoubtedly have spent in order to research every aspect of his life.

.. anyone he wanted..

Even the fact that, apparently, Tenma had the doubtful honour of being the one the monster wanted to be killed by.

That obsessive, sadistic maniac..

Or the tiny detail that Johan knew how to say his first name correctly.

.. wants to explore his sexuali- ..?

On the rare occasion that Tenma had heard Germans pronounce his given name, he noted that they usually struggled with the length of the second syllable. Even Eva never got it quite right, though Tenma had always been too polite to correct her. But Johan..

"Ken.. zou.."

Tenma shuddered, the memory tugging at his insides with burning hot fingers. He had never heard his name pronounced quite like that before.. no, not even pronounced, rather breathed into his skin..

..WITH ME?

The doctor felt inappropriately grateful when Johan came back into the room, distracting his brain from arranging those disconnected thoughts into the most terrifying jigsaw puzzle.

Speaking of the devil..

The young man's hair had dried, his whole appearance being flawless to an almost surreal extent once again. For the first time, Tenma noted that he was less formally dressed today, wearing only a pair of black trousers and a thin beige polo neck jumper. Yet Johan still managed to look as if these casual clothes had been designed especially for him, wearing them with such perfect posture and natural elegance as if he were attending a formal banquet. The older man gazed at him with a mixture of disgust.. and awe. He could not help but being struck down by the monster's beauty every single time that Johan reappeared in front of him, as if the doctor's brain kept forgetting that something like this could even exist as soon as the young man was out of sight.

Why can't I look away?

Involuntarily, Tenma found himself searching for something in the monster's cloudless face, the tiniest of changes, a trace of what he had seen earlier..

It must be there, somewhere..

There was nothing to be found. However, Tenma exhaled in relief when the young man put a hand into the pocket of his trousers to extract a set of keys. The monster walked up to the bed, playfully twirling the keys in his fingers and allowing his gaze to glide along his captive's frame, causing the older man to grit his teeth, suddenly remembering that he still wasn't properly dressed.
You are enjoying this, aren't you?

"You might want to change your clothes", Johan suggested matter-of-factly, finally bowing down to open Tenma's foot cuffs.

"You don't say", the doctor hissed. Apparently, his mind was so overwhelmed by the many different emotions that were rushing through him, most of them conflicting and all of them rather absurd, that it decided to turn to sarcasm as its last resort.

"You don't seem to do it yourself very often, Doctor Tenma, considering the amount of.."

Tenma was surprised that Johan's provocations still managed to make him blush, even after all the humiliation he had already been subjected to only a short while ago. "You don't seem to do it very often either", the doctor snapped before he could bite his tongue, instantly giving himself a mental slap for sinking to the monster's level. And another slap for irrationally expecting that Johan's demeanor towards him would somehow change after what just happened. In fact, in light of the grotesqueness of the whole situation, Tenma felt like continuously slapping himself until he would wake up from this nightmare.

The doctor's reaction provoked a chuckle which carried a slightly surprised overtone. Johan was looking down at him while opening his right handcuff, a mischievous smirk playing on his lips.

"Didn't sound like you had any complaints."

He was obviously taking delight in this little game, and Tenma clenched his jaw, trying to gulp down a fitting response which included several phrases that were not usually part of his vocabulary. He was also trying to ignore the feeling of Johan's fingers on his wrists, or the fact that the monster's soft hair was almost touching his forehead when the young man leaned over to undo the second handcuff. Of course, Tenma failed the latter task.

"No retort this time, doctor?" Johan sighed, finally freeing him from his last handcuff. "And I was starting to enjoy our conversation."

And I wasn't.

Without a word, Tenma got up from the bed, zipped up his trousers and headed straight for the bathroom.

As the doctor took off his spoilt clothes and began to wash himself, mechanically, he could feel the guilt finally starting to draw nearer from where it had been hanging over him at some distance like a dark, stormy cloud ready to burst. Now the acid drops were starting to fall, one by one at first, then lashing down like whip strokes, eating through him and turning his insides upside down. The feeling of hot water and fresh clothes on his skin – Tenma discovered the clothes he had been wearing the previous day in the bathroom cabinet, washed, ironed and neatly folded up – did nothing to make him feel any cleaner. He eyed the hardly ignorable stains on his discarded trousers and jumper, a blatant evidence of his body's betrayal, shaking his head with increasing violence. A scream was building up deep in his throat, threatening to rip it apart.

God I'm disgusting.. disgusting.. disgusting..

Tenma forcefully bit down on his lip to reopen the fresh wound, hoping to find some comfort in the iron taste filling his mouth. He pressed his face into the palms of his hands, leaning against the wall, trying to suppress the cry of horror that was burning his lungs.

Calm down. That's exactly where he wants you. DAMN! You're a man. You're almost forty. CALM
The doctor took a few deep breaths, focusing on the sensation of cool air rolling down his throat, expanding his chest and resting there for a second before leaving his mouth; he visualised each exhale carrying some of the distress out of his system. These techniques usually worked well with anxious patients, even though Tenma rarely felt the need to try them out on himself. If anything, he was blessed with a remarkably stable psyche. Even in situations of extreme stress, when a patient’s blood pressure started to rapidly drop during an operation, or when he faced the most gruesome road injuries, his brain would simply shut out all unhelpful emotions and focus on the task at hand. His hands would not shake. So why now? Even after the horrible incident in Heidelberg he had recovered from the shock fairly quickly, concentrating on what he had to do. Or what he thought he had to do. So why did he feel so utterly helpless when facing the monster at close distance? How did that twenty year old boy manage to throw him off balance so badly?

How could my body react like that.. tied up and against my will.. and with HIM..

Face still buried in his hands, Tenma was fiercely chewing at his lip. As usual, Johan's earlier comment was to the point. The doctor did not cater for his body's needs in that particular respect very often. Or rather, there did not seem to be a great deal of need. These things never played an important part in his life. Surely, Tenma did enjoy sex with Eva, it was simply a pleasant part of their routine as a couple. And after they broke up, he did have some brief flings with other women.. well, a few? Tenma furrowed his brows, trying to remember at least one of those flings. He thought for a while. He couldn't. But what did it matter? He used to spend so much time at the hospital that his colleagues joked he might just as well give up his flat and move in. And Tenma happily laughed with them, knowing that he was fairly contented with the situation. It meant that he never felt lonely or in need of looking for a partner, in spite of Doctor Becker's continuous efforts. Tenma had always tried to avoid these stressful issues, for as secure as he felt in his professional knowledge and skills, as clumsy had he always felt in amorous matters. Even in high school, on the fairly rare occasion that he would go to a party and his friends would point out girls who were 'obviously' attracted to him, Tenma never quite understood what exact signals he was supposed to be looking for, and how he was supposed to react to those signals. In the end, he always seemed to choose the safe and secure option of friendship, and indeed ended up having quite a few female friends, much to the dismay of his mates. And when Doctor Heinemann introduced Tenma to his daughter, their relationship developed in a very natural and convenient way, as if it was a self-evident thing to happen, considering both of their positions, and Tenma was more than pleased with it.

Now, Johan..

The scream in Tenma's throat was coming up again, with renewed force. What the monster succeeded in doing to his body this morning had swept the doctor off his feet so badly that all the rest of his innumerable worries, such as Johan being a mass murderer and himself being his prisoner, seemed to take a background position right now. It was as if the young man's hands and lips had uncovered and gently pushed open a door whose existence Tenma had never even suspected. Now that door was not only blatantly glaring at the doctor, it also seemed impossible to shut. There was a gap, only as wide as a hair. A light blond hair.

Tenma hauled off and slammed his knuckles into the wall with full force, wincing at the pain. There was no way, no way he could be attracted to that despicable, cruel, inhuman creature, no way in hell, and it would take him a lifetime to enumerate all the manifold reasons why..

But I am..

The doctor repeated the action, hitting the wall until the pain finally succeeded in cutting through the
black cloud of guilt surrounding him and a blood stain appeared on the white tiles. He wished that wall was Johan's face. He wished he could beat that unbearable, smug perfection out of it.

You do this because you think you can break me. There is no other reason. There CAN be no other reason.

Tenma pressed his tongue to his bruised knuckles, letting himself fall into that burning sensation.

But I refuse, REFUSE to be broken by you! Do you hear that?

The doctor felt his ability to think rationally returning, slowly, very slowly. Of course, this was Johan's preferred modus operandi. The monster did not seem to particularly enjoy straightforward violence, even if he could kill a person without batting an eye. Tenma shuddered, thinking back of Junkers's execution. Then he folded that thought up and stuck it right at the bottom of the rapidly growing box in his head labelled 'to be dealt with later'.

No, Johan much preferred creating inescapable scenarios. Taking others by the hand and leading them to the edge of an abyss from where they could clearly observe the despicability of their existence. Then he would watch them jump.

"I want others to see the barren land that I see."

It was an almost Socratic approach, a method which worked perfectly well because the monster's victims could not help but respond to him as if they were responding to the darkest questions hidden in their own hearts.

But he can't MAKE me question myself if I don't let him. It's MY decision to take.

That was a comforting thought. Tenma picked up his discarded clothes and proceeded to wash out the embarrassing stains. He simply had to stop thinking in that self-destructive manner. There surely was a psychologically sound explanation of his involuntary reactions to Johan. He was allowing the monster to catch him out way too easily.

Tenma arranged his trousers and jumper on the radiator, gloomily inspecting his work.

It's as if I'm actually living here. Pathetic.

Now that the doctor realised what kind of dirty tricks Johan was prepared to resort to in order to throw him into a tailspin of self-doubt, Tenma felt determined not to let the monster have his way. Instead, he had to focus on finding an escape door out of this maddening situation, he had to..

"How long are you intending to hide in there?" Johan's voice coming from the corridor made him jump, but he quickly recollected himself. "I am hungry."

"Well, I am not."

The doctor was satisfied with the calmness in his voice as he opened the door. Not deigning to look at his tormentor, he walked past him into the bedroom and lied down on the bed, crossing his arms under his head. He forced himself to keep his eyes closed as he heard Johan's steps approaching. then stopping and moving to the opposite side of the room.

"Won't you have breakfast.. or are you waiting for more of what you had earlier on?"

Tenma exhaled.
That was a rather weak attempt, Johan.

The doctor's immune system seemed to have finally started producing antibodies against these invasions. At least as long as he could not see the monster and as long as Johan was standing at some distance from him. And not touching him.

There were a few seconds of silence. Tenma could feel a pair of penetrating blue eyes on his face, slowly digging through his skin.

"I see."

That calm voice seemed further away now and Tenma squinted. The monster was looking out of the window once again.

"Doctor Reichwein has a beautiful little garden, doesn't he?" Johan mused, letting his words come out slowly. "There is a house opposite which has a pretty good view of it. Dieter often plays in that garden. He is waiting for you to come back, Doctor Tenma."

"ALRIGHT. Alright", Tenma sat up in one rushed move. "You don't need to threaten me with the life of a child."

"Threaten, doctor?" Johan turned around with the most innocent of smiles, leaning his back against the window, obviously pleased with having regained his captive's attention.

Despite the surge of fear rushing through him, Tenma felt a tiny spark of triumph. Uttering a more or less direct threat was not a very elegant move by Johan's standards. And it gave the older man yet another reason to thoroughly despise the monster.

As if I needed more reasons..

"What can I do for you to stop this farce and let me go?" The doctor snapped. "Since you're obviously not intending to kill me."

Johan tilted his head slightly, observing his captive with the reptilian coldness of a chameleon waiting for the right moment to flick its tongue. His signature non-responsiveness was nothing short of maddening.

"Tell me so we can get over with it!" Despite his earlier resolutions, Tenma could feel himself loosing his cool once again. Still, anger was certainly the most appropriate feeling to harbour when facing the monster.

"Not sulking like a little child could be a promising start", Johan suggested. He gave the older man a mildly condescending look, pouring oil into the fire that was Tenma's blood.

YOU..

"If your intention is to break me then I promise you won't succeed!" Tenma clenched his fists, deciding that this far down the line there could be no harm in playing his cards openly.

"Is that a challenge, doctor?" One corner of the monster's mouth curled up in a dangerous, yet at the same time curiously charming smile. Tenma was still trying to figure out how these two qualities could possible go together when, unexpectedly, Johan nodded.

"Yes, you are right."
Tenma blinked.

"I have seen many broken people in my life, Doctor Tenma." Johan's gaze swayed to a point on the wall behind Tenma, eyes narrowing slightly as if he was peering into an indefinable distance. "People who had lost every trace of humanity, who wished nothing more than to die, who.." Those cold blue orbits returned to look straight into Tenma's eyes, no, to look straight through them and into his heart, piercing it with two deadly icicles. "But you, Doctor Tenma, you are not easily broken. Moreover, I won't allow you to break until you have killed me with your own two hands, and then you will finally be able to look at me. Aah, you will understand. But for now..

The monster finally broke the gaze, leaving Tenma's heart frozen.

".. let's have breakfast."

Johan walked out of the room, his movements possessing the casual elegance of a wild cat and leaving no doubts that he expected the doctor to follow. And Tenma did.

There were no words to express how much he regretted not to have pulled the trigger.

Chapter End Notes

I was reading "Another Monster" when writing this chapter, so some things I say in this and the following chapters are taken from there - once again, credit to Naoki Urasawa and his co-authors for creating these fantastic characters!
Thank you everyone for the reviews!! This story was actually completed a few years ago and published on another website, I have now transferred it to AO3 since I much prefer this website :).

Well, this really is the make-or-break chapter for my story - if this works, then, hopefully, the rest of it will work as well (there are still ca. 7 chapters to come). I find it very challenging to strike the right balance between the "Angst" and the "Romance" aspects of the story.. And to make Tenma feel attracted to the monster without making Johan less of a monster (and it can't be all about his looks, because, of course, Tenma is not that superficial). So I would be particularly grateful for reviews and constructive criticism on this chapter! And once you've worked yourself through all that dialogue and (self-)tormenting (and - warning! - some fluff), I promise there'll be a lot of well-deserved (and totally unfluffy) smut in the next chapter! :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

and I feel my world crumbling
I feel my life crumbling
I feel my soul crumbling away
and falling away
falling away
with you

(Muse)

Such controlled movements..

The monster was manoeuvring around the kitchen, pouring coffee and taking the croissants out of the oven. The more Tenma observed his captor, the more he came to realise what it was that made Johan's movements so peculiarly, almost unnaturally elegant. He seemed to completely lack those involuntary and purposeless gestures that every human being regularly displays: the odd brushing through one's hair, the odd shifting of weight from one leg to the other, the occasional distracted twitching of fingers.. All of the young man's actions were streamlined to carry out their specific goals, all movements reached their projected completion, like those of a highly accomplished ballerina.

But a ballerina is on stage for only two, three, maybe four hours – yet he.. it's as if he could maintain absolute control over his motor system over a long period of time.. how is that even physically possible?
The memory of Johan's shaky hand in his hair suddenly re-entered the doctor's mind without knocking. Johan's hot, trembling face in his neck the moment he came, that puzzled expression. A flush of heat exploded in Tenma's stomach, catching him off guard. And the most embarrassing thing was that, very unlike himself, Johan seemed not in the slightest thrown off balance by their earlier 'encounter'. Though it evidently was an unexpected and highly unusual experience for him to lose control like that, even for a few seconds. No, it was not the case that the young man was wholly incapable of human emotions, as Tenma had previously suspected. But he certainly was inhumanly skilled at ridding his system of anything that he did not want: compassion, doubt, remorse.. warmth?

That level of self-control.. does it not get tiring sometimes? Does he.. WAIT, am I sympathetic, with HIM?

Tenma realised that he must have been intently watching the monster for quite some time when Johan caught his gaze. He quickly turned away, continuing to inspect the wall when a mug of coffee was placed in front of him. The doctor picked it up, automatically, trying to busy himself with taking a few sips. Johan did not ask how he liked his coffee, but, quite unsurprisingly, it was perfect. He knew. Of course. Tenma stared into the dark liquid in despair.

"Why me?"

"Do you really find it that astonishing, Doctor Tenma?"

The older man jumped, startled, almost spilling his drink all across the table. He did not realise that he had uttered that thought aloud. Tenma grabbed a croissant and made a sincere effort to focus on cutting it in half while avoiding looking at the monster who sat down on the other chair at a not-so-safe distance.

Conversation with Johan. = No good.

"That was a question", the young man prompted, helpfully.

"Johan", Tenma sighed, concentrating on applying butter evenly to fully cover both halves of the croissant. "I am not interested in talking to you. Unless you want to discuss how we can end this.."

"You surprise me, Doctor Tenma." Johan surely wasn't one to be easily distracted from his own agenda. "You don't even consider the rather straightforward notion that I might simply find you interesting? Do you think so lowly of yourself? Or do you regard me as so devoid of any kind of human impulse? That from a self-declared philanthropist and a surgeon who quite literally had his fingers inside my head at one point. Really, I .."

"Wa- wait", Tenma protested, helplessly taking the bait and looking up at the monster.

Do you HAVE to sit so close to me?

"I don't declare myself any--.. You seem very eager to distance yourself from everything that is human."

"Oh? And you are inclined to believe me rather than 'what your heart tells you'?” Johan chuckled, mocking Tenma's wording from earlier that morning. "I thought we would get there, but not quite that soon."

Tenma shook his head, gloomily. No matter where he went, Johan seemed to be there long before him, waiting to catch him and spin him around until he lost all sense of direction. And there he was, thinking that some of his former colleagues at the hospital were rather manipulative people.
"Maybe you could just tell me what you want to hear me saying", the doctor suggested, wearily, "since you are not interested in a real dialogue."

"You want a real dialogue?" Johan paused in the middle of buttering his own croissant to offer his captive a sunny smile that, once again, did not fail to light up a hidden place within him. "Fine then. What is your favourite book?"

They stared at each other for a few long seconds, Tenma with his mouth open, stunned by the impressive randomness of the question, Johan holding his eyes, no, pulling them deeper, without return, into that enticing blue. Then, suddenly, the young man burst into a quiet laughter. Tenma continued staring at his opponent, dumbfounded. It was the first time that he saw Johan laugh. Not giving one of his cold, cynical chuckles or well-calculated mocking giggles, but actually laughing out in what was a still very controlled but almost sincere gesture. He could feel that soft sound inexplicably vibrate through his own body. Johan was quite right. Tenma could never truly believe that the young man was entirely heartless, even when coming directly face to face with his blood-curdling crimes. It simply went against the doctor's nature. However, he did do a reasonably good job at convincing himself that this was the case. It made those crimes so much easier to explain. It also made pointing a gun at Johan's head a little easier.

"You are pretty hard to please, Doctor Tenma", Johan noted almost cheerfully, reaching for the jar of strawberry jam in the middle of the table. "Though, gladly, not in every respect."

The monster uttered that last sentence under his breath, as if talking to himself, but loud enough to cause the older man's mouth to fall shut instantly, his teeth clenching. Tenma quickly bit into his croissant, the colour of his face now coming dangerously close to that of the jam. The sheer range of feelings that Johan was capable of enforcing upon him, all at the same time, was indescribably confusing and frightening.

"How come you don't know what my favourite book is?" He growled. He had to say something.

"It doesn't look like you ever shared this information with anybody. So, maybe, you can share it with me."

("Maybe you can go to hell."

"There is nothing interesting about me." Tenma forced the rest of the pastry down. The quicker they finished breakfast, the quicker Johan would go and leave him in peace. Or so he hoped.

"I disagree." The monster was systematically covering his own croissant with jam. For some reason, Tenma could not take his eyes off those long, slender fingers holding the knife, the same fingers that.. He swallowed.

"Let's see. First you decided to come to work in Germany instead of taking over you father's excellent hospital. You started a career from scratch, even though you did not even speak a word of German when you arrived. Then you ruined this same career because you foolishly operated on me. I gave you your job back, but instead of doing what you are most talented at, you decided to throw in the towel, get yourself a rifle and go after me all on your own after receiving some fairly pathetic 'training'. I do find all of this pretty interesting, Doctor Tenma. Even though you are a very intelligent person, you also seem to have a talent for taking rather odd life decisions. Which, ultimately, is why you ended up having breakfast with me today. Am I wrong?"

Johan was carefully observing his captive's face, a hint of a smile on his lips, and Tenma felt the air in his throat turning hot. Both the young man's arrogance and his marksmanship were certainly beyond belief. "Should I ever need advice on how to live my life from you, I'll let you know", he
hissed. It was hardly unexpected that Johan would stick his nose deep into his captive's past, yet it was embarrassing and infuriating nonetheless. Tenma was well aware that many of the decisions he took throughout his life seemed ridiculous to other people. And, often, even to himself. He had always tried not to look back and worry about things that could not be changed, and yet..

"I'm flattered, doctor. Now, have another croissant."

The older man obeyed, frantically chewing at the pastry. He was prepared to do anything, if Johan could just refrain from elaborating on any of the points he just made.. Tenma was hoping in vain.

"Hmm.. I have always wondered why you disobeyed your father when he wanted you to take over the family business. Such an illogical thing to do. Especially for a young middle-class Japanese man."

The monster's voice was smooth and blank like a sheet of paper, its edge moving to cut into Tenma's skin. The bite stuck in the doctor's throat.

"Was it because you wanted to build something of your own? Because you were scared of not being able to fill your father's shoes? Did you lack confidence despite your brilliant grades? Or maybe.."

"JOHAN!" Tenma slammed his fist down on the table. The mug in front of him jumped, spilling coffee across the cloth. The monster's words were coursing through his body, letter by pointy-edged letter, ripping his veins to shreds. "That's none of your business! I.."

The young man was looking down into his own mug, unmoved.

".. maybe it was because your mother had always favoured your older half-brother and wanted him to inherit the business, even though he was far less skilled than yourself, and not even her own flesh and blood."

Johan lifted his deep sea gaze to let it wash into Tenma's dark eyes, wide open and naked in front of him.

"That must have hurt", he concluded, softly.

A hollow noise escaped Tenma's throat, somewhere between a wince and an astonished sob. Within a time span of only five minutes, the monster had succeeded in taking him apart, brick by brick, then inserting an elegant finger right into his core. And twisting it around. The doctor's fist released, his fingers curling into the table in a pain that was unspeakable. Quite literally. Tenma had never spoken about his relationship with his mother, to anybody.

Who did he talk to? How much did he pay? How..?

The doctor's brain was grasping at these practical issues, trying to push the content of Johan's words away, back into the darkest corner of that box he had always kept locked. But it was no good. There was no way back. So, with his brain refusing to look for a sensible answer, he simply moved forward.

"Yes, Johan." Tenma's knuckles went white as his fingers dug deeper into the table for support, his words coming out so hoarsely they were hurting his throat, as if he were pulling razorblades from somewhere deep inside him out through his mouth. "Yes. That hurt. Very much. It still hurts. Anything else you would like to point out? About my childhood? My family? Or maybe you would like to tell me about your childhood? Your real family?"

The doctor was shaking, but he firmly held Johan's calm gaze. One of the monster's eyebrows
quirked up ever so slightly. And, indeed, Tenma himself could not believe that those words had actually left his own lips. He never used to think that attack was the best form of defence. He never, ever used to voice his feelings openly like that. He never.. There were so many things the monster had uncovered and laid bare inside him.

Tenma suddenly became acutely aware of the large clock on the kitchen wall, for he could hear it ticking, unbearably loudly, counting the seconds of silence that passed.

What now? Will you laugh? Will you hit me? Will you..

"Aaah, look, you spilled the coffee." Johan stood up with a sigh, turning around to get a cloth.

"NO!" On a sudden, violent impulse beyond his control, Tenma jumped up, swinging the young man around by the shoulder and pushing him into the wall beside the sink. "You show me your face now!" The doctor was breathing heavily, feeling the blood pulsing in his temples. Johan did not offer any resistance, he simply looked at Tenma, as if observing him from some distance, from the deepest ocean bed that no man could ever reach, even though their faces were terrifyingly close right now.

"SHOW SOME BLOODY REACTION!" Tenma slammed the young man's shoulders into the wall once more, his heart thudding dangerously against his ribs. He could not even tell what exactly he wanted to see or hear. Or why. And then, slowly, something surfaced in Johan's face, the corners of his mouth moving up in a mildly ironic smile that Tenma already knew too well. That smile told him that he had lost once again. He always did. His fury withdrew back on itself, transforming into a different kind of heat. The floor started to spin beneath his feet.

Johan leaned in, closing the rest of the distance between them.

The floor stood still, then disappeared altogether. Tenma's eyes fell shut, and his mind followed the second that Johan's silky tongue began to trail along his lower lip. The doctor exhaled shakily, his fingers burying deeper into the young man's shoulders. He wanted that strawberry jam sweetness deeper inside his mouth, wanted to taste the monster's tongue with his own..

Yet Johan did not deepen the kiss, simply staying nuzzled against his captive's lips. "Oh, and apart from those other things I find interesting about you", he whispered, his warm breath not in the slightest uneven, "I also do find you attractive."

Without much effort, he freed one of his arms and casually run a hand through the older man's hair before slipping out of his grasp, leaving Tenma burning and gasping for breath. The doctor slowly turned around and leaned against the wall, his knees having a decisively jelly-like quality. The resolve he had felt earlier on, his vows not to fall for the monster's traps again, the pain and anger he had felt a second ago.. that one moment of scalding heat made it all evaporate into nothingness.

I wasn't even tied up.. I did not even try to pull away.. I.. Oh God..

By that moment in time, Tenma was fairly certain that all of this was merely a dream. It just had to be. Perhaps, the last months of his live were nothing but a dream. Or the last years. Perhaps, in reality, he was already married to Eva, doing his job, coming home to his family every night, living the stable, decent life he had always hoped he would be living one day if he just worked hard enough..

"As far as I know, my real father was dead long before I was born. As for my real mother.."

Tenma watched Johan as he proceeded to wipe the table. The nonchalance with which the monster picked up their earlier conversation after doing, and uttering, the most impossible thing, and the fact
that he did pick it up – both were equally puzzling. Yet Tenma did not quite come around to being puzzled. There was a certain upper limit to the amount of bewilderment that a single person could experience in the course of a single morning.

".. there are certain things I can't fully remember at the moment, but since it now looks like I will live for a little longer, thanks to your lack of resolve, I am going to find out. Here, hold this."

He passed Tenma his mug while wiping underneath it. The doctor absent-mindedly took a few gulps. It felt good, and helped him to focus on processing the new information, rather than on what Johan had said before.

"You are.. going to the Czech Republic?"

The doctor only realised after speaking that questioning the monster so directly could lead to unpredictable, and possibly highly undesirable results. And that he did not want to talk to him in the first place. He cautiously looked at that immaculate face, turned to him in profile. It smiled. Johan did not look as if he felt found out.

He does actually.. want me to look at him. In more than one way. He really does.

"I never doubted your intellectual capacity, doctor."

"Does your.. is your mother still alive?"

Why am I asking him these things?

Johan walked over to the sink to let the wiping cloth drop into it, and Tenma quickly hid his face in his mug. His body seemed to behave like a thermographic camera around Johan, turning red when it felt the monster's presence approach. And the confession that was murmured against his lips a minute ago truly did nothing to improve matters. Tenma wouldn't have known how to behave even if he had heard those words in more appropriate circumstances, and from someone who was his own age, and female, and, well, not a psychopath. Gladly, nobody had ever said anything like that straight to his face before.

"I suppose, we were both not particularly pleased with something about our mothers", Johan noted, thoughtfully.

Tenma cringed at the comparison, which seemed ridiculous even despite the fact that he had no idea what Johan was talking about. He peered over the rim of his cup to look at the young man's face which, unsurprisingly, matched the quiet coldness of his voice. The doctor nervously licked his lips.

It was his own fault for challenging Johan to talk about his own family, but he never expected that the monster actually would. What was he supposed to say?

"Whatever you.. I don't know, but.. I did not decide to spend my life.." Tenma swallowed, the mug almost slipping from his sweaty fingers. ".. destroying other people's." Suddenly, a painful memory hit him and he bit his lip, yet he could not hold it back. "Nina was very happy with her fam-"

Johan turned around to face him, and something in his eyes made the doctor's heart feel as if it were being squeezed by a cold hand. The words froze in his throat.

"Don't worry, you will soon understand", the monster promised, unmoved.

"I don't want to understand, Johan", Tenma whispered, trying to shake off the icy fingers that seemed wrapped around his throat, cutting off his air. He was tired, endlessly tired of being thrown between the boiling heat and the freezing cold he felt when sinking into those deep blue pools. "I
don't want to understand what it feels like to kill a h-

The doctor's eyes snapped open in shock, the icy fingers around his throat tightening as he shuddered violently. For some time, he had forgotten what he had done. The coffee mug was about to drop from his hands – when Johan closed his own hands around them. His skin was so warm, despite everything.

"See, Doctor Tenma?"

The monster carefully took the mug out of his captive's trembling fingers and placed it in the sink, soaking up the horror written on his face like a blotter.

"We are not all that different, you and I."

You're wrong! We are different! Very, VERY different!

The monster's softly spoken words were followed by a knowing smile. The poison was already running through Tenma's veins.

We have nothing in common!

Johan walked back to the table, turning away from the doctor while resting both hands on the back of his chair.

"You know, Doctor Tenma.."

Don't tell me!

".. every time that I lived with another family.."

I don't want to hear!

".. at some point, I actually thought it might work.."

I don't want to know you!

".. Sometimes, you pretend that you could fool yourself.."

I don't want to FEEL you!

".. until you realise that you can't.."

You're not human, I know you're not..

".. and that you have been aware of this all along. I think you know what it's like, Doctor Tenma. Am I wrong?"

I always knew..

Johan's eyes were inside him once again. They were all around him as well. Deep sea creatures swallowed him in a single gulp. It didn't even hurt that much.

Of course. I always knew what it's like to be alone. No matter how hard I tried to fool myself. Not alone as in on my own. Alone as in homeless. Alone as in alone in the world.

"Doctor Tenma?"
Tenma stared at the monster, helplessly, ready to accept whatever toxic injection he was going to receive next.

But instead, the young man's face lit up in a reassuring smile. It was the antidote. Johan was able to pull facial expressions out of little drawers, like other people pull clothes out of their closets. And when he wore them, they suited him as perfectly as did all his outfits, as if his face could never display anything else but its current expression.

"As much as I enjoy spending time with you, I will need to leave you alone again", the monster sighed. "But first, I want you to do something for me. Come."

Tenma's body followed his captor, as if pulled by invisible strings. He felt as if he were sleepwalking. Back in the bedroom, Johan opened the small wardrobe standing across the room from the bed.

"Here."

Despite his dazed state, Tenma's brow still crept up in disbelief. He had obviously underestimated his own ability to be amazed.

"Play something for me."

Johan was holding out an acoustic guitar to him.

"Hn.. ?" 

"Play something for me."

No matter how well the doctor prepared himself, the monster always found a way to catch him out with something completely unexpected. Unexplainable. Inappropriate. Painful. Stunning. That kaleidoscopic image of hell was constantly moving, the little pieces of glass rearranging themselves and showing him a different picture every time, a picture he could not predict.

_I want to cut open that beautiful head of yours once more. I want to look inside once again, to know what goes on in there.. No, I don't want to know!_

"What..? Why..?"

_No, I do. I do. Damn you."

"You used to play the guitar. Isn't that right, Doctor Tenma?"

Tenma shook his head, puzzled.

"I gave it up in High School. That was.. twenty years ago. Your informants certainly told you.."

_God, I am that old already? .. How could you say you find me.. 'attractive'?_

"I am sure you can still do it if you try."

"I wasn't very good either."

"That's not what I heard."

"Johan, what is this all a-..?"
"Would you prefer us to spend time differently, Doctor Tenma?" Johan showed him a perfectly white row of teeth, sending a shiver down his spine.

"Us"?

Tenma snapped the instrument out of the monster's hands.

Just keep your fingers off me, for God's sake!

The older man sat down on the bed, slinging the strap of the guitar over his shoulder. What a long forgotten feeling that was! He took a few basic chords, tentatively. Once he had decided to give up playing the guitar, at seventeen, he had never touched an instrument again.

"You enjoyed playing it. Why did you give it up?" Johan was still standing by the wardrobe, hands folded behind his back.

"I was not good enough to spend time on it", Tenma muttered, adjusting the tuning pegs. "Many students in High School with me.. were very talented musicians."

"Mnh." That sound told the doctor that the new item of information had been successfully added to the profiling data the monster kept on him inside his head. He could not bring himself to care any more. It was much easier to simply tell Johan whatever he wanted to know. Tenma let his fingers glide over the strings. Yes, he did enjoy channelling his emotions into music when he was younger, very much.. The doctor felt dizzy, numb, but at the same time.. strangely alive. The monster had stripped him naked in more than one way, leaving his skin exposed and tingly, as if covered with popping candy. He had never felt like that before.

What shall I play?

Picking randomly at a few strings, Tenma realised that the only tune he could probably still play was his favourite song, Al Green's "Let's stay together".

No, I'm not going to play THAT song for him!

The older man cringed, trying to think of something else, anything – but his left hand was already looking for the chords it remembered best. Tenma was surprised by how naturally it felt. His fingers had a good memory of their own. Well, those were the fingers of a brain surgeon, after all.

What does it matter? He wasn't even born when that song came out.. I was thirteen..

The doctor struck the starting chords, haltingly at first, but with rapidly growing confidence. He closed his eyes. The words of the song were running through his head, automatically, as he played the tune.

"I'm, I'm so in love with you
Whatever you want to do
Is alright with me.."

That song, its tune oozing harmony.. It always stirred an inexplicable longing inside him. Of course, Johan's earlier observations had been accurate once again. Tenma was an expert at fooling himself, pretending that pouring himself into his job would make him forget the deep loneliness that had always been a part of his very being. Pretending that if he lived in a foreign country, he would at least have a good excuse for feeling like he didn't have a home. He never was one to wallow in self-pity, however. Vaguely, he did realise that it was his own fault. He had never truly let anyone in. And, thankfully, nobody had ever tried to force his way into him before.
".. Cause you make me feel so brand new.."

Tenma had always been more of a listener than a talker around other people, not for reasons of politeness, or because he lacked confidence. He genuinely preferred to be at the receiving end of a conversation rather than sharing whatever happened inside him. The doctor suspected that this was a major part of the reason why most people seemed to enjoy his company, but rarely made an attempt to deepen their acquaintance.

".. Let me be the one you come running to..

Even Eva.. Tenma used to feel rather pleased with the fact that she did not seem too interested in his thoughts or emotions. Some of the things Johan made him say this morning – they were things he had never told her, he would never have wanted to tell her, tell anybody..

How sick that he would be.. the first one who really wants to know me? Is that because he sees something of himself in me? Is that why he has chosen me to kill him? Is that why.. he draws me in like that?

".. Cause being around you is all I see..

Does he see me as the other side of the magnet, do I put a plus wherever he puts a minus?

".. Let's, let's stay together
Loving you whether, whether..

Tenma pressed the palm of his right hand to the strings when the last chord died away, looking up at his tormentor. Johan was gazing into the distance. That dreamy, melancholic expression from earlier this morning had reappeared on his face.

Such a beautiful face.. If only I could extract the tumour behind it.. If only..

"I liked that, Doctor Tenma." Slowly, the monster lowered his calm blue eyes to meet the doctor's own.

What am I thinking? He needs more than just a good brain operation to sort him out. A LOT more. He needs.. What does he need?

"I'm glad I can provide some all-round entertainment for you."

"Really?"

"No. That was sarcastic", the doctor heard himself saying in a strangely unscripted fashion.

Johan chuckled, the mocking overtone only barely noticeable. Tenma looked down at his fingers which still rested on the guitar strings, an unwelcome smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. The heat and the cold had melted together, leaving him feeling inexplicably warm.

Just what is happening to me?

Chapter End Notes

Yeah, I know that was very cheesy ;D - but don't blame me! "Another Monster" says
this song is Tenma's favourite, so I had to work with what I got. Strangely, though, I
had the guitar scene in my head even before I read in "Another Monster" that Tenma
used to play it. I could totally see the doctor playing the guitar.. Aww.. Since I'm writing
from Tenma's POV, I don't get the chance to express how hot he is, but I'd totally chain
him to my own bed if I could ;D.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

What a relaxing chapter to write! ;) No complex character developments, no research necessary, simply some pretty straightforward smut (though, once again, I'm not completely happy with it. I still have so much to learn..). I hope you enjoy. Unless you are uncomfortable with explicit non-con (yes, that's graphic non-consensual sex between two men.. or a man and a monster ;D). In that case, I hope you press the back arrow button of your browser instead. And don't let the fluffiness at the end of the last chapter distract you. This here is my longest chapter by far, and the lemon takes up almost all of it, so yes, it's quite detailed, and most of it is also quite cruel. READ AT YOUR OWN RISK – IT'S RATED "EXPLICIT" FOR A GOOD REASON! Though, admittedly, it DOES get quite cheesy once again towards the end – so there's another danger there ;D.. I seem to be attracted to both the romantic AND the cruel sides of the story in equal measures..

(NB: One aspect of this chapter that doesn't seem to make sense will be explained in the next one.)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I couldn't feel, so I tried to touch.

(Leonard Cohen)

Tenma hastily laid the guitar back onto the floor when he heard a key being turned in the lock. Johan had only loosely fixed one of his hands to the headboard before going out earlier that afternoon, leaving the instrument leaned against the bedside cabinet. The doctor was gloomily eyeing it for a while, very well aware that the young man had not left it within his reach by accident. There was nothing coincidental about anything that Johan did, ever. The world that the monster had created for himself, a black hole that everything around him was irrevocably drawn into.. it was unspeakably perverted, but certainly not irrational. And for reasons that surely made perfect sense in that unfittingly pretty blond head of his, he clearly wanted Tenma to get in touch with all those splinters of his personality that the older man had consciously suppressed, or unconsciously lost, or maybe never fully discovered – memories, feelings, sensations.. And hell was he successful!

For some time, the doctor had been sincerely trying to make the most of the relative freedom he was granted, but there was nothing within his reach that could have helped him to escape. The bed was fixed to the floor, and its metal headboard was sturdy enough.. as were his handcuffs. Those were not the type that anybody could get in a fancy dress or sex shop – they seemed to be real police cuffs, and the doctor did not even want to think about where Johan had obtained them, or how. In the end, Tenma resigned, picking up the guitar. He spent the rest of the afternoon trying to play some songs by ear, hoping to take his mind off the many, many things that it desperately needed to be taken off. Songs that he had liked listening to in the radio before his life became such a terrible mess. He ended up doing a surprisingly decent job, both in terms of the distraction and the tunes. Tenma had quite a good ear for music, though only very few people knew that about him.
Johan had also left him the rest of the croissants and some sandwiches (though, surprisingly, nothing to drink), and as darkness started to set in, Tenma began to wonder if the monster would come back at all that evening. He did not like the way that conflicting emotions were tugging at his stomach at the thought of not seeing the young man anytime soon. No, not at all. And the little jump his heart made when he heard the front door being opened was even worse.

"It's hard to believe you haven't played for years, Doctor Tenma."

Johan switched on the lights as he walked in, and Tenma gave him a look that managed to be surprised, downcast and, unwillingly, admiring, all at the same time. He would have preferred both of their faces to remain hidden in the dusk.

"I was standing outside for a while, listening to you", Johan explained, coming up to the bed, casually, as if returning home after a day's work, and releasing his captive. Quite unusually, he did not say much else. Something seemed to be going on behind that remote, unmoved face, but the monster chose not to let Tenma in on his thoughts. He simply offered him a glass of water, let him use the bathroom, then handcuffed his hand to the headboard once again – and left the room.

Tenma sat on the edge of the bed in utter confusion. There was a faint noise coming form the kitchen, the legs of a chair scraping the floor. And then silence. Tenma furrowed his brows. That Johan would leave him alone instead of torturing him in one way or another - it was highly abnormal. Not that Tenma wanted to be tortured, or that the monster's behaviour could be judged against any standards of normality.. but still. The doctor lay down, then sat up again, nervously. Time was dragging by, painfully slowly. Just what was going on?

The situation did not lose any of its oddness when Johan finally came back through the door. He stopped a few metres away from the bed and simply stood there, hands folded behind his back, wordlessly observing his captive. The monster was wearing that altogether expressionless face that he seemed to be putting on by default when not mimicking a particular emotion. On any other person, that mask would have suggested an attempt to hide feelings; yet in Johan's case, it actually denoted a slightly higher degree of authenticity. Strangely, however, Johan's more sincere moments were the ones that truly scared Tenma.

The doctor's uneasiness was growing by the second. He aimlessly looked around the room a few times, then cautiously glanced back at the young man. Nothing changed. He hated the idea of being the one to initiate a conversation with the monster, but that uncomfortable silence spreading between them was simply unbearable.

"Umm.. Johan?" Tenma tried with forced casualness. "Do you want anything?" There was no reaction.

Then, within a fraction of a second, the monster switched his face to one of the several mildly mocking expressions in his repertoire, as if resurfacing from God knows what depths.

"I'm glad you ask, Doctor Tenma." He strolled over to an armchair, removing his suit jacket with one elegant movement of his shoulders and laying it down, then returned to his previous position. "I do indeed."

Tenma was wondering what Johan had been doing throughout the day that caused him to change back into formal wear.* Or maybe he just preferred to wear suits. It was yet another shell. However, the doctor's thoughts quickly found a different focus when the young man inserted a finger into the knot of his tie, tugging gently. He proceeded to slowly undo the tie, eyes fixed on the older man, until it hung loosely around his shoulders.
"What.. are you doing?" Tenma nervously followed the monster's movements, puzzled.

"Undressing." The answer was as simple and self-evident as it was confusing.

"Hn..?"

"I'm going to sleep with you now, Doctor Tenma", the monster informed him matter-of-factly, as if announcing the agenda for a business meeting.

It took several seconds for Tenma's ears to relay the information to his brain, where it was promptly rejected as an obvious mishearing.

"W-what?" The doctor stammered.

"I think you understood." A wicked smile started to creep onto the curve of Johan's lips as his long, slender fingers moved up to undo the top button of his pale blue shirt. Tenma found his own arms moving up in a vague halting gesture.

"Wait, what.. are you saying? I'm a man."

Johan chuckled, not taking his eyes off his victim for a second.

"Yes, Doctor Tenma, I know. If I had any doubts, they were certainly lifted this morning." Those unrelenting fingers moved on to the second button. "Surely, you are aware of the range of applicable sexual practices."

The realisation that the monster was being serious started to slowly dawn on Tenma. Though to say that it started to dusk on him would be more appropriate. His heart fluttered, jerkily, like a butterfly trapped in a fridge, before speeding up, pumping that chilling, numbing fear through his veins. However, very, very deep inside him there was also something else, something even far more terrifying, a spark of absurd excitement, a knowledge that he saw it coming, that he had been waiting for it. Tenma watched the third button being undone, barely breathing. He suddenly found himself slipping into an out-of-body experience, looking down at his own face that was staring at the monster, wearing a pathetic deer-in-the-headlights expression. The older man forcibly shook his head, trying to prevent that rigidness from taking over his body.

"Johan. NO." He raised his hands in a more decisive stopping signal, yet his voice was a far cry from being firm. "That's.. that's not going to happen. I am not going to sleep with you."

"Don't worry, Doctor Tenma", Johan reassured him, softly, fingers on button number four. "I'll do all the work. You just need to relax." That was anything, anything but reassuring.

"Wha.. !" Tenma felt his mouth go dry. His outstretched hands started to shake slightly. "That's.. impossible. Are you crazy?"

"Hmm." The monster tilted his beautiful head in that maddening, mock-thoughtful signature gesture, his hands not halting in their unhurried motion. "Is that even a question, doctor?"

"I won't do it with a MAN!" Tenma snapped, losing the rest of his poise. ".. Won't do it with YOU! It's sick! You.. you're sick!"

Johan laughed out, the soft, guttural sound vibrating through the short distance between them and into the doctor's body, adding to the trembles that were already spreading through him, unstoppably. The monster had almost finished unbuttoning his shirt. He seemed to revel in the fact that his captive had no choice but to watch helplessly as he slowly undressed in front of him.
"Aah, Doctor Tenma. How odd. I suppose you would find it completely natural if I pointed a gun at
you. But you are calling me 'sick' for wanting to sleep with the person I am attracted to? The only
person I have ever been attracted to, in fact. Are you sure that your moral axis is still in the right
place?"

"You are sick", Tenma simply restated, hoarsely, his ability to access his intellectual resources
rapidly decreasing.

Johan shook his head with a sigh. The twisted elegance of his rhetorics was obviously wasted on his
bewildered victim right now.

"Well, this is why I am with you, doctor", he pointed out.

"You don't need a doctor! You need an undertaker!" The older man yelped, unable to hold back the
panic any longer.

"Everything in due course." The monster offered Tenma a disarmingly charming smile as he took off
his shirt. With his upper body naked and stripped of its usual armour of formal wear, Johan
surprisingly looked slightly younger than his age, which was in stark contrast to his manner of
speaking and all the rest of his ridiculously smug demeanour. Tenma suddenly became acutely aware
of the fact that the monster was only about half his age, a boy who had only just become a man. It
would have made the whole situation seem even more grotesque, had it not already reached the
uppermost level of grotesqueness.

"Now.." Johan made a step towards him, still bearing that dangerous smile on his delicately chiseled
face, and the older man climbed backwards onto the bed in one hectic, clumsy move. Considering
what Johan was planning on doing, this was probably not the wisest choice of action, but the only
thing Tenma could think of right now was not allowing the distance between them to diminish. The
way his body betrayed him this morning.. if Johan came any closer, if he touched him.. he could be
lost.

"Don't even.." The doctor hissed, his back pressing into the wall. Even though he was scared beyond
belief, his mind still did not fail to register Johan's perfectly sculpted collarbones, his pale skin
looking as smooth as it did in Tenma's dream.

"Or what?" Johan smirked, taking two more well-measured steps and stopping in front of the bed.
"Why are you so flustered, Doctor Tenma? This is a logical continuation of what I did this morning.
You liked it."

"I did NOT.. LIKE it!" Tenma barked.

The young man gave him the mildly chiding look of a parent who just caught his child uttering a lie
so obvious that any further comment was unnecessary.

"It's not like you never had sex before at all, doctor. Unlike me."

Tenma winced, pressing himself even harder into the wall and intently hoping that it would
somehow soften and suck him in.

"So this is.. what you want it to be like, Johan?" The doctor's mind was desperately looking for the
smallest crevice, any way that he could get to the monster. "You really want your first sex to be a .."
Tenma swallowed hard, feeling cold sweat on his skin. The word stuck in his throat.

"No, Doctor Tenma, it is you who wants it to be a rape, apparently." Johan grinned coldly, slipping
both hands into the pockets of his trousers while looking down at his captive. "I would be willing to
sleep with you even with your consent."

EVEN with?

Johan's manner of thinking combined out-of-this-world absurdity with strict internal logic in a way that always managed to amaze the doctor, even at a moment like this.

"Which is why I will give you the option of not being tied up completely."

The young man casually let one of his knees sink into the mattress, then bowed down. In a reflex, Tenma kicked at him and Johan effortlessly caught his leg in mid-air, then his lips, in one swift, flowing motion. Surprisingly for himself, the utter terror that the doctor felt managed to outweigh those other, very unwelcome effects of the monster's closeness this time. Tenma fiercely bit down on Johan's lower lip as it pressed against his mouth in such a self-evident, intrusive fashion. The young man did not make a sound as he slipped off the bed, straightening up and holding a hand to his bruised lip. He mustered the traces of blood on his fingers, his calm face not showing even a hint of pain or anger. The iron taste filling his mouth, Tenma felt his muscles tense, ready to fight.

"Well, Doctor Tenma", the monster sighed, still inspecting his fingertips. For some reason, the red on his lips made him look even more devilishly beautiful. "You made your choice." Suddenly, he turned his head to the side, his attention apparently caught by something the doctor could not see, and Tenma automatically followed his gaze. It was only a fraction of a second later that he received a very well calculated and accurately executed blow to his solar plexus, knocking him out for what seemed like an eternity as he was wriggling in pain, desperately trying to breathe. When the darkness around him finally began to dissipate, letting some much-needed air into his lungs, both his arms and his legs were fixed to the bed once again. But this time, Johan had tied him up so that he was facing the mattress.

Tenma certainly wasn't one to cry easily, but he could feel hot liquid filling his eyes in shock and shame. He had just been tricked by what was probably the oldest trick on earth. And he had underestimated the monster once again. He had not expected Johan to actually hit him. Tenma felt strangely betrayed, not so much by Johan as by himself, by the way he had slightly opened up to the young man that morning, even if against his will. By the moments when he had felt something else but fear and disgust when looking at him, something inexplicably warm. That morning, Johan had systematically deconstructed the wall that guarded the very core of Tenma's feelings, then forced himself into that core once it was bare and unprotected.. only to come back treating him with such derisive cruelty. Tenma hated, hated how this hurt more that anything else.

"Why did you force me to do this, Doctor Tenma?" There was a hidden yet cutting edge to Johan's calm words that seemed to be coming from far away. "Do you like being hurt?" Tenma's head was lifted off the mattress by his hair, causing a sharp intake of air. "Do you want it to be painful? Because if that's what you want, then I can."

"No..", Tenma groaned, defeated.

"Fine." His head was allowed to sink back into the mattress as Johan's voice softened. "I didn't think so either. Now, be a good doctor."

Tenma pressed his eyes into the bed sheet, swallowing the tears. He could feel his body, no, his whole being go limp, dissolving in humiliation and stripped of its will to fight. The monster let a few seconds go by, obviously taking in the sight of his captive stretched out and defenceless in front of him, waiting for him to do as he pleased.

Then he climbed onto the bed.
The doctor's heart stopped when one of Johan's knees was carefully placed in between his separated legs, the young man's hands coming to rest on both sides of his shoulders. He wished his heart would not start beating again, but it did, unevenly so, yet with increasing speed as Johan's face was buried in his hair. The monster made a strangely satisfied, purring noise, rubbing his nose against the back of the older man's head and slowly letting his weight sink down onto his frame. Tenma gasped, that warm heaviness enveloping, immobilising him, pressing him deep into the mattress.

"Doctor Tenma.." Johan whispered in his ear. There was just the slightest trace of unexpected, raw huskiness in that smooth voice that made the doctor's insides tremble. "Secretly, you have been waiting for someone to come and claim you, without the need for decisions on your part. Because you never felt like you belonged. Isn't that right? I will do that for you, Doctor Tenma."

Tenma whimpered, trying to move his head away, those well-aimed words piercing through his very heart and throwing it off rhythm. Suddenly, the young man sat up, straddling him. There was a faint metallic noise and the doctor swirled his head around, as far as it was possible in his current position. He caught a glimpse of Johan's faithful butterfly knife before his face was firmly pushed back into the sheets as Johan bowed down once again, pressing his warm lips against Tenma's ear.

"I will make you mine, doctor."

The older man jerked at those grotesque words that stirred something dark and unknown within him, at the feeling of cold metal touching his neck and slipping underneath his collar.

"Shh.." Johan held him still as he sliced through the fabric. "What was the point of taking off my shirt if I can't feel your skin?" He pushed the two halves of the ripped item of clothing aside. "Hopefully, it was not your favourite jumper."

The monster made an indefinable, soft noise as his fingers brushed along the older man's exposed back. The manner in which the young man touched him, only grazing Tenma's skin with his fingertips at first, then carefully pressing down his palms, trailing every small curve and bulge on his body.. it had something almost reverent, something of a child that could finally lay its fingers on the expensive toy it had always wanted.

Tenma bit back a sob. He could not help it. Johan's gentle touch just felt.. so ridiculously good. Now matter how brutal the monster had been only seconds ago - that touch made him forget it, forget everything. The pain in his stomach had already been replaced by that inexplicably delightful tugging, as if the monster's soft fingers were magnets, attracting all the iron in his blood and causing it to flow faster.. a lot faster. A wonderful hot shiver ran through him when Johan's right hand lightly closed around the nape of his neck in a gesture that was unexpectedly possessive. The young man leaned in, pressing his own smooth, warm skin against Tenma's and placing open-mouthed kisses all over his neck and shoulder blades. Johan's left hand slid down to run along the older man's side and lower back, striking a light wherever it went.

There was something maddening, but also maddeningly enticing about the casualness with which the monster's mouth and hands were exploring his captive's body, making him feel as if he were indeed the young man's property. The doctor suddenly remembered the first time he slept with Eva.. how incredibly insecure and clumsy he had felt. Johan's unnatural confidence was the self-assuredness of a boy who had never looked at himself, never doubted himself, no, never even known a true 'himself' at the core of his many highly controlled outer shells.

Is that why he wants me to look at him so badly, why he wants to break into me so that he can see himself through me? And does he find it so easy to break into other people because he has no image of himself to hold him back?
Johan's right hand moved up to tangle itself in his captive's long, dark hair as he sunk his teeth into the hollow of his throat, sucking in the sensitive skin. Tenma shuddered, his own teeth digging into the sheets underneath him, trying to suppress a moan. Johan patiently continued to softly suck at his neck and jaw until that embarrassing moan finally escaped the doctor, and the monster made a satisfied guttural sound into Tenma's skin. He began to slowly trail his tongue down the doctor's spine, causing him to shiver uncontrollably. The monster's left hand stirred from where it rested just above the rim of Tenma's trousers, soft fingertips tracing that rim, then slipping underneath. The older man gasped at that utterly inappropriate touch. He wasn't wearing a belt and had lost some weight while hunting down the monster, so that Johan's hand could easily slide all the way inside the back of his trousers.

"Jo.. Johan.. get your hand.. out.." Tenma was shocked by the hoarseness in his voice, suddenly realising that he had not been protesting for a while. The monster chuckled, making his captive jerk when he squeezed.

"Fine."

The young man's hand slid out of the doctor's trousers and around his hip, turning it slightly upwards. He had left the chains of Tenma's hand and foot cuffs fairly long, allowing for some movement. The older man's breath caught again when he felt Johan's fingers on the zip of his trousers. He desperately tried to wriggle out of his grasp and the monster trapped his legs between his own knees, firmly holding him in position as he proceeded to open the zip.

"N-no.. please.. don't.." Tenma trembled violently, feeling his blush deepen by the second. His protest had failed to sound entirely convincing, which did little to improve matters. In fact, his body had not at all forgotten the bliss that Johan's hand had caused it to experience that morning, and it was craving, craving to have it back.

"The way you fight against yourself, doctor, .." The monster murmured into his ear, effortlessly sliding his trousers and underwear down his legs. "..is captivating. I do appreciate your efforts."

"GO TO HELL", Tenma groaned. The feeling of his lower regions being exposed was humiliating.. and humiliatingly arousing.

"L'enfer, c'est les autres, Doctor Tenma." Johan's hot, cruel tongue slid into the doctor's ear the same moment that those soft fingers closed around his waiting erection, eliciting a startled pant from the older man's lips. "Have you not read Sartre?"

The monster leisurely dragged his tongue along Tenma's jaw line, beginning to stroke him slowly. "Sartre is wrong though. Existentialism is certainly not a Humanism."

The young man's body flush against his own, his warmth, his inexplicably sweet smell, his still perfectly smooth, even voice engulfing him, that caressing hand.. Tenma was dissolving like a flake of butter falling into a pit of flames. He desperately pressed his sweaty face deeper into the mattress, teeth clenched, trying to stifle those noises that were escaping him with every movement of Johan's skilled fingers. Every centimetre of his heated flesh was tingling with delight, electrified. All blood had completely withdrawn from his brain to throb in his veins, rushing to hungrily absorb Johan's presence. Yet the touch of the monster's hand continued to be maddeningly light, almost teasing, making him shake with longing.

The doctor was so overpowered by those tantalising sensations that he barely noticed a faint noise, like the cap of a plastic tube being opened, as the young man leaned away, not interrupting the steady motion of his right hand. Yet Tenma's eyes flew wide open in shock when he felt one slick, lubricated finger of the monster's other hand rubbing against him in a most intimate place, then
suddenly being pushed all the way in. He gasped in disbelief, then forgot to breathe altogether as that long finger bent lightly inside him. It wasn't painful, but it was very uncomfortable, and unspeakably embarrassing.

"Wha.. hn.."

Tenma's dismay was so overwhelming that he could not even protest, only tugging at his bonds in silence, powerfully enough to bruise the skin of his wrists, that sharp pain mercifully cutting through the shameful pleasure he was feeling.

"Hmm.. Does that hurt?" Johan enquired thoughtfully, gently pushing a second finger into his captive.

"STOP!" Tenma squirmed, painfully turning his neck around. His muscles tensed violently, which only caused the unbearable sensation of Johan's fingers pressed against his inner walls to grow more intense.

"You are very hot inside", the monster informed him, calmly smiling at the older man as their eyes met for the first time in a while. Infuriatingly, Johan's face still failed to display any discernible emotion, even a trace of excitement. "I always knew that you are hot inside", he added, ambiguously, taking the opportunity to lean down and press a casual kiss to the side of Tenma's lips. The young man's tongue flicked out to lick the corner of the doctor's mouth the same time that his fingers unexpectedly twisted inside him. Tenma exhaled shakily, completely caught off guard by the hot shudder those actions caused.

"Doesn't seem like you really want me to stop" Johan noted with mild mockery, leaning away once again and taking up the movements of his briefly paused right hand. He was applying more well-measured pressure this time while using his other hand to repeatedly slip his fingers in and out of Tenma, with continuously increasing speed. The doctor's head helplessly dropped back onto the mattress, the impossibly thrilling sensation instantly letting him forget all pain, discomfort, shame – as well as everything else inside and around him. He could not help but notice how what Johan's left hand was doing added a surprising new dimension to what his right hand was doing, a very foreign and frighteningly intense heat. Tenma groaned through clenched teeth, his saliva starting to form a wet patch underneath his mouth.

"This seems pretty easy-going now", Johan muttered, sitting up and removing both of his hands just as Tenma started to feel his stomach tense in anticipation of what promised to be a very powerful release. The older man sighed in frustration, yet once that stimulation had been withdrawn it did not take long for his panic to come back with full force, choking him. The quiet but very well noticeable sound of a zip being opened somewhere behind him chilled him to the bone. That infuriating, never-ending see-saw between burning up and almost freezing to death that the monster was forcing him into.. it was so far outside the safe, moderately warm range of emotions he always chose to reside in.

There had been more than enough opportunities for Tenma to notice, as much as he tried to ignore it, that the monster was indeed not left cold by what was happening himself, despite his emotionless face. He seemed to be human enough in that particular respect, even though, for once, Tenma wished he wasn't. The doctor felt like screaming when he heard the sound of a tube being opened once again, for, this time, he realised the meaning behind it all too well. Yet the words that came out of his mouth were a mere whisper.

"Johan.. please.. come.. come to your senses.. don't do it.."

"Are you afraid of the pain, Doctor Tenma?" The monster enquired softly, not moving from where he was straddling him, the cool fabric of his trousers rubbing against Tenma's bare, heated skin. He
had not fully undressed.. maybe.. maybe there was still a chance?

"No..", Tenma lied, unable to control the shaking in his voice. "I just.. don't want this." That was mostly true. Well, it was half true at the very least. "No matter what..", the doctor swallowed. "No matter what it might.. seem like to you."

There was silence. Tenma licked his lips, deciding to go all-in. He had nothing to loose.

"What you said this morning.. that we have something in common. You might.. you might be not completely wrong. I.. I understand better now. You.." Tenma clenched his fists. "Johan, you've already seen.. a lot of me. More than anybody. You don't.. don't need to do this. It won't make you know me better. It won't make me.. look at you. Just.. stop!"

A few seconds passed by, and Tenma was wondering, if the monster actually gave it a thought – or if he was merely torturing him with his silence. Then there was a quiet laughter. A cloud of the darkest despair engulfed the doctor when he realised that his very last attempt to get through to Johan had fallen on deaf ears.

"Doctor Tenma, I do appreciate your sincerity. But it wasn't quite enough yet." The young man leaned forward, firmly pressing the older man into the mattress and pinning him down with his body weight. There was no escape.

"Because I want to be inside of you in every way," Johan breathed into his captive's neck and Tenma whimpered, feeling a hot, silky hardness pressing against his lower back. Until that very moment, the doctor did not realise just how frightened he actually was. He was shaking like a leaf. A leaf that was about to be plucked from its twig and torn in half. Tenma tried calming himself down, tried telling himself that it was just sex, that it would not last forever. Yet his heart was racing at a dizzying speed when Johan positioned himself, unhurriedly, pulling his captive's hip slightly upwards and to the side and holding it in place. The doctor's eyes were tightly clenched, as if hoping that he could disappear by immersing himself in darkness.

It can't be happening.. it just can't..

"You don't need to be so scared." That unbearably calm voice made a ridiculous and futile attempt at comforting him. "I will be gentle."

Tenma's body went from helpless trembles to complete rigidness the moment that he felt Johan's heat nudge against him, his breath catching in his throat.

The young man lightly pushed against his resistance for a second, then withdrew with a sigh, placing a kiss on his shoulder blade.

"You are making this hard for me, doctor."

"Good", Tenma whispered into the bed sheet, soaking it with his sweat.

"No. Not good." The monster continued to trail light kisses along his damp skin. "I don't want to hurt you more than necessary, Doctor Tenma. You have to relax."

Johan tried again, eliciting another incoherent sound of protest from his victim. The doctor understood very well that, at this point, letting the monster have his way would be the wisest course of action. That he should try to get it over with as quickly as possible. But his body simply refused to give in, despite his arousal. Allowing that boy to take him in such a humiliating manner was simply.. unthinkable.


".. can't.. relax.. to this.." Tenma pressed out through gritted teeth, barely hearable.

Johan's face moved up slightly to rest in the nook of his neck.

"Ganbatte kudasai, sensei. Daijoubu desu yo." ***

The older man's eyes snapped open in amazement. The sound of impeccably pronounced Japanese coming out of the monster's mouth caught him completely off guard, making him forget everything else for a second. That second was just enough for Johan to force the first few centimetres into him. Tenma drew in air so sharply that it cut his throat, but this was hardly a match to the other excruciating pain that ripped through his body. Johan's hot breath hit the nape of his neck.

"That's better, doctor. It will go easier now." How could the monster's voice still be so perfectly even, how could he continue to address him in a formal way while doing this to him!

And how the hell does he know Japanese?

Tenma desperately clenched his teeth into the bed sheet as Johan slightly pulled at his hip, pushing in again. The doctor had not expected it to hurt that much, despite the lubrication and the fact that Johan was indeed being very gentle. The monster did not seem to be in any hurry, pausing and giving his captive the opportunity to adjust every time he slid a little further into him. Nevertheless, the older man could not stifle a pained exhale after each of those careful movements. The feeling of Johan's length pressing hard against his inner walls was tearing him apart, cutting off his breath. The doctor's hands were helplessly twisting in his bonds as he was making a sincere attempt to relax his muscles, yet it still hurt.

That searing pain even made him forget his pride. Tenma was praying that Johan's hand would start stroking him again to make it easier, at least a little. But, obviously, the monster did not intend to take the older man's mind off that maddening feeling of being slowly entered, centimetre by centimetre, without the opportunity to even move. Another well-measured thrust pushed the doctor beyond the very edge of his pain threshold, making him resort to begging.

"Please.. no more.. Johan.. I can't.."

Unexpectedly, there was a reaction. Johan suddenly let go of his hip and brought his right hand forward for support as he leaned down, nuzzling his face into Tenma's dark hair. The older man winced. Intimate gestures like this coming from Johan were unbearably inappropriate.

"But I'm only half way in."

Tenma's eyes widened in dismay.

THAT was only.. HALF..?

Not that it truly surprised him that nature had been generous to Johan in this particular respect as well. He truly had everything a young man could ever wish for. Well, apart from a soul, of course.

"I will take you as deeply as I can, Doctor Tenma", Johan promised, unrelentingly grasping his hip once again and forcing into him with cruel determination. The older man cried out in agony, writhing underneath his tormentor.

".. I'LL KILL YOU.. God.."

"But of course you will", the monster reassured him, soothingly, kissing his neck before delivering another merciless thrust.
Tenma felt hot liquid running down his face. He could not even tell whether those were streams of sweat – or tears. Probably both.

"Does it really hurt that much?" The monster paused for a second, sounding infuriatingly innocent.

"What.. do you.. think.. bastard..", Tenma pressed out, his fingernails driving deep into the skin of his palms.

"Hmm."

Obviously, he made such a pitiful sight right now that even a monster decided to show some mercy, for Johan halted in his movements. His right hand slipped forward from where it rested on Tenma's hip and the doctor sobbed, feeling bizarrely grateful. It took a while for the tingling sensation to return, little by little, to compete with the pain.. come to a tie with it.. then slowly, very slowly begin to take the upper hand. The young man's fingers were confidently gliding along Tenma's shaft, causing him to tremble and let go a little more every time they swirled around the tip. He was loosening up to the monster, involuntarily, feeling the heat painfully throbbing inside him slowly and astonishingly beginning to adopt a different quality and spread out like a carpet of warmth, enfolding every fibre of his body. It felt like nothing else he had ever experienced, as if all barriers inside and around him were giving in and melting down. As if he were nothing but a clumsily built house of plasticine that was softening in Johan's skilled, warm fingers, under the heated breath on his scalp that sent the doctor's hair on edge.

Johan's face dragged along the side of his head, and, unexpectedly, he felt the monster's hot tongue sliding over his cheek and closed eyelid. The doctor shook in a mixture of disgust and absurd arousal, giving the most embarrassing guttural moan. Apparently, it was to the monster's liking, for he continued to slowly lick Tenma's face, neatly cleaning it of all tears, while softly rubbing his thumb around the head of the older man's erection. Tenma wasn't sure if he was going to be sick – or lift off the bed. His stomach was certainly fluttering more than enough for either option. It seemed to be filled with a swarm of butterflies drawn towards that light breaking through the black pain and shame that were engulfing him only moments ago.

"You taste good", Johan whispered into Tenma's temple, that barely noticeable yet strangely alluring huskiness roughening his voice once again.

".. screw.. you..", the doctor blurted out, helplessly overwhelmed by the conflicting sensations fighting over his body.

"No, I think I prefer to screw you."

And with one last, assertive movement, Johan finally took him, completely. Tenma gasped.. then forgot to breathe out. It was still excruciatingly painful, but it was fulfilling, ultimately, in every possible respect. The young man brought both of his hands forward, stretching out on top of his victim's quivering frame, covering him, lips pressed to the shell of his ear.

"Can you feel it, Doctor Tenma? How you belong to me right now? All of you.."

And before he knew what was happening, Tenma's throat already made an incoherent but undeniably affirmative sound, against his will.. if he had a will of his own left at all. He had lost control, irrevocably, his body one single, throbbing heartbeat. And even that heartbeat did not belong to himself anymore. Yes, he was all Johan's, neck and crop, to the very tips of his hair. He prayed it would never end. The young man's impossible closeness filled up his senses, wrapping him into the
most delicious cotton candy, so thick that it shut off all of the outside world.

"You wanted to understand.. Can you feel me now..?"

"Yes..", Tenma sobbed, raggedly. His blood was yearning, no, screaming for Johan to move inside him, to fully feel the monster's ownership over his body. And the young man did, grinding his hips against the older man everytime he slowly rocked into him, those soft lips kissing Tenma's face, neck, the back of his head. Each thrust made the doctor moan shakily into the sheets, those involuntary sounds seeming to come from deep inside him, washed to the surface with every unbearable wave of pleasure that seized his body, head to toe, leaving it wet and shivering with desire. Oh God, it felt fantatstic! He was drowning in those powerful, frothing waves, breathless, no, not wanting to ever breath again. Johan was gradually picking up pace, his left hand grasping the older man's shoulder for support to move even deeper into him. And then, suddenly, he hit something there that made Tenma cry out, a blindingly bright bolt of electricity blasting through him, setting every cell alight in a mind-blowing chain reaction. Of course, the doctor knew of the anatomical factors behind this sensation, but he would never have imagined that it could feel like this. That anything in the world could feel like this. The pain was still lingering in the backround, but, inexplicably, it made the pleasure even more intense. Tenma threw back his head, lost in dizzying bliss. It landed on Johan's shoulder and the young man wrapped a hand around his dripping wet forehead, holding him close as he was hitting that wonderful spot inside him over and over again, as if striking sparks with a flintstone. Two of the monster's fingers slid down Tenma's flushed face, stroking over his brow and cheek before slipping in between his trembling lips to press against his tongue as Johan's own lips were sucking at his jawline. The young man slowed down his rhythm, obviously reveling in hearing and feeling the barely stifled screams that each of his well-aimed thrusts evoked, the doctor's tongue helplessly jerking against his fingertips.

A last shred of shame shot through the doctor's head when he realised that he would not only come while being raped, and very soon, but that it would also quite certainly be like nothing he had ever experienced before. Then his mind was wiped blank, whitewashed by that breathtakingly warm light that was filling him, starting to ooze through his pores, taking away gravity. Johan's fingers slid out of his panting mouth, down his side and underneath him, wrapping around his painful erection.

"Call me.. by that name.. ", Johan ordered, his voice finally hitching, his lips slightly trembling against Tenma's neck as he was pushing and pulling at the same time.

He did not even need to ask. He was not the monster without a name, not any more. Right now, he was the only one who had a name for Tenma, the only one who existed. Every rushed, heated breath, every deafening heartbeat thudding against the doctor's ribcage, every tensed muscle that was shaking with anticipation, everything was Johan.. Johan..

".. Jo.. han!"

Tenma only wished that he could look into those eyes right now, that his heart could dissolve in those dangerous, inexplorable, shoreless depths, completely, like his skin was already melting into Johan's, tingling with unbearable excitement.

But the monster was better prepared than he had been in the morning. His damp forehead was firmly pressing into the side of Tenma's face, holding it down. He would not let him see. Not right now.

"Yes..", Johan breathed, the movements of his hips quickening, their well-measured rhythm giving way to more abrupt, unrestrained thrusts.

"It's my favourite.. name.. since you call me that.. doctor."
Feeling the young man loose control inside him, covering his neck with shaky kisses in between sharp exhales, was all that Tenma needed to finally send him over the edge. Every single atom in his body exploded at once, overrun by the most delightful, all-consuming wildfire. He cried out, shuddering and twisting in unspeakable bliss when Johan's teeth dug into his skin, very real, wet heat filling him, his inability to move intensifying the pleasure thousandfold. It just didn't seem to stop. Tenma was falling into that feeling of unconditional belonging, of absolute completion, endlessly..

He had still not hit the ground when he became aware of Johan's hand softly stroking through his hair. The heart-rending affection in that gesture almost succeeded in distracting him from the monster's intention to hold his head down, preventing him from turning around. It was an unnecessary precaution. Tenma was unable to move. Yet he had never felt so alive.

"Well.. was it.. that bad.. for you?" Johan's voice still had that uneven quality that was almost touching, but he was quickly catching himself. Even though Tenma could still feel the young man's heat pulsing inside him.

After this, how could he go on living?

Chapter End Notes

* By the way, I am also wondering what Johan is doing all day. :D I just can't have him hanging around all the time, or I would need to write too many dialogues. If you have any exciting ideas about what he might be up to that I could integrate into this story, please let me know.

** Johan is quoting the famous "Hell is other people" from Jean-Paul Sartre's "Huis Clos" ("No Exit"). The monster's next sentence refers to Sartre's cornerstone philosophic work "L'existentialisme est un humanisme"("Existentialism is a Humanism") from 1946. It's a very interesting philosophic concept, also in light of the moral issues dealt with in Monster..

*** "Do your best, doctor. It's ok." or "Try harder, doctor. Everything will be fine".

On a sidenote: So far, I haven't found a single story where Johan is on top – properly on top – like here. It's probably hard to imagine, because of his (screwed-up) adoration for Tenma, and the age difference.. and the fact that Tenma is just such an unlikely uke. On the surface. However, if you read what Eva says about their relationship in "Another Monster", I think it's not too far-fetched to imagine a submissive side in Tenma as well.. I feel that this chapter fits into the storyline, with Johan wanting to break into Tenma in every way, so I hope it's not too implausible. However, if you are not comfortable at all with Tenma being the uke.. I still hope that you continue reading, since there are yet more chapters to come.. ;)
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

I found this chapter really hard to write! I tried not to get too deep into Johan's character so far, for obvious reasons, but after 7 chapters it became unavoidable, plus the dynamics between those two are getting more complicated with every chapter. So, possibly, my take on it goes into a completely wrong direction. I hope you like it, but I warn you - it gets VERY cheesy. I'm not joking. I was even cringing myself when writing some parts of it. ;D But, I could not have written it differently.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Love is like a sin, my love
For the one that feels it the most
Look at her with her smile like a flame
She will love you like a fly will never love you again

(Massive Attack – Paradise Circus)

What happened then?

Had Johan allowed him to shower, to put on fresh clothes? Had he tied him up again? And had he said anything before leaving?

Tenma could not recall any of it when he woke up. If he did wake up at all. He kept slipping in and out of that nightmarish state of half-consciousness that occupies a nowhere land between dreaming and full self-awareness. How many times did he come close, so painfully close to breaking through its surface, as if fighting his way up through numbingly cold, viscous liquid, shaking with exhaustion.. only to helplessly slide back into yet another layer of dark, restless sleep?

At an indefinable point in time, daylight began to ooze through his eyelids.. that refused to open, seemingly glued to his pupils and burning like fire when he finally managed to squint. Everything was in a blur. He must have indeed sunk to the bed of a faraway ocean, failing to recognise a single shape of the world beyond its surface as he was gazing up.. it was Johan's ocean. Only.. when did it heat up like this?

Tenma groaned. He could not even tell if his limbs were tied up right now. It felt as if every single muscle in his body had been pierced through with a chain, causing a dull pain when he stirred. Moving was a bad idea. The doctor lied still where he was, shivering with nausea, too dazed to even wonder what was the matter with him. Random images kept flaring up in his head. Scenes from his childhood, that one time when he played hide-and-seek with the neighbours' children, when he remained in his hideaway as it was getting dark, knowing that the others had long left.. he wanted someone to come looking for him so badly. Johan's face. Scenes from his youth, the heat in his room as he spent another summer bent over his desk. Yet it was never good enough. Johan's face again. In fact, most of the images involved Johan's face, from one angle or another, all those detached, well-defined expressions it could adopt.. and the other kind of expression the doctor had seen only once,
the one that could not be defined in any terms he knew. And Johan's hands..

Tenma did not stir when one of those hands slid over his forehead. That Johan would be there, that he would touch him whenever it pleased the monster... it seemed all perfectly natural by now. Though the young man's skin was unusually chilly.

"Doctor Tenma?"

That familiar voice sounded remote. Tenma's ears were clogged with salty sea water. He gave a faint noise of recognition on hearing his name, automatically, like a musical instrument responding to its owner's touch, and was instantly rewarded by those agreeably cooling fingers stroking down the side of his face.

"You have a fever."

.. fever.. hmm.. yes..

Johan's words seemed to make sense, though the insight they brought failed to provoke a further reaction from the doctor. That hand disappeared from his face and Tenma sighed, slipping back into a dim doze. The next time he came to there was a quiet beeping noise somewhere close to his head, and something was being pulled out of his ear.

"Thirty-nine point five. It is very high, am I right, doctor?"

.. maybe I'm going die..

The thought filled Tenma with an incongruous feeling of grim gloating, even though, of course, he realised that his death was not particularly likely. But there was some hope, especially since he did not know the source of this fever. He usually enjoyed excellent health. Tenma could not even remember the last time he had been seriously sick. Maybe it was just a psychosomatic reaction of his body to..

"Do you.. have pain somewhere?"

The older man became aware of a surprisingly cautious hand on his shoulder, shaking him slightly. He could not be bothered showing a reaction.

"Doctor Tenma.. can you hear me?"

One of his – apparently untied – arms was lifted, a pair of soft fingers pressing against his wrist; then it was carefully laid back onto the bed.

"Your pulse is normal", the monster muttered.

.. maybe because.. body temperature is not linked to heartbeat..

The doctor found Johan's rather helpless attempts at diagnosing him strangely amusing. Were it not for the numbness in his face, he probably would have smiled. There was a word for it in German: 'Galgenhumor' - gallows humour. Tenma could never quite figure out what it meant from the explanations in his dictionary. Now he understood.

Johan's hand returned to his shoulder in the silence that ensued, resting there in an untypically indecisive fashion, then slightly tightening its grip.

"I can get you any medicine you want."
There was something in the monster's voice that succeeded in catching his captive's waning attention, something that had never been present before, just a hint of confusion, maybe even.. worry? Not that it mattered.

.. you don't have to.. treat fever.. fool..

Tenma found himself being shaken by the shoulder once again, more forcefully this time. He gave a discontented groan.

".. just.. let me."

Speaking required a lot of effort, even those monosyllabic words seemingly sticking to his swollen tongue that felt far too big for his mouth. And there was nothing to make that effort seem worthwhile.

"No, Doctor Tenma. Get a hold of yourself. Last night, you seemed eager to reassure me that you were a man."

The intended mockery in Johan's words failed to wholly cover up what was hiding underneath it, like an animal lost in unfamiliar territory, a helplessness so foreign to the monster's usually cool, affirmative tone.

.. yes.. and it meant nothing to you.. nothing at all..

Tenma hardly had an interest in leaving his conveniently numb state. If his mind were never to clear again, so be it. He wished he could just sleep.. sleep.. and not wake up. Stripped of his pride, his life was not even worth living.

Johan finally let go of his shoulder, obviously realising that he was unlikely to get any sense out of his captive right now.

"Fine. I will give you some aspirin. It should bring the fever down at least."

When the monster sat down next to Tenma, it felt like a déjà-vue of the first minutes of his imprisonment. Only some forty-eight hours had passed since then, even less, yet it seemed like a lifetime. If speaking of life was even appropriate. The doctor could never go back to being the man he used to be. The man he had always assumed he was.

"Open your mouth. You will feel better."

Tenma firmly pressed his lips together. No, things would be different this time. He would not take it. He did not want to, no, not even deserve to feel better.

"Drink some water at least. You should drink a lot when you have a fever."

"Hn.. I didn't know that.. yet."

Wasting the precious little amount of energy he had left on a sarcastic comment was hardly a rational thing to do, yet times when Tenma's mind, when his body.. when any part of him had acted rationally – those times were long gone.

"Well? Will you drink?"

The older man shook his head. Or rather, he slightly turned it from side to side. Even that tiny movement hurt like a swarm of needles piercing through his neck, bringing a wave of nausea in its
wake.

"Doctor Tenma."

Was there a shade of impatience in Johan's composed voice?

"Does this sort of childish stubbornness make you feel more in control?"

Tenma could almost feel the monster's eyes glide over his heated face like a pair of ice cubes, searching it for a reaction.

"Would you really like me to force you.. again?"

The doctor lied still, his captor's words passing over him, failing to stir anything inside. Those taunts had no chance of breaking through the bulletproof, tinted glass walls of his lethargy.

There was a soft sigh as the monster got up from the bed.

Yes, go away.. go away and leave me here to die.

The older man did indeed feel an almost childish defiance welling inside him. Oh, how he wished to stop breathing right now just to spite Johan, just to show him, show him that he could not have his will for once. This could be his last, his ultimate act of resistance. Yet as soon as the young man's weight left the mattress, a different kind of weight came to press down on Tenma's chest, immaterial yet stone-heavy, a surge of bone-numbing fear. So this was really it? Johan would truly leave him all alone? Now that the monster had taken what he wanted.. would he simply abandon him like a broken doll?

But Johan was not one to give up easily, as the doctor was soon to be reminded when an ice-cold, wet cloth suddenly manifested itself on his forehead. He moaned at the undeniably pleasant sensation, which, however, had the unwelcome effect of pushing back the nausea and clearing his head a little.

"Well then, Doctor Tenma. We will make a deal."

Make a deal?

That was certainly a phrase Tenma would not have expected to leave the young man's lips. Usually, it was his way or no way. Or rather, it was his way, full stop.

"I shall give you a piece of information which, I suppose, will alleviate your conscience a little; and if it does, you will allow me to make you feel better. Agreed?"

The older man stirred in what was supposed to be a shrug of his shoulders, yet he lost the motivation to complete that simple gesture halfway through. What could the monster do, what could he say that would make a difference? Even if Tenma were to be released right now.. what did it matter?

"Do you remember the tablets I gave you on the first day? Well, one of them actually was a painkiller."

Tenma's breath stopped midway in his throat, refusing to go any further.

".. but the other one.."

.. wha.. ?!
".. was something to get you 'in the mood' a bit, for a couple of days."

The doctor felt his lungs painfully convulse, demanding to be filled with air. He gasped.

"I also dissolved some more of it in your drink last night. You might have wondered why I waited for an hour, before - "

".. You.. drugged me?"

Tenma could not believe what his own mouth had just said out loud – or as loud as a hoarse whisper could get.

"This is unnecessarily reproachful, doctor. I simply wanted to help you..

"HELP?"

".. to enjoy what I was planning on doing a little more. Though, admittedly, the look of confused arousal in your eyes was rather adorable."

Johan had certainly not promised too much. The older man was indeed suddenly overcome by a desire to shake off his daze.. even if only so that he could punch that immaculate, mocking face. At last, his brain decided to resume its work, frantically reassessing the events of the past two days. All those bizarre feelings that had been tormenting him – his body's inappropriate reactions to the lightest of touches, the embarrassing dream, and then last night.. maybe even those waves of heat alternating with chills, the dizziness, that disturbing way his heart sometimes fluttered simply from looking at Johan..

Tenma was not sure what kind of substance could have caused all of those effects. He decided not to ask for details, desperately clinging to the belief that Johan could get his fingers on a drug as powerful as this, like a drowning person would cling to the flimsiest plank of wood unexpectedly floating into its reach.

"Aah, I knew this would make you feel better about yourself. I can see the relief on your face."

The cloth on the older man's forehead was removed and replaced a few seconds later, wonderfully ice-cold once again, as the monster's hand came to rest in his hair.

"See, Doctor Tenma? You don't need to despise yourself too much. You were right yesterday morning, it was just a physical reaction. You could not help it. It's not as if you liked me. Now that would be truly grotesque, would it not?"

Tenma squinted up at the young man, stunned. Was it just his impression, or had there been the slightest tremble in Johan's pointedly cheerful voice, a melancholic glimmer in those words the monster strung together so evenly, as if threading beads on a string. Somehow, that string found a way to wind itself around the doctor's heart, squeezing it painfully.

"It is wearing off, so your fever might be a side effect. There should be no long-term damage. Just have a drink and take the aspirin now."

For the first time that morning, Tenma wished he could see clearly. Yet his vision was still a blur, Johan's face only a pale blot framed by light blond.

"How can you even think that.. after what you just told me.. I would.."

"Don't worry, Doctor Tenma", the monster reassured him, sounding infuriatingly convincing. Oh
yes, he knew how to be convincing, regardless of the actual content of his words. "I will not do that to you again. I was simply interested to know what people are making such a fuss about. Actually."

The young man's fingers tenderly trailed down Tenma's cheek.

".. it exceeded my expectations. I did not think that I could enjoy such a ridiculous act. Now, will you start being sensible?"

".. hn."

Tenma didn't get it. How could the monster do the most horrendous things to him, without even a hint of remorse, while, at the same time, touching him with an affection that felt heartrendingly innocent, almost devoted, displaying cruelty and fondness with equal nonchalance. It still failed to add up in the doctor's recently much-abused, overheated brain, the two similarly disturbing parts of that bizarre equation threatening to neatly split it into its two hemispheres. Tenma even forgot to worry about other possible side effects of that unknown drug, forgot to be infuriated by how shamelessly the young man had used him. Or by that smug 'compliment' he had the doubtful pleasure of receiving only seconds ago.

And then Johan said something that finally broke down the rest of the older man's resistance. It was only one word, but one he had never uttered before, at least not in a way that wasn't ironic.

"Please?"

It sounded like a visitor from another planet putting his vast theoretical knowledge of human rites into practice, weirdly poignant. Tenma gave up. Fine. He would do whatever the monster asked of him. That's how it always ended, how it was meant to be. One way or another, Johan always got what he wanted. Apart from some very important things he must have missed out on early in his childhood.

One of the young man's hands rested on the doctor's back as he helped him into a sitting position, his other hand holding the glass. Despite his fever, Tenma could still feel the heat of sitting so close to Johan. But it was no longer a sensation that would make him cringe and back away, not even one that would confound him. Even if the doctor's mind still failed to believe what had happened between them last night – his body had already accepted it, still wrapped into that feeling of infinite intimacy like into a soft blanket. If he were to lean to the side just a little, only a few centimetres.. Even with his eyes closed, the doctor could still sense Johan, like the green parts of a plant could never fail to sense the sun, that mysterious photosynthesis letting something grow inside the older man, something unknown and frightening.. yet warm. It took all of his willpower to resist an overwhelming urge to press his face into the young man, to allow himself to fall..

Tenma quickly lied back down.. suddenly realising that where his head ended up was not the mattress. The doctor showed just the appropriate amount of token resistance as Johan's hand tangled itself into his hair once again. Where it belonged. A second hand came to rest lightly on his chest. The monster would not allow him to change his position now.

Thank God..

"Well, that wasn't too hard, now was it?"

That completely irrational feeling of comfort, his head resting in the lap of quite possibly the most dangerous psychopath in recent history.. was he still under the influence of some kind of dangerous substance?
"Why.. drugging me.. in the first place?" The doctor's tongue felt unwilling to move. "Surely.. you could have easily found someone happy to.. do it with you.. without being.."

Johan laughed out in that soft manner that was so inimitably his.

"Is this meant to be a compliment?"

"No.."

.. but it's hardly a question of personal opinion that you are beautiful.

"My dear doctor Tenma."

That address had lost some of the mockery it originally used to hold.

"I find it a mystery why you cannot accept that I have chosen you. Can I be any more obvious?"

Please don't..

"How is that so hard to grasp, especially for someone as intelligent as you?"

"Where.. shall I even start?"

Tenma did not actually intend to voice that rather meaningless question. It simply happened. All these things.. were simply happening, without him being able to influence the course of events. Throughout his life, the doctor had always, always been in control. He simply had to be. None of that was left now, and among other things, it felt strangely.. liberating?

"I have got time", Johan encouraged him softly.

"I am a man.."

"So you keep telling me."

".. a lot older than you.."

Johan chuckled.

"Interesting that you should mention such negligibilities before.. other things. You really did enjoy a traditional upbringing, Doctor Tenma."

Mercifully, the monster chose not to expand on those other things right now.

"I never found it particularly helpful to think in categories of age, or gender. When I was a child.."

The young man was lightly running his fingers through the doctor's hair as he spoke, quietly, almost in a whisper. It was the most delightfully comforting sensation Tenma had ever known.

".. I used to wear girls' clothes a lot."

".. hmm?"

"My mother was on the run, so she dressed me up. Pretending that only one child existed.. a clever way of disguising her identity."

.. on the run..
The monster did not allow him to contemplate on what he had just said.

"I did not mean to interrupt your line of argument."

_I wish you did._

"Johan.. you have only.."

Tenma furrowed his brows, realising something he had not thought of before.

".. after you fled from the hospital.. you have only seen me twice."

The older man shuddered at the memory of their brief encounters. That murderous creature – and the boy who was holding him so gently now. How could it possibly be one and the same person?

"That's not entirely true, Doctor Tenma."

Tenma blinked up at the young man.

"I saw you quite a few times throughout the years. Though you did not see me."

"H-how?"

"I came to Düsseldorf to have a look at you every now and again. I just had to see your smiling face."

Johan's hand cupping his cheek was the safety net to catch him as Tenma's heart performed a dizzying salto mortale .. never had that term done its name so much justice! The monster was as uninhibited in his casual confessions as he was in his acts of torture. He just had no shame.

"Though you have not smiled a lot lately."

_Does that.. SURPRISE you?_

"Aah, Doctor Tenma.. I remember the way you touched me."

.. _TOUCHED_..?

"When you examined me after the operation. So carefully, as if I were something very precious. I was not fully awake, but I _remember_. Your hands were so –"

"Jo.. han! Please.."

Tenma cringed, sweating out of every pore of his body. And it wasn't just that his fever had started to come down. He almost regretted that the young man had not made a wholehearted attempt to hurt or humiliate him for some time – in fact, a long time by his standards. Had Johan decided that he had done enough damage to his body and soul for the time being? Or did he want to take advantage of Tenma's drowsiness that left him unable to process those revelations to their full extent? Be it as it were, the doctor sincerely prayed for cruelty instead of this impossible adoration he was receiving right now. He could handle just about anything, just not _this_, not those unabashed romantic advances coming from the monster. He tried to move away, but Johan was holding him firmly. Holding him..

"How amusing, Doctor Tenma. You are so embarrassed even though it is _me_ who is confessing."

".. it's not.. _appropriate_.."
That was certainly a ridiculous word to choose after everything that Johan had done to him. But Tenma failed to find better terms to express his feelings – or, at least, that fraction of his feelings he could express – amid his clouded thoughts.

"Appropriate?"

Sliding off Johan's tongue, the word was bursting with contempt.

"Let's face it, doctor. You never felt fully appropriate. If you did, you would be managing a hospital in Yokohama this very moment. Though you have always desired to fit in seamlessly. But there is no need. You are good enough as you are."

"I don't need you.. to tell me this!" Tenma growled, wishing he could sound – or at least feel – as indignant as he should. Instead, his heart was pierced through, not with a needle, but with a safety pin. One that would fasten it, painfully, but securely, forever.

"No?" Johan enquired, with soft irony. "I thought people needed to be told this once in a while. Who is doing that for you, Doctor Tenma?"

The way Johan pronounced 'people' made it quite clear that he did not include himself in that group. Yet Tenma could pick out something of Aesop's fox in that derisive tone, calling the unreachable grapes sour.

Johan.. have you ever felt loved at all?

"Oh yes, I forgot."

Despite the usual mockery in the young man's voice, Tenma was suddenly hit by a wave of sadness.

*All of your foster families.. when they tried to show you love and kindness..*

"You are the doctor, so you don't require anybody to take care of you, right?"

.. were you unable to accept it? Did you punish them for offering what you felt was so ridiculously out of place? You were punishing yourself at the same time..

"Of course, you don't need any of this, right?"

Johan’s fingers tenderly caressing his jawline left no doubt what he meant by 'this', and Tenma felt his head turn slightly to lean into the young man's hand with a sigh, against his.. no, it was not even against his will, not any more. He had craved to be touched like this for far too long. What the monster had done to him was worse than death. Yet right now, it felt better than life. And deep down, Tenma knew that this was something no drug on earth could justify. Johan did not make an empty pledge last night when promising to make him his own, that humiliating yet breathtakingly sweet feeling of belonging continuing to course through the doctor's veins, incessantly. Like a dog who had once felt the touch of his rightful owner would never again falter in his loyalty, even if kicked, regardless of the crimes his master were to be accused of..

And Tenma finally began to understand. The jigsaw puzzle he had been desperately trying to assemble for over a year, each piece showing nothing but a segment of that deep blue ocean.. at last, the doctor was able to join these orphaned pieces into larger planes of cool, troubled, salty water. Though he would never be able to comprehend that degree of destructive self-negation.

*Simply to die is not good enough for you.. No, you are meticulous, you have to erase every step of earth you happen to walk on..*
Like Goethe's spirit that ever denies,* like a defiant little boy burning down every fragile bridge he is too scared to cross.. In the end, having Nina’s parents killed meant nothing more to the monster than jealously destroying his sister’s favourite toy.

Could it even be that Johan had drugged him, because.. A sudden realisation hit Tenma. Surely, it was not to make things more enjoyable for him; such an altruistic thought could never have crossed the monster's mind, regardless of his stance towards the older man. It also seemed highly unlikely that this manipulative creature would have felt the need to resort to such tricks. No, the real reason was that Johan did not want Tenma to respond to him while being sober. He would not have been able to deal with it – other than, obviously, by pulling out his gun..

"Your fever seems to be going down now." The relief in that gentle voice sounded genuine. "You should try and sleep."

Almost instantly, the doctor felt his eye lids grow heavy. The monster's control over him was that strong. One part of him, the one that could not bear it, still wished nothing more than to fall asleep forever. And to die right here, in Johan's arms.. it could be pure perfection.

Yet another, steadily growing part of Tenma longed to finish solving that jigsaw puzzle, to carve a frame for it, to build a house where he could hang it on the most sunlit wall, safely..

A rather random question suddenly flared up in his mind.

"Johan?"

"Mmh?"

Right now, Tenma could have asked him just about anything.

"How do you know Japanese?"

Johan's soft laughter was the most melodious lullaby.

"Knowing the native language helps you to understand the way a person thinks."

.. you even learned my language..

"But I am not going to speak it to you", the monster was quick to add in an uncharacteristically rushed manner. "Your German is clearly superior."

Tenma felt the corners of his mouth curl up. Of course, Johan was such a perfectionist. He could never allow his surface to be anything other than flawless, other than perfectly polished, sleek, cold steel.. though the doctor could now detect minuscule cracks in that mirroring wall. He was the only one able to recognise them.

"There, you are smiling."

Johan.. all these years, you.. you idiot.. why did you not.. maybe I could have.. could have done something..

"Now sleep."

Is there anything I would not do.. for you?
*Footnote:

Unfortunately, Goethe's "Faust" is not well-known outside Germany, even though it is to German literature what "Hamlet" is to (British) English literature. There is a very famous scene where the demon Mephistopheles introduces himself to Dr. Faust - it goes like this (the English translation is a bit crappy, but there doesn't seem to be a better one around):

"Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint!
Und das mit Recht; denn alles, was entsteht,
Ist wert, daß es zugrunde geht;
Drum besser wär's, daß nichts entstände.
So ist denn alles, was ihr Sünde,
Zerstörung, kurz, das Böse nennt,
Mein eigentliches Element."

"I am the spirit that denies!
And rightly so: since everything created,
In turn deserves to be annihilated;
Better if nothing came to be.
So all that you call Sin, you see,
Destruction, in short, what you've meant
By Evil, is my true element."
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I am milk
I am red hot kitchen
And I am cool
Cool as the deep blue ocean

I am lost
So I am cruel
But I'd be love and sweetness
If I had you

(Garbage)

Doctor Tenma was finally able to sleep deeply, and the monster made sure to sit still, careful not to wake him up. The fever had faded away hours ago, yet the monster did not move. Doctor Tenma needed that rest now, he had to recover before taking the next step, since it was his turn. One way or other, it promised to be interesting.

Doctor Tenma...

The monster had often tried to imagine what it was like to not only have a name, but to have a name made up of meaningful symbols. The two characters in 'Tenma' meant 'heaven' and 'horse'. It sounded like something stepping out of Greek mythology, reminding him of Ηέλιος and his άρμα πελίο. He had devoured those stories while studying Old Greek in his teens, blood dripping from each elegantly curved letter, tales of eternal punishment and meaningless torture, of jealous children murdering their own parents and ignorant parents being fed the remains of their own children. That people would preach the immorality of homicide, while, at the same time, indulging in their gods performing the cruelest acts imaginable – it was just another proof of the streak of pathetic hypocrisy in mankind.

Even Doctor Tenma.. No, he was no God, just another weak human being, like the rest of them. The monster could see it all too clearly. In the end, the second character of his given name was nothing but a digit: 'three', the third son. Oh yes, Doctor Tenma knew what it meant to be a number, just like the monster did, back then, in that despicable place.. no, even earlier, right from the very start. But it was hardly an exceptional experience; all creatures capable of reason should be able to arrive at the same logical conclusions, to recognise their place in what they so reverently referred to as 'the world', their miniscule numeric value of no possible significance, statistical or other.

But they did not, they chose to shroud the plain truth into a veil of noble doubt, pretending it were a magic cloak, wearing irrational beliefs like badges of honour. Thus conscience did make cowards of them all. Yet deep down, they were all craving to be redeemed from that crippling mirage of ethical meaningfulness they were helplessly stuck to like flies to flypaper, flies calling out for their lord. Oh yes, they did follow the monster all too willingly. People were prepared to do a lot of things in exchange for the luxury of being led by one who knew no doubt, one who could take that fearful indecisiveness away from their fluttering hearts and show them a glimpse of true freedom, a freedom from assigning and questioning value, the freedom to create and to destroy, to live and to die..
Yes, to die. When Doctor Tenma witnessed Junker's execution, he did not spend a single thought wondering how that no-good had gotten onto the roof in the first place. He came on his own free will, or the mishmash of confused desires people liked to refer to as their 'will'. Though Junker was begging for his life, he had already understood that death was the ultimate form of redemption. Even Doctor Tenma understood that by now, though he would not be allowed to escape so easily.

".. hn.. Johan.."

Doctor Tenma stirred lightly in his sleep, one loose strand of black hair falling across his eyes. The monster brushed it away, furrowing his brows, his index finger drawing a vague pattern on the stubbly cheek. That automatic growth, of hair, of grass on a sunburnt plain. It was something that had always slightly befuddled the monster, that, somehow, life seemed determined to continue, stubbornly, despite everything.

In fact, Doctor Tenma himself had presented the monster with several issues he still failed to fully understand. Even after a few days of close-up investigation, some things remained unclear. One of those issues was the way that fake name resonated through him every time that it left Doctor Tenma's lips, as if echoing through a deep, hollow gorge. Indeed, it had required some effort to take on the identity of Johan Liebert a second time, more effort than the monster would normally have invested into a task as trite as finding a new alias. It was not a very common name. But after meeting Doctor Tenma that night, after hearing that name from him, the monster knew he had to become Johan once again.

Another issue was the question why Doctor Tenma had failed to pull the trigger. The monster had done his very best to make things ridiculously easy for him. Setting, timing, atmosphere - everything was just perfect. Doctor Tenma had even succeeded in shooting at another person for the very first time only minutes before. After that, there should not have been anything to hold him back. Even little sister did shoot, again, though her aiming skills had not improved since childhood. Yet Doctor Tenma.. When the monster was passing him, he could see it in his eyes, shining through all that pain and despair, the unflinching faith in life, in the meaningfulness of all life, so powerful that it could not be broken even when facing what was so blatantly contradicting it, once again.

Looking into Doctor Tenma's eyes made the monster feel. No, there was no need for suspension points. Looking into Doctor Tenma's eyes made the monster feel. It was unfortunate enough as it was. It made him abduct Doctor Tenma, tie him up and do things to him he never thought he would do, with anybody, ever. Of course, Doctor Tenma had always been special. He had saved him, and now he was meant to eradicate that mistake. But he was never meant to come so close, because.. The one who lay awake at night every so often, recalling that soft face, pondering everything he had been able to find out about the doctor; the one who wrote and tore up countless letters addressed to the older man; the one who hid behind trees to catch a glimpse of Doctor Tenma leaving the hospital, laughing at some - probably inappropriate - jokes Doctor Becker was telling.. It was not him. It was the boy who was still locked up in that dark room with no walls, without any sense of direction, the boy who was counting meals, hoping, begging, crying to be released. The boy who would never be freed. The monster could not allow that to happen.

Yet looking down at Doctor Tenma's endearingly imperfect features was..

The monster never had a preference for a particular colour, a special kind of food, a certain song. Now, was this what it was like to have something that is your favourite thing, something you could not get tired of looking at, touching..

It did not matter now.

Yet looking down at Doctor Tenma's face, the monster wished, for the very first time, that he had
been.. someone else? *Something* else? No, not quite. For the first time, the monster wished he had *been*.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Just a short chapter this time, and I will be returning to Tenma's perspective in the next one - staying in Johan's head for too long is disturbing ;D!

P.S.: The Old Greek stuff means "Helios and his sun chariot". Cookies if you can find the Hamlet reference in this chapter! ;D
Do you see the fire, heavy lit before this time?
Know you the colours of the end, of the end, of the end?

In the midst of a moment can you break the boy,
can you tame the demon?

Light a candle in the dark, in the dark, in dark,
in the dark, light a candle in the dark, in dark, in dark, ooh..

(Alela Diane - To Begin)

This time, there was not a shadow of doubt in his mind. It had felt crystal clear ever since he had woken up. His hands did not shake as he listened to those familiar steps moving through the kitchen, accompanied by other faint, cluttering noises.

Familiar steps. Tenma clenched his jaw, his knuckles turning white as his fists tightened around the chain in his hands. The chain that held him prisoner for three endless days, that would now imprison him for a lifetime. But he had no choice. It had to be. It wasn't even killing. It was, in essence, euthanasia. Johan had not left him untied without a purpose. Johan..

The doctor could not hold back tears any longer. He would never be able to take the boy out of his heart again. But he could still take him out of his reach. Out of anybody's reach. Finally bring the outside world in harmony with the monster's inner world, that dark, mysterious place where he had failed to exist from the very beginning. After their last conversation, after finally being able to glance inside the imploding star that was Johan's soul, to understand his own role at the centre of that unstoppable gravitational collapse, Tenma could not fail to accept that this was the only thing that he could do for him. Something only he could do.

Tenma had no estimation of how long he had been waiting when Johan's steps finally left the kitchen and approached the bedroom door. And waiting seemed to be the wrong term. He was simply standing there, in a trance that put him outside of the space-time continuum. Yet he felt uniquely alert at the same time, despite the weakness in his body that hunger, lack of movement and the recent fever had caused.

The doctor wasn't hoping that he would be able to do it this time, to finish it with his own two hands, not hiding behind the scope of a rifle, just as the monster had predicted. Nor was he fearing it. He just knew it would finally happen. Because what drove him now weren't fury, disgust or a sense of duty. Times when those motives were of any importance seemed far away now. That was a different life. That was a different him. And now he felt nothing - nothing but sadness. The kind of pure, untainted sadness that he had never allowed to take over his soul before, the one that he had always successfully turned into empathy, or resolve, or even harder work. Until now.

The monster's steps paused on the other side of the door, and Tenma had no doubts that the young man knew what was to come. There had been enough opportunities to prepare for this, for both of them. The doctor tensed, thoughts suddenly racing. What if Johan had changed his mind and decided to leave? What if he had a gun? What if.. ?

The door creaked open, and Tenma rushed forward. The chain wrapped around the monster's neck so effortlessly, as if it were the most natural place for it to be. The older man gave a hoarse cry as he
pulled both loose ends towards him with all his force, and the boy's arms flew up, thin fingers tugging at the metal around his throat as he made an indescribable stifled noise that chilled Tenma to the bone. The doctor clenched his eyes tightly shut as he leaned backwards against the wall, using his body weight to pull even harder.

Then Johan's knees gave in. The doctor automatically let go of the chain and caught him as he fell, carefully laying the limp body on the floor and kneeling besides it. He felt his unnatural calmness slowly starting to dissolve as he stretched out a trembling hand to cautiously remove the chain from the boy's pale throat, wincing at the sight of the marks that it had caused. The monster's neck wasn't broken. The boy was unconscious, but his chest was still moving up and down ever so slightly. Tenma just needed to wrap that outstretched hand around his throat and press down. It would not even hurt Johan anymore. He would just.. stop breathing.

Tenma furiously rubbed at his eyes. He had to stop his pointless tears and have a clear look at that immaculate face, just one last time, before he would remove it from the world. He.. Suddenly, he remembered Johan's words:

"I won't allow you to break until you have killed me with your own two hands."

It all made sense now. Tenma had not just swallowed every single one of his captor's baits, no, he had swallowed the nameless monster itself, and now it was so deep, so deep inside him, so hopelessly entangled in his nerve cords and arteries, and pulling it out would mean..

"..and then you will finally be able to look at me.. you will understand."

Yes, once he would have killed the one he had brought back to life.. the one that brought him..

The doctor could see it now, the nothingness, that endless, barren, hollow landscape.. It was the end. Not the end of something specific, not even the end of existence, or the world. Simply the end. And in an instance, all the adrenaline that held him upright boiled over and evaporated from his blood, the last ounce of strength leaving him, and Tenma dropped onto Johan's chest, his body shaking in breathless sobs. He did not even have the strength to cry out loud, to cry out the name that the boy liked to hear from his lips, even though that name was tearing his chest apart, he did not even..

"Rea.. lly.. you're.. no good.. at this."

The doctor froze. It was just a whisper, but it reverberated through the hollowness inside him like a drum roll. Slowly, very slowly, he lifted his head, as if pulled by invisible threads.

Johan..

Johan lay stretched out on the floor before him, ruffled blond hair luminous against the dark carpet, clear blue eyes half open, cold mountain lakes shaded by velvety eyelashes, skin as white as the virgin snow on the peaks above, except for those dark red marks.. He had never looked more terrifyingly beautiful, more alluring, so incongruously and so heartbreakingly fragile. An indiscernible whimpering sound escaped Tenma as the chain slipped from his fingers, seemingly tightening around his own throat.

"Well.. doctor.. ?" Johan's whisper was painfully hoarse. "What will you.. do now?"

The monster did not sound reproachful, or frightened, or even surprised. He did not move either, calmly observing the older man from underneath his long lashes, waiting. And Tenma gaped back at him, still unable to stop the tears, his insides trembling like overstrung springs moments before being
let loose. He realised that, until this very moment, he had known nothing of despair. Or love.

"Yes.. kiss or kill.. what a truly.. existential choice.. you have to ma-"

"Oh just SHUT up and –"

The doctor had no idea what he wanted to say, and it hardly mattered. His mouth was already violently crushed into Johan's smirk, less in a kiss than an acute need to reassure himself that the boy was there, alive, breathing. He brought two shaky hands up to cradle Johan's pale face in his palms as he pressed his lips into the boy's bruised neck, letting the comforting rhythm of a faint yet steady pulse hum against them until his sobs finally began to die down. That rhythm was calling him, like the beat of a primeval drum reverberating through the most sultry, impenetrable rain forest..

Blood shot into Tenma's head, washing away the few stray thoughts that still lingered there. He needed more, more of that skin he was hungrily breathing in, like the scent of a first mild spring morning after a barren winter. And before he knew it his fingers were already sliding down to the collar of Johan's shirt, clumsily fumbling at it for a few moments, then tugging impatiently. One of the buttons that flew off hit him hard on the chin, yet the pain did not register. He buried his face in that irresistible scent, sucked every millimetre of warm skin into his mouth, ignoring his aching lungs that were crying out for air. His hands trembled as they stroked over the boy's smooth chest, stomach, the thin line of hair leading downwards from his belly button. God, how he had always, always wanted him!

When Tenma's fingers reached the rim of Johan's trousers, he didn't even bother with the button. The boy underneath him remained as lifeless as a doll, not rejecting him, but not encouraging him either as the older man pulled down the rest of his clothing in one jerky movement. He simply let the doctor have his way, and Tenma did not hesitate for a second as he undid his own trousers, roughly spreading the boy's legs with the empty-headed determination of a sleepwalker. He heard his own heavy breathing seemingly coming from afar, his face nuzzled into Johan's soft neck once again. So long.. He had been waiting for so long. Tenma clasped the boy's shoulders, pushing him into the floor as he took him with one raw thrust. He gasped, overwhelmed..

And then there was another noise, a stifled whimper. It was barely noticeable, yet it brought Tenma back to his senses like a bucketful of icy water emptied over his head. The realisation of what he did just now hit him like a punch in the stomach, of how he did it, more brutally than even the monster himself had been. He froze, feeling sick with both disgust and arousal, the breathtakingly tight heat that clenched around him making his head reel. He was unspeakably terrified to lift his sweaty face from the nook of Johan's neck where it was hiding in shame. But he had to look at his victim.

The boy's head was leaned back, an aureole of hair surrounding his angelic face, composed except for his eyebrows that were slightly drawn together. Yet the doctor knew even the tiniest features of that face too well by now. He could not fail to notice the two thin wet streaks at the outer corners of the monster's closed eyes, the wetness that made his lashes stick together.

"J-Jo.. han..?"

It was all that Tenma could stammer before being cut off by those eyes that fluttered open, an overflowing arctic ocean that focused on him, on him alone, dangerous and captivating and ringing with sirens' songs. Looking into Johan's eyes while being inside of him made the older man feel weightless, breathless, a thousand wonderful kinds of '-less', but..

"S-sorry, I.. I didn't mean to.."

The whole ridiculousness of the doctor's helpless attempt to explain himself was instantly reflected in
the mocking curl of the monster's mouth, its irony tinted with pain.

"What.. kill me.. or fuck me..?"

Tenma flinched like from a slap in the face. Just what.. what the hell was he doing? He didn't want this, any of it, no, he had to stop, stop now, JUST STOP! Yet the boy was wrapped around him so tightly the older man could feel his inner muscles twitch, sending the most tantalising shivers down his spine. The urge to move, to rub himself deeper into those hot, slick walls was so unbearable it made him light-headed. Yet the sheer thought of it, of what had caused that slickness, was little short of nauseating. And Johan continued to hold the doctor's eyes in yet another merciless grip, indulging in his favourite cocktail of guilt and desire that Tenma never failed to provide for him.

"Aah.. Doctor Tenma.. so kind and hesitant.. even.. in the middle of screwing.. is that the true reason why.. Eva dumped you?"

Even now, even pressed into the floor beneath him, his voice breaking up in pain, that brat still managed to provoke and insult him! Tenma growled, withdrawing to the tip, only to roughly bury himself inside the boy once again. He succeeded in eliciting a stronger reaction from the monster this time. Johan arched his shoulders as he threw back his head with a hoarse gasp, eyes wide open.

".. yes .. show me.."

It was all the encouragement the doctor needed. Oh yes, he would show that smug devil just how kind he was!

He clawed one hand into the carpet, the other around Johan's shoulder, leaning away just far enough to be able to closely watch that mesmerizing face as he began to move inside the boy with barely controlled force. Those beautiful small gasps and flinching eyebrows elicited by each angry thrust sent jolts of pure electricity through the older man. He could not even tell if Johan was actually enjoying what he had undoubtedly asked for, but he did not really care either way. To be able to draw such instant, raw reactions from that faultlessly controlled monster was so unspeakably satisfying it drove him into the most blissful madness, seduced him into finally following his most despicable, primal instincts, urges that seemed to wholly contradict his nature: fury, vengefulness, unrestrained lust.. It had to be Johan's greatest triumph yet, his ultimate victory. Yes, Tenma was fully aware of it.. he just couldn't care less. He was burning, burning to possess that cold, beguiling, cruel creature, completely, to finally pay him back for all the pain and humiliation, for everything that he had done to the world, and to him, to feel the monster, and to make him feel, anything, pain at the very least..

The doctor groaned at the dizzying waves of pleasure his hungry, impatient strokes brought, shoulders curved, toes slamming into the floor to allow him to push in harder and harder, to drive even deeper into the monster he finally had in his power. He pressed Johan's legs further apart with his hips as if trying to split him in two, mercilessly increasing the rhythm until he could feel that immaculate body shake underneath him with each violent thrust, until the monster's restrained gasps finally turned into the most arousing pained, breathless moans, sounds Tenma had never expected to escape from those mocking lips. Until his victim could not take it anymore. Suddenly, Johan's hand darted up, fingernails desperately digging into the arm Tenma had placed next to his head, the boy's face turning to tightly press into his wrist.

"Ngh.. Doct-.. Haa-.."

Tenma jerked and shuddered, painfully clenching his teeth as he came so unexpectedly and
powerfully his body seemed to explode into a universe of dancing stars. He clasped at Johan's shoulder, as if to stop himself from dissolving. And as he lay there, panting heavily, trying to put all of those throbbing fragments back together to understand what the hell was going on, a second scalding wave came crashing down on him without warning. It wasn't even shame for sleeping with the monster - or with a boy only half his age. Somehow, those worries paled in comparison with the shock of having discovered such an immoral, animalistic streak within himself, a part of him that could act with such ruthlessness, that could enjoy exerting power and causing pain. Such terrible pain. He knew it all too well from his own experience. And what he did just now proved the monster right, proved that Tenma was not a jot better than him, that they were the same.

*I can see you.*

Tenma violently shook his head, trying hard to regain his senses, to regain *himself,* looking down at the gorgeous, damp face pressing into the sensitive skin of his wrist, eyes clenched tight, hot exhales hitting his pulse. The doctor's heart was pounding so uncontrollably and in so many places at once it turned his body into an earthquake.

*No.. that's.. that's not it..*

He finally released Johan's shoulder, shaky fingers stretching out on an impulse to sink into that crown of ruffled blond, only to jerk back, as if burning himself on melting hot gold.

*.. all of this only happens because.. I am trying to suppress.. what I want.. so badly..*

All of a sudden, the doctor felt painfully shy, which seemed rather absurd considering that he was still nestled deep inside the boy. Yet that frenzy of furious passion had already been washed away by a feeling of tenderness so overwhelming it would have swept him off his feet, were he not already on the floor. In more than one way.

*.. what I need.. more than anything in the world..*

The older man held his breath as he finally dared to reach out, a little clumsily, to stroke through Johan's hair, reveling in the way its silky texture felt underneath his fingertips. The boy's pale, bruised neck was turned towards him so trustingly now, a poignant reminder of the crime he had almost committed. Tenma bowed down to timidly press his lips to its fragile curve, as if asking it for forgiveness. Was that his reward for enduring days of torturous, enforced intimacy with the monster? An unexpected recompense for almost drowning in those icy waters that reflected a perfectly clear image of himself, a picture he had never dared to look at before in such detail? Was it even thinkable that Tenma had misinterpreted the boy's intentions all along, that all of the events of the past three days had been ultimately geared towards preparing the older man for this inestimable gift: being handed full control of the boy's destiny, being allowed to touch such impossible perfection, to get inside when no-one else was permitted to even come close?*

Or maybe it was simply the last, well-planned move in the monster's cruel game of chess, the one that finally put his victim checkmate, cleverly using the doctor's own pieces to block off all escapes?*

What did it matter now? Tenma had already laid down his crown at Johan's feet a long time ago, probably the very night he first met him as a grown-up, the moment he looked into that remote face that defied all laws of nature, of society, even of humanity itself, the face that brutally sucked him in without return. He gave up his life to follow that face. Of course, he had succeeded in convincing himself that what urged him on was the duty to kill the monster. But truth was, he hardly had a choice. What was it that Johan wished him to do right now? The doctor craved to play his assigned role perfectly at last. He had probably failed to cause the boy anything but pain so far, so maybe..
Tenma swallowed, hesitating for a second, then cautiously slipping a hand in between them. The older man's heart skipped an erratic beat when his fingers reached and tentatively wrapped around their destination, then hammered wildly inside his chest as Johan jerked and sharply drew in air underneath him. It made the doctor wonder whether he would survive all of this, not even from a psychological, but from a purely physical point of view. Not that it wasn't worth dying for. It did not even feel as weird as he would have imagined. And to be able to hold a literally firm proof that he was doing something right in his very hand, throbbing against his palm.. there were no words.

Though maybe it wasn't what Johan had expected him to do after all, since his head spun around to finally face the doctor again, and for a second Tenma thought that he would be commanded to stop. He gave the boy no chance to protest, letting his hand slide up with not too light pressure, observing in awe as Johan's eyes widened, his fingers curling into the older man's arm as he gave a breathy mewl that sounded stunned, almost helpless. The boy's face was flushed, yet still remarkably composed, but the way he was now looking at the doctor out of big blue eyes.. that still ocean was swaying and trembling, as if from a mysterious, hot current that ran closer to the surface with every slow stroke of Tenma's hand. The doctor completely forgot everything around him as he watched the monster's mask begin to crack and dissolve. Johan's face was opening up beautifully as he was visibly losing control over his body that was involuntarily pressing up into the older man's hand. It was like watching layer after layer of wafer-thin, almost sheer curtains being lifted to gradually reveal a stage, occupied by a play so complex and intriguing it had Tenma too enthralled to even notice that he was growing hard once again.

The realisation came as Johan gasped and shifted underneath him, sincere surprise joining the many traces of entirely human emotions that were now flickering across his face in a stunning and utterly disorderly fashion. Tenma felt his cheeks burn, unsure whether to be embarrassed or amazed; he would not have thought that recovering so quickly was even possible at his age.

".. I'm sorry.. I.."

Johan's hand found its way up the older man's arm to glide across his face, unsteady fingers pressing against his mouth. Not that there was anything Tenma actually wanted to say. All that he wanted right now.. Why was he still hesitating, why did the thought of kissing Johan make him feel so incredibly nervous it caused his insides to twist and shake? Maybe because he realised that despite all the unspeakable things that had already happened between them, Johan had never attempted to kiss him deeply, never enforced this last, ultimate intimacy upon him. No, he was patiently waiting for his captive to admit crushing defeat on his own free will. Or maybe not so patiently right now. If those eyes did not belong to Johan, the monster, Tenma could have sworn that they were begging him.. And who was he to tell them 'no'?

With sudden resolve, the doctor pressed his mouth into the pale fingers that still lingered there, before bowing down, shakily.. Johan did not remove his hand until their faces were only centimeters away from each other, and not without slowly rubbing his fingertips along the doctors lips, gently pulling them apart. He had Tenma trembling with anticipation when the older man was finally allowed to softly brush his mouth against Johan's own.

If this was defeat, then all victory could rot in hell.

Tenma's eyes fluttered shut as he sank into the kiss with a resigned yet infinitely contented sigh. For a few moments, the boy underneath him remained still, then he stirred, pressing his own soft, inviting lips up against the doctor's, cautiously, almost shyly. Warm fingers trailed along the older man's cheek to lightly wrap around the nape of his neck, holding him to the kiss.. as if he could ever get away! Tenma purred in pure bliss, tenderly rubbing his lips against Johan's before pulling them into his mouth, as if finally indulging in the most delicious candy he had been lusting after all his life,
without even realising.

The doctor rested the elbow of his supporting arm on the floor, tangling his hand in silky hair as he slowly let himself sink down onto the boy, deepening the kiss. He was almost nauseous with excitement when his tongue brushed against Johan's teeth before pressing them further apart to slip in between, finding and hungrily wrapping itself around Johan's own surprisingly guarded tongue. The boy seemed to have told the truth when confessing that he had never kissed anyone before. It took a few moments before he began to respond, but when he did, when he opened his mouth a little wider, yielding to the doctor's will, his tongue nudging against Tenma's own in between whimpers.

They were so close now that Tenma could feel the boy shiver when he resumed the movements of his hand and hips with long, smooth strokes. This time, the older man was determined to fully savour and absorb every second of this dazzling, surreal intimacy, like parched sand that hungrily sucks in salty waves, willfully oblivious of being drawn into the sea, grain by heated grain. He tried hard to hold back moans in order to be able to listen to the softer sounds that Johan was making in the short intervals that the doctor released those wet, trembling lips, the fingers of his caressing hand feeling more lubricated by the second. And suddenly, Johan jerked and struggled, hastily pulling an arm from underneath the older man to hide his face in the crook of his elbow.

"No.." Tenma panted, seizing that rebellious arm with his free hand and determinedly pinning both of the boy's thin wrists above his head.

"Let me.. look at you.. Johan.."

The doctor's body lit up head to toe like a giant sparkler when he saw the expression in Johan's eyes. They were looking up at him, helplessly, but trustingly, shaking with unexpected fear, but glowing with even more foreign feelings, unlocked.

"It's.. what you wanted.. Johan.."

It was only now that the older man realised the whole extent of his physical superiority; it required little effort to hold down the squirming, gasping boy, without losing his steadily increasing rhythm. That Johan had managed to keep him on his knees for three long days by means of little more than mere chutzpah was indeed astonishing. But deep down, things have been different from the very start. Tenma was the one in control, because he was the one who could bestow a name upon the monster, and make him believe it was his. Even if for a second. And it was this, this very second! The moment that the last sheer layer of ice dissolved in that iridescent blue and let Tenma dive into its very core, past the deep sea monsters, down to a deserted ocean bed, to the wrecks of proud ships that lay sunk there, and deeper still, to the treasure chests that lay untouched inside them..

".. Kenz-.. aaah.."

The doctor pressed his wet, salty face into Johan's, breathing in his cries, feeling the boy shudder violently underneath him, and around him, almost crushing him in his arms when he came a second time, unspeakably more satisfying. There was no guilt, no remorse, there were no doubts; only Johan's hands in his hair, Johan's soft skin flush against his own, Johan's breath in his lungs, Johan's pulse in his own heart.

Time was stretching like strands of hot toffee.

This could last forever..

"Don't you think.. you've been in there.. long enough now?"
The boy's soft voice did not even make a half-hearted attempt to drape the potential mockery with a suitably ironic tone.

"No", Tenma whispered. then tried again, painfully pulling his brain out of its state of hibernation. "Yes."

He withdrew, sitting up and watching the boy get on his feet, make a few steps, sway and clutch the door frame for support. His inner thighs were stained with blood.

"I will run us a bath."

"I'm not going to..", Tenma began, then realised that he was speaking on autopilot rather than in sincere protest. He fell silent.

"Oh.. would that be too much intimacy for you, Doctor Tenma, after you just screwed me.. twice?"

The doctor could not help but smile. The monster was recovering. But it could not affect him anymore. Not after where he's been, not after what he found there. He mustered Johan's exposed back, as if seeing him for the very first time, suddenly realising that the boy's body was not as perfect as he had imagined. His frame was a little too thin, a defect easily concealed by his manner of dressing, and there was an adorable sprinkle of light freckles on his lower back. It made him all the more beautiful in the older man's eyes.

"Could we leave the 'Doctor Tenma' already?", the doctor suggested simply.

Johan gave a soft chuckle and disappeared from his sight, leaving the two doors that separated them now wide open.

"I thought your first name was reserved for family and close friends.."

Johan's voice was almost drowned out by the sound of water running into the bath.

".. and lovers?"

Tenma closed his eyes.

"Well.. it's not as if you haven't used it already."

He listened to the comforting gushing sounds.

"Fine then. Kenzou."
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oh sweetness,
you can fall in love with me,
against all hope and sense of dignity.

My sweetness,
you can come be by my side,
against all hope and sense of human pride.

And the world spins round, and I don't care anymore.

(Micah P. Hinson)

"Does it still hurt?"

Tenma's eyes were following the drops that crawled along Johan's face and down his delectable neck.

"Yes."

The glistening of water caused the bruise marks to glow in a painfully dark red on the boy's pale skin.

"It would not hurt now.. had you tried harder."

The doctor's gaze continued to slide down, slipping underneath the water line where the view promised to be much more comforting. Yes..

"Maybe next time."

As softly and unintrusively as Johan's words were spoken, their content inevitably made the older man frown.

"Next time?"

The reality of their situation was slowly coming back to him. He sent it away to drown in the hot water that surrounded them, to vanish amongst the thin wisps of steam that rose from their entangled bodies. That bathtub certainly wasn't designed for two.

"I am going away tomorrow, remember? And you will come after me." Johan was mustering the white ceiling with a dreamy smile, watching the steam condense into drops of cooled water, ready to fall. "You will."

Tenma slightly shook his head, drowsy from the heat and the unexpected physical exertion that preceded it.

"After this.. this.. you really think that.. I could ever."
"Well, if you don't."

The monster's smile spread into that dangerous, and dangerously alluring grin that used to disturb Tenma more than anything else in the whole world; now it pained and excited him in equal measures.

".. you will be responsible for the things I am going to do."

Johan let one smooth, slippery foot slide along the doctor's leg and thigh and up his stomach, causing a sharp intake of breath when it passed over the area in between.

"How much more guilt will you be able to bear, Kenzou?"

The doctor seized that sneaky foot when it reached his chest, toes sinking into dark hair. He was grateful to be able to hang on to something tangible, something so utterly human, as his mind was running in circles once again, trying to grasp a solution, a way out of this convoluted situation, a labyrinth that paradoxically became only more entangled now that everything was crystal clear between them.

Tenma looked into Johan's calm face as he ran a few fingers along the sole of his elegantly curved foot. No, there were no words that needed to be exchanged anymore, there was nothing left to be said, and if there were, it could hardly be put into the clumsy syntagmas of natural language. The older man wondered if Johan's face was so heartrendingly familiar because the monster did not bother wearing the mask with him anymore - or because he could see past that mask so easily now. And what lay behind it was still bone-numbingly frightening, but Tenma discovered the truth in the saying that the devil you know is better than the one you don't.

However, just as the older man was forming these (completely unhelpful) thoughts, an odd expression started to appear on the boy's face, one the doctor had not seen yet, and a moment later Johan jerked and pulled his foot out of Tenma's grasp, giggling.

The doctor stared at him, stunned.

"You.. are ticklish?"

He laughed out heartily, thoroughly ignoring the whole inappropriateness of glee under the current circumstances, and Johan turned away, looking unexpectedly confused. It made the doctor's laugh suddenly freeze in his throat as he realised how unlikely it was that Johan ever had the opportunity to find out if he was ticklish. All of those completely natural and self-evident little things that the boy never had a chance to learn about the world, or himself.

Tenma felt his chest tighten, his vision blurry. He had certainly spent more tears in the course of the last three days than in the whole of his adult life.

"There are other ways, Johan.", he whispered hoarsely, trying to pick up their earlier conversation.

The boy turned to face him once again with that combination of a slightly raised eyebrow and a lopsided half-smile that the doctor had come to find inexplicably captivating. Though it seemed beneath the monster to comment on Tenma's vague suggestion. The older man found himself forced to be more explicit. He anxiously licked his lips.

"You could still.. submit yourself to justice, and- "

"Kenzou."
The doctor did hardly expect the monster to react favourably to his proposal, but the mixture of contempt and disappointment in his tone, the one that used to drive Tenma mad with fury.. now it actually succeeded in hurting him. He gritted his teeth, certainly disliking that development.

"Yes, Johan."

"Justice. You are not an unintelligent person, Kenzou. How can you walk through the streets of this city - of any city - and speak of justice."

The monster snorted, his gaze fixed on something above the doctor's head.

"How can you look into the eyes of children who trifle with their lives, when there are others who don't even know what life is, and call it justice? How can you look into the eyes of a society where some have to sell their bodies, and others have the means to buy them, and call it justice? How can.. a mother choose between her children, and call it justice? This is what you want me to submit myself to, Doctor Tenma Kenzou?"

Tenma swallowed. He understood most of the references Johan was making all to well, but it was the last one, the one he did not comprehend yet, that left the deepest impression, though he could not tell why. Something in the monster's voice made it almost too painful to listen to. Spoken in a different tone, this monologue could have been a passionate plea for a better society. But Johan's calm, measured words rang with nothing but freezing scorn. He would never be one to mend and forgive. He would always be the one to slash and burn. It could not be helped, but perhaps it could be.. held in check?

A ridiculous thought flared up in Tenma's mind and reached his tongue before he could extinguish it.

"Would you stop if I were with you?"

The doctor furiously bit down on his lip, but it was too late. He stared at the angelic face hovering two metres away from him, in unspeakable shock, preparing himself to receive the most acidic mockery. And this time, it was fully deserved. Did he really just say.. Has he really just suggested that they.. ? It was unthinkable, but surprisingly, it had turned out to be very say-able only a second ago. of course, Johan would laugh him in the face for hopelessly overrating his own weight in the monster's eyes, for even considering that they could have something remotely reminiscent of a relationship, for showing such weakness, for..

But to Tenma's great surprise, the boy's facial expression was a far cry from sneering, or even ironic. The doctor found himself being mustered thoughtfully, even melancholically by those deep blue orbits.

"And are you prepared to make this sacrifice, Kenzou?"

There was something so poignant in that one simple word, sacrifice. It made the doctor's heartbeat rise all the way up to his throat and stop there, his stomach clenching in agony. And then, in that very moment, maybe the most important moment of his life, the one that truly meant something.. he found himself unable to speak, even breath. Tenma gazed into Johan's beautiful clear eyes, helplessly, but he could not take in the sight of the boy in front of him. He suddenly remembered how after difficult operations, patients would often describe their near-death experiences to him, how they spoke of their whole lives passing before their closed eyes. This was not dissimilar. Only that what was now passing before Tenma's own eyes was his future, the way he had always conceived it: being chief surgeon of his beloved Eisler Memorial Hospital, giving lectures at Düsseldorf University, helping his students to become the best doctors they could possibly be, growing old gracefully, respected by friends and colleagues, adored by patients.. The images flickered by faster and faster until their
colours merged together and faded into white vapour, dissolved, and then Tenma looked at Johan once again, truly, truly looked at him, and opened his mouth to say something, no, to say the right thing..

But it was too late. The mockery the doctor had been waiting for was finally creeping onto the boy's face.

"Well, I am not interested in talking about hypothetical probabilities."

Tenma wanted to protest, but the monster had already turned around in the bathtub, swiftly and gracefully at once, and only a fraction of a second later he was lying on top of the older man, face to face, his hands around the doctor's neck, his hot, wet tongue inside his mouth. By the time Johan allowed him to breathe the doctor had lost his speech once again, even though for a very different reason.

"Now be quiet."

It was an unnecessary command. Tenma bit down a sob as Johan began to methodically cover his face with kisses. It felt as if he wanted to commit every feature, every centimetre of his captive's face to the tactile memory of his soft lips, to take it away with him wherever he went.

And while unable to speak, Tenma knew with all the clarity he could ever hope to attain, that this was the time and place he had been fighting to reach for so long, the moment that the monster's destiny was wholly in his hands. He could tie the boy up and hand him to the police. He could kill him. Maybe even save him. And what was he making of all that immeasurable power he was granted?

He simply lay there, holding Johan in his arms until the water turned cold.

That was all.

Chapter End Notes

I know, that was a rather short chapter.. I'm sorry to announce that the next - and last - two chapters will be equally short. The story is coming to its logical conclusion, and I don't want to artificially stretch it. Though I am very sad that it will be finished soon. I grew to love the characters so much. Sob. Maybe I'll follow the story up with a series of one-shots. I actually almost finished one about half a year ago. We'll see..

P.S.: Originally, this scene was supposed to include an under-water blowjob, but, to be honest, I'm a bit tired of the sexy bits by now. There are only so many times that you can write "he gasped, trembled and [insert some suitable word from the Thesaurus].." before it starts to lose its charm. Sorry, guys. But you are welcome to take this chapter for inspiration and expand it.. I'd certainly love to read it! :D
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

I've been looking forward to writing this chapter ever since I first heard those amazing lines from one of my favourite songs of all times :)! Overall, "Hallelujah" has always been one of my main inspirations for this story. I can't even say why. For me, this is simply Johan's & Tenma's song..

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Well, maybe there's a God above,
but all I've ever learned from love
was how to shoot somebody
who outdrew you.

(Leonhard Cohen - Hallelujah)

Invisible fingers playing with the hair on his chest, lips drawing lazy patterns onto his skin..

Smooth legs wrapped around his body in pitch dark..

And when a pale grey square began to appear where Tenma remembered the window to the outside world to be, the boy's light, even breath on his neck as they were both drifting off to sleep..

The doctor did not have to wonder where all of this had gone when he woke up from a surprisingly peaceful sleep, why Johan's warmth had disappeared from his shoulder, from the pillow next to him. He did not have to open his eyes and sit up in order to know what he would see.

But sit up he did, slowly, to face the barrel of the handgun that was pointed at him.

"Good morning."

Tenma felt perfectly calm as he allowed himself to indulge in the sight of the boy this one last time. There was no need for Johan to tease or threaten him anymore. No, this was it. It was meant to end just like this. The spellbound night they had spent together, bathing, dining, lying awake in complete silence.. and all that time, Tenma wished to go back to the one brittle yet defining moment when they were facing each other in the tub, to say that it could never be a sacrifice, no, to the contrary, that it would be the first truly egoistic thing he would ever have done in his live - !

Yet that moment had gone, irrevocably, and one careless sound would have been enough to pop the bubble, one thoughtless step enough to extinguish their microcosm. They did not speak a word. Until now.

"I changed my plans."

The boy was already fully dressed, his attire looking even more immaculate than usual. Every little
fold of his light grey jacket was in its proper place. The buttons of his faultlessly white shirt were neatly done all the way up, despite the heat in the room that was painted in bright colours by a diligent morning sun. It almost seemed as if the monster's already flawless outer shell had been given an additional polish to compensate for the disorder within. The older man was well aware how very unlike Johan it was to talk to a victim before he would pull the trigger, to pause in order to say goodbye. Yes, he was certainly being given a special treatment. Even the gun was different from Johan's usual weapon of choice, an old-fashioned six-barrel revolver rather than a nine millimetre.

"You know why I am doing this, don't you.. Kenzou?"

The doctor noticed how Johan hesitated for a fraction of a second before saying his name, as if contemplating reverting to the formal address, locking away and negating all of that breathtaking intimacy between them. He obviously decided against it.

"Don't you, Kenzou?"

Hearing his name from those soft lips he now knew the taste of.. the monster's half ridiculous, half poignant eagerness to receive a word of reassurance from his own lips.. It all brought an utterly incongruous smile onto the older man's face. He gazed at Johan's unbearably dear, beautiful features, the streaks of autumn sunlight caressing his left cheek the same way that Tenma's hand did last night.

"You did not expect that you could actually.. that you would be able to let me come so close. And now.. you don't know how to-.."

"I'm glad you understand", the boy interrupted softly, mirroring his smile. Tenma suddenly wondered what a stranger who, by some inconceivable twist of fate, happened to enter the room would think of them that very moment, one of them in suit and tie, the other butt naked, both looking at each other with moronic smiles on their faces, a loaded gun hovering in between them.. they certainly looked like hopeless fools! And, well, they were.

Then Johan cocked the gun.

It was only a faint click, barely even noticeable, but it caused something reminiscent of a dam burst in Tenma's system, instantly flooding every blood vessel in his body, down to the thinnest capillary, with heart-stopping fear. He stretched out his arm, as if it could protect him from the impact of a bullet, his tongue suddenly numb.

"W-wait.. Johan.."

The doctor felt like a character from one of those overly artful films where sound is intentionally muted during the most violent scenes, adding to the dramatic effect when it blasts back with full force.

"Please don't beg."

Johan did not seem wholly unaffected by that blast either, though Tenma could not tell for sure if the boy's hand had trembled slightly just now, or if it were just his own shaking muscles that impaired his vision.

"Don't do that to yourself, Kenzou."

'And to me', Tenma read in the monster's eyes. 'To us.'

Even now, the monster's voice was strangely comforting, though it had lost some of its unfaltering coolness.
"I did not.. intend to..", the doctor exhaled. "I just.."

"I did not sleep", Johan interrupted him, again, departing further from his usual manner of speaking. He sounded almost breathless when he continued, as if chasing after his words, scared that they would run away on him.

"You thought I were asleep, you were touching me the way you would touch someone who is sleeping, like the very first time, in the hospital, but I wasn't asleep, I was thinking, about everything you said, and I decided.."

He paused, suddenly lifting his free hand to run it through his hair, abruptly, brushing a strand of golden blond from his forehead. It would have been a perfectly trivial gesture for any other person, but in Johan's case, it indicated a level of emotional agitation Tenma had never seen before, not even when the boy lay panting underneath him.

The older man instantly forgot his own fear, even the gun. Absurdly, he was now the one trying to comfort the cruel creature in front of him.

"It's alright, Johan", the doctor whispered. "It's alright.."

The boy took a deep breath. This time, Tenma was quite certain that his eyes did not betray him: the hand that held the gun was visibly trembling.

".. I decided that you were right. There is another way. I will kill myself.. afterwards. Just as you suggested. My gift for you.."

Tenma's eyes widened in surprise.. until he remembered, with considerable horror, that he had indeed suggested for the monster to take his own life. But that was right at the start of their surreal encounter, when he had only just dipped his little toe into those treacherously still pools. All life took its beginning from the depths of an ocean, once upon a time, and it was only now, only after stepping from those salty waters, that the doctor felt like a whole person for the first time in his life. The thought of seeing them drained and turned into a desert was not simply unbearable. It was impossible.

"No, Johan", Tenma protested, desperately, "I don't want y-"

The doctor's words were drowned out as the blast of the gun hurled him back onto the bed. He clutched at his shoulder, gasping for air, eyes wide open in a shock that left no room for pain. A red ceiling was spinning and pulsating above him. Still, Johan's voice sounded clear and soft against the throbbing in his ears, like a ray of light cutting through numbing darkness.

"I need you to know two things, Kenzou. The first.. Roberto is alive. I wanted you to think that you killed him, but you really.. aren't good at this. Now you never will be.. I'm glad."

Tenma was listening intently, unable to process what was said, but clinging to that voice for dear life, to its unexpectedly shaky quality, the fragility of a September sun beam already drenched with rain. The feeling of hot liquid trickling in between his fingers paradoxically brought him back to his senses. Slowly, he wrenches himself back into a sitting position.

Click.

"The second thing.. "

Johan's face was pale, even by his standards, but, at the same time, curiously animated by a visible struggle to bridge the distance between his mind and his tongue. All of the monster's effortless,
polished eloquence seemed to have left him, though the expression glowing in the depths of his eyes was hardly in need of an interpretation by his lips. It pierced through Tenma's heart where the bullet had missed him.

"Well..", the boy finally whispered. "You already know that.."

Then he pulled the trigger a second time.

The adrenaline rush of the first shock could no longer offer any protection. Tenma heard his own cry as if from behind a foaming curtain of crimson water, his head hitting the pillows hard once again. The pain was all-encompassing, yet the older man's mind remained strikingly lucid, even sharpened by the realisation that Johan had failed to hit a vital point in his body. Twice. That the boy's feelings were powerful enough to affect the monster's very nature, even its dark, murderous core. That..

Would you stop if I were with you?

Now Tenma knew the answer to his obtuse question, knew what he should have said, what he should have done, everything. there was so much he needed to tell Johan, yet his physical ability to speak was leaving him second by unstoppable second. He tried to sit up again, yet his muscles were failing to respond to his brain's commands.

"Johan.. listen.. it's not wrong.. for you.. to feel.. it's not wrong.. what we.."

"Be quiet, Kenzou."

Another click, another surge of searing pain, another agonised groan somewhere in the far distance.

".. it's not wrong.. that you exist.. I would save you.. again.. any time.. I.."

"Be quiet!"

The next shot left the older man just enough breath to finish that all-important last sentence.

".. forgive you."

"SHUT UP!"

Johan's shrill, hoarse cry had almost as much impact as the fifth bullet piercing through the doctor's body. The darkness was closing in on him, swallowing the pain, along with all sensual perception. He felt wonderfully light, as if a heavy weight had been lifted off his shoulders, taken away by the blood that was leaving his system. Tenma sighed, his eyes falling shut as he finally gave in to that comforting obscurity. He was not afraid anymore, only..

I just wish I could have told you how much I love you too.

There was a faint sob.

A vague clink of metal hitting the floor.

Then there was nothing at all.

Chapter End Notes
Well, to me, this is the most romantic chapter of the whole story.. which really shows my warped sense of romance! I apologise for this mind-boggling cheese. This is the one chapter I really had a very clear idea of from the very start and it contains all my melodramatic, girly perceptions of tragic love. Voilà! Hope you are not too sad that there was no wedding.. we all knew it had to end in a tragedy, didn't we? ;)

P.S.: Personally, I much prefer Johan on top, so to me, Chapter 10 was not very exciting from the lemony point of view, I was more interested in the psychological perspective.
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

And here it is. The last chapter.

I have always imagined this chapter like the end title sequence of a film where you have a split screen with one half showing the credits and the other half showing the last scenes of the film itself, and a song being played in the background.

Speaking of music, there were a lot of songs that inspired me while writing this story, and, unfortunately, I could not use all of them as epigraphs to the chapters, so here's just a very short list of some of those songs: AFI - Torch Song & Evanescence - Bring Me To Live (both of these songs have lyrics that would have fitted Chapter 10 perfectly, but in the end Alela Diane won that battle), Muse - Unintended, The Babyshambles - In Love With A Feeling, Aimee Mann - Save Me, Bonnie Tyler - Total Eclipse Of The Heart, U2 - One..

Well, anyway, without further ado..

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Beep -

He is finally..

Beep -

Waking up..

Beep -

Beep -

Beep -

Doctor Tenma..

The first image the doctor managed to discern through a curtain of sticky eyelashes was a flesh-coloured blob hovering over his head. Tenma squinted, trying to get the picture in focus. The blob was slowly transforming into a painfully familiar face, framed by blond hair. Familiar, and yet..

The doctor attempted to turn away, instinctively. It was just too.. heartbreaking. He never realised how truly alike they were. And how very different.

"No, please, don't move!" The girl's voice sounded kind and caring, and deeply worried, yet Tenma could already feel the heat of righteous fury seething beneath the placid surface. Yes, that was Nina Fortner. He smiled faintly, not wishing to turn away any longer.
"How.. are you feeling?"

Nina flushed slightly, probably well aware both of the involuntarily rhetorical quality of her question and the intensity of emotion it rang with, something she did not try to conceal.

"You are alive", Tenma whispered. He felt a pang of guilt, having completely forgotten about the brave girl's fate. It was soothing to find her so well.

"You are alive", Nina breathed, taking his limp hand into both of hers and gently squeezing it with her tiny fingers. And looking into the girl's wet eyes, Tenma knew that she had at least a vague idea what an unlikely circumstance that was. He could not quite grasp it himself..

"It's a miracle!"

Doctor Reichwein's stout shape appeared behind Nina's chair as the old psychiatrist laid a fatherly hand on the girl's shoulder; Tenma had not even noticed his presence until then.

"Five bullets - and not a single fatal wound!"

*Five.. he had one left..*

"And the strangest thing is that all of them were very short of hitting major arteries, almost as if.."

*He just could not do it.. for the first time.. he failed..*

"However, you did lose a lot of blood, thank God we found you so quickly! I promise you will fully heal now, we will make sure.."

*I never will..*

Tenma's gaze wandered from the needle in the back of his hand, along the tube, to the drip, slowly panning the hospital room with its pale green walls and cream-coloured curtains. He wished they had not pumped his body full of analgesics. He actually wanted to feel the pain, to keep his memories as sharp as possible. For a second, he dared to let in the thought that had been banging on his skull from the moment he woke up, that Johan might have kept his promise and used the last bullet on himself..

But no, that was impossible! Tenma felt it with every fiber of his body. Their lives were so intricately connected now, and if he was alive, then so was the boy. He was somewhere out there, waiting..

In the corridor outside, a radio was playing softly. The doctor recognised Leonard Cohen's gravelly croon, though he had never heard that song before.*

*I had to go crazy to love you*
Had to go down to the pit
Had to do time in the tower
Begging my crazy to quit

"Please don't worry", Doctor Reichwein's deep voice made Tenma snap back into reality. The old psychiatrist had obviously followed his gaze and found something there that made him instantly wish to comfort the younger man.

"A good friend of mine received an anonymous call.. you're in his private hospital now. We will protect you whatever it takes! The police won't find you here."

Tenma turned to look at his friends with a grateful smile, deeply touched by their loyalty, their
concern. How could he ever explain that this was the least of his worries right now?

*I Had to go crazy to love you*  
*You who were never the one*  
*Whom I chased through the souvenir heartache*

"Doctor Tenma, wh-..", Nina bit her lip, and Tenma could see how she was burning to ask that one obvious question, yet did not dare. He wanted to make things easier for her.

"Johan."

He pronounced those two syllables deliberately slowly, allowing them to rest in his mouth before setting them free. The girl's eyes widened, though it was hardly an unexpected revelation.

"What.. what did he do to you?" Nina whispered breathlessly, releasing his fingers as her own hands began to form tightly clenched fists.

*Everything.*

The girl's face was now deeply flushed with barely contained rage.. and maybe something else. Tenma felt the blood rushing to his own cheeks when he realised that they must have found him still in bed, completely naked..

*I had to go crazy to love you*  
*Had to let everything fall*  
*Had to be people I hated*  
*Had to be no one at all*

Yet after those three days, he found that his sense of shame was significantly lowered. There were so many other, more important things to focus on..

"It's my fault for missing!"

"No, Nina, please..", the doctor grabbed the girl's arm just as she was about to jump up from the chair, hissing at the unexpected electric current of pain that shot through his arm.

"It's not your fault.."

She eagerly leaned over him, eyes sparkling.

"I promise you I will make him pay for this! And if it's the last thing I do.."

Tenma gazed up at the girl, stunned. He had been a fool not to realise that she had feelings for him.. her as well! And now he could not help but compare the expression on her face, those warm, compassionate, utterly human emotions, with what he had seen in Johan's eyes.

The monster certainly loved in just the same way that he managed all other aspects of his life:  
Egoistically.  
Insanely.  
Irrevocably.

The doctor had no shadow of a doubt that he would gladly go through hell, again, to be the target of those bottomless eyes once more.
".. but you, Doctor Tenma, you should not let it be your concern anymore. You've done.. you've suffered enough! The police will have to drop their charges against you now and you could go back to being a doctor, you should just.."

The doctor stared at Nina. He had hardly had a chance to think about his situation until now, yet she was right. Even Inspector Runge was unlikely to assume that he shot himself five times in order to fool the police, and there were probably enough survivors of the fire in the library to give a rather positive account of his character. Now that he knew for sure that he would never be able to kill the monster, there could be a chance to resume his comfortingly ordinary life. But..

But crazy has places to hide in  
That are deeper than any goodbye

"No."

The doctor shook his head as determinedly as his sedated muscles would allow.

"No. I will find him."

There was something else he knew for sure now, that it was indeed in his power to stop the monster, forever, not with a bullet, but with a simple word. Or three words.

I will find you.

Show you how to be a human being.

Teach you how to feel the way that human beings feel.

Like you have already taught me.

Johan.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~THE END~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Chapter End Notes

Footnote: *Which is unsurprising, since it's from Cohen's new 2012 album (and, obviously, all rights belong to him, etc.).. And in case you were wondering, no, he doesn't pay me for the promotion of his work.. *SIGH*

A/N: I really hope you liked the way this story ended.. it's an open ending, just like in the original story itself!

EDIT: So I might have written a random little sequel thing, for when Johan and Tenma finally meet again, and get together.. https://archiveofourown.org/works/16954197

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!